

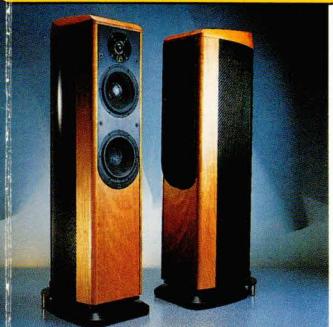
# HI-FI CHOICE

THE FINEST HI-FI MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

**WHY**  
You should buy a  
CD multiplayer, p48

**PLUS: TOP HI-FI RATED!**

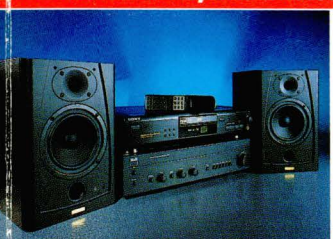
## HOTTEST AMPS YET



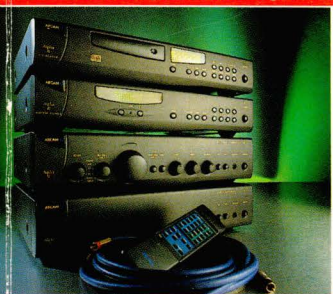
**HI-TECH Carbon Fibre Speakers**



**AMAZING CD Transports & DACs**



**REVEALED: Super £600 System**



**WIN! Arcam Hi-Fi Worth £3,000!**



**We pick the UK's best integrated amps from under £300 to £700!**

**Buyer's Guide**

**Our experts name the best hi-fi 3,000 Products ● 400 Star Buys**



*The B&W Nautilus is absolutely the most ideal speaker I have ever heard. It can be only limited or coloured by the sources, amplifiers and cables, without any coloration of its own. This is the best loudspeaker that money can buy*

*– Hi-Fi Review Japan*

*Special awards for component of the year*  
*– Stereo Sound Japan*

*Special award for Grand Prix component of the year*  
*– Radio Gijutsu Japan*

At B&W, music is our very reason for being. In our search for the perfect music reproduction, the B&W Nautilus, has pioneered technologies such as the hollow pole magnet drivers and the transmission pipe principle, which will shape the direction of the audio industry well into the next millennium.

It symbolises all the innovation, dedication and love of music which have inspired B&W engineers ever since the company was established 30 years ago.

In the search for transparency of sound, the Nautilus represents a true audio miracle. It can only be limited or coloured by the source, amplifiers and cables, without any colouration of its own.

Hailed as 'the best loudspeaker that money can buy', the Nautilus enables the listener to hear nuances and subtle dynamics hitherto unattainable, offering a level of sonic accuracy unmatched by any other speaker.

The Nautilus offers a unique chance to hear music exactly as recorded – detailed, vibrantly alive, full of power and unhindered by driver distortion or cabinet diffraction.

Listen and you'll see!

**B&W**

---

*A word in your shell-like...*



L I S T E N   A N D   Y O U ' L L   S E E





### DM#601



*"The 601s sound like the voice coils of God."*



### CDM1



*"For a domestic loudspeaker that knows how to groove, our European Award is an honestly-bestowed plaudit."*



### P4



*"Fast, weighty, superbly balanced sound: gorgeous range of real wood finishes. These floorstanders are among the best in their price band."*

*B&W's patented method of using Kevlar for loudspeaker cones, has been a major factor in reducing unwanted standing waves. Kevlar's unique woven fibres along with further 'doping' by B&W provide a remarkably near perfect solution to this problem.*







prism system

*The result for the problem of resonances inside budget speaker cabinets is B&W's Prism construction. The solution involves a series of tapered wedges on the rear panel. Sound waves reflect off these wedges in a random fashion, reducing the build up of resonances and so contributes to clearer, uncoloured sound.*



DM<sup>3</sup>302



*European loudspeaker of the year 1996/97*

**HI-FI CHOICE**

*"Probably the best balanced miniature currently around. The 302 is an undoubted success and bound to become a leading contender for the best seller slot."*

**B&W**



# Concert



**The Jamo Concert Series.  
HEAR...SEE...RELAX & ENJOY...**

Advanced technology, innovative design and refined workmanship is not always the perfect recipe for success, we believe a little more is required.

The Concert series has enabled Jamo to produce a range of loudspeakers which will reproduce music that is clean and neutral. The dynamic range transparency and sound stage are all raised to a higher dimension.

The successes attained by the Jamo development team is the result of efforts to design high-quality loudspeaker components which are critically matched to one another.

It is an honour for us to introduce this new generation of loudspeakers to you...

... **Jamo Concert 11, Jamo Concert 8 and Jamo Concert Center.**

THE SOUND OF EXCELLENCE - Made in Denmark.

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Web page: <http://www.jamospeakers.com> E-mail: [speakers@jamo.dk](mailto:speakers@jamo.dk)

*Listen and you'll see*



*For more information please contact*  
B&W Loudspeakers (UK) Ltd on: +44 (0)1903 750 750 <http://www.bwspeakers.com>

# Editor's Notebook

**Stan Vincent** reckons hi-fi fans are the ultimate music fans.

Plus: how much further can the price of audio equipment fall?

**A** few years ago I used to work on a music magazine aimed at rock and pop fans. It was produced by a major-league publisher, and during my stint there I rubbed shoulders with some of Britain's finest writers. At the time, I assumed that I would never again work with — or write for — a more concentrated group of music lovers. Now, when I look back on that era, I believe that the only true music lovers are people who've heard a good hi-fi system in action.

In my experience, with the exception of classical music aficionados, there is a simple difference between music lovers who have and have not heard what a really good hi-fi system can do. For those who have not heard good hi-fi, being 'into' music is as much concerned with musicians and fashion trends as it is with the sounds that are stored on the LP or compact disc. The hi-fi-savvy music enthusiast, meanwhile, cares much more for the actual textures, rhythms and components of a recording.

Classical music fans seem more predisposed towards a good hi-fi. After all, they were the first to embrace CD wholeheartedly — partly, I suspect, because the digital format suited classical music's grandiose dynamic scale and frequency ranges.

But readers of my music magazine, and some of the writers too, scoffed at the idea of spending more than a token sum on hi-fi. As far as they could see, money spent on hi-fi was money they couldn't spend on new albums. Hey, any old ghetto blaster would do! Pop and rock fans are always especially concerned to buy the latest releases, spurred on by the zippy adverts that fund the music press. How much of what they buy, I wonder, is still worth playing after more than a few months down the line?

The beauty of hi-fi is the way it allows music to stay fresh and nourishing in the long term. When you listen

to records on a good system, each play is a voyage of discovery. More importantly, as I've said before, a good system communicates the essence and spirit of a piece over and above mere individual catchy strands. Individual catchy strands make hit records; but only the emotion conveyed in a whole piece makes for satisfying listening.

### What price hi-fi?

The cost of hi-fi equipment is always blamed for its lack of acceptance by the general public. How many pundits, though, have actually stopped to look at some of the prices being offered today? In the past few months we've seen a number of new hi-fi brands launched on the back of retail operations. The idea is that the retail business 'subsidises' the manufacturing business, meaning that a product can be built to sell with a slimmer profit margin than perhaps a dedicated manufacturer could afford. The benefit to the consumer is, in theory, quite simply 'more hi-fi for your money'.

Richer Sounds has been the prime mover in this area, with affiliated company Audio Partnership producing separates under the Cambridge Audio and Gale brands. Richer Sounds' stores sell these at knock-down prices. Now comes an outfit called Tangent Acoustics, founded by the proprietor of Hyper-Fi, a retailer based in Barking, Essex.

Tangent is producing a range of no-frills speakers at ultra-competitive prices, and retailing them through a consortium of independent dealers, in what must be a direct riposte to Richer. Also, Tangent has just announced the re-introduction of the AMC electronics marque, noted for its inexpensive vacuum-tube products among more conventional fare. Again, prices are very keen across the board.

What does all this imply for the future? As I write this, the hi-fi industry is having its work cut-out to shift goods in the traditionally fertile pre-Christmas period. These days, it seems, people need a lot of convincing that hi-fi is a better value-added buy than computers and designer mince-pies. Hit the British public with a knock-down price, however, and they'll buy their own toenail-clippings — hence the trend towards 'price erosion' in all branches of consumer electronics.



Bargains are all well and good. If you have limited funds, it's better to buy budget-priced hi-fi separates than a packaged audio system of uncertain provenance. However I deplore the British obsession with 'the ultimate deal'. If you can afford to spend more on hi-fi, do it. One high-end importer once defined for me the true audiophile as someone who would rather buy a set of cables than a new pair of trousers. That's going a bit far, but it serves to illustrate once again that hi-fi is the gateway to passionate enjoyment of music.

I hope that *Hi-Fi Choice* readers will do their bit to explain the magic of hi-fi to friends and colleagues. Us audiophiles must evangelise the cause! At the same time, however, *Hi-Fi Choice* will continue to tell the honest, unbiased truth about hi-fi that performs well and hi-fi that doesn't make the grade. If the industry's premium hi-fi brands can't offer the cheapest prices, they will instead need to prove their worth in pure performance and suitability for the market.

### What's happening this month?

Our first-test feature, *Sessions*, reached its sell-by date, so we had to take it off the shelf. In its place comes *Instant Systems*, which every month will combine components in the name of seeking out great-sounding outfits, as well as ground-rules for successful system building.

Also new this month is the design of our *Help!* pages, into which we've introduced more colour and a more geometrical layout. The idea is to make the whole article easier to read and simpler to follow.

Elsewhere there's the usual blend of news, features and reviews, which I trust is to your liking. That's it from me until 1997, so enjoy your listening this month and have a great Christmas!

*Stan Vincent*

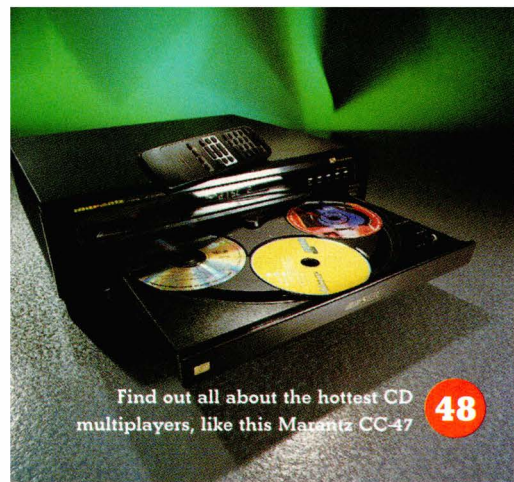


We were honoured to be voted Hi-Fi Magazine Of The Year at the CETI Industry Awards, Harrogate, May 1996.

Hi-Fi Choice is the UK hi-fi magazine representative of the European Imaging & Sound Association



(EISA). Every year EISA awards the finest hi-fi and home cinema products throughout Europe.



Find out all about the hottest CD multiplayers, like this Marantz CC-47

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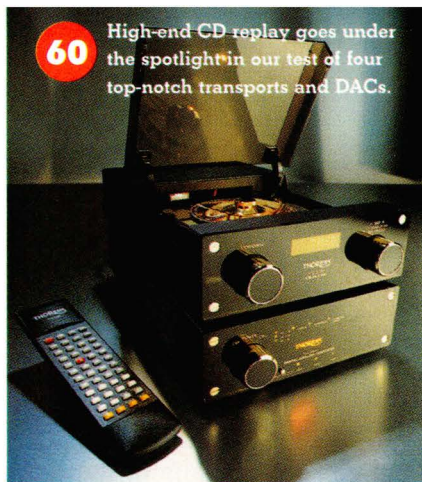
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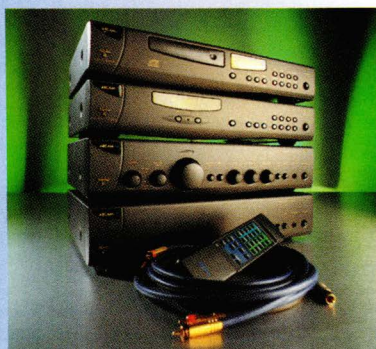
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## WIN!WIN!WIN!



## £3,000 worth of Arcam hi-fi equipment must be won this month!

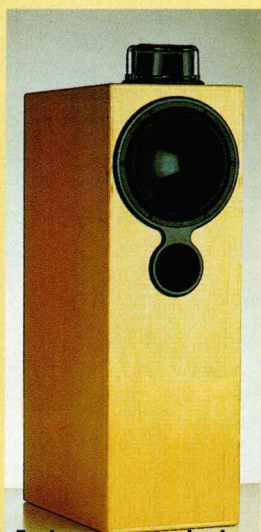
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# Update

IT'S JUST LIKE HAVING YOUR VERY OWN HI-FI TICKER-TAPE! HERE'S MALCOM STEWARD WITH THIS MONTH'S NEWS.

## In brief

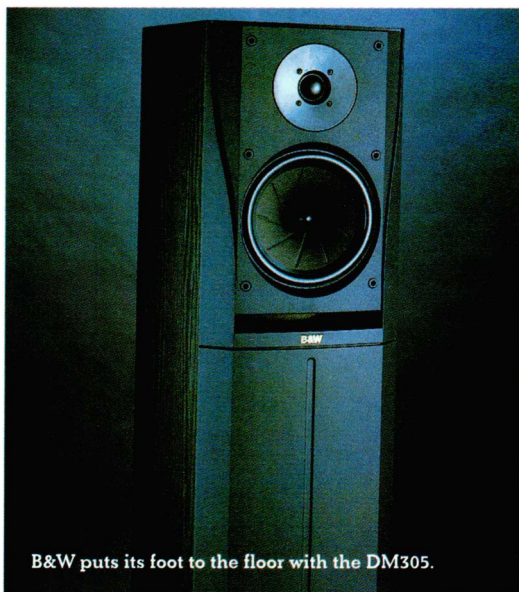


Funky tweeters are back: Lineaum Model 10.

Richer Sounds is now the exclusive UK distributor for the American-made Lineaum loudspeakers. Four models are currently being imported with prices ranging from £299.95 to £1,999.95. ☎ (0500) 10 11 12.

Musical Images has opened an audio-visual superstore at 126 High Street, Beckenham, Kent. Apart from interest-free credit, seven-day opening, and three dedicated demo rooms, the store also provides free car parking. ☎ (0181) 863 3777.

Sevenoaks Sound and Vision has opened two new stores. Both cater for hi-fi and home cinema buyers with dedicated demonstration rooms. You'll find them at Units 3 & 4 Kings Walk Shopping Centre, King Street, Reading, and 29/29a St Giles Street, Norwich, Norfolk. Respective phone numbers are: (0118) 959 7768 and (01603) 767605.



B&W puts its foot to the floor with the DM305.

## Axisymmetrical waves ahoy

B&W is using its recently launched Prism technology, first seen in the CC3 and DM302 models, in a new floor-stander, the DM305. As well as a 26mm soft dome tweeter, the speaker will use a bass driver sporting a 6.5-inch, doped paper cone incorporating 'wave spoilers', which, we're told, 'minimise the build-up of axisymmetrical standing waves within the cone.' This ribbing is to ensure that the midband stays nice and neutral sounding.

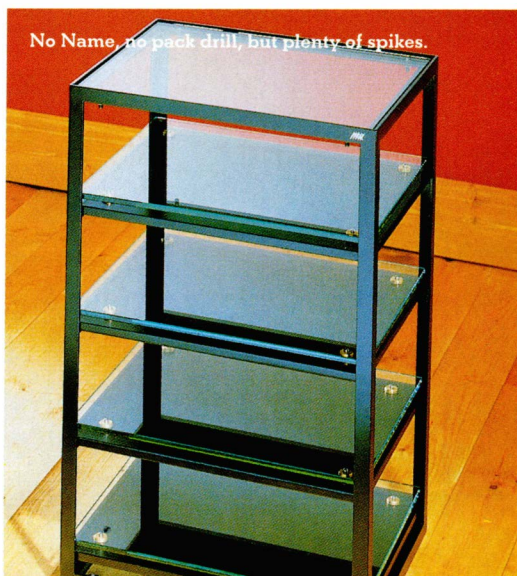
Finished in black-ash vinyl, the £349 DM305 measures 841mm tall, 217mm wide and 308mm deep. Sensitivity is high at 91dB to provide compatibility with a wide range of amplifiers.

B&W also has two new in-wall speakers. The £399.95 CDS6 is the ultra-discreet version of the THX-approved DS6 dipole, while the £149.95 CCM60 is a general purpose design that promises high output with modest amplification. Both speakers' frames and grilles are finished in 'semi-white', which can be repainted to suit your decor. ☎ (01903) 750750.

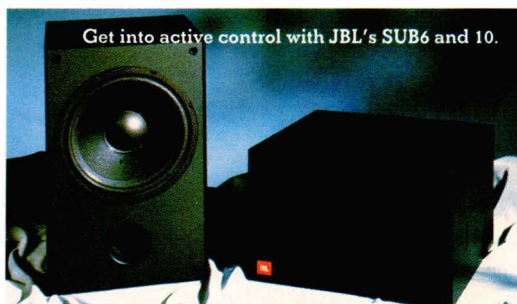
## A stand with No Name

Quality without compromise is what Norwich-based No Name Acoustics promises for its new range of 500 Series equipment supports. With welded, powder-coated, mild-steel framework, stainless-steel fitments and 10mm clear glass or 15mm Medite shelves, the stands use a unique ball bearing and brass disc levelling system to ease set-up.

The series consists of an isolation platform, wall-mounted shelf, and a range of free-standing tables with two, three, four or five tiers. These can all be upgraded with additional isolation stages. The isolation platform costs £175, the wall shelf £350, while the stands start at £250. All tables and shelves come with Allen keys and a bulls-eye spirit level for assembly. ☎ (01603) 615817.



No Name, no pack drill, but plenty of spikes.



Get into active control with JBL's SUB6 and 10.

## Total control

JBL's revised *Control* series includes four models available in black, white and all-weather finishes. All are shielded for AV use and feature upgraded driver technology — titanium tweeters and poly-laminate coned bass/mid drivers.

The £99.99, 75 Watt CM40 replaces the *Control Micro* and is designed for rear channel surround applications. The £149.99/pr CM42 is available singly as the CM42V for centre channel use. The £199.99 CM52 replaces the *Control 1* and is available alone as the CM52V. The £269.99 CM62 replaces the *Control 5* and claims 175 Watt power handling.

Still to come are two active *Control* subwoofers — the 60 Watt SUB6 and 100 Watt SUB10. Already here are two other JBL subs, the PSW1000 and PSW1200, priced at £325 and £375 respectively. The PSW1000 uses a 100 Watt amplifier to drive a 10inch bass unit, while the PSW1200 uses a twelve-inch driver and a 120 Watt amplifier. Complete with adjustable crossover and gain controls, the subs are designed to match a wide range of small monitors. ☎ (01908) 317707.

# AMC returns to UK

AMCs CVT 3030a brings hybrid tube technology to the masses once more.



The value-conscious AMC range of electronics will once again be sold in Britain, thanks to a new exclusive distribution deal signed by Tangent Acoustics UK, the manufacturing/distribution concern based in Chelmsford, Essex.

The proposed range includes more than 20 components, including CD players, amplifiers, tuners, and home cinema equipment. AMC is noted also for a range of inexpensive vacuum-tube products, kicking off with the CVT 3030a integrated amp at £399.95.

However marketing efforts are expected to focus on budget-priced, semiconductor-based components such as the 25 Watt, remote-controlled 3025a integrated amp (£139.95), and the one-bit-

DAC-equipped CD8 CD player (£159.95). A new amp and CD player at even lower prices are expected in March 1997.

According to Tangent Acoustics' Peter Schmitz, AMC products are priced to compete with equipment "costing between three and five times more."

Tangent Acoustics is currently manufacturing four of its own UK-designed speakers, whose prices start at £59.95 for the bookshelf two-way *Monitor Three*, rising to £179.95 for the floorstanding two-way *Monitor Eleven*.

These speakers are available alongside AMC electronics in 50 UK hi-fi dealerships, together with selected items of Sansui electronics. ☎ (0500) 828620

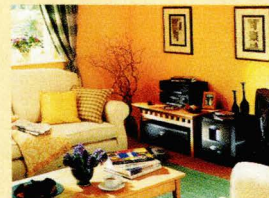
## Cambridge's new mark

Partly in response to feedback from buyers, the Cambridge Audio A1 amplifier has been improved and now emerges as the A1mk3. Apart from improved casework, including a re-styled aluminium fascia, and better ergonomics, which involve the addition of a separate balance control, the A1mk3 has a new output stage and an uprated power-supply transformer. Higher current capability is said to give vastly improved dynamics and makes the amplifier happier driving a wider range of speakers.

Despite these seemingly extensive internal and external revisions, the amplifier still sells for £119.95, which, we're told, is due solely to streamlining of production techniques. ☎ (0171) 357 9090.

## In brief

Opposite the Virgin cinema in Bruce Street, Belfast citizens will find a new hi-fi shop. Called The Hi-Fi Shop and run by the former manager of Zeus Audio, it caters for hi-fi and home cinema enthusiasts and also houses a Bang and Olufsen centre. ☎ (01232) 327604.



Kino's Modular Space System provides storage for CD, hi-fi and video equipment that's 'stylish and fun'. A range of units can be combined to suit individual needs, with individual items priced between £14.99 and £49.99. ☎ (01656) 669906.

The Herts and North London Audio and Record Fair takes place at Wolsey Hall, Windmill Lane, Cheshunt on 15 December 1996. It's open from 11am to 4.30pm and features modern and vintage hi-fi as well as records and CDs. There's also a 'live' record-cutting demonstration showing how 78 rpm lacquers sounded circa 1930.



Philip Koomen is offering a bespoke hi-fi furniture service building cabinets to suit individual requirements. If you're looking for a custom-made creation — something spectacular, maybe, crafted in lead-lined bird's eye maple and cherry inlaid with ebony — he could be your man. ☎ (01491) 681122.

The British Standards Institution has published two new standards — BS6840 and BS EN 60268 — relating to headphones and earphones. Each is priced at £30.75 to BSI mem-

## Another 0.5 from Levinson

Mark Levinson's latest reference CD transport, the 31.5, is now available at a cool £9,295. Combining aspects of the company's former top transport, the newly-designed 31.5 comes with the Closed-Loop Jitter-Reduction system found in the 37 and Proceed CDD. The 31.5 is said to provide a quantum leap forward in low level information, clarity, dynamics and timbral accuracy. The list of other new elements in the 31.5 is extensive and includes: a Philips CDM-12 Industrial CD-ROM mechanism; a modified CD-ROM controller; all digital servo system; on-board DSP; a new differential output stage; updated control software; a new lid assembly and a revised remote control.

Owners of the 31 will be pleased to note it can be upgraded to 31.5 specification. Because of the many modifications, three update levels are offered: performance, performance plus lid, and complete. Contact Path Premier for full details. ☎ (01494) 441736.

## Dial 118 for digital

NAD is launching two new power amplifiers and two new pre-amplifiers, one of which is a digital design.

Apart from a digital output for use with an appropriately digital recorder, the £999.95 NAD 118 also provides a digital output for use with external DACs or loudspeakers with integral DA conversion. The 118's volume, balance, polarity and mono/stereo switching all operate in the digital domain using 24-bit signal processing to maintain signal integrity even at low volume levels.

It combines a 20-bit resolution DAC and a Bitstream ADC with 18-bit resolution sampling at 48kHz; this, says NAD, ensures that analogue sources suffer no quality loss.



The £429.95 NAD 116 preamplifier is an analogue design offering full remote control, six line-level inputs, switchable MM/MC phono, an independent headphone amplifier, and balanced XLR outputs alongside its conventional RCA outputs.

It will happily drive long interconnect cables, and its twinned RCA outputs facilitate bi-amping. The new power amplifiers are the £469.95, 125 Watt, 216THX and the £849.95, 200 Watt 218THX. Both these THX certified designs are bridgeable using dual-mono circuitry, and the 218THX comes with fully balanced XLR inputs. ☎ (0181) 343 3240.

NAD's 118 digs into the digital domain.

## New English opera

The *Duetto* is the new entry level speaker in UK Distribution's *Opera* range. It replaces the *Prima*, and though at £395 it's the company's least expensive offering, it still comes in a solid mahogany cabinet. This is constructed from 25mm panels, interlocked and braced to provide a resonance-free environment for the compact design's 13cm polymer coned bass unit and 19mm silk dome tweeter.

With a nominal eight Ohm impedance and 86.5dB sensitivity, the *Duetto* is, say its makers, a fairly easy load that should deliver good results with valve amplifiers rated above 12 Watts, or solid-state amplifiers in the 20 to 60 Watt range. UKD also notes that a matching stand is available, the height-adjustable *S1*, but that any robust, quality stand will be suitable. ☎ (01753) 652669.

## In brief

bers and £61.50 to non-members. ☎ (0181) 996 7444.

Denon's new entry-level Dolby Pro-Logic receiver is the £299.99 *AVR-600RD*. Three discrete 50 Watt amps handle the front speakers and two 15 Watt amps take care of the rears. The full EON RDS radio section has forty presets and covers the AM and FM bands. ☎ (01753) 888447.

Intelligent Power Management is just one feature included in Onkyo's *TX-SV434* AV receiver. Priced at £399.95, it delivers 55 Watts to the front channels and 20 Watts to each of the rears, and provides subwoofer and line-out connections for system expansion. ☎ (0181) 343 3240.



The *Heylios* is the first stand-mounted speaker in Heybrook's 'beaded' range. Reflex ported and bi-wirable, this compact two-way comes in black and rosewood finishes for £339. ☎ (01579) 342866.

Alanha research is set to release the *Concept 1* and *Concept 2* loudspeakers. Both use polypropylene bass units, titanium dioxide inverted dome tweeters, and Speakon connectors. Finished in black with stainless steel fittings, they're priced at £699 and £995 respectively. ☎ (01468) 843746.

B-Tech has a new loudspeaker stand offering height adjustment from 30 to 40cm. The £34.95 *BT10* also has two mounting heads to suit a variety of speakers weighing up to 25kg. ☎ (01689) 848535.

As well as providing a complete, three-level restoration service and chassis refurbishment for older valve amplifiers, PM Components is also handling the Ukrainian Moodrich Human range of valve designs. Models on offer include a £595 preamplifier and two power amplifiers — the £1,795 *015* stereo and the £2,495 *040* monoblock. ☎ (01474) 560521. E-mail: 101650.2424@compuserve.com

# Top drawer mini



Dinky, delightful and diminutive, that's the Denon D-99W.

The *D-99W* is Denon's new top-of-the-range mini system. It replaces the *D-250* and adds RDS radio, improved styling and red mahogany vinyl-finished speakers to the roster of features. Selling for £1,049.99, or £899.99 without speakers, the four-box system consists of a pre-amp/tuner with five inputs including phono and a proces-

sor loop, a power amplifier, a CD player, and an auto-reverse, drawer-loading twin cassette deck. Denon claims that the 50 Watt power amp is capable of driving larger speakers, while the cassette deck links to the CD player for one-touch CD recording and calibration of record levels. ☎ (01753) 888447.



KEF's serious new monitor: the RDM Two.

## Off the shelf monitors

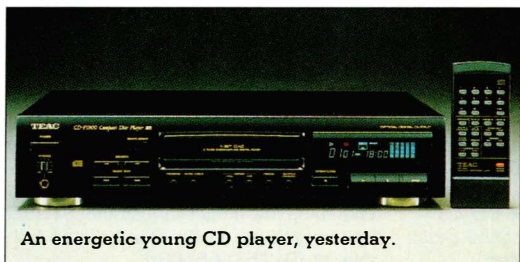
KEF's new Monitor Series kicks off with two new bookshelf models featuring the company's Uni-Q coaxial driver technology. The £499 *RDM One* targets hi-fi and home theatre buyers and uses a 160mm polypropylene bass/midrange driver with an integral 25mm soft dome tweeter. The compact, eight-litre cabinet uses closed box bass loading and is equipped for bi-wiring.

The £699 *RDM Two* uses a similar driver in a larger, 12-litre enclosure. A front-firing reflex port provides the bass loading and both the driver and crossover are magnetically shielded. Bi-wire facilities are also provided on this model but the *Two* is further distinguished with audiophile grade OFC internal wiring and polypropylene capacitors in the high frequency signal path.

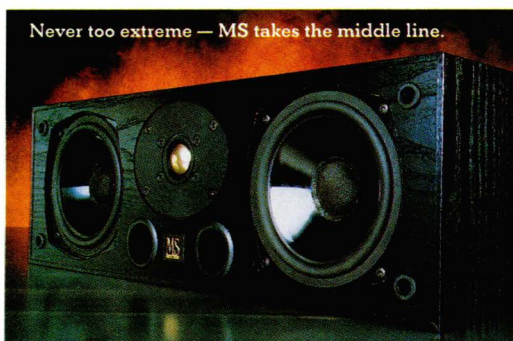
Both speakers come in 'video grey' with polished side cheeks finished in red lacquer, grey lacquer or cherry wood. ☎ (01622) 672261.

## Budget thrust from Teac

Teac's vigorous thrustings in the budget CD player arena aren't abating, it seems. The company has just released another low-cost machine, the £129.95 *CD-P1800*. Features include a one-bit DAC, eight-times oversampling digital filter, TOS-Link optical digital output, centre-mounted mechanism, full function remote control, headphone jack, and all the display and programming functions any reasonable cove could desire. ☎ (01923) 819630.



An energetic young CD player, yesterday.



Never too extreme — MS takes the middle line.

## MS takes a central channel

Mordaunt-Short's *MSCi* is a centre-channel voiced to complement the Music Series range. The new speaker is fully magnetically shielded and employs two 110mm, MCS technology mid-bass drivers, and a 25mm, anodised aluminium, gold-dome tweeter. Finished in black ash, it sells for £179.99. With an eight Ohm impedance and 88dB sensitivity, the *MSCi* works with amplifiers rated between 15 and 60 Watts. ☎ (01705) 407722 or on the Internet at <http://www.mordaunt-short.com/>.





Lubricate your lugs with these noise cancelling headphones.

## No noise cans

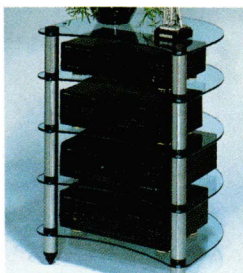
If you're in the habit of trying to listen to music in noisy environments you'll be pleased to hear that Sennheiser is now producing headphones incorporating its professional Noiseguard system for public consumption. The *HDC451-1* will mask continuous background noise but allows through the sort of stuff you'd still like to hear, such as warning bells and alarm signals. It does this using a compact electronics module, which provides eighty hours' operation from two AA cells. External microphones feed the ambient noise into the module, which reverses its phase before sending it to the earphones, effectively cancelling it. If the batteries die the headphones continue to function without the noise reduction. The headset is lightweight — 110 gm — and comes with a standard 3.5mm plug and an adaptor for airline two-pin sockets. The price of undisturbed listening is £169.95. ☎ (01494) 551551.



W b's follow up to a hard A.C.T.

## Premier style

Optimum International 2000 has launched the *Premier* range of hi-fi and AV support systems. Using designer-styled, toughened safety-glass shelves and stainless-steel support rods, the system is modular and comprises complete, three, four or five-shelf models along with additional single-shelf models in four different heights to accommodate a variety of equipment. Prices naturally vary according to configuration but start at £299 for a three shelf stand, with the five-tier *OPT660* selling for £399. All stands come flat packed, complete with floor spikes. The company also offers a *Designer* range of midi system supports with single-column loudspeaker stands to match. ☎ (01274) 583249.



Stolen from Flash Gordon's spaceship...

## Subwoofers from the Planet Polk

A panoply of new products from Polk includes the *RM5300* six-piece home theatre system with powered subwoofer, the *PSW50* and *PSW150* powered subwoofers, the *RM3300* satellite and powered subwoofer system, and the floor-standing *RT20P* speaker with a built-in — you guessed it — powered subwoofer.

The *RM5300* system sells for £999.90 and consists of *RM2000II* satellites, an *RM2500C* centre channel, *M1* surround speakers and a *PSW50* powered subwoofer. The satellite and centre channel speakers use polymer aggregate cabinets, which have the look, feel and acoustic properties of stone. All the speakers, bar the sub, come with wall mounting brackets.

The *PSW50* and *PSW150* subs use driver technology derived from the big bucks *SRT* system, and Polk's patented Power Port technology. The £349.90 *PSW50* uses a 100 Watt amplifier to drive its eight-inch bass unit, while the £499.90 *PSW150* has a 10inch unit powered by a 200 Watt amplifier.

The £699.90 *RM3300* system combines the *PSW50* with a pair of *RM2000II* satellites, effectively making it an *RM5300* without the centre and surround speakers.

Again featuring *SRT* technologies, each of the *RT20P* floor-standers uses a 114mm midrange unit and a 25mm tri-laminate dome tweeter bolstered by two eight-inch bass drivers, powered by an on-board 100 Watt amp. Cabinets for this £1,499.90 box eschew a stone-like finish in favour of black ash, maryland maple and light oak.

☎ (01727) 827311

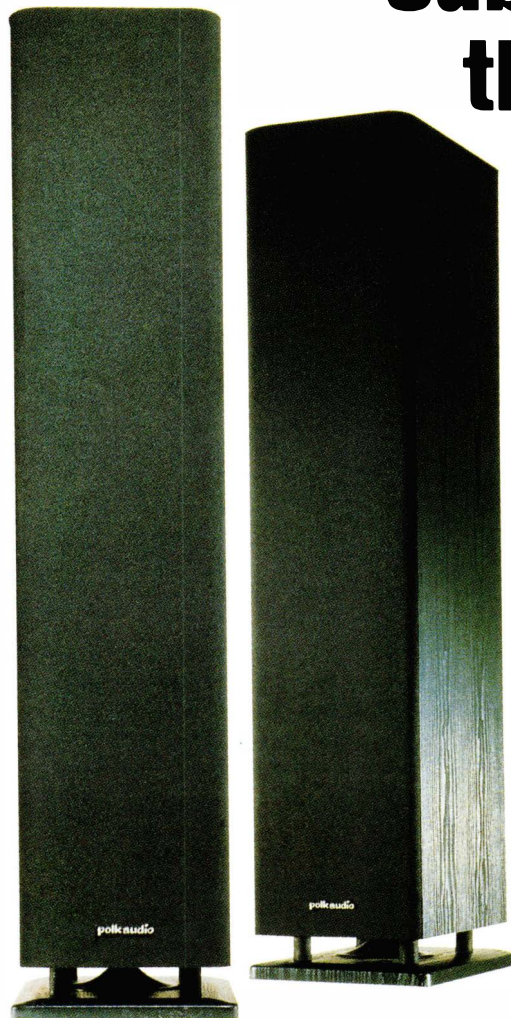
## Carbon thespian

Carbon fibre weaves its composite magic in the *Actor*, a new loudspeaker from Wilson benesch. Developed from the *A.C.T One* (featured in *Statements* this month), this free-space, one metre-tall, floor-stander combines double-chamber differential tuning with a custom-built 170mm, carbon fibre reinforced bass unit, a smaller midrange driver, and a silk dome tweeter, to achieve a fast, neutral bass that integrates effectively with a similarly open upper register. Sensitivity of 89dB, a nominal impedance of six Ohms, power handling of 200 Watt peak and a maximum output level of 112dB are claimed for the *Actor*. That other vital figure, the price, is £3,800. ☎ (0114) 2852656

## The power of Q

REL has launched two new subwoofers. The £375 *Q-50* replaces the original *Q-Bass* model, delivering 25 per cent more power through its completely redesigned 50 Watt amplifier. An updated option is available for owners of the original speaker for £75. Environmentalists please note that the old amplifier is subsequently recycled.

The £475 *Q-100* is an all-new design featuring a front-firing 12inch drive unit powered by a 100 Watt amplifier. Both models are aimed primarily at the AV market — although they're said to enhance all manner of audio systems — and promise to be fully able to handle Dolby Digital AC-3 soundtracks. ☎ (0181) 207 5050.



Polk's RT20P active power houses.

# “It’s a rare combination of superb sound, and terrific value”

**WHAT HI\*FI?**

and only available from these authorised dealers...

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<b>AYLESBURY</b> Northwood Audio II 01296 28790	<b>BLOXWICH</b> Sound Academy 01922 473499	<b>CHESTER</b> Peter's Hi-Fi 01244 319392	<b>EPPING</b> Chew & Osborne 01992 574242	<b>KETTERING</b> Classic Hi-Fi 01536 310855	<b>MARGATE</b> V.J. Hi-Fi 0181 743 3698	<b>MIDDLEBOROUGH</b> Gilson Audio 01642 248793	<b>PERTH</b> W.M. Coupur 01783 634809	<b>PLYMOUTH</b> The Hi-Fi Attic 01752 699511	<b>WALLINGFORD</b> Astley Audio 01491 839305
<b>BANBURY</b> Blinkhorns 01295 259859	<b>BOLTON</b> Practical Hi-Fi 01204 395789	<b>CHIPPENHAM</b> JD Stereo Center 01202 529988	<b>EXMOUTH</b> Exe Video 01395 278 558	<b>KINGS LYNN</b> Martins Hi-Fi 01533 761683	<b>MARTON</b> Hi-Spek Electronics 0181 349 1166	<b>MIDLESBOROUGH</b> MSV 01642 223366	<b>PETERBOROUGH</b> The Hi-Fi Company 01733 341755	<b>POOLE</b> Movement Audio 01202 730865	<b>WARRINGTON</b> Doug Brady Hi-Fi 01925 828009
<b>BANGOR</b> I & H Griffiths 01248 370655	<b>BOURNEMOUTH</b> Movement Audio 01202 529988	<b>CHORLEY</b> Suttons 01202 555512	<b>EXMOUTH</b> Exe Video 01395 278 558	<b>KINGSTON UPON THAMES</b> Eastern Audio 0181 943 3530	<b>MILTON KEYNES</b> Technosound 01908 604949	<b>MIDDLEBOROUGH</b> KJ West One 0171 486 8262	<b>PLYMOUTH</b> The Hi-Fi Attic 01752 699511	<b>ST. ALBANS</b> Radlett Audio 01923 856497	<b>WATFORD</b> Hi-Fi City 01932 226169
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<b>BARNSTAPLE</b> J & A Video Centre 01271 24384	<b>BRIGHTON</b> Richer Sounds 01273 673333	<b>COVENTRY</b> Frank Harvey Hi-Fi 01203 256860	<b>FOLKESTONE</b> Halksworth Wheeler 01303 255688	<b>LEICESTER</b> Practical Hi-Fi 01524 36991	<b>MIDLESBOROUGH</b> M. O'Brien Hi-Fi 0181 946 1528	<b>MARGATE</b> Kerco Electronics 0181 743 3698	<b>POOLE</b> Movement Audio 01202 730865	<b>ST. AUGUSTINE</b> E.T.S. 01726 75400	<b>WATFORD</b> Hi-Fi City 01932 226169
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# Two Hot To Handle

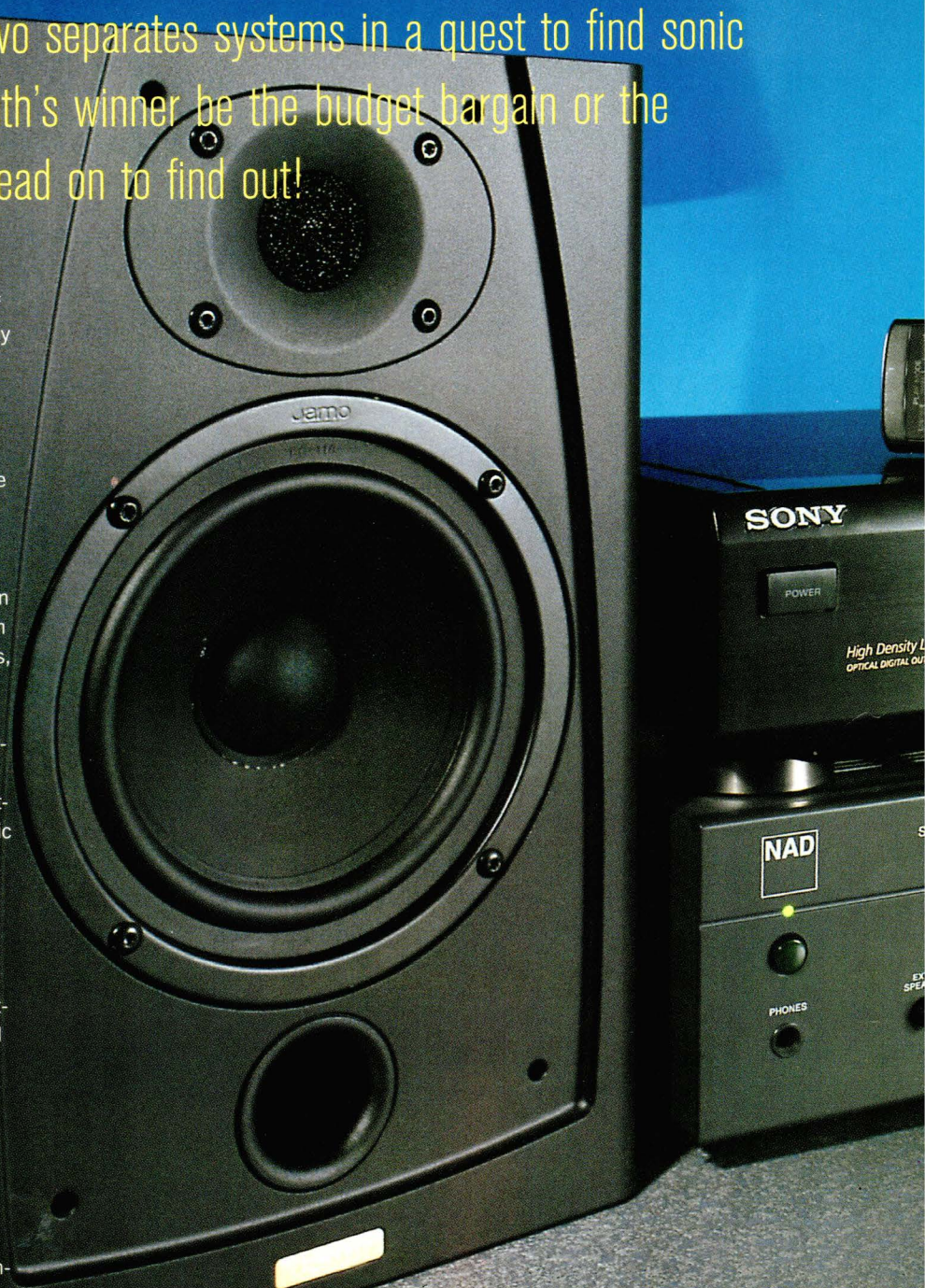
Alan Sircom assembles two separates systems in a quest to find sonic serendipity. Will this month's winner be the budget bargain or the performance package? Read on to find out!

**A**t *Hi-Fi Choice* our aim is to sort the wheat from the chaff in hi-fi equipment. That's why we put so much effort into identifying the greatest CD players, amplifiers and speakers every month. At the same time, however, we're well aware that the secret of great sound is to combine the right components.

Putting together a great system is not just a matter of slinging together separates in any old order, even if the products in question have been favourably received. It's a good idea to start with Best Buys and Recommendations from our tests, but that is just the beginning of the research. Over the next few months we'll be putting together systems made up of individual CD players, amps and speakers known to be good in their own right. We hope to discover some great-sounding combinations and establish some basic rules for successful system matching.

It's an inescapable fact that sometimes the effect of a whole system is less than you'd expect from the sum of its parts. Regrettably, we found this to be the case in our more up-market system, which proves that there are pitfalls in system matching that even experienced listeners cannot predict. However, every situation presents lessons to be learned.

Determining why a system doesn't work is just as interesting as working out why it does perform well. Also, just because components do not gel in one permutation, this does not cast aspersions on their standing as individual players. That's certainly true of the more expensive rig we checked out this month.



**SYSTEM A**

- Sony CDP-XE500 CD player .....£159.99
- NAD 314 amplifier .....£259.95
- Jamo Model 38 speakers.....£179.99
- Total (excl. cables, stands, etc.)...£599.93

**The Components**

Our first system grew in a truly organic manner. It began with the NAD 314 amplifier, which received a solid Recommendation in issue 157 for its entertaining interpretation of music. This battleship-grey integrated amp harks back to the legendary 3020 giant-killer, only with a few more features and inputs. It has the standard soft-clipping circuit, may be used as a pre- or power-amplifier, and can pump out 50 Watts at a pinch. Additionally, it has been a fixture of our office rig between its formal test and this system review.

Issue 159 turned up Sony's Best Buy CD Player, the CDP-XE500. Like the NAD, it has done a tour of duty in our office system, while in its formal review it outperformed many a machine, including its bigger brother the CDP-XE900E. The XE500 lacks the high-tech disc-transport mechanism of its more costly sibling, but it does

include the family's rotary track-skip control which users either love or hate. For me, it's a godsend.

In our office system, this source and amplifier have proved themselves favourably paired, even with expensive speakers that would normally reveal the limitations of such inexpensive equipment. What we needed here, however, was a pair of speakers that would keep the price under £600.

We settled on the Jamo Model 38, a diminutive enclosure wrapped in rosewood-effect vinyl. These speakers have a comparatively simple, front-ported design, which deploys a foam-covered, 25mm dome tweeter and a doped-paper, 127mm mid-bass unit. With a claimed sensitivity of 89dB and impedance of six Ohms, the Model 38s should be easy to drive — ideal starter hi-fi fodder.

The speakers sound less cluttered with their grilles removed, but the front baffle has a grille-shaped rebate that detracts from stereo performance when the grille is removed, so there will always be a trade-off between stereo imagery and clarity. I preferred the speakers with their grilles firmly affixed as I found the other option too bright for everyday listening.

**The Importance Of Stands**

I always believed that only expensive equipment truly benefited from good stands, cables and tables. However, this system only started coming to life with good quality supports and umbilicals. In particular, the speakers cry out for heavyweight underpinning. I used the Target R1 stand, but a more real-world answer would be the Atacama SE24, filled with three weighty tubs of SoundBytes interlocking steel stand-filler. I also found that the speakers repaid investment in cables a notch above bell-wire.

It may seem daft to use £420-worth of electronics on £1,000 worth of tables, but there is potential for improvement. At the very least, check out down-to-earth solutions like the Base baseboard, but set aside funds to add Mana isolation supports or Townshend International's isolators at a later date. When it comes to interconnect cables, £50 would be a reasonable sum to pay.

**Sound Quality**

Okay, with all these extras we've crashed through our price ceiling. All we're saying is that there is great potential to leverage your initial investment in the fullness of time. But how does it sound? Very, very good indeed. The clean honesty of the Sony, the earthy warmth of the NAD and the fresh bounciness of the Jamos combine to produce a system that's hard to fault at the price.

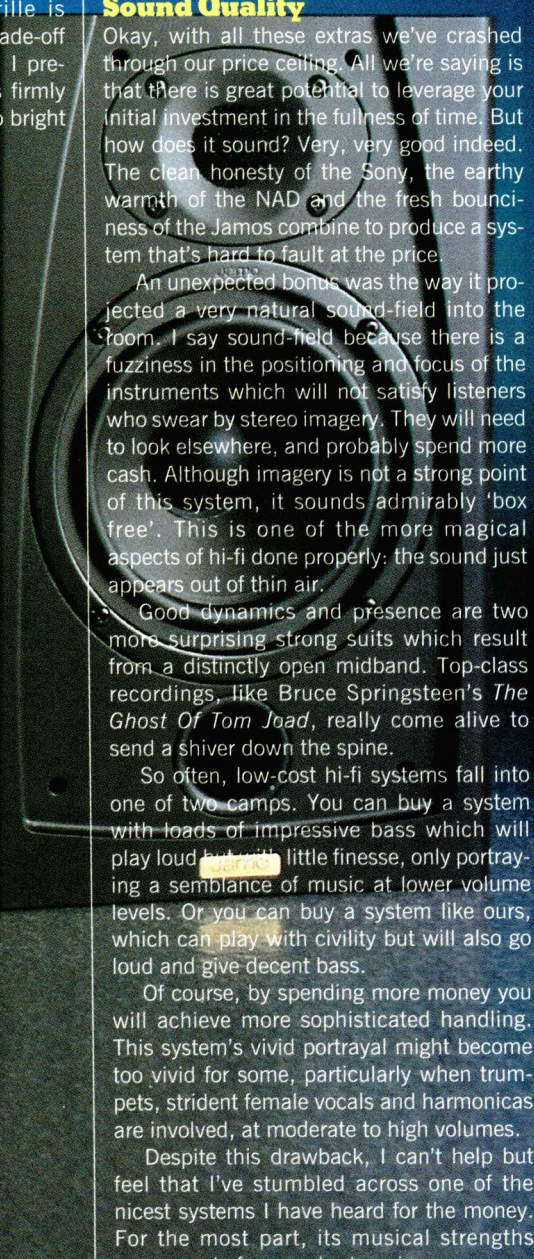
An unexpected bonus was the way it projected a very natural sound-field into the room. I say sound-field because there is a fuzziness in the positioning and focus of the instruments which will not satisfy listeners who swear by stereo imagery. They will need to look elsewhere, and probably spend more cash. Although imagery is not a strong point of this system, it sounds admirably 'box free'. This is one of the more magical aspects of hi-fi done properly: the sound just appears out of thin air.

Good dynamics and presence are two more surprising strong suits which result from a distinctly open midband. Top-class recordings, like Bruce Springsteen's *The Ghost Of Tom Joad*, really come alive to send a shiver down the spine.

So often, low-cost hi-fi systems fall into one of two camps. You can buy a system with loads of impressive bass which will play loud but with little finesse, only portraying a semblance of music at lower volume levels. Or you can buy a system like ours, which can play with civility but will also go loud and give decent bass.

Of course, by spending more money you will achieve more sophisticated handling. This system's vivid portrayal might become too vivid for some, particularly when trumpets, strident female vocals and harmonicas are involved, at moderate to high volumes.

Despite this drawback, I can't help but feel that I've stumbled across one of the nicest systems I have heard for the money. For the most part, its musical strengths compensate for any shortcomings.





**SYSTEM B**

Trichord Genesis CD player .....	£549
Audiolab 8000Q pre-amp .....	£1,099.90
Audiolab 8000M power-amp monobloks, two of .....	£1,599.80
Mission 753 Freedom speakers .....	£798
<b>Total (exc. cables, stands, etc.) ...</b>	<b>£4046.70</b>

**The Components**

This outfit comprises a heavily-modified Pioneer CD player from Trichord, an Audiolab 8000Q preamplifier and 8000M monoblok power amplifiers, and a pair of Mission 753 Freedom loudspeakers.

Trichord does for Pioneer CD players what Cosworth did for Ford Escorts. Priced at £549, the heavily-modified Genesis CD player is based on the humble (and discontinued) Pioneer PD-S504. Trichord adds its own master clock and regulated power supply, then uprates the op-amps that deliver the analogue musical signal to the outside world. This means the output stages operate more in Class A than Pioneer's existing products. Everything is done to elevate Trichord's players to an unparalleled level of performance — or so Trichord says.

Audiolab's reputation stands on its legendary amplifiers, and the line-only 8000Q preamplifier (£1,099.90) is no exception. It uses Audiolab's proprietary Zq technology, a microprocessor-controlled method of



directly coupling the line-level signal and eliminating capacitors in the signal path.

Audiolab's 8000M monoblok power amplifiers have a similar enviable reputation. These slimline units, each with a claimed output of 125 Watts, have received praise for their strong, controlled sound. Both pre- and power-amplifiers have been dramatically upgraded since inception, in part to comply with stringent European Union CE-mark legislation. Now they incorporate improved grounding, and added voltage-discharge prevention in the power amps.

I had a brief chance to compare old models of both amps with the newer designs. Without reservation, the improvements have had a marked effect on the sound, which is more transparent and warmer. Low-level dynamics and detailing are improved, and the sound is at once more satisfying, more revealing and more exciting than its predecessors. Interestingly, the power amplifiers seem to be more powerful, although the changes have not increased the rated power output. However, owners of pre-CE-marked Audiolab 8000Q/8000M models needn't worry that their units have been outclassed.

Like Audiolab, Mission has upgraded its range recently, designating new models *Freedom*. The 753 *Freedom* costs £798 in standard black finish and £898 in rosewood or prima vera. The main differences are internal: the 753 *F*'s structure is more complex than the simple split box that made its debut as the original 753 four years ago. In the *Freedom* version, a greater proportion of internal volume is dedicated to the bass drivers, while high-frequency and midrange units now have their own sealed box. Another upgrade is a silk-dome tweeter.

I didn't have a pair of original 753s to hand for comparison, but in its four year existence this design has become so ubiquitous that its sound quality is well known. The *Freedom* seems to offer more palpable, deeper bass than the original could ever muster but, as with the Audiolab amps, I don't think the difference between old and new warrants existing owners upgrading.

As a complete package, this sort of system should have everything going for it. Independently, the Trichord CD player has stunned us with its dynamics and holographic imagery, the Audiolab combo's power and control make it a paragon of neutrality, and the Missions can handle almost any signal with aplomb. Blend these characteristics and a system should achieve a sound that every hi-fi buff seeks — at least, that's the theory.

### Sound Quality

In practice, this outfit produces the tidy, controlled and rather dry sound that the latest generation of Linn products seem to strive for. Unlike the Linn sound, however, our system offers more stereophonic imagery but much less musical coherence. This characteristic complements heavily produced pop recordings but renders well-

recorded music too acerbic, shiny and unreal. No individual component is to blame, but the sound just wouldn't shine.

Perhaps this paints too bleak a picture. The system offers a vast quantity of musical detail, with a great sense of scale from top to bottom and no obvious discontinuities across the frequency range. A hi-fi novice would think this system impressive, but the experienced listener would detect the absence of the X-Factor that separates the great from the good.

The sparse recording of Górecki's *Third Symphony*, released on Elektra Nonesuch, highlights the problem areas. This moody, *lento* piece depicts the plight of Polish people during WW II. Reproduced appropriately, it is dark but beautiful. On this system it became just too stormy and depressing.

Chambers Dictionary defines synergy as "combined or co-ordinated action". Regrettably, the Trichord/Audiolab/Mission system is found wanting in the synergy department. There was a lack of energy to the sound and a drabness that one would not expect from either the components or a system at this price. As this drabness is not a function of any of the components, the fault must lie in the combination.

Admittedly, I did not have every cable, table, stand and tweak on hand, but I believe that the flaw lies in the Trichord *Genesis*/Audiolab 8000Q interface. The two simply do not match as well as we'd hoped. Swapping the Audiolab for a Pioneer A-300R *Precision* (see page 93) was a step in the right direction. Exchanging the *Genesis* for the Sony CD-PXE300 also moved the system in a more musical direction. Audiolab's own CD players would probably have a beneficial effect, too. ▲

### Conclusion

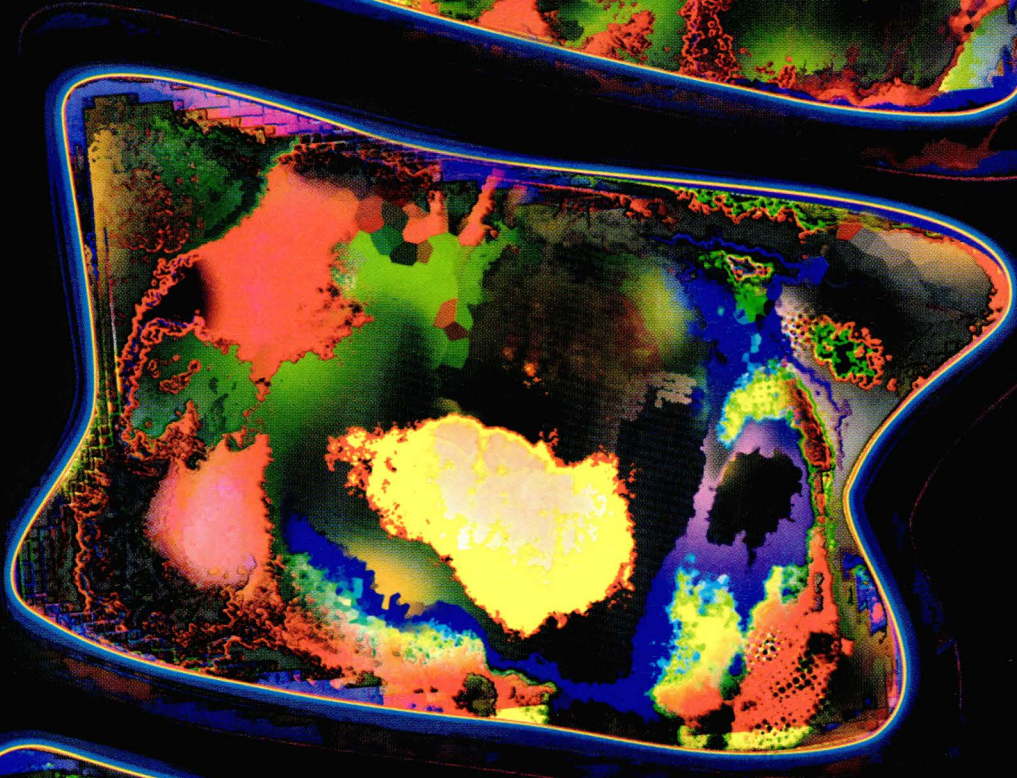
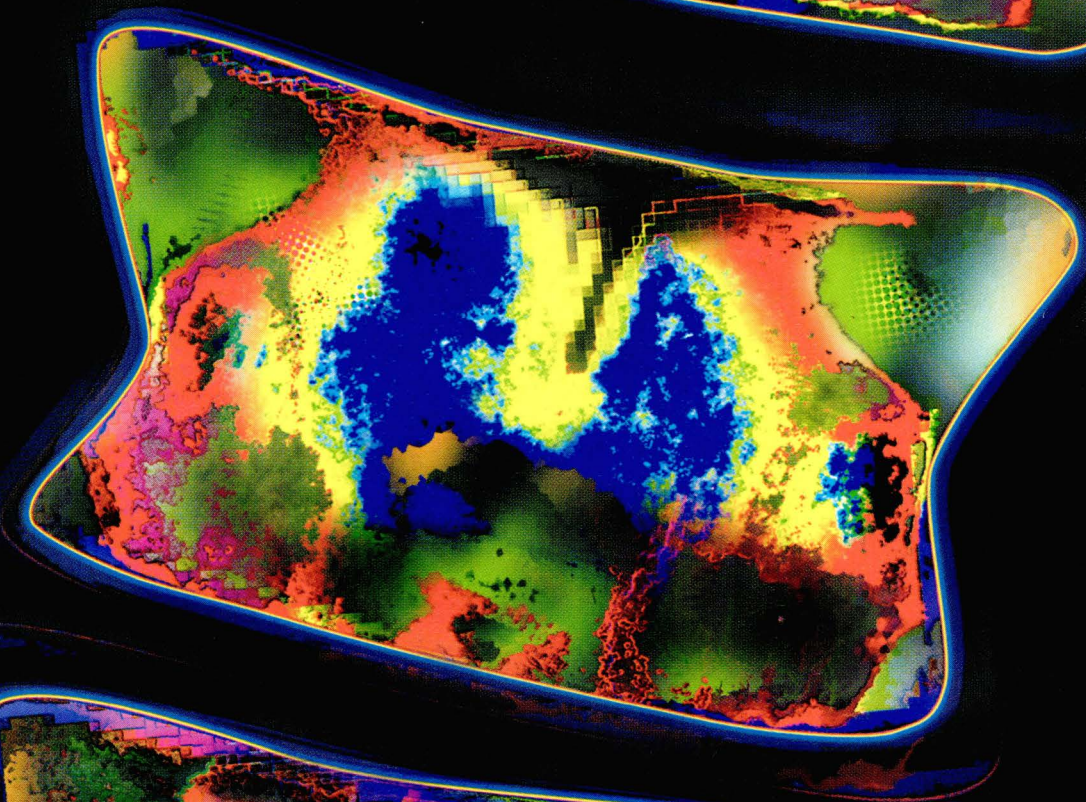
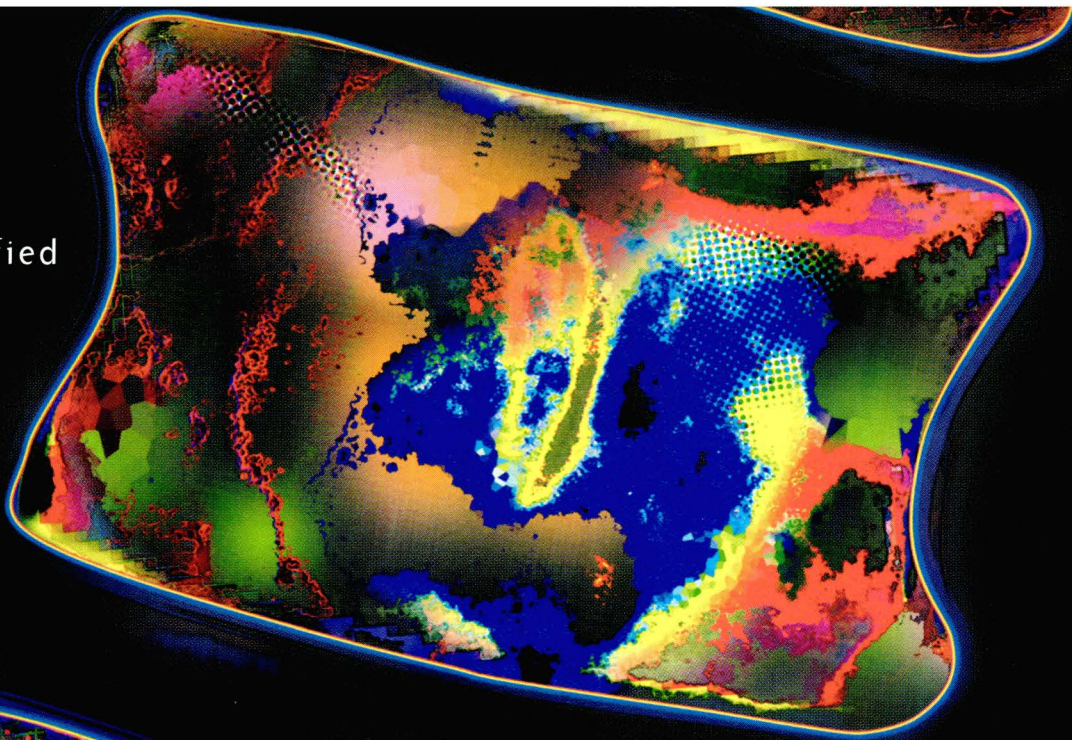
Was the cheaper system better than the more expensive one? Not at all. Despite my misgivings over the blend of components in the up-market system, its overall sound has considerably more bass, dynamic range and openness than the budget combination. In every respect, System B outperformed System A, despite the obvious synergy apparent in the latter.

Compared to a more carefully selected system at its price, however, System B lacks performance. The moral of the story is: at prices ordinary mortals can afford, components that are individually acclaimed do not automatically make a superb system. System matching is the key to hi-fi success — don't let anyone tell you otherwise!

### Manufacturer Contacts

Atacama (Sambell)	(01455) 283251
Audiolab	(01480) 415600
Base (Audiophile Furniture)	(01342) 826262
Jamo	(01327) 301300
Mission	(01480) 451777
NAD	(0181) 343 3240
Sony	(0181) 784 1144
SoundBytes	(0141) 339 7595
Target	(01582) 401244
Townshend International	(0181) 979 2155
Trichord	(01684) 573524

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# Ear Waxings

Jason Kennedy listens with fresh ears to CDs, and spends more time with Rega's new Planet CD player.

**T**he debate is officially over: turntables versus CD players, vinyl versus polycarbonate. It occurred to me that the difference between decent CD players and record players is now no greater than that of the software that's played on them. Or rather, that software differences are greater than hardware ones, all other things being approximately equal. The main reason why some disagree with this statement is that some high-end systems are geared for one medium rather than the other.

There are well-established medium- to high-end marques, whose product ranges are designed with the intent of getting the best out of vinyl. They have believed until recently that this was the highest-fidelity medium available. But audio equipment designers have increasingly come to appreciate that CD needs to become a high-fidelity medium and, as a result, have designed not only far better CD players but more importantly, amplification and loudspeakers that make the most of the signal that comes out of them.

This is a state of affairs that those producing for the mass market have appreciated for years, but they are restrained by fairly severe budgetary constraints. The high end, in the UK at least, has held on to vinyl as the ultimate medium and, therefore, many audio maniacs have yet to discover the potential of CD. I know I was one of them. Until only three or four years ago, I begrudged buying CDs, and spent what must have amounted to weeks every year searching out hot wax. I still do, but that's my problem, and I don't mind buying CDs so long as I don't have to pay chain-store prices.

However, to retrieve the point: if you still can't get on with CD, then something's wrong with your CD player or your system. Which is pretty hard to take if your LPs sound superb, but it's easy to assemble a system in which music takes precedence rather than the medium it's inscribed on, and you won't have to harangue your local record dealer to get the obscure vinyl version of an album that he claims doesn't exist, but some journalist has wittered on about.

The system that inspired me to arrive at this point was not my own, although mine

gives both mediums an equal chance. It was, in fact, Kevin "Definitive Audio" Scott's relatively down-to-earth outfit, which is fronted by a Systemdek 2X2 turntable with an Ortofon MC7500 cartridge (a steal at £2,000) mounted in a Rega RB300 arm. Then there's my Acoustic Precision-based, Black-Box-mains-filtered Trichord Revelation (which finally saw off the Wadia 16, which been slaying all pretenders for at least two years); Audio Innovations' P1/L1/series 700 amps; and the all-new, £1,300, Living Voice Auditorium floor-standing speakers (more on these next

featuring cut-outs where the material bulges through to ensure that operating the parallelogram lid doesn't move the player. Beware of lifting it off of glass shelves, though, as it'll hold onto the shelf — for a while.

This £398 remote-free machine (a handset costs £25) is built into Rega's customary cast alloy casework with a top-loading disc bay. The clamping puck is built into the lid to minimise hassle and spins above the lid as well, which is quite appealing.

Sonically the Planet pulls off that favourite Rega trick of distracting you with the music. It emphasises the nature of recordings above its own subtle character. It was difficult to get a grip on, so engrossed did I get in various discs. Its only distinct characteristic is slight glare, which shows up only after extensive high-level listening, and is something I am particularly sensitive to.

Otherwise, its chameleon-like ability to make recordings sound so distinctive, by reproducing instruments and voices in such a convincing manner, is quite beguiling. I even started getting into some stark classical discs, which I'd bought because they're culturally edifying if not aesthetically very approachable. These included Bartok, Shostakovich and Panufnik, with the latter's *Sinfonia Concertante* proving remarkably engaging. At times

I thought the Planet wasn't bringing out low-level detail as well as a Trichord *Genesis* for instance, but then again, recordings showed so much character and variety that it may have been the Planet's subtle eagerness pushing the more salient musical details to the fore. It's a bit of a taste thing — I prefer a relaxed balance, but the likes of Paul Messenger, for instance, go for the Formula One-style, warts-and-all ride that, say, a Naim CDS provides, and this is closer to that vein.

In much the same fashion as the Planar 9 turntable, the Planet is a hi-fi component for music lovers, not hi-fi buffs. Those of you looking to wring every last ounce of detail from the disc should look to the other players mentioned on this page, while those of you who just want to dig it — and that should be all of us, I guess — could do worse than digging up a Planet. ▲



month). This balanced and dynamic system kept us entertained all evening, despite better speakers being on hand for comparison.

### Rega In Orbit

If the CD player pic on this page looks familiar, it's because I wrote about the new Rega Planet CD player in October's issue. Now the players are rolling off the production line, I managed to intercept one for more thorough listening. The finished unit differs from the early version in its footwear, which is now fashionably chunky. A sorbothane-esque blob is held between two cups, the lower one

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# The Jimmy Hughes Experience

**Jimmy Hughes** graciously invites us into his parlour, and reveals the secrets of his glorious-sounding hi-fi system.

**M**any recent visitors have been unusually impressed with the sound of my system. Many are surprised at the hotch-potch of high-end and budget items I use, not to mention the way it's put together. Yet those who scoff at my less mainstream ideas are converted once the music starts. I hope I've always had a good sound, but lately it's been a bit special. The reason for mentioning this is to highlight some of the unusual things that have helped to create the effect.

Quite a few people say I get the sort of sound they've always wanted, yet by breaking only a few rules. Many audiophiles believe that Simple Is Best, and avoid having unnecessary things in the signal path. The idea is to maintain the purity of the signal and reduce unnecessary degradation. Yet my current set-up is successful because I haven't taken this approach. Introducing 'unnecessary' items at key points in the chain has helped create a balanced, humanised sound. Experts may exclaim in horror at some of the 'extras' I've introduced, but they work. For those prepared to accept that Less is not always More, here's a quick guide.

## Out Come The Tweaks

For starters, I use two line matching transformers: one between DAC and amp, the other between speakers and amp. A Trichord-modified Pioneer PD 75 CD player acts as a transport and feeds a Cambridge DAC Magic fed via its balanced outputs into a Luxman transformer. The balanced outputs give a three-dB increase in gain, superior dynamics and drive, plus a cleaner sound. The signal is fed to a Musical Fidelity X10-D valve line stage and then to a Marantz PM 54SE integrated amplifier. I'm often asked why I use a cheap amp — well, it seems to work, and I'm short of cash. I love the PM 54SE's lively tactile sound; it's also bomb-proof and utterly consistent in everyday use. It may not have the mellifluous subtlety of a triode valve amp, but the way it performs in my system you could think otherwise.

The PM 54SE drives Impulse H1 horn speakers via another transformer marketed



**Jimmy's reverse-facing speakers and Marantz amp.**

in the mid '80s under the Volte Face marque. It has spent nearly a decade in my basement, but I recently resurrected it and was stunned by the results. How ironic to use this device with a transistor amplifier! In the valve era designers dreamt of ditching the output transformer and direct coupling the speakers. Now, here I am in the '90s reintroducing a variant of it. Purists will say it's madness, and all it does is add phase shift, coloration, and some bandwidth limiting. But it isolates the amp from the speakers' reactive load while reducing the effects of back-EMF from the drive units. Anachronistic or not, it makes music more tangible and realistic, and improves listenability and clarity. People say they like my system because it sounds cohesive and integrated; if so, the pivotal role of the Volte Face transformer cannot be exaggerated. Without it I could not get away with using such a cheap amp.

I've written about the way I place my speakers before, turning them around so they fire away from the listening seat towards the wall. The aim is to increase overall sound

coherence so you hear a totally homogeneous soundstage rather than individual drive units trying to sound as one. Such seamless integration may come only at the expense of clarity, yet the results are surprisingly lucid and tactile with excellent depth. Definition is not impaired; indeed clarity is better because the ear can make sense of complex music more readily.

Having listened to my speakers like this for over four years, I can't envisage returning to a conventional arrangement again. I can't see any sonic advantage for doing so, but can think of many drawbacks that make it hard to obtain a clean, trouble-free, natural sound. My system is hardly the best money can buy, yet musically it would be hard to improve. Some people think good sound is only about buying expensive components, as if a famous label guaranteed success. If you gave me a blank cheque to buy the finest hi-fi available, I'm not sure I could get better sound than I currently enjoy, if at the same time I couldn't use my transformers and place the speakers back-to-front.

## Battling On

Sometimes you have to lose a battle to win the war. If I remove the transformers, or take out the X10-D, the sound is more forward and perhaps a shade more energetic and lively. But it's also 'noisier' during climaxes, less refined, and musically not so easy to assimilate. You're suddenly more aware of what's wrong with a recording than what's right with it. But much depends on your aim when putting together a hi-fi system, and also on what you think constitutes a good sound.

To me, a good system is one that makes music enjoyable and accessible so that one's attention is held by the music and performance, not the equipment. Doubtless many would subscribe to such a view; we all say the music comes first. Yet how often does the reality match the rhetoric? Isn't a question of buying better products so much as learning how to get the best out of what we've got. Have you noticed how good reproduced sound often bears scant relation to the cost and quality standard of the equipment being used? It's not what you use, it's the way that you use it that makes the difference! ▲

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# Paul Miller's Oasis of Sanity

Sometimes the best theories fall flat on their faces in practice. Take the splitting of DACs from CD transports, for example. **Paul Miller** looks at a good idea gone bad.

**I**'ve heard it said that: "A good big one is always better than a good little one", at least as far as loudspeakers are concerned. Well, here's another hi-fi adage for you to ponder over: "A good one-box is typically better than a good two-box." What am I referring to? CD players, of course, and the realisation that separate CD transport/DAC combinations, however sophisticated their lineage, are often outperformed by more modest integrated players.

Following the launch of CD in 1982, all players were fully integrated affairs with the transport mechanism, decoder, oversampling filter, DAC and analogue filtering all housed in a single case. Indeed, modern integrated CD players are composed of the very same building blocks. However, drawing upon the analogy of separate pre/power amplifiers, the idea of splitting a CD player into two boxes gained greater acceptance in the late 1980s.

The advantages seemed clear. After all, the laser transport section with its various motor functions, servo controllers, RF and signal processors can create an electrically noisy environment which, directly or indirectly, interferes with the final and very delicate step of digital-to-analogue conversion. Any disruption here, particularly in the form of digital jitter, will exact some sonic penalty. Hence the evolution of the separate CD transport and outboard DAC.

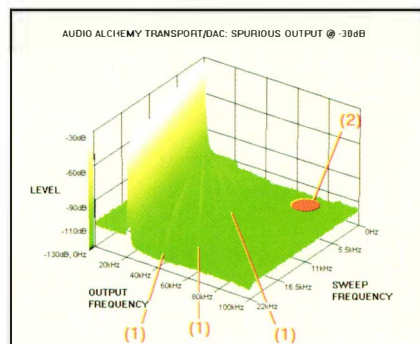
Great idea, in theory. In practice, however, the performance of separate CD transport/DAC combinations is often compromised by the implementation of the interface — the digital umbilical link — that joins them. This is known as the S/PDIF (Sony/Philips Digital Interface Format) connection, visible as either a coaxial or optical socket on both the CD transport and outboard DAC.

Whether you choose to employ the electrical/coaxial or optical link, the format of the data that passes across remains the same. Naturally, this additional S/PDIF link is not required within the confines of a single, integrated player. Here communication between individual digital chips is typically accomplished using another data format called I2S, or Inter-IC Sound.

The two-box option may well reduce interference and digital jitter by separating the two 'halves' of a conventional CD player. Nevertheless, the unbalanced 75Ohm S/PDIF link requires the system clock to be regenerated after transmission, via one or more phase-locked loops within the outboard DAC. Temporarily 'losing' grip of the clock in this fashion can produce more disruption (i.e. digital jitter) than might otherwise have been suffered by a comparable one-box solution, where the data is regulated by (ideally) a single master clock.

Several manufacturers have attempted to 'patch-up' the inadequacies of the S/PDIF link by employing a clock-locking arrangement. A synchronising feed is returned to the transport from a master clock situated very close to the D/A converter itself. Nevertheless, it's interesting to note that the lowest jitter levels on record are held by integrated players, not multi-box combinations. It seems that jitter, like rain in sports convertibles, always finds a way through.

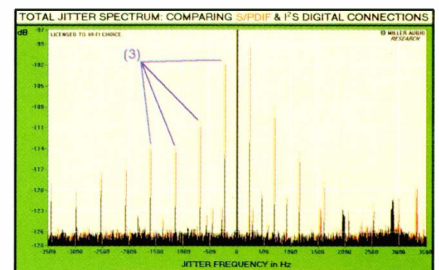
So why not adopt another, albeit non-standard, digital interface format? That's certainly the view of US company Audio Alchemy whose CD transports and DACs are equipped with both S/PDIF and, in a somewhat radical move, I2S digital links to bridge the digital divide.




**N**aturally, the proof of Audio Alchemy's departure from both the letter and spirit of IEC958 (which defines the digital audio interface standard for domestic gear) is in the listening. Sure enough, the combinations I've auditioned invariably sound more open, transparent and fundamentally more compelling when connected via their I2S link in

place of S/PDIF. And yet there's no obvious *measurable* difference in harmonic distortion, S/N, low-level linearity or frequency response between I2S and S/PDIF.

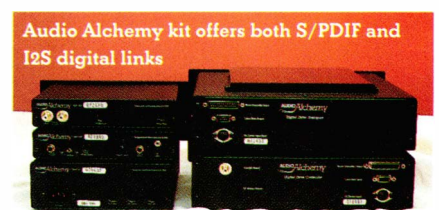
The 3D plot below left, for example, demonstrates the spray of harmonic distortions (1) and very low levels of ultrasonic noise (2) that are part and parcel of the 20-bit converters used by Audio Alchemy in one of its outboard DACs. But even this plot remains quite unchanged whether the S/PDIF or I2S links are chosen.



**T**he difference in sound quality is attributable to another form of distortion caused, as shown above, by our old enemy jitter (3). This is massively reduced using the I2S connection (black trace). But why? Because the 'Inter-IC Sound' is a serial/parallel communications format that comprises L/R serial data, L/R clock, bit clock, master clock and a de-emphasis flag as five separate lines. Importantly, all five of these data lines are communicated in parallel without losing the system clock in the manner of S/PDIF.

The result is a reduction in jitter across the interface to just 28 per cent of that incurred by S/PDIF. It's neat, it works but, until other manufacturers break with tradition, it's sadly incompatible with every other mainstream CD transport and DAC available at your local hi-fi emporium. Ho hum... 

Do you have a query for the Oasis? Contact Paul Miller direct via E-mail on [100576.3021@compuserve.com](mailto:100576.3021@compuserve.com)



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1936  
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# Personal Messages

Paul Messenger is inspired by the new Mission *nxt* technology, and has some fun with the Nordost cable lads.

Last month (issue 160, p21), Alvin Gold described the new *nxt* panel speaker technology from Mission's research wing, Verity Labs. He did a fine job explaining how this actually worked, but a single page didn't give much opportunity to explore the implications.

The speaker's multi-mode resonant panels operate very differently from our conventional moving-diaphragm speakers in all sorts of ways. One distinction is that an *nxt* panel operates as a diffuse, distributed source, whereas most speakers tend to behave as a point source. This suggests that *nxt* is unlikely to be a significant threat to existing stereo music speakers. Many audiophiles give a high priority to stereo-image precision, while the diffuse *nxt* source would seem likely to lead to weak stereo focus and image imprecision.

However, what might prove to be a drawback from a stereophonic hi-fi perspective could turn out to be a major advantage for extra speakers used in home cinema — surround and centre-front dialogue.

A diffuse sound source is exactly what is wanted for the surround speakers of a Dolby Pro-Logic system. It's the reason why the more upmarket examples (and the Home THX specification) opt for elaborate dipole configurations, so that most of the sound reaches the listeners after becoming 'diffused' by wall or ceiling reflections. Furthermore, the fact that the *nxt* panels deliver more even loudness should mean that surround sound effects are distributed much more evenly than with conventional speakers.

The potential of *nxt* as a dialogue speaker is even more intriguing, and could bring a real boost to the through-room video projector approach. Figuring out how to put the speaker and screen in the same place is a problem that's taxed real and home cinema for years. With *nxt* you use the speaker panel as the screen. The movement of the panel is considered too small to interfere with picture reproduction, while the 'even loudness'

distribution could provide a further bonus for large auditoria.

But that's not the best bit. Because the sound comes diffusely from the whole panel/screen, the ear/brain will accept any point on the screen as the origin. Allegedly, when the eyes see someone's lips moving, the ear/brain follows their lead, providing a psycho-acoustic stereophonic separation of voices across the screen. Like I said, intriguing.

All this, of course, is speculative at this early stage of *nxt* development. The new technology offers some exciting home

consistent, and happens to suit my system and personal preferences rather well. However, it does lack a certain audiophile credibility, so I was easily persuaded when the guys from Nordost (distributed by QLN in the UK) offered to come down and play me a few samples from their extensive range.

It was a very convincing demo. We started off with the cheapest, the £3.25/m polythene-skinned *Octavia*, which sounded decent enough for a low-cost cable, then we worked our way up, via the popular *Flatline* variations, the upmarket *Blue Heaven* and *Red Dawn*, to the £3.25/m *SPM*.

What impressed me was the coherence of the range as a whole. There was a strong family resemblance throughout, but each specific step up the ladder brought a definite improvement in sweetness, tidiness, fine detailing and perceived bandwidth. By the time we'd got up to the *SPM*, I was getting hooked, and having to return to my normal cable was most unwelcome.

A few weeks later, I managed to get hold of some more *SPM* for a longer period, and my respect for it has continued to grow. It's a particularly good match for my wall-mount Tannoy 15-inch dual-

concentrics. It tightens and subjectively increases their exceptional bass extension, sweetening the mid/top and improving focus.

With my 'other' reference point, the Rehdeko 175s, things are less clear cut. I bought these for their dramatic speed and dynamics, and while the *SPM* tamed some of their edgy quality and delivered exceptional stereo precision, along with a cleaner and better controlled top end, I did miss some of the drive and urgency I get with *NACA5*.

Is there such a thing as a perfect cable? No more than there is a perfect speaker, I guess. There's no question *SPM* is a very fine cable (it had better be at the price), but I still find my ideal recipe wants to blend some characteristics of one with some of the other, rather the way I do when swapping between the above 'reference point' loudspeakers. ▲



cinema sound possibilities, but compensating disadvantages are probably lying dormant. The panels may need some extra help in the bass region, for example, while fundamental qualitative differences might make it difficult to combine *nxt* and conventional speakers in the same system. One thing's for sure: it's going to be interesting finding out.

### The Uncolor Purple...

I'm not a great one for fiddling around with endless combinations of interconnect and speaker cables. Naim users rarely are. The company's own inexpensive leads suit its electronic components, while DIN socketry further discourages experimentation. Naim's *NACA5* speaker cable isn't the last word in sweetness or delicacy, or the most neutral or transparent-sounding around, but it is cheap,

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# Write on!

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## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Music was my first love

Congratulations to the Editor for his revolutionary and quite outrageous concept that the prime purpose of owning a hi-fi system is the enjoyment of recorded music.

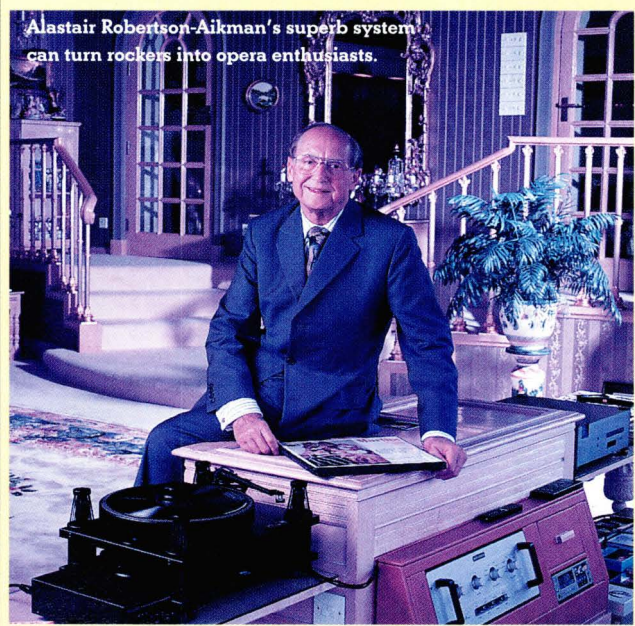
This concept leads to the simplest and best guide to buying hi-fi. Find a dealer (or several dealers if you wish) with a decent range of equipment, discuss your basic requirements such as budget, room, etc, and let the dealer suggest a few systems to you. Then listen to a wide selection of music, including some that is not to your usual taste. The system that you react to most positively, with a little fine tuning, will be the best system for you.

I agree with the Editor's point that good hi-fi takes the effort out of listening to recorded music (*Editor's Notebook*, issue 160). I would go further and say that the quality of the 'good' system needs to improve as the listener becomes more musically sophisticated. These improvements need to be musical rather than hi-fi in nature, thus enabling the listener to gain greater appreciation of musical subtleties.

Paul Messenger's feature about the Music Room of SME founder Alastair Robertson-Aikman ('SME As It Ever Was', issue 159) is a case in point. After exposure to unfamiliar, and by inference previously unliked music on that superb system, Paul admits to a 'much greater appreciation of the operatic tradition'. As a frequent visitor to Steyning, I must admit to my own interest in opera being awakened by very similar experiences.

Without an appreciation of the music, hi-fi can easily be just another noise.

D Wiley, *The Sound Organisation*, London SE1



Alastair Robertson-Aikman's superb system can turn rockers into opera enthusiasts.

### Magnetic polls

I must disagree with Alvin Gold in his reply to the query raised in the *Help!* column of the November issue (159), under the heading 'Magnetic attraction'.

Far from discouraging the use of a mains-driven, wand-type demagnetiser, Nakamichi actually recommends its use. My Nakamichi cassette deck's manual states under its Maintenance sub-heading, "about once every 50 hours of use, the heads and capstan should be demagnetised with the [Nakamichi] DM-10 demagnetiser or any other properly-designed wand-type demagnetiser. Otherwise, residual magnetism can induce noise and degrade high-frequency response."

J Towers, *London SE12*

*Stan Vincent replies... If in any doubt as to the feasibility of demagnetising your own cassette deck, check with the manufacturer or your local dealer before taking any action.*

### Clash of the Titans

May I suggest that you schedule a review of CD players in the £800-£1,000 range, which have been spared the rigors (embarrassment?) of a truly critical comparative testing thus far. Within that narrow price band, those included will be competing within their league; as in boxing, bouts should be in the same division and a few pounds plus or minus can mean a lot. Besides, wouldn't you agree that mismatches are often boring even if the probability of upsets is high?!

Reading about hi-fi gear slugging it out gives me a tremendous kick, and I derive

great satisfaction from listening, in my mind's ear, to the emergent champions.

*Celso U Bautista, Philippines*

*Stan Vincent replies... You should find our next issue pretty interesting, Mr Bautista, as we have planned a test of 20 players, which is intended once and all to find out whether budget CD players can out-gun more upmarket units on a 'sound-per-pound' basis. I agree that measured performances can only be compared between specimens of similar price, which is why we have introduced a new group average system in our group tests. However I believe that sound is an absolute quantity, and we rely on our blind tests to determine — without prejudice — whether a less expensive product sounds better than a more expensive competitor.*

## Crumbs!



This is our stylish *Hi-Fi Choice* garment, which will be awarded to the writer of the most interesting letter every month. Available only in capacious, flattering, XL size.

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"We reserve the right to edit all  
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Nottingham Analogue's Spacedeck: cheap at half the price!



◀ **Ground Control to Major Tom**

I write to you from the drowning pit of my deep lament; my soul is tortured. Was there really an error in the November

1996 issue? I fear the prices quoted for the Nottingham Analogue *Spacedeck* and arm to be those of a previous era. On the company's April price-list I see the *Spacedeck* at £750 and the arm at £450. This pushes your Best Buy in a sub-£1,200 test over the ceiling price of your review. I feel betrayed; yet I am the betrayer, for such a great publica-

tion deserves not this pathetic quibbling from one barely fit to bathe in the phlegm from the *Hi-Fi Choice* spittoon.  
*Brett Lohn, Epsom, Surrey*

*Stan Vincent replies... Stop gibbering and get a grip, man! You are correct, and we regret, that the total cost of said turntable package (as reviewed in issue 159) is £1,425, not £1,125. Price increase notwithstanding, we still consider it a Best Buy.*

**Heresy? Schmeresy!**

In my opinion, Jimmy Hughes is misleading your readers with his absurd, inaccurate comments on the Musical Fidelity X10-D (*The Jimmy Hughes Experience*, issue 159).

This gadget destroys the accurate crispness of the sound, and I reckon it's a waste of money. To get rid

of CD harshness you should use a better CD player, pre/power amp, and most importantly of all, try to buy CDs that have been well recorded.  
*P Stanley, Potters Bar*

*Jimmy Hughes replies... I love the sound of the X10-D, and wouldn't be without it. Now mine's been switched on for several months, it's sounding better than ever, and far from dulling the sound, it actually helps improve focus and detail. However, I am sorry you wasted your money — always listen before you buy.*

**Graphic sects**

While I share a loathing of 'fiddlers' with Ray Fowler (*Write On!*, issue 159), I must disagree with his views concerning graphic equalisers for one major reason.

I suffer from industrial deafness which has selectively depleted my hearing in a relatively small band of frequen-

A controversial widget: Musical Fidelity's X10-D CD enhancer.



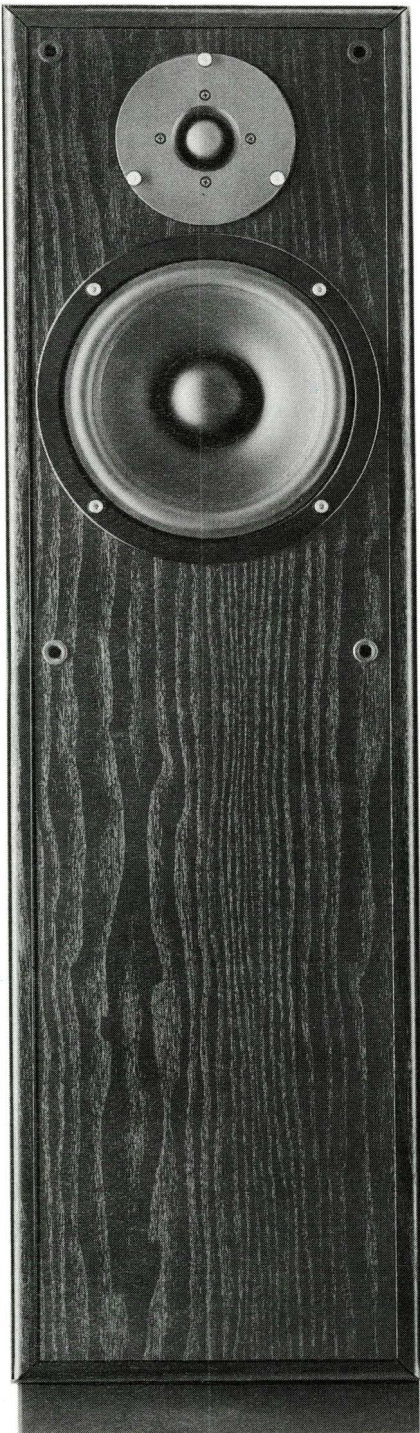


WHAT HI-FI?



# Déjà vu.

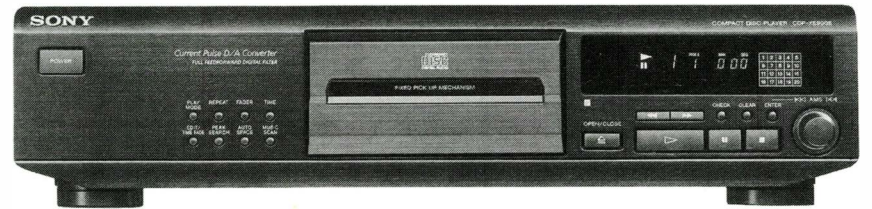
Last year we became the first ever manufacturer to gain five stars for five separates. This year we've done it again. We're speechless. We'll leave it to "WHAT HI-FI" to say a few words.



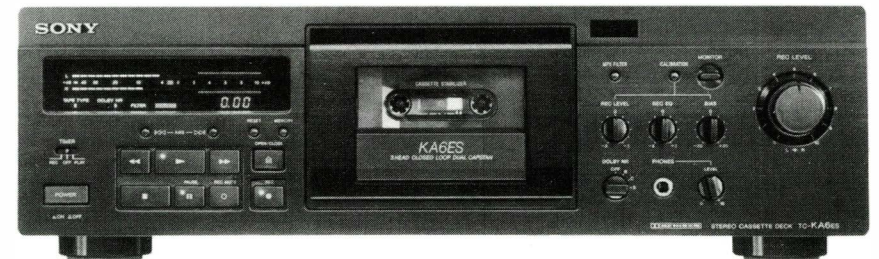
TA-F448E AMPLIFIER. "...sounds clean and totally in control. This amp is good – very good!" (JULY'96)



MDS-JA3ES MINIDISC SYSTEM. "The Sony makes recordings virtually indistinguishable from the original" (DEC'95)



CDP-XE 900E CD PLAYER. "...feels built to last, looks smart and sounds very classy: it deserves to do well!" (AUG'96)



TC-KA6ES TAPE DECK. "...a very superior piece of machinery. Superbly built, this deck mixes luxury and functionality." (JUNE'96)

SSI76EB SPEAKERS. "...their space, presence and rich authority make for a wholly satisfying listen." (SEPT'96)

# SONY

\*Sony is a trademark of the Sony Corporation, Japan.



The Cloth-Eared Brigade proves that eclecticism rules — maaan.

cies. I can — and do — compensate for this using a graphic. Adrian Tuck, via the Internet

### Personal hygiene

Regarding your article on the newly-established Aiwa customer help-line (*Update*, issue 159): I recently purchased a top-of-the-line, £180 Aiwa HS-RX758 personal radio/cassette-player. Despite searching through the instruction leaflet and product catalogue, I could find no reference to the frequency response of the cassette deck, however after assurances from my retailer I duly made the purchase.

After a short period of pleasurable use, I tried out a pair of Sony headphones that provided a clearer, brighter sound, but lacked the remote control facility of the Aiwa 'phones. My curiosity was aroused by this discovery. Were the supplied headphones mismatched? I rang the newly-announced help-line, posed my first question — what is the frequency response of the cassette deck? — and was promptly referred to the technical department.

Once speaking to someone in 'the know', I was surprised to be told that the frequency response of playback-only

decks was not relevant. An offer was made to contact Japan for the required figures; a weekend elapsed, I made another call which produced the response that this information was not in existence. I was too stunned to continue with the rest of my questions.

Have I failed to grasp the significance of this simple measure of audio equipment? Are all other manufacturers who supply this information pulling the wool over our eyes? Has anyone else used the Aiwa help-line successfully?

S D Foulkes, Keighley, West Yorks.

Stan Vincent replies... I spoke to Mark Brindley, Product Manager at Aiwa, who was concerned to hear of the problems you had experienced. He confirmed that it is not Aiwa policy to withhold information of the nature you sought; rather it appears a simple breakdown in communication has been to blame. However, I suspect that even if you had the frequency responses at your fingertips, they would not shed light on your experience with the Sony headphones. All mechanical transducers (like headphones and loudspeakers) have differ-

ent tonal characteristics, and the difference you heard was not due to any mismatch, but merely a different flavour of presentation. My advice? Don't worry about the specs; just enjoy your music!

### The pierced-ear brigade

How sad to see musical snobbery raising its ugly head in your fine publication (K G Leigh's 'Cloth-Eared Brigade', *Write On!*, issue 160). Although I am only a recent convert to your magazine, I have noticed that you use a wide variety of music in your equipment tests, as sensible reviewers should.

Believe it or not, Mr Leigh, people use their hi-fi systems to play music other than classical. Ours gets used for rock, jazz, classical, and anything else that sounds good or interesting. If this shocks you I suggest you return to your copy of the *Gramophone*, and leave *Hi-Fi Choice* to cater for those of us who have open ears (and minds!).

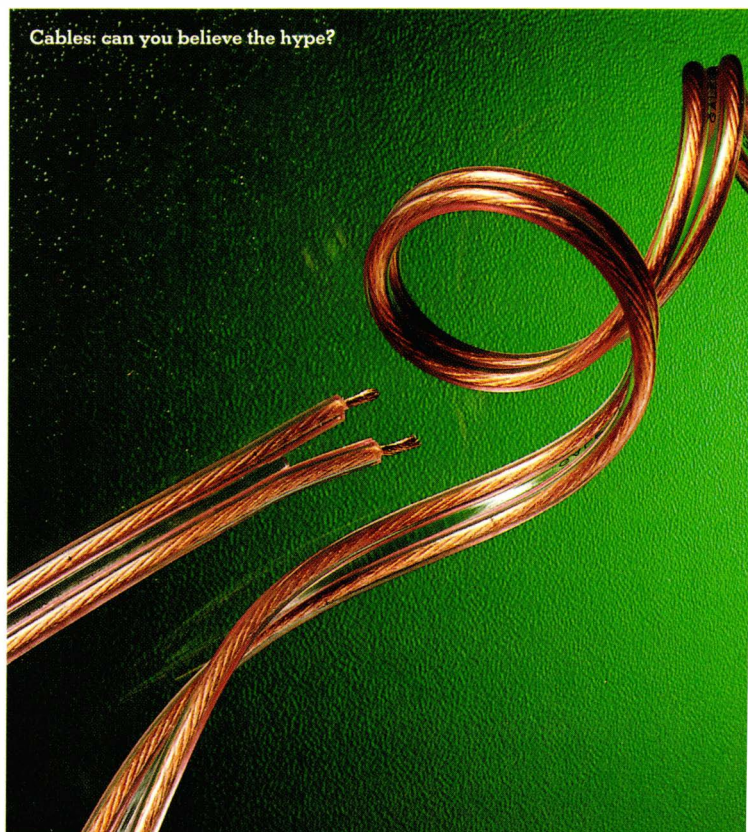
S & K Grantham, Maidenhead, Berks.

### Crossed wires

I am currently studying Electrical Engineering and Electronics. For my final year

project, I am investigating loudspeaker cables to find out if more expensive cables offer a significant improvement in sound quality. After reading the article in the September edition of *Hi-Fi Choice* on budget loudspeaker cables, I would be interested to find out how you conducted the lab tests on the various cables. Do you believe that spending extra money on 'better' cables is worth it for the difference in sound quality, or is it just 'hype' about big thick cables giving a marked improvement in performance? John Sharratt, via the Internet

Paul Miller replies... The lab tests performed on our group of budget loudspeaker cables are all standard procedures, including series inductance, resistance and parallel capacitance which are normalised for a five-metre length. Other parameters, such as the power loss, damping factor and series bandpass are derived from the LCR characteristics. As a rule of thumb, cables that are densely-stranded or otherwise complex in construction are often more 'manipulative' in their subjective performance. Simple cable designs usually sound all the more neutral and transparent. ▲



Cables: can you believe the hype?



It's bigger than anyone thought it would be.



WHAT HI-FI?

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SONY

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The logo for Cyrus, featuring the word 'CYRUS' in a stylized, bold, sans-serif font. The 'Y' and 'R' have a distinctive double-line or shadow effect.

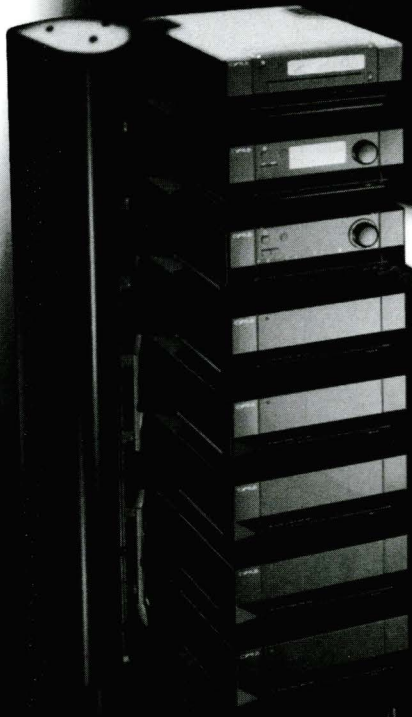
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# Powerful Urge

Alan Sircom investigates the latest amplificatory offerings from Meridian.

**N**ow best known for its masterful digital audio and video products, Meridian once stood for state-of-the-art amplifiers. Back in the '80s, the modular *100 Series* of slimline amplifiers were considered by many to be the best at the time — so good that second-hand examples are rare.

With Meridian's investment in CD players, it's not surprising that the company's amplifiers were neglected. There were exceptions, like the *605* monoblok, but since the days of the *100 Series*, Meridian has been famed for its CD players — until now.

The new £1,295 *502 Analogue Controller* (or preamp for the hard-of-thinking) and £1,400 *557* stereo power amp have put Meridian's amps back in the same league as its digital products. They retain that high-tech appeal, yet have the sonics of some of the best analogue electronics around — at a sensible price.

Both products are in typical Meridian *500 Series* livery, albeit steroid-enhanced when it comes to the *557* power amplifier. The *502 Analogue Controller* has as much technology as a series of *Tomorrow's World*. Basically, it has four single-ended (phono-plug) and three balanced line inputs, two pairs of single-ended tape outputs and a balanced and single-ended main output. The first line input can be fitted with the 'reference' *RIAA* phono equaliser (not available at the time of writing).

But Meridian does not stop there. Each input can be user-configured to be either a line or tape input. These can then be assigned labels, the gain of each input can be equalised, and — if needed — the source assigned to the correct address. It is also possible to use Meridian's own communication link for *500 Series* CD players or tuners — earlier Meridian comms settings will be accommodated. The 200 Watt *557* can even be adjusted for bridged mode operation. Fortunately,



once set up, the *502/557* is remarkably user-friendly, especially if used with the £70 *Meridian System Remote*.

There is a school of audio sadism that believes the amount of difficulty encountered in day-to-day operation is in direct proportion to sound quality. These people know that the *502/557* combination is a work of the Devil, since it combines remarkable ease of use with the sort of sound quality that stands head and shoulders above its price rivals — and beyond.

What makes it so good? Having 200 Watts or more on tap is a blessing when driving most loudspeakers, yet these Watts are not delivered with the sort of sluggishness often associated with big power. Likewise, the preamplifier — given a day or more of running in — has a remarkably fast and tidy persona that holds on to any style of music like a Terrier.

It's far more transparent than you'd expect at the price, especially given the *557's* sheer output. It will not be as transparent as the best, but for that last degree of openness, you need considerable amounts of moolah. That aside, it has almost everything you'd want from a good amplifier, including near-holographic imaging and first-rate depth, an excellent sense

of rhythm, responsive dynamics and detail that makes you feel you are in the studio — when partnered with sympathetic ancillaries.

Most of all, there is flexibility in the sound itself. It retains a Levinson-like darkness throughout, but sounds different if used in balanced or single-ended mode. I preferred the more even-handed sound in balanced mode from my *508.20* CD player to the *557*, using the excellent (but day-glo green) £130 Cable Talk *Broadcast 2* XLR cables, but single-ended had a rhythmic sound that was alluring.

I will hold on to this pre/power combination. It's the perfect benchmark: open enough to reveal what sources are doing, powerful enough to drive almost any speaker, yet not so expensive that only the elite few can afford it. Of course better amplifiers exist, but they are either more expensive, more tweaky or less freely available. The *502/557* sounds fantastic and enjoyable, whatever I play on it. At any price, this would be a good amplifier combination, but at this price, it is a true bargain. ▲

Meridian Audio Ltd, Stonehill, Stukeley Meadows, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED.

☎ (01480) 434334

Meridian's dynamic duo: the *502 Analogue Controller* (£1,295) is on the right; the *557* power amp (£1,400) is on the left.

# Double act

Jason Kennedy checks out the new Wilson benesch A.C.T. 1 speakers, and discovers a new rival to the high-end stalwarts.

**W**ilson benesch was not started by Mr Wilson and Mr Benesch, but by the men who married Miss Wilson and Miss Benesch respectively. The fellas are Craig Milnes and Andrew Scholey, and they have something of an obsession with applying high technology to hi-fi equipment. The material that distinguishes their creations is carbon fibre, the type used to make Formula One racing car bodies, and a material that is extremely light and very stiff. Stiffness at audio frequencies is worthwhile in hi-fi kit, but it's not until you realise that high masses store energy before randomly releasing it, that the appeal of lightness is realised. Wilson benesch has used carbon fibre in a turntable sub-chassis, a tonearm tube and head-shell, and to make the bodies for its cartridges. It has also used it to great effect in the A.C.T. 1 loudspeaker that you see across the page.

The A.C.T. 1 is an extremely elegant and remarkably compact loudspeaker design; curved sides make it appear smaller than it is. In fact it stands over a metre tall and weighs in at 45 kilos — the fibre is only used for the curved side panels that give the A.C.T. 1 a cross-section like the prow of a boat. The carbon fibre in the case of the A.C.T. 1 is used to laminate a phenolic resin honeycomb, forming a

stiff panel further strengthened by its curvature. The front baffle is medite with solid wood uprights either side — it would have been more expensive and of little advantage to have used carbon fibre on this flat face. But extra stiffness is gained by using an aluminium plate on the part of the baffle that supports the drive units.

The 40-litre cabinet is internally braced and lightly damped with foam, containing two independent chambers so that the activities of the bass driver don't interfere with those of the midrange unit. It stands on an elabo-

made up of a radiused medite beam bored out near the top to reflex-load the midrange/hf part of the cabinet.

The A.C.T. 1 is a genuine three-way design that can be tri-wired via the gold plated, copper input sockets located discreetly in the base. These are hooked up to a minimum-phase crossover and thence to the various drive units; the internal wiring is silver-plated copper van den Hul for bass and midrange, with a single strand of pure silver on the tweeter. The drive unit complement includes a 170mm custom-built Scan bass driver with mass loading and a carbon fibre-reinforced pulp/polymer cone, plus second unit of the same size and origin, this time without the mass loading but with the same cast chassis covering the midrange. A silk dome of 25mm diameter and an aluminium chassis does the high frequency stuff.

Build quality is first class, as it should be at this price. Ah yes, the price. High-tech hi-fi with an eye on world markets does not come cheap, but in the context of the products the A.C.T. 1 is taking on, such as the Wilson WATT/PUPPY combo or the Sonus Faber *Extrema*, a £6,400 tag doesn't seem so high. It's difficult to find speakers with the A.C.T. 1's sonic capabilities that are so attractive too.

## The Power And The Glory

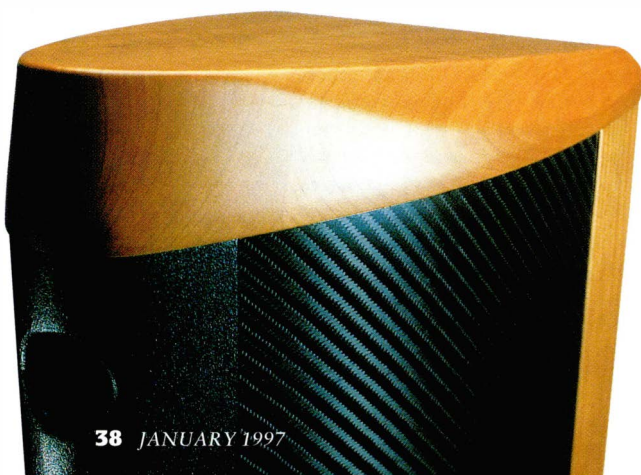
Whether it's worth the money hinges largely on what it can do with the signal you feed it, and if you want to hear it at close to its best you'd better give it something tasty and powerful. Despite benign-looking impedance, nominally six Ohms, and sensitivity of 89dB/Watt, the A.C.T. 1s don't seem to like low-powered amps. In fact, anything pumping out less than 100 decent Watts will be out of its depth. A Roksan ROK-S1 was up to the job but more power would have been interesting. The A.C.T. 1s have a good grasp of dynamics for a design with a



rate base made up of two sections, the upper one steel and the lower one medite. These two parts are designed to give the speaker a decent footprint and acoustically to vent the reflex port for the bass enclosure. The spikes are monsters: hand made out of M14 stud, these things are about four times the size of most spikes but are thin enough at the business end to penetrate carpets with minimum trauma. Nonetheless I shouldn't let other owners of the carpet see you fitting them. Because of the unusual two-tier base it's difficult to use these speakers unspiked (I generally use cones) so I cut out a couple of plywood boards to protect the floor and fitted the mighty spikes. The difference they made was not subtle.

The top of the cabinet is made from solid wood and sloped forward to dissuade pot plants and minimise perceived depth; you can put one or two LP sleeves on there but CD jewel cases are definitely out. The spine is

The A.C.T. 1 combines conventional and new materials to form an elegant and stylish loudspeaker whose sonics match its looks.







less-than-easy amplifier load. They are responsive to level changes and make a fine job of high energy material; it's only when you bring in something stronger in the dynamic realm that makes a better job at low volumes, such as a horn, that you hear the shortcomings. Where many dynamic speakers tend to fall down is in low frequency extension and power, an area where these make quite an impression. These things have that high-end favourite, 'slam'. Fast, deep, powerful bass that'll kick you in the stomach if you get enough quality power behind it.

The only other limitation that struck me (and it's likely to strike me more than most as an ex-Sonolith 2.2xi speaker user) is stereo imaging for off-axis listeners (those not sitting in the sweet spot). As this is a virtually ubiquitous problem, this is more of an observation than a criticism and does not imply that the A.C.T. 1 does not image well, quite the contrary in

fact. Get them correctly toed in, about 18 inches from the wall, and they'll produce images to fit the music every time. Be it expansive or pinpoint, these speakers reflect the recording venue's ambience and scale every time, and with artificially enhanced stuff they'll pull notes from behind your ears — two speaker surround is not a myth.

What these speakers major in is lack of distortion; they are the best balanced and cleanest-sounding speakers I've used for years, the sort that can play John Zorn's *Naked City* at attack volume and come up smiling. What first gave this state of affairs away was their outrageous transparency — clarity without the slightest hint of glare.

They got on very well with the Krell KAV 300i (*Statements*, issue 160) which revealed their potential in terms of timing. This speaker will stop on a dime and start again exactly when it should. Throw the most complex rhythms at it and hear them as

they were recorded. In other words, if you're askin', they're dancin'.

And they love it when you get better ancillaries. The switch from Trichord *Genesis* to *Revelation* CD players was lapped up, the latter making the former sound almost crude — even though it had been the source of most of my comments!

I had a great time with these speakers. Played loud they're one of the best I've used. They have a subjectively ruler-flat response, which is claimed to extend to 40Hz, and one of the cleanest presentations to emanate from a non-electrostatic loudspeaker. The A.C.T. 1 is a very fine high-end loudspeaker I'd strongly recommend you hear it. ▲

Wilson benesch, Unit 2, Fall Bank Ind Estate,  
Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 3LS  
☎ (0114) 285 2656



**A fearsome footprint.**  
The dual layer base of the A.C.T. 1 with its awesome spikes and three-way binding posts.

# HELP!

Malcolm 'Reverend' Steward is this month's duty priest in the 24-Hour Church Of Hi-Fi.

Send your hi-fi queries to 'Help!' at the usual address (page 153) or 100433.1130@compuserve.com. We regret that we cannot answer individual queries on a personal basis.

## Query of the month

Brought to you in association with B&W Loudspeakers

B&W

We're awarding a pair of B&W DM601 speakers, worth £200, to the writer of this month's best query. These 14-litre enclosures sport one of B&W's famous 120mm Kevlar mid/bass drive-units, which come with a cast-alloy frame, leading to sound quality that is praised for its sense of authority and soundstaging. Wow!

### Speakers on a shoestring

My system consists of a Technics SL-PG570 CD Player, a Rotel RA-970BX amplifier, Mission 731LE Speakers, QED Incon interconnects and Cable Talk Talk 3 speaker cables. I find that my system lacks bass control and extension. What I would like is tighter bass with a clean and crisp treble. I would like to keep my amplifier, so could you please recommend a suitable change of speakers or CD player. I am a student, living in a small room, and have a limited budget of around £300.

Anthony Lee, Coventry

A small room means small speakers, and small speakers mean restricted bass — laws of physics and all that. However, some small loudspeakers do a better job than others of making the most of what they're able to deliver. One of the best in this respect is Mordaunt-Short's MS10i. This speaker's low end gives music a sense of appreciable weight and speed. What it can't do, of course, is produce quality bass where little or none exists. Sorting out that part of the equation is the responsibility of the source components. Inexpensive CD players usually lack either quality or quantity in the bass but some are more adept than others. I'd look at the Cambridge Audio CD4 and CD6, both of which, thanks to their design and marketing, squeeze above average performance from their utilitarian casework.

As a finishing touch, park your speakers on Atacama's sand-filled SE24 stands, which work absolute wonders for lightweight miniatures.

Mordaunt-Short's MS10i:  
small speakers that deliver!

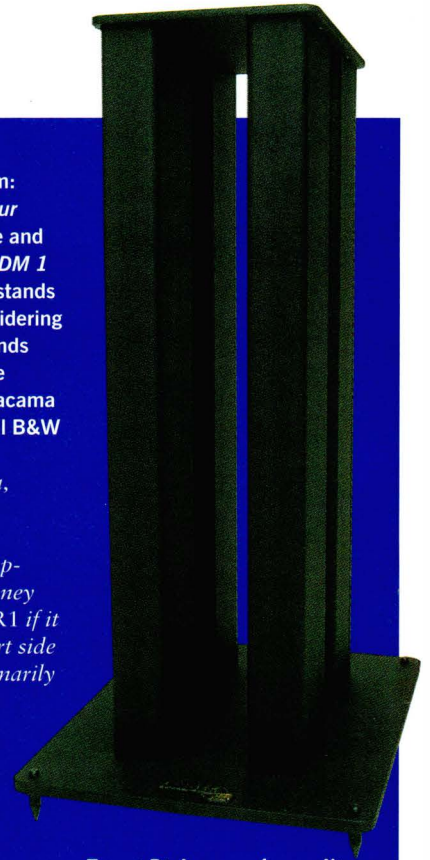


### A standing target?

I have the following system: Philips 880, Camelot Arthur DAC, Parasound 1100 pre and 2200 power amp, B&W CDM 1 speakers on Target SP60 stands and REL Q-Bass. I'm considering upgrading the speaker stands and I wonder if it would be beneficial upgrading to Atacama SE24s, or even the original B&W stands or Target R1.

Berni Stephanus, Geneva, Switzerland.

The CDM1 deserves a top-quality stand and my money would be on the Target R1 if it wasn't a little on the short side (53cm); it's designed primarily for the ProAc Tablette miniature. It might work in your room with the B&Ws but you may find it adds undue weight in the bass. In which case, look at taller models such as the Kudos S100, Partington Trophy, or a bespoke pair from Slate Audio.



Target R1: bang on for quality, but could do with being taller.

### Smooth seconds

I am looking for a new amplifier and speakers to replace the Cambridge P40 and KEF K120s I currently use with my Linn Sondek LP12, Ittok LVII and Rega Elys. My budget is up to £200 for the amplifier and £200 for the speakers. I'd like a smooth sound with detail and tight bass that suits '70s rock music.

Azani Manaf, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

You're asking a lot if you want a £200 amplifier with a phono stage good enough to do credit to your turntable. Perhaps you should consider looking around the second-hand market for a series one or two Naim NAIT or an early Creek 4040. If that idea doesn't appeal, maybe you should keep the KEFs a while longer and buy an Arcam Alpha 8, the replacement for the Alpha 6 Plus. In truth, anything less capable will be a waste of money.

### Cabling conundrum

I listen to all kinds of music and currently use: Linn LP12 Valhalla/Ittok LVII/Roksan Corus Black, Marantz CD12LE, Exposure XV (MM), Neat Petite on Target R3 stands with Exposure speaker cable. The rest of the equipment is on a Target 775 stand.

I have a budget of around £3,000 for upgrading my system to make it more dynamic and involving with better resolution. I've considered the following amplifier changes: Exposure XVII and XVIII, Naim 72/HiCap/250 or 82/180. I plan to change the cartridge to a Denon DL304 or Ortofon MC15 Super II. If funds allow, would it be worthwhile upgrading my Neats to Mark II status? Should I add an Armageddon power supply to my turntable, or Linn's Lingo?

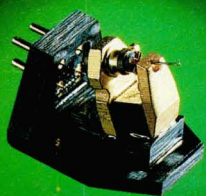
If I go for Naim amps, do I have to change my speaker cable to NACA5? What high quality interconnects should I use with a Naim system? And can I connect up the amps so that I bypass the Hi-Cap? Kozit and friend, Thailand

If you opt for the Naim NAC82/NAP180 combo, you should be looking at a more adventurous cartridge too — at least a mid-range moving coil such as

the Lyra Lydian or Wilson-benesch Matrix. An improved power supply will work wonders for your Sondek, but hear the options and make up your own mind. The three I've tried — the Lingo, Armageddon and Pink Triangle Pacesetter — have much to commend them, but each proffers a distinctive perspective on music making.

Naim designs its amps with close regard for partnering cables, so stick with NACA5 as the speaker cable, and don't look for better ways to wire the amps because you'll mess up the system's earth paths. For CD to preamp interconnects use whatever takes your fancy. You'll probably find outwardly mundane leads deliver a more enjoyable performance with Naim amps than 'sexier' alternatives.

Wilson-benesch Matrix: an adventurous cartridge!



### Music muscle

I have a Pioneer PD-S703 CD-player, A-400X amp and B&W DM 600i speakers, connected with Tara Labs interconnects and speaker cable. I really enjoy the sound of my newly purchased amp but I feel there's a lack of muscle and sometimes the sound is almost sharp. I think the problem might be in the source component and I have short-listed the Denon DCD-1015 and Marantz CD63SE as possible replacements. Should I aim higher? P. Ericsson, Sweden

The A-400X sounds more incisive than its predecessor, which is probably highlighting the 703's similar tendencies. The Denon DCD-1015 will deliver a smooth, lively performance. You should also check out the Rotel RCD970BX whose powerful but tightly-reined bass will provide a solid foundation and sense of substance in the right system. A better player still will pave the way for future upgrades.

speaker cable while bass units are connected by Cable Talk Talk 3. Lan Tan, Singapore

To improve both your bass and soundstaging, you need to change your speaker cables. To preserve the system's dynamics, tonality and phase coherence you need to use the same cables for both the high and low frequency drivers. I would recommend a heavy-duty cable such as Naim NACA5, but have your dealer fit the plugs. Then start auditioning CD players. Those from Trichord and Micromega make the best job of handling bass so listen to, say, the Trichord Revelation and Micromega Stage 4, 5 or 6. Other likely contenders with fine stereo imaging potential are the Meridian 508.20 and the Marantz CD-17.

### Bass boom

My system is shy on bass; I like deep, tight, controlled bass. I also wish to have a wide soundstage. I listen mainly to jazz, pop and New Age music. My system consists of a Marantz K I Signature CD player, Arcam Delta 290 preamp, Arcam Delta 290P power amplifier and Mission 752 speakers. Interconnect between pre- and power-amp is Audioquest Emerald. Tweeter units are connected with QED Qudos

### Component compatibility

I have a system which I put together buying second-hand equipment. As a result, I have a Musical Fidelity A1 amplifier and KEF Reference Series 104AB speakers with no manuals, so I don't know their specs. Someone suggested that the KEFs may require a more powerful amp to be driven properly. How does one tell if an amp is not powerful enough for a particular set of speakers? Michael Surina, via the Internet

KEF will be able to supply you with full details of the 104AB and Musical Fidelity will be able to advise you about suitable speakers for use with the not-so-ancient A1. Basically, they're not suitable partners. The low-powered A1 was designed to drive less demanding speakers. A general guideline for determining amplifier suitability is that low-powered models (say 40 Watts and under) will work best with speakers having 89dB sensitivity or higher, and an impedance that doesn't drop much below eight Ohms. This will be especially true if you enjoy playing the system at realistic volume levels.

### Going AV

I would like to set up a home entertainment system and have been recommended the following items for my budget of about £3,000: Marantz CD63SE or CD63 MkII and Cambridge DAC Magic III, Musical Fidelity E200 pre-amplifier, E300 power amplifier, Yamaha DSP-E390 decoder, Mission 752/753 or Roksan Ojan 3 front speakers, Mission 73C centre speaker, and my existing JPW Mini Monitors as rears, plus a Yamaha YSTW120/300 or REL Strata 400 Sub-Woofer. I wish to keep the video part out of the stereo circuit and not use an AV amp. My listening pleasures include classical, acoustic jazz and vocals, and I'm partial to tight and thumping bass. C.H. Tan, via the Internet

Dealing first with the music side of your system, I would suggest a better CD player and some very tight-sounding amplification if you're planning on the Ojan 3s. These speakers hardly need a subwoofer's assistance, so you

could save some cash here. However, you will have trouble finding a centre-channel speaker to match them. You'll find it simpler to achieve a correctly-balanced front soundstage using, say, the Mission 752s with the Mission 75C, which was complementarily voiced. Another balance consideration is amplification. Again, the best results come when the front channels are driven by matching amps. Using a stereo power amp from one maker and the in-built centre-channel amp in a decoder is workable, but not ideal. If you can afford it, use the decoder purely as a decoder and patch it into identical power amps, or use something like the Arcam Xeta One with Arcam power amps or the Cyrus AVmaster with Cyrus amps.

Mission 752s are great main AV speakers.

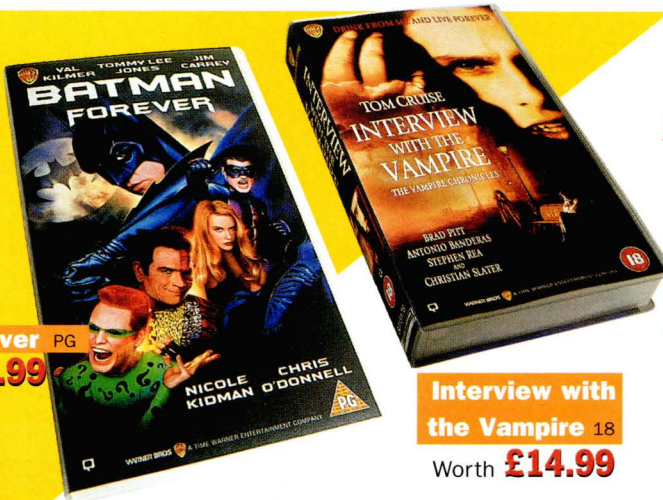


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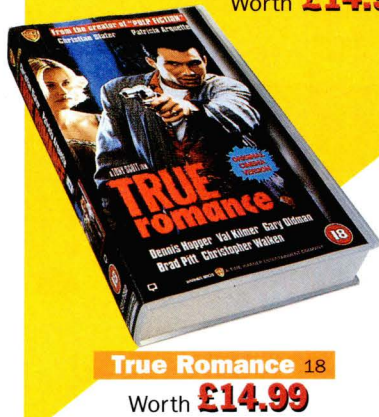


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## ◀ CD transports

I am thinking of buying a two-box CD player but I am confused by the huge prices of the transports. It seems that good quality transports do improve sound reproduction, but I can't understand why. All a transport has to do is read the bits from the CD, reassemble the blocks and perform the error-correction, then pass the correct series of bits to the DAC. A CD-ROM drive for a PC has to perform the same function, yet CD-ROM drives cost £60 for one that operates eight times faster than an audio CD player. I would be very grateful if you could explain why audio CD transports should sound better than a CD-ROM drive.

*Richard Murray, via the Internet*

*It's demonstrable that error correction circuits can introduce as many problems as they set out to cure in a digital musical environment. The comparison with PC CD-ROMs is invalid because we're talking about different time scales: you can wait for a second or two while a PC sorts itself out and barely notice that anything's wrong, but if a CD player 'misses a beat' it's obvious. Temporal anomalies are bad news in a CD system, and designers have to work hard to ensure they don't occur. This means, among other things, mechanically isolating the transport and taking care over the signal path. None of this matters much in a PC, which isn't designed to play music with any semblance of fidelity.*

## Cartridge upgrade

My vinyl-based system comprises a *Lingoed LP12*, *Ekos* arm, *Trampolin* and *K18II* cartridge, 1990-vintage *Exposure VI*, *VII* and *Super VIII* amplification, and *Linn Keilidh* speakers. Occasionally CDs are played on an *Arcam Alpha 5 Plus*.

I have around £300 to spend on an upgrade. As I see it, I have three choices: replace the *K18II* with a moving coil — something like a *Denon DL304*, *Dynavector 10X*, *Sumiko BPS* or *Ortofon MC10 Supreme*; get the *Cirkus* upgrade fitted to the turntable; or find a second hand *Super VIII* power amp and bi-amp the *Keilidhs*. I favour the third option, which would give me more weight and presence and wouldn't further increase the void between vinyl and CD replay systems. It also gets me closer to my long-term aim of going active using *Linn's* active boards and tune-up box. Do you think this is a good strategy, and do you think the *Super VIIIs* are up to the job?

*Simon Chambers, Doncaster*

*The bi-amp idea is good but I'd upgrade your cartridge first. This will increase the void between vinyl and CD replay but you admit that your forays into CD are very occasional and life's too short to deny yourself enhanced vinyl satisfaction. The Denon DL304 would be my first choice but I'd also suggest listening to the Milltek Aurora. I'm not fond of the Ekos (it sounds a bit hard and artificial), so a cartridge with an easy-going nature seems best suited. Regarding a second power amp, try contacting*

*second-hand dealers and local shops that regularly advertise bits and pieces they've taken as trade-ins — such as Audio-T — saying that you're interested in a Super VIII.*

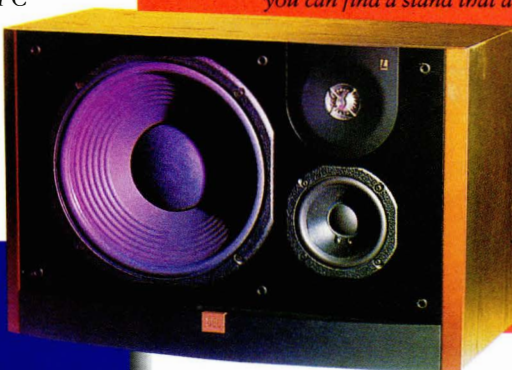


Denon's DL304 is a very fine moving coil at the price.

## Supporting JBL

I have bought a pair of *JBL L90* speakers, but I need decent floor stands. I have tried to contact *JBL* in Denmark, but nobody has been able to recommend a pair of suitable stands. *Martin T. Olesen, via the Internet*

*Some speakers only give their best when partnered with a dedicated stand. Others simply provide a different presentation according to what's supporting them. So you need to audition a few models to discover which make the L90s sing the tune you want to hear. Look for a rigid design that places the tweeters at ear-level when you're seated, and supports the speakers close to the cabinet's perimeter. If*



*you can find a stand that allows for filling with sand or lead-shot, so much the better: this is good for fine-tuning the speaker's bass register.*

**The JBL L90 needs a high, wide stand: you may have to go custom-made.**

## Talking drivers

I wonder if you could give some advice on amp/speaker matching. I have a *Micromega Stage 3*, *Melos SHA-1* valve preamp, *Musical Fidelity MA 50-X* monobloks, *Acoustic Energy Aegis 1* (a prize from *Hi-Fi Choice*, thanks) *Flatline Twin* speaker cable and *Audioquest Lapis* interconnects.

I have now ordered a pair of *Totem Model 1s*. Do you think *MA50s* are up to driving the *Totems* (sensitivity 87 dB/W, four Ohms)?

*Chris de Armitt, via the Internet*

*Both Paul Messenger and I have tested and enjoyed the Totems. We used Naim amplifiers — NAP135s and NAP250s respectively — and found the combinations worked well. That's hardly surprising as the Naims were designed to cope with low-impedance, demanding speakers. Exposure amps are similarly rugged and exhibit the musical qualities the Totems seem to appreciate. I've also grown fond of the Acurus A150, which seems contented driving troublesome speakers. None of these power amps, however, will suit a valve pre-amplifier.*

## Improving CD clarity

I have the following system: *Cyrus III* Amp, *PSX-R* off-board power supply, *Nakamichi DR-3* cassette deck, *Mission 751* speakers, *AudioQuest Ruby* interconnects and *AudioQuest Indigo 2* speaker cables. My question concerns the up-

grading of my *Technics SL-PG420A* CD player. I was wondering if it would be worthwhile having the player *Trichord Clock-2*-modified. I find the dynamic range of the player a little limited — would the clock upgrade help with this? Would it help improve clarity?

I know that the ultimate answer is to upgrade the player to something more fitting the system, like the *Marantz CD63mkII K I Sig* or the new *Micromega Stage* players. Unfortunately my hi-fi upgrading ambitions are tightly capped at the moment!

*Paul Owen, via the Internet*

*You've answered your own question: your system is crying out for a more sophisticated player. While I'm sure that clocking your Technics will improve some aspects of its performance, it won't address more vital areas where improvements need to be made. All budget players are limited by compromises and there's only so much that tweaking can achieve. The best advice is to suffer and keep saving.*

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## ◀ Sound on a budget

I currently have an Aiwa NSX-V90 mini system. However, I want to buy a system that includes a CD, an amp (that can power an eight-Ohm subwoofer), speakers (for a 'bachelor'-sized room), tuner and a tape transport. I would like all of these to have a remote control and, if possible, the CD source should be able to take more than one disc at once. I generally listen to soul/rap/pop with a bit of classical stuff thrown in and my budget would average about £250 per unit.

Clifford Okoro, Edmonton



Denon DRS-640: serious hi-fi starts here!

*If you're after a better sound on a budget you might have to give up some mini system luxuries. Here's a suggested system which you can use as a starting point: Cambridge Audio CD6 (£300), Denon TU260L tuner (£120), Denon DRS-640 cassette (£200), NAD 314 amp (£260) and Mordaunt-Short MS20i loudspeakers (£200). Spend what's left on a pair of Atacama SE24 speaker stands and some Cable Talk Talk 3 speaker cable.*

## Vinyl upgrading

I'm one of those increasingly rare people still interested in vinyl replay. I currently use a Pink Triangle LPT/Roksan Tabriz/Corus Black with Audiolab 8000A and Linn Keilidhs, bi-wired with K400. I've been happy with this set-up, but since replacing my old CD player with a Naim CD3, for the first time CD now sounds better than vinyl.

There are lots of non-fundamental upgrades I could make, most of which would be difficult to audition since the LPT is no longer available. On the other hand, if the LPT itself is likely to severely limit the potential of such upgrades, I might be better off trading it in and going for a deck with more potential, such as a Michell Gyrodec with QC PSU. Would the Tabriz (with Zi cable) sing better on such a deck, or should I save up for something like an SME IV or Naim ARO? And what cartridge — Denon 304, Sumiko, various Ortofons — or a Lyra Lydian?

The remaining problem would be amplification. I'd like to go remote-control, and the Audiolab 8000S sounds like a significant improvement over the 8000A, but of course I'd need a phono stage. Given my liking for the CD3, I suppose I could go for Naim amps, which still come with a decent phono stage, but I can't imagine blowing £3,000 on a 82/180 unless the improvement is dramatic.

One final point — the 8000A occasionally drives a pair of remote JPW Sonatas through the switched terminals. One of the attractions of the 8000S is that, presumably, I could keep the 8000A and use its power amp dedicated to the Sonatas.

Robert Tuson, via the Internet

*I'd upgrade the front end entirely. My choice for a significant vinyl contentment boost would be either a Linn LP12 with ARO tone-arm or a Well Tempered Record Player. The Gyrodec looks cute but has never quite scaled the heights others can reach. Also worth investigating is the Rega Planar 9.*

*Bite the bullet and invest in a decent moving-coil. Your amp choice will be crucial, too. Listen to the 8000S and note that Audiolab makes a dedicated phono stage, the 8000PPA. Compare these to the 82/180 and see which you prefer. If you opt for the Well Tempered deck, check out the Dynavector amps most WT dealers will stock. And don't worry about your secondary speakers: almost any pre-amp can be configured to drive a second power amplifier.*



The next step up from an LPT — an LP12.

# HINTS AND TIPS

## Evaluating Improvements

**Jimmy Hughes counsels caution when deciding how good your system sounds!**

You don't have to spend a fortune on hi-fi to get great results. Superb sound can be obtained from modest but well-chosen components that work together well in a sympathetic room. Unfortunately, you can also spend a fortune on the best equipment there is and end up with terrible sound. The road to audio hell is paved with lots of questionable decisions: individually they might not cause rotten sound, but they do when their effect is combined. Because most of us own systems whose components hail from different brands, the process of selection itself is crucial.

Over the past 25 years or so, I've spent thousands of hours listening to and comparing hi-fi components, on my own, and with other people, sometimes on listening panels. Having observed the way most people listen to and evaluate hi-fi, I'm forced to conclude that few of them are any good at it — myself included!

Say we make an A/B comparison of some cables, making the second set our favourite. We're convinced we've made the right choice, and duly install said cables in our system. Only a few days later, however, the honeymoon's over: we finally accept that the system doesn't sound as good as it did before. Sheepishly we go back to our original cables, and what a surprise! They sound preferable. A/B comparisons have validity, but you must be careful.

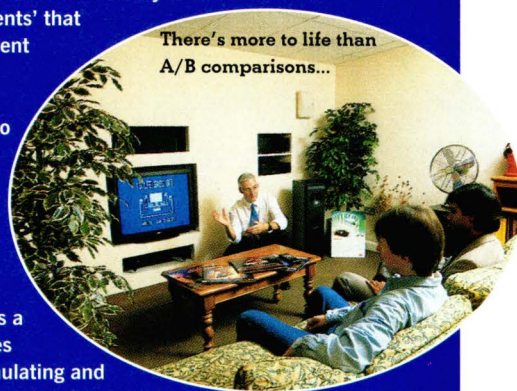
When I make any change to my system, be it large or small, I trust my reaction a day or so later, over and above my opinions in the heat of battle. I've spent whole evenings tweaking, going to bed convinced that my newest 'upgrade' is a roaring success — only to have radically different views the next morning! Sometimes you get so caught up in the minutiae of what you're doing, you lose your bearings. That's why I set such store by having a positive reaction when listening to a system 'cold', without comparison.

If you switch on the day after modifying something, and your first reaction is, "that sounds good...", chances are the changes you made were beneficial and worthwhile. Another positive sign is when you find yourself noticing the music and its performance, rather than the system. It's so easy to

make 'improvements' that make the equipment sound loud and obtrusive — you end up listening to your system and not the music. Naturally, much depends on what you want. But what I'm advocating here is a system that makes music sound stimulating and engaging, while not drawing your attention to the means of reproduction.

This kind of system will make you want to listen to whole albums, rather than bits of tracks. Another way of testing the water is to play an unfamiliar recording, or perhaps a disc of music you don't like. If the experience of the music and performance make sense and communicate, the system is doing its job. Your changes will have been validated.

There's more to life than A/B comparisons...



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	DSP-E1000 5 Ch.	699

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# Multiplay time

Two's company and three's a crowd, but not for CD multi-players, where the more discs, the merrier! **Alan Sircom** tests five hot machines on sale.

**W**ith the growth of multi-room systems, and the proliferation of in-pub hi-fi systems not tied to a juke box, the CD 'autochanger' is finally coming into its own in this country. The autochanger's combination of convenience, convenience, and yet more convenience makes it a highly attractive proposition for many systems.

But, if multi-play CD autochangers exist, why would someone want a single-disc player? Put simply: quality. I've listened to some of the latest and (arguably) greatest multiplayers around, and not a single one can compete with a well-sorted single-disc CD player of a similar cost. If you seek outright sound quality and don't already have a single-disc player, think carefully before committing yourself to one of these machines, no matter how attractive the package may appear on paper.

There used to be two schools of thought about autochangers. Convenience-led types believe that loading in an entire party's-worth of discs saves time and effort, while purist hi-fi types believe them to be nothing less than evil works of Satan, sacrificing virginal sound quality at the altar of slack. Multiplayers have benefited from 'conver-

#### THE CAST LIST

Harman/Kardon <i>FL8300</i> .....	£299.99
Kenwood <i>DP-R6080</i> .....	£249.95
Marantz <i>CC-47</i> .....	£249.90
Pioneer <i>PD-F605</i> .....	£229.95
Pioneer <i>PD-F805</i> .....	£329.95

gence', like most consumer electronic products: purists are beginning to appreciate having a selection of music available, while slackers have begun to develop a taste for sound quality.

As such, it is not uncommon for high-end multi-room systems to have single and multi-disc CD players living side-by-side. The latter is used when critical listening is not vital; the single-disc player rises to the occasion when high-brow listening is required. This equitable (though expensive) solution is an effective foil to all manner of difficult hi-fi arguments.

There have been only three basic styles of autochanger since CD began. The most common system is the tray-based machine, where discs are fed onto a horizontal carousel. These can hold a maximum of five discs on a single carousel, but uniquely most allow the listener to change four of these discs while the fifth is still playing.

Despite the carousel's proven track record, there are some who say its days are numbered. Now growing in popularity is the 'file-based' system, which stacks discs vertically in a normal-width CD player. Some models mix the two technologies, stacking the discs vertically on a carousel. This makes for potentially huge storage capacity that takes up almost the whole autochanger itself. Often these systems are more like a home juke-box than a CD player.

There was another CD autochanger system, which helped develop the in-car CD market. The removable six-disc CD cartridge, seen in all but the most recent in-boot autochangers, was developed for domestic use. Today, although they are still made and sold in quantity to the pub market, these cartridge systems look seriously dated in the home, especially as they are now incompatible with the 12-disc in-car units.

The brief survey that follows is not meant to be definitive. There are a number of other products that we have covered in previous issues and still others that we will cover in forthcoming tests. Instead, this feature aims to give you a flavour of what's on the market, by rounding up some of the best examples available right now.



they are difficult to outwit. Loading and unloading is quick and easy, as the *FL8300* gives you access to four of the five discs at any one time. Some will find the omission of a variable output a distinct disadvantage in a world where convenience is king, but at least it means that the sound quality is unencumbered by cheap internal volume controls and pots.

Perhaps it is the lack of internal volume controls that gives the *FL8300* its good sound quality. It has a warmth and darkness that is alluring and doesn't just immediately impress the listener. It is not a bright or sibilant sounding machine, yet stops short of becoming depressing or sinister.

Ultimately, the treble lacks some of the intensity of the bass notes, and can sound a little too rolled-off, but this is still the ultimate dinner-party soundtrack machine, whatever the music.

### Harman/Kardon FL8300

This £300 machine is one of the fastest autochangers I have ever used. In tests, I found that disc-to-disc swap time averaged out at a brisk five seconds, with random play taking a couple of seconds more, according to stopwatch measurements. Less inspiring is the remote control, which has one set of keys for track and disc selection. To get to track two on disc three means pressing the

disc button, followed by the numbers two and three on the key pad. This is a disc misfire waiting to happen! Still, at least the fluorescent display can be dimmed or switched off altogether.

The overall feel of the player is typically H/K: square, with big, easy-to-use buttons and well-laid-out control surfaces. In theory, I am not convinced by the dual-action buttons underneath the drawer, but in practice

HARMAN/KARDON FL8300 - VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£299.99
▲	Warm, dark sound quality.
▼	Treble lacks drive; no internal volume control.
✉	Gamepath, 25 Heathfield, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes MK12 6HR
☎	(01908) 317707

### Kenwood DP-R6080

Kenny's £250 five-disc carousel player is sleek and well-finished. I particularly like the idea of placing the controls above the tray, as it means you can control the player even with its tongue sticking out. As the disc tray only allows access to a maximum of two discs at any one time, the transport seems free of the clunky plastic feel commonly associated with carousels. The downside of this solid mechanism is the way it takes appreciably longer to change all five discs than any of its carousel rivals here. That said, disc-to-disc access was reasonably nippy at around seven seconds, and random access only took about three seconds more.

It's a neat-sounding player for a multi. While this player will never compete with a single machine, its sound is rockin' and hugely enjoyable in that clubby sort of style. It's not the most subtle beast around, and is more than a touch edgy, squeaky and sibilant on many discs. It even gets rough with a few! Then there's that built-in reverb box that never quite seems to disappear. But for

slammin' on hour after hour of dancey vibes, the Kenwood is just the thing.

Perhaps this is due to the hard-as-nails muscular solidity, or the satisfying sense of timing and musical coherence. It does come unstuck with the polyrhythmic sounds of Schoenberg, but with a regular 4/4 beat it keeps better time than a Japanese train

timetable ever could.

The biggest drawback of the CD autochanger genre is its portrayal of imagery, and alas the *DP-R6080* is no exception to the rule. Image depth in particular is virtually non-existent. But the Kenwood overcomes this thanks to its great sense of musical enjoyment.



KENWOOD DP-6080 - VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£249.99
▲	Muscular, rocking sound quality: ergonomics.
▼	Lacks charm and can sound edgy.
✉	Trio-Kenwood UK Ltd, Kenwood House, Dwight Road, Watford, Herts WD1 8EB
☎	(01923) 816444

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### Marantz CC-47

Full marks to Marantz for producing a £250 CD autochanger that has both a coaxial digital output and offers the facility to quickly load a single disc when necessary. Thanks to a duo of buttons sited within the CD tray, the player can be used to play just one CD at speed or quickly load its way through all five discs without the user needing to fiddle with any external buttons. This is a good thing too, as the tray hides away two discs at all times, which could otherwise slow things down dramatically.

There is the usual parade of functions and buttons on both the front panel and the remote, although I can't help thinking that the feel of the player is slightly dated com-

pared to the others in the group. It does come with extensive taping controls, including a fader, which give it an edge over the rudimentary facilities of the other autochangers tested here.

The family sound is evident in the Marantz's performance, just as it is noticeable with the H/K and, to a lesser extent, the Kenwood. Here, the CC-47 has all the brisk crispness and forward nature of the single-disc Marantz players, but lacks their grace and charm. This makes the sound of Underworld's *Dubnobasswithmyheadman* CD sound fresh and exciting, and imparts a similarly flavoured reading to the more sanguine, cool jazz sounds of Ted Sirota on the recent Naim release *Recent Souls*.

Of the three tray autochangers, I feel that this one comes the closest to producing the sound of real hi-fi — there's even a hint at imagery. Sure, it gets bogged down too quickly in musical complexity and some percussion sounds get pretty shaky at times, but the music seldom loses its integrity.

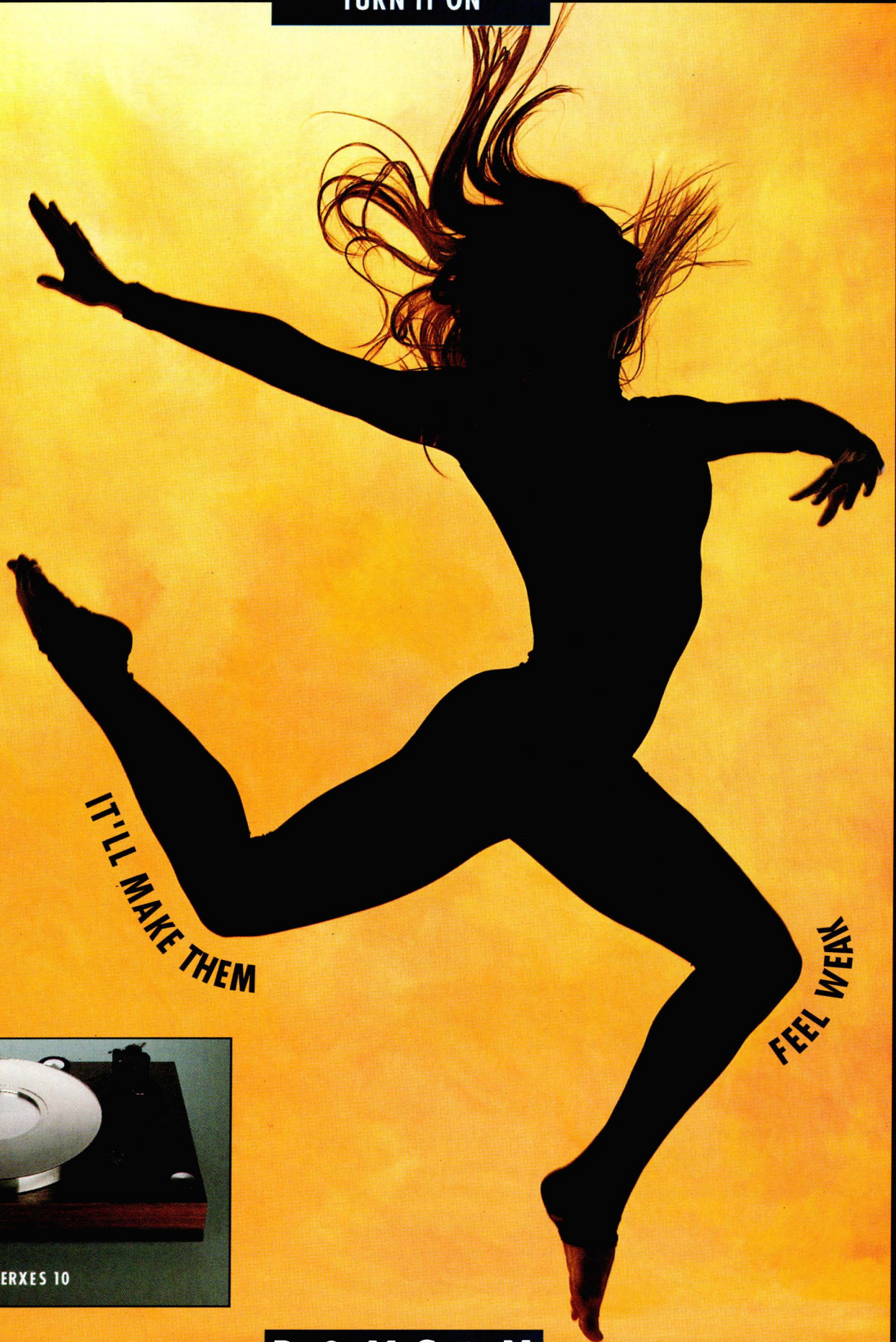
#### MARANTZ CC-47 - VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** £249.90

▲ Comes closest to a realistic hi-fi sound.  
 Dated looks and feel.

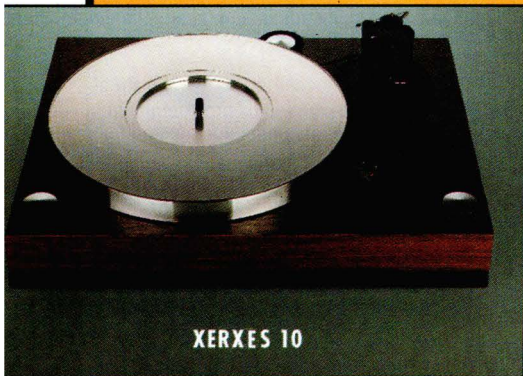
✉ Marantz Hi-Fi UK Ltd, Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks,  
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### Pioneer PD-F805

Of all the decks we had to check out, this one was the real monster. Standing almost twice the height of a conventional CD player such as the Marantz *CD-63*, Pioneer's £330 *PD-F805* can eat through your CD collection at great speed. It holds 50 discs, held in two 25-strong magazines, and offers replay of an extra single disc in a vertical slot at the far left of the machine.

Ten seconds seems to be the magic number with Pioneer, as it seems to take this long to jump from any one disc to another. Front panel ergonomics are good, but the remote is a bit of a hindrance when you are trying to access track 14 on disc 37. If you

are playing a disc in one of the 25-disc files, that file is locked and the disc cannot be loaded with any others. However, the good news is that the other file and the single disc drawer can be accessed at this time. With such storage capacity on tap, it's no surprise that Pioneer supplies a booklet to hold the sleeves of incarcerated discs. Curiously, the Pioneer multiplayers do without remote volume control, like the Harman/Kardon.

Sound quality is almost academic with such an array of discs on tap, but fortunately it makes a pretty fair stab at music content. The sound is on the bright side, yet it does have the ability to create shock-waves of bass. Comparisons to a single-disc player

become truly unfair when you contrast levels of technology within both, but at least the '805 papers over cracks in its performance with a smooth-as-silk character. Not the best sound, but offers honest performance and the greatest flexibility of the bunch.

#### PIONEER PD-F805 - VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £329.95

▲ Isn't holding 51 discs enough?

▼ Necessarily big box; bright sound quality.

✉ Pioneer High Fidelity (GB) Ltd, Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Slough SL2 4QP  
 ☎ (01753) 789500

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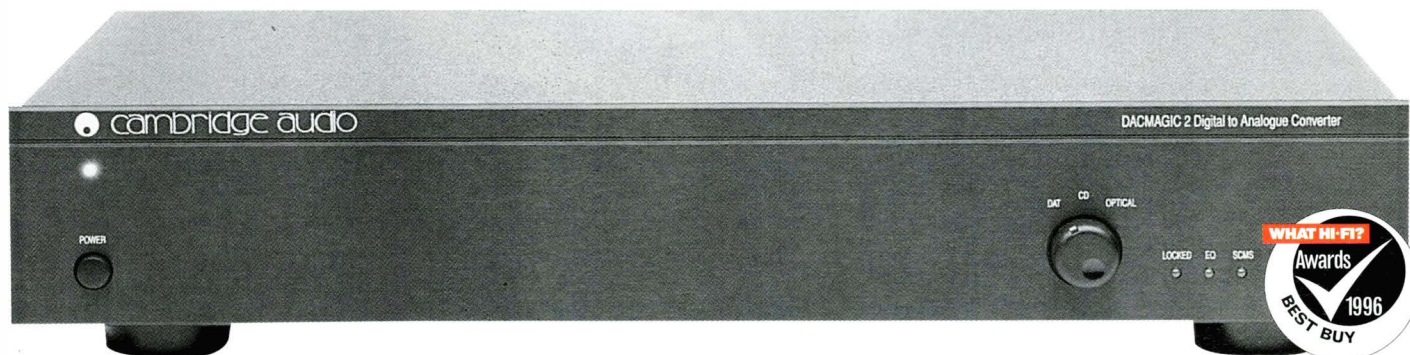
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## Pioneer PD-F605

If the thought of 51 discs inside Pioneer's *PD-F805* fills you with dread, there's a scaled-down version available for £100 less, in which you get only one file that holds 25 discs, with no single-disc access. On the extra front panel space thus liberated, Pioneer has made the buttons slightly larger so consequently they are more user-friendly. Unfortunately, the problem of many discs being locked away while one plays, is more of a millstone than on the bigger model.

The '605 presents a much lower profusion of buttons on its remote control, which has neat little up/down switches for moving from disc to disc. This is fine until you want to flip from discs one to 15, when the shortcomings of this solution become evident and a more complete remote looks attractive.

As the '605 is essentially the '805 in different guise, you'd expect there to be similar levels of performance. You'd be right, though I can't help feeling the former is paradoxically better sounding than its more



### PIONEER PD-F605 - VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £229.95

▲ Holds 25 discs at a shot.

▼ Big box; bright sound quality; discs inaccessible.

✉ Pioneer High Fidelity (GB) Ltd, Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges Slough SL2 4QP  
 (01753) 789500

expensive sibling. It is very slightly smoother-sounding and has better control over mad Goldie-style drum-and-bass notes. The differences between the two are minute,

though. For the first time in my career, I will suggest opting for the worse-sounding one of the pair, if only to get the most flexibility out of the package.

## PIONEER'S LATEST BOX OF TRICKS

**Y**ou'll be surprised to discover which is Japan's top-selling Japanese CD player. When you take into account single and multiplex machines, the top dog is not some poly-Yen behemoth player that weighs as much as a Toyota *RAV 4*; instead, it is the ever-so-'umble Pioneer *PD-F25*. This tiny file player holds 25 CDs in a case the size of 25 CD jewel cases. As if to prove the fact, it comes complete with a black-plastic stand to hold the 25 cases of the discs in use — and this has a bigger footprint than the *PD-F25* itself!

The *PD-F25* is designed to slot into any mini- or micro-sized system, and in honesty it looks out of place next to full-sized hi-fi separates. Also, as it is tall rather than wide, it sits uncomfortably on normal hi-fi tables. Its tiny box has forced Pioneer to do away with all but the most necessary functions on the front panel, but this only enhances the cuteness factor.

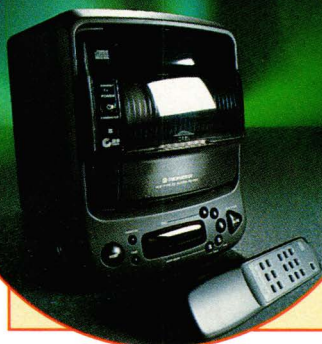
The *PD-F25* is one of the few multi-disc machines that should appeal to people on aesthetic as well as convenience grounds.

However, being perverse, I also feel that it would be the perfect hide-away CD autochanger for a multi-room system in which space is at a premium.

We'd hoped to tell you how this unit performed, but unfortunately at the time of going to press, the only available sample was configured for 110v Japanese mains sockets.

The next unsold model is about 6,500 miles away, but expected in the near future!

Pioneer's PD-F25:  
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## SONY'S 200-CD JUKEBOX DISC-U-LATOR

**I**n many parts of the world, the CD autochanger is king. That makes the forthcoming Sony *CDP-CX200* a veritable Napoleon of the CD market! Not content with five, six, 25 or even 100 discs, the *CDP-CX200* absorbs a staggering 200 discs within its case. But that's not all, since when partnered with the Sony *TA-VE800G* Dolby Pro-Logic-equipped AV amplifier, the *CDP-CX200* can be

controlled by the on-screen display of the amplifier. And as if that were not enough, the whole system can be controlled by the elegant egg-shaped *VisionTouch* remote. This unique infra-red remote has just a pair of volume buttons and a single thumb-controlled cursor button that drives the on-screen display. So with the simple touch of a single button you can access and operate one of 200 CDs with ease. As you can imagine, combining a 200-disc CD changer and a full-function AV amplifier is not inexpensive, but for sheer flexibility this pairing must take the cake.

Unfortunately, this *CDP-CX200* is hot property and all of Sony's first samples were already pre-sold to eagle-eyed early adopters. Even photo samples simply do not exist.

The next shipment looks likely to disappear just as rapidly, so the moral of the story is: if you need a multiplexer that can cope with 200 CDs and hook up to your telly, place an order with Sony today, sight unseen. Let's face it: with 200 discs on tap, the sound quality is immaterial. There is nothing, as yet, that can even begin to compete with the Sony for sheer specmanship. We have no idea how this next-generation CD changer performs or sounds in reality. As soon as we hear it, however, we'll let you know how we get on...

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Old amplifiers never die — certainly not as long as valve devotees like Bill continue to collect and maintain them, and audiophiles sing their praises.

# The Audiophile Antiquary

Jason Kennedy visits a subterranean listening room that is stuffed with classic hi-fi from the 'Golden Age' of audio!

Ten years ago, the room you see in these pictures probably held no greater promise than a few dusty bottles of wine and a freezer. Since that time, its owner — let's call him Bill — has built up a collection of vintage hi-fi kit that makes the jam-packed listening rooms of Japanese audio maniacs look positively spartan.

It all started out with a relatively conventional system from dealers Definitive Audio in Nottingham, where Bill continues to find inspiration, even though his tastes have become extremely esoteric. The original system consisted of a Voyd turntable with a Helius *Cyalene* arm and Audio Note *Io* cartridge, Musical Fidelity *MXV* and *MA50* amplification, and silver-wired Snell *Type J* speakers. A nice system, but not one you'd expect to inspire the multi-deck mania that seems to have taken over this ultra-compact listening room.

## Springing a leak

I suspect the first symptom of the 'fever' was manifested when a Leak *Point One TL/12 Plus* made its way into the set-up. This mono valve amp from the late '50s opened the floodgates to the collectables that have now filled the room. What's more, that first antique ignited in Bill a passion for Leak tubes that still burns fiercely. The current power amps are the earlier *Point One*



A system of choices: the Leak *Point One TL/12s* and hidden Marantz *7C* are semi-permanent fixtures, but which turntable will it be today?

*TL/12s*, which were in production at Leak's East Acton factory between 1949 and 1957. This design is a triode-connected, 12-Watt affair, using KT66 output tubes. It was a great success in its time, being sold to broadcasting authorities worldwide. It's still revered for its sound quality, as its presence in this remarkable system proves.

Most of the amps in the room are Leaks of one sort or another. There are three pairs

of *TL/12s*, a pair of *TL/10s*, *Point One* and *Varislope* preamplifiers stacked up in every available crevice, and a *Troughline* tuner or two to boot. However, it's not all Leak. Our man Bill has tried a few other models in his time. These include some real gems, such as a pair of Williamson monobloks with separate power supplies. This late-'40s design was produced for the home constructor, and introduced negative feedback to the push- ➤

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The mighty EMT atop a granite plinth outweighs a Garrard 301 (back) and another TD124 (right).

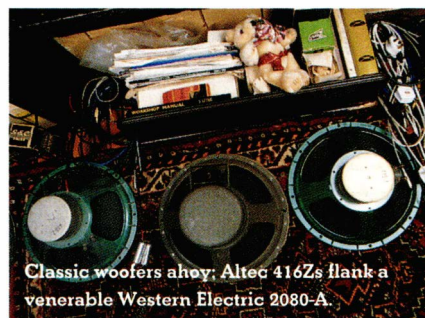
ter deck is equipped with a rare Grace G714 tone-arm, which features a hardwood main beam, and is equipped with a B&O MMC One cartridge.

**Clash of the titans**

The largest turntables here are the three EMT 930STs. These broadcast machines are among the most highly sought-after models on the Japanese scene, and not because of the numerous controls they offer! Peel back two or three layers of mat, and you come across a monster platter. I was genuinely shocked

to see a two-inch-deep, high-mass wheel on the end of a six-inch bearing inside this tank-like design! The EMT must have been one of the first turntables to carry a platter like this, and undoubtedly it formed the inspiration for the myriad domestic audiophile designs that have appeared over the last 25 years or so.

Bill only had one of these decks set up, and



Classic woofers ahoy: Altec 416Zs flank a venerable Western Electric 2080-A.

unfortunately didn't have a working cartridge to hand — the matching EMT cartridge had met an unfortunate and untimely end. He told me that it sounds rock-solid and more than a touch Teutonic; the more romantic Thorens was clearly more to the owner's liking. Still, the 930ST looks very serious in its granite plinth with one of those funky EMT arms.

The other deck that catches the eye is a Garrard Model 301. This design first appeared in 1953 and utilised an idler-wheel drive on a chunky alloy platter. The example awaiting action here is set in a slate-topped wooden plinth, cut out to accept a 12-inch SME arm.

The relative youngster in the camp is a classic Technics SP10mkII from the '70s. This sounded pretty tasty with a regular nine-inch SME arm and an older SPU cartridge.

**Horn of a new era**

When it comes to speakers, the first impression is that there has been less indulgence in exotic vintage wares. Look a bit harder, though, and you'll see that the speakers in action are home-made bass 'corner

horns' with Altec four-cell midrange units. The rather classy drive units are Altec 416ABs on the bottom and Altec 802-8D pressure drivers in the mid. High-frequency units have yet to be selected, but there was talk of Technics bullet designs, Gauss horns and other eclectic options with a public-address provenance. Our collector had taken a fancy to a Wharfedale Super 3 paper-coned unit, which looked quite similar to those used in the Danish-made Hørning speakers. Unfortunately, he only has a single, damaged example of the Wharfedale unit.

Bill's earlier horn experiments are commemorated by a pair of Edgar horns sitting face down next to one of the EMT turntables. These are custom-designed 150Hz tractrix horns, constructed by the hand of legendary horn guru Bruce Edgar, and equipped with Lowther PM4A full-range drivers. In their day, these were combined with ceiling-mounted, 15-inch Wharfedale bass units — now that's one set-up I'd love to hear!

Future options include a pair of Vitavox 10-cell midrange horns, waiting upstairs for suitable drive units — or for the doorway to be enlarged to get them into the room! The back-up driver selection is pretty enviable too. It includes Altec's venerable 604 and 416Z designs alongside Western Electric 2080-As. There can't be too many of those hanging around in this part of the world.

**It's a toy thing**

"Is this guy just an equipment nut?" I hear you ask. "Does he listen to music, or just test tones?" Fear not: there are 5,000 classical LPs hidden away in or near the room. If it hadn't been for a recent flood, which caused an emergency evacuation of the room's contents, all those discs would have presented even more of a hurdle to circumnavigation of the room.

Although the system has become a little excessive over the years, it has all been assembled to fulfil a long-standing passion. While some men collect tin toys or stamps, others, like Bill, get to collect the equipment you see here. Not only is it beautiful to look at, it serves a purpose as well, turning a fabulous record collection into a musical archive. Someone once said: "The guy who dies with the most toys, wins." They were right, and in Bill, I think we have a winner. ▲



Just one of the jam-packed nooks and crannies in this audio Aladdin's cave.

pull amplifier. The Williamson circuit was a considerable success, spawning manufactured imitations and launching a parts industry for the hands-on enthusiast.

Other unusual tube wonders teetering on the wooden rack include a push-pull PX4 triode design of unclear heritage, a Lowther mono preamp, and a substantial Philips/Mullard integrated design manufactured shortly after Philips took over that fine valve company.

The preamp actually used in the current system hides under a Technics turntable. It turns out to be a Marantz Model 7, probably the most desirable vintage preamplifier around. This cult classic is so popular that Marantz has recently put it back into production, alongside the Model 8B stereo and Model 9 mono power amps.

**Let's go round again**

Amplifiers make up just half of this spectacular collection. As you can see, turntables take up a substantial proportion of the floor-space in this tiny eight-by-ten-foot den. You can barely walk from the sofa to the cunningly-concealed preamp without stepping over a record player or two. And these are not just any old turntables, either — all are out-and-out classics.

Look closely and you'll notice that some of the decks look distinctly similar. In fact, even though there are nine players in the room, there are only four different models. The current favourite is one of the three Thorens TD124s: the one with a 12-inch SME mk1 arm and Ortofon SPU cartridge. The latter was one of the first moving coil designs, and it is still in production today.

The TD124 was introduced in the late '50s. Like the Garrard 301 it had a heavy cast chassis, perimeter 'Roto-drive' system and easily accessible level adjusters. Even today the black acrylic armboard is very neat and allows easy tone-arm changes. Two of the TD124s are set up: the one already mentioned has an alarmingly heavy lead plinth, while the other one sits on a rather nice wooden plinth made by the owner. The lat-

# Spinning Dac-tors

The two-box route is widely tipped for CD nirvana, so **Richard Black** (listening test) and **Paul Miller** (lab test) investigate four first-class units.

Some readers, on seeing this review, will scoff and write off the whole piece. After all, don't CD players above about two hundred quid sound the same? Nearly fifteen years after the introduction of CD, the notion that a CD player, any CD player, is as near perfect as makes no odds, still sticks in the craw. And even the most enthusiastic hi-fi aficionado would surely have to concede that the differences between CD players are seldom anything like as dramatic as those between turntables, for instance, or loudspeakers.

On the other hand, many listeners have come to realise that the differences apparent between CD players make themselves felt in subtle but persuasive ways, and although a bad player might not set your teeth on edge within seconds, it can make long-term listening a bore after a few hours' acquaintance.

Hence the efforts of manufacturers to reach just that little bit closer to digital perfection, or at least as much of it as current standards will allow (writer ducks to avoid flak from all sides; let's not get into that little dustbin of worms just now....).

Perhaps significantly, two of the four transport/DAC combos in this review

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Roksan ATT-DP3/DA-2/DS5 .....	£2,440
Thorens TCD/TDA2000 .....	£1,599.98
Trichord TDT/Pulsar Series 1 .....	£2,094

come from respected and dedicated manufacturers of LP turntables: Thorens and Roksan. Of the other two manufacturers represented, Audiolab is mostly associated with its small but extremely successful line in amplifiers, especially the well-loved 8000A, while Trichord Research is a young company with roots in the specialist tweaking of established products, specifically those of a digital persuasion.

In fact the Trichord transport bears a remarkable resemblance to a Pioneer PD-S504. That's because it is one, substantially fiddled with in various ways by

Trichord. If you think that's cheating, bear in mind that no small manufacturer can possibly justify making a CD transport mechanism from first principles; and

are they supposed to make integrated circuits too? Trichord's approach seems eminently reasonable to me.

Why two boxes? This is by no means a stupid question and indeed there are several reasons bandied around by different designers, all of them by and large perfectly valid. Some designers prefer to use a single box, pointing to certain admitted drawbacks of the two-box approach. The main technical argument in favour of the two-box approach is the reduction in various sorts of electrical noise that can be coupled between the control systems of the transport, and the sensitive DAC and analogue output in a one-box player.

In addition there is greater flexibility to be had from two boxes. You, the user, can choose one manufacturer's transport and another's DAC, and in particular you can economise with a cheap transport and high quality DAC until you can afford a high-end transport too. On the other hand, the link between the two boxes can introduce that great bugbear of digital audio, jitter, which is one of those things which can be reduced but never eliminated. And of course two

boxes are apt to be dearer than one. The fact remains that in high-end audio, there are successful examples of both one- and two-box CD players.





## AUDIOLAB - VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** £1,399.90/£899.90

▲ Generally honest and unflappable  
 ▼ Not the greatest resolution or excitement  
 ✉ Cambridge Systems Technology Ltd, Spi fire Close,  
 Ermine Business Park, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6XY  
 ☎ (01480) 415600

Audiolab 8000CDM/  
8000DAC

In keeping with the Audiolab house style of slimline, understated but immaculately finished black boxes, the matching transport and DAC are smart, very tidily put together and unremarkable. Probably the worst that could be said about them is that they are slightly boring, and that's no great crime. Standards of design and workmanship are first-rate inside and out, both units being based on a substantial metal chassis containing a large single PCB and a generously over-rated toroidal transformer. Critical circuits in each unit are contained in a screening can. The transport is based on a simple but well-made Philips CDM12.4 mechanism that works smoothly, quickly and quietly.

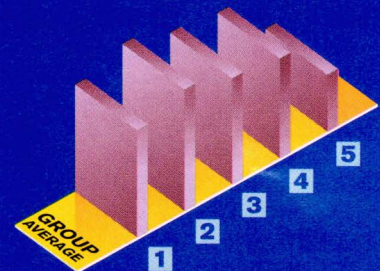
The transport has the usual kind of programming facilities, slightly fiddly to use but allowing up to 60 programming steps. Outputs are to coaxial S/PDIF on a BNC plug and Toslink optical, and to AES/EBU professional on an XLR. A small and neat remote control is supplied, which is sufficiently powerful to work when pointed the wrong way in a medium-sized room. Several functions are only available via the remote, including direct track access and search.

The DAC is a very well-equipped unit with three coaxial (BNC) inputs plus one output, three optical inputs and one AES/EBU. All three sampling rates are supported and there is a phase inversion function. There are also

two filter settings available, although you have to dig deep into the instruction manual to find any mention of this. The only surprise I found was the use of NE5534 op-amps in the analogue stages. This component is out of favour with many audiophiles though still a de facto standard in pro-audio gear.

In the blind-listening sessions this one split opinion. If I remember people's opinions of Audiolab amplifiers correctly, those who like the amps also liked the CD player, which might be a significant observation! The precise comments might well help you decide if this would appeal, too: while one listener found it relatively "bland" and "tonally rather grey", "dynamically rather restrained" and with Frank Zappa sounding "not as live as [he] can", another commented on its "good body", more realistic and less "mechanical" piano sound, and found in various tracks "words easier to follow" and "good definition of instruments". A third found it "very natural" with "very good resolution, crisp yet not harsh". This apparent divergence of opinion (more marked than in any other case) suggests if anything that your reactions to this player will depend on exactly what you listen for in a sonic presentation.

Listening in more detail at home, I found the Audiolab's main characteristics to be tonal honesty, slightly compromised by a degree of veiling that mars one's appreciation of the finer levels of detail in a good recording. My acid test of solo piano showed a small degree of the 'plasticky' sound that affects many digital players, while very fast finger work was not perfectly clear. String orchestra sounded quite natural but was somehow not as involving as it can be. These are quite minor gripes and listeners who value Audiolab's general politeness and unflappability will probably like this player. It seems only right, then, that this fine combo should be Recommended.



1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	75%
2	JITTER	85%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	65%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION	70%
5	LINEARITY	40%

## THE LAB REPORT

Since our last review of this 8000 Series combination (issue 127), a number of revisions to the DAC have resulted in an improved technical performance, even though the basic 'register' of the product (as described by Richard) has evidently remained unchanged. The NPC SM5813 eight-times oversampling filter has now been superseded by the 20-bit SM5843, resulting in a reduction of idle channel noise of three dB and a widening of its A-wtd S/N from 104dB to 107dB. This is state of the art for a single TDA1547 (DAC7) application and is reflected in the strong 'dynamic range' bar value.

Peak-level distortion has been squashed to just 0.0003 per cent midband and a low 0.0016-0.018 per cent right across the audioband at -30dB. Low-level linearity is retained to within tight +0.0/-0.4dB limits while jitter, at 273psec, is the lowest in this test. Much of the sonic 'greyness' however, could be linked to a series of high-order sampling patterns detected in its ultrasonic spectrum. This phenomenon had previously been associated with a loss of warmth and emotive expressiveness in many earlier Philips SAA7350-based players — particularly those with a wide S/N ratio. PM

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Ironically, in later sessions at home the bass seemed less strong and the sound seemed, by comparison with the other players, a touch under-powered and tending to roughness. Turning up the volume fractionally (that is, until output was higher than with the others; the *Attesa* has a lower-than-average output which was compensated to start with) remedied the seeming lack of power and gave a vigorous, up-front presentation. As with the Audiolab, everything seemed in order tonally, and side-to-side imaging was certainly precise, but there seemed to be a hint of distortion which showed up on a string orchestra. In addition, image depth was not as good as with the Trichord combination. However, something tells me that this could be more of a hit with the 'rhythm and timing' brigade, and for this reason it warrants Recommendation.



#### ROKSAN - VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** £1,295/£595/£550

▲ High excitement factor

▼ Not the cleanest or most sophisticated player

✉ Roksan, Verity Group, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE18 6ED.

☎ (01480) 451777

#### Roksan Attesa ATT-DP3.P/ ATT-DA2 DAC/ATT-DS5 PSU

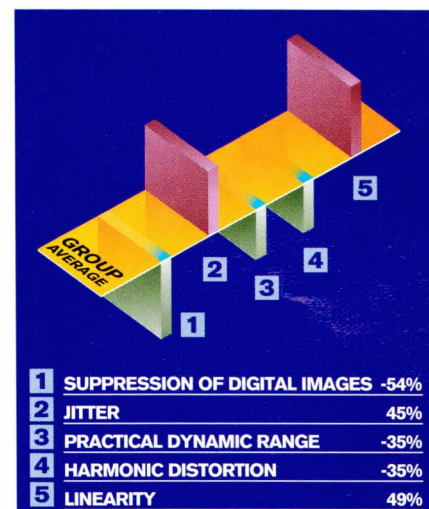
Roksan's *Attesa* transport (which is in fact a complete CD player with additional digital output) is one of those units whose looks are likely to inspire strong likes and dislikes. It is a top-loader and needs a good seven inches above its top to open fully. Inside it sports a sled-mounted mechanism built into a metal tray, screwed onto a piece of Medite and suspended by four springs, giving very good isolation from external vibration. Further pieces of Medite, each individually separated from the main chassis on isolating feet, support the power supply and logic circuits. There are two toroidal transformers, fed from a filtered mains inlet. The logic and decoding board has all the hallmarks of a Far Eastern unit but it is supplemented by additional small boards for D/A conversion and digital output, plus associated dedicated power supplies. Construction is a little shoe-horned in places but looks robust enough and the finish is excellent.

The *Attesa* DAC — properly, the *ATT-DA2* — actually comes in two boxes, one containing the (monstrously over-specified) power supply, the other the DAC proper.

Both boxes match the styling of the transport and side-by-side match it for width. Inside the DAC box is a single small board bearing additional power-supply regulation plus the receiver and D/A circuits. The D/A chip itself is the same as used in the *Attesa* transport, as are the high-quality op-amps buffering the output. Three coaxial (BNC) inputs are fitted, with an optional module providing either a fourth coaxial input or an optical (Toslink or AT&T) input.

Operation is slick and hassle-free, although track search is slow-ish and you have to use a CD puck (Roksan's is magnetic) to keep the disc on its spindle. Programming can only be carried out using the remote control but is straightforward. Phase reversal is available on the DAC and all three sampling rates are supported.

Presented, as we found out later, twice in the blind-listening sequence, this player demonstrated just why one should never trust first judgements in a new listening environment. Heard as the first player in the group it was criticised by two listeners who later found much more to praise. Even so, certain qualities clearly stood out, such as good portrayal of detail and good imaging. Referring principally to the later auditioning, with the panel well used to the system and recordings, comments such as "believable piano tone", "uncluttered sound" and "big, live and with plenty of bite" give some good pointers to a sound which was generally liked with only small reservations. One of these concerns bass which was referred to a couple of times as slightly overblown and diffuse, although certainly well extended.



#### THE LAB REPORT

According to my computer, the technical heritage of Roksan's *ATT-DA2* DAC can be traced right back to the *ROK-DA1* reviewed four years ago in issue 113. This latest iteration also employs a very straightforward implementation of Crystal's CS4328 bitstream converter, complete with an external DC supply feed and further on-board regulation. Once again, Burr-Brown op-amps are used in the final analogue stage but the overall output level is now reduced to a relatively low 1.38V. This is some -3.2dB below the nominal two-volt standard and must be accounted for in any A/B demonstration if Roksan is not to suffer a disadvantage.

Distortion increases to around 0.07 per cent at peak level/high frequencies thanks to a strong third harmonic (just like the *ROK-DA1*) and yet, at lower levels, its performance is comparable to other implementations of the Crystal chip. So, low-level linearity is held to within tight +0.1/-0.4dB limits while distortion at, say, -30dB, is dominated by an innocuous carpet of noise at less than 0.03 per cent. The 578psec worth of jitter, meanwhile, is populated with data-induced sidebands, presumably caused by the S/PDIF link between Roksan's transport and DAC. End-of-side track access is also very sluggish, typically taking ten seconds. PM

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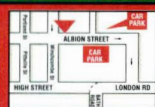
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**THORENS - VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £899.99/£699.99

- ▲ Lively and forward
- ▼ Perhaps a little too lively and forward!
- ✉ Portfolio Marketing, PO Box 442, Great Missenden, Bucks HP16 0JB
- ☎ (01494) 890277

**Thorens TCD2000/  
TDA2000 DAC**

I don't know how well Thorens' 2000 Series separates are going down in general, but I rather like their look. These two boxes match the family appearance with dark acrylic and gold plate dominating things, plus the distinctive, neatly aligned screws in the corners. Operation is slightly unusual, too, with the top-loading transport (like the Roksan, a complete player in its own right) giving access for loading via a smoked acrylic door which hinges upwards by some six inches, aided by a rather noisy motor. To raise the lid one can either give it a flick or press the left-hand knob; granted it's a lot prettier than a little black button, but unfortunately the spring behind it is rather strong and if the unit is standing on a smooth surface it is apt to slide backwards. The right-hand knob controls play/pause (press), track selection (a quick flick to left or right) and search (turn left or right and hold). The alarmingly congested system remote control

gives direct track access but can be confusing to use. Basically, ergonomics are ingenious but could take some polishing.

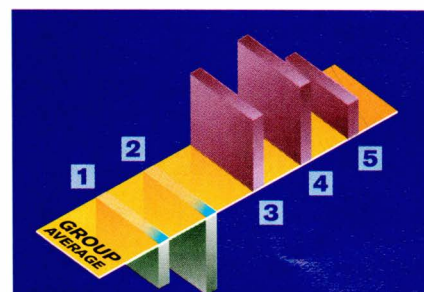
Inside the transport, a Philips mechanism is supported on three sprung mounts. One of the latest generation of highly integrated mechanisms, this carries a small circuit board which drives the digital output (coaxial, phono) directly. Unusually in a high-end CD player, there is also a headphone output.

The TDA 2000 DAC accepts up to three inputs (two coaxial, via phono sockets, and one Toslink) and deals with all three sampling rates. There is no phase inversion, but there is an indicator light for corrected errors, useful especially for DAT-recorder owners. The front-panel display lights up in an attractive shade of orange. Internally, the DAC shows signs of making an effort to achieve audiophile cred with a large sheet of solid copper which, despite appearances, does not go right under the circuitry. Then there is what appears to be a pair of chunky toroidal transformers — except that they're actually decorative plastic cans over a pair of small frame transformers. Still, the basic componentry and construction seem okay, if not outstanding at the price.

If this player attracted few enough actual criticisms, it seems to have excited little enthusiasm either. On balance the panel found it a lively performer with quite good rendition of detail and speed. However, men-

tion was made of treble "splashiness" and bass was felt not to be perfectly controlled. One listener commented on some midrange coloration. On a more positive note, another found it "vibrant and colourful" and it was generally felt to be quite immediate.

Later listening sessions turned up a distinct tendency to lack of bass control, which in some material (Donald Fagen's rather chunky bass lines being a case in point) can sound quite impressive but in other pieces becomes wearing. There was further evidence of splashy treble, with hi-hat developing a rather aggressive fizz, and piano came across as unnaturally hard and bright. Orchestral material again suffered slightly in the treble and was neither particularly easy to hear-through, nor very involving in the long run. However, if you like a sound that comes out and gets you then this player might appeal rather more. It is certainly up-front in its presentation.

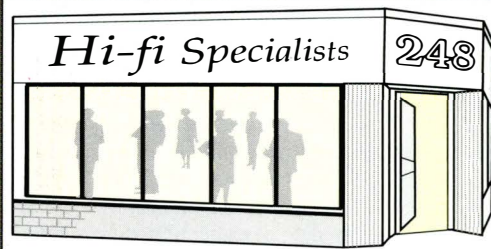


1	SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	-32%
2	JITTER	-55%
3	PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	50%
4	HARMONIC DISTORTION	55%
5	LINEARITY	24%

**THE LAB REPORT**

In many respects, this new combination has no obvious comparison in the realm of 'high-end' audio. Sure enough, the transport section is based around a linear-tracking CDM12 mechanism, isolated on a free-floating three-point suspension, but it's the partnering TDA2000 DAC that houses the surprise. Here we find one of Philips' TDA1307 eight-times digital filters (with selectable third/fourth-order noise shaping) feeding two dual-mono DAC stages based around 'push-pull' TDA1547 (DAC7) bit-converters. This yields a ripple-free response with very mild +0.1dB rise between 13-18kHz, a low 0.0005-0.005 per cent peak-level THD, a massive >120dB channel separation and stupendous 110dB S/N ratio (albeit compromised by a +10dB noise modulation).

On the debit side, this 'wide-open window' may serve to expose the worst excesses of the high 1950psec jitter along with a similar pattern of high-order sampling images seen in Audiolab's combination. Once again, the pattern of jitter is dominated by data-induced phenomena which could well explain the combination's fizzy treble and lack of perceived fine detailing. Otherwise, the measured low-level resolution holds true to within +0.0/-0.8dB over a full 100dB dynamic range. A nice set-up that could be impressive with a few tweaks. PM



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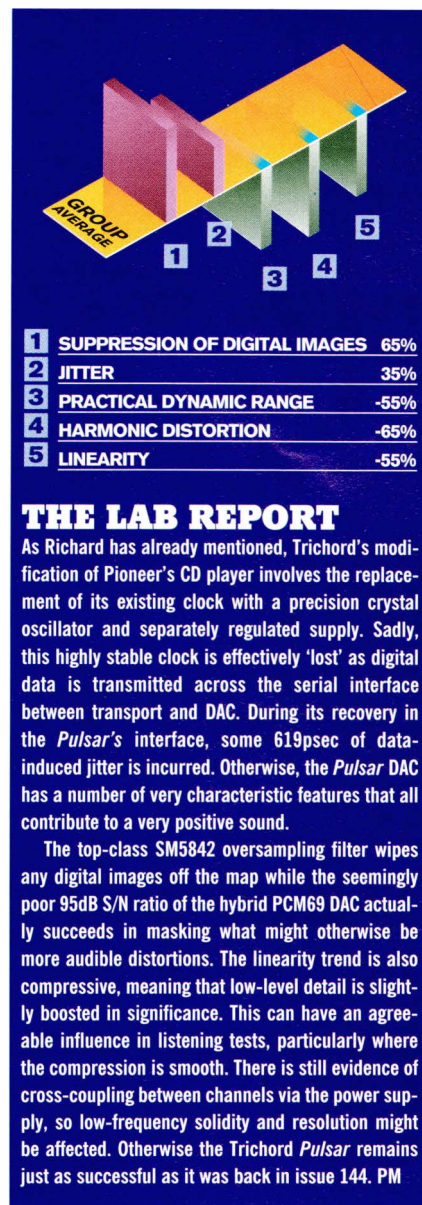
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lessly. Massed orchestral strings retained their bite and body without deteriorating into spit and fizz, while small jazz ensembles were clearly defined as a collection of individual players, each with a distinct sound and line, rather than just a homogenised mix. No surprise, then, to find this review concluding with a Best Buy swing-tag.

As a postscript, it is interesting to note that Pioneer's phono-socket digital output is still connected and so the two outputs can be compared. Let's just say Trichord's mods do it for me. A little 'wife-swapping' between transports and DACs confirmed that both transport and DAC are, individually, very fine!



### THE LAB REPORT

As Richard has already mentioned, Trichord's modification of Pioneer's CD player involves the replacement of its existing clock with a precision crystal oscillator and separately regulated supply. Sadly, this highly stable clock is effectively 'lost' as digital data is transmitted across the serial interface between transport and DAC. During its recovery in the *Pulsar's* interface, some 619psec of data-induced jitter is incurred. Otherwise, the *Pulsar* DAC has a number of very characteristic features that all contribute to a very positive sound.

The top-class SM5842 oversampling filter wipes any digital images off the map while the seemingly poor 95dB S/N ratio of the hybrid PCM69 DAC actually succeeds in masking what might otherwise be more audible distortions. The linearity trend is also compressive, meaning that low-level detail is slightly boosted in significance. This can have an agreeable influence in listening tests, particularly where the compression is smooth. There is still evidence of cross-coupling between channels via the power supply, so low-frequency solidity and resolution might be affected. Otherwise the Trichord *Pulsar* remains just as successful as it was back in issue 144. PM

unit as received was set to 20-bit, dither off, jitter-free, phase normal; a brief check suggested this is generally ideal. There are only two inputs on the DAC, coaxial (BNC) and Toslink. Operation of the transport is fast and slick and the DAC certainly gave no complaints in use.

The panelist's comments from the blind listening tests show a general sense of warming to this combination. One panellist shifted his stance from "competent yet uninspiring" on the first track heard to "open and clear" and "plenty of weight" by the fourth, while another commented: "very sweet-toned" and "quite dramatic". There was the odd voice of complaint; for instance in a Paolo Conté track, one listener felt that the piano was "plodding along" and another found its rendition of solo piano "a little flat and uninvolved".

With listening over a longer period at home, however, Trichord's pains were more readily justified. Perhaps the most obvious feature of the sound is its solidity, which places the performers fair and square in front of the listener (or to the side as imaging demands!) without either dumping them in one's lap or making them seem vague and discorporate, as can happen. More important in the long term, however, is the player's lack of 'fatigue factor'; indeed it was arguably the only player in this group that kept the listener's attention consistently for long periods without inducing either boredom or a wish to go away. Where all the others seemed after a few minutes to suffer mild distortion on solo piano, for instance, this one remained perfectly clean and it tracked the changing dynamics of the music effort-

### TRICHORD - VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £699/£1,395

- ▲ Clear, solid, detailed and eminently listenable
- ▼ Too bad they don't match visually
- ✉ Trichord Research Ltd, 73 Church Street, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 2AE
- ☎ (01684) 573524

### Trichord Research Digital Turntable/Pulsar Series One

As mentioned previously, Trichord's transport is actually a budget Pioneer CD player (one of the 'Stable Platter Mechanism' range), modified by Trichord. On quick inspection, the modification seems to consist of applying a Trichord sticker over the Pioneer badge (though not on the instruction manual!) and replacing the analogue output sockets with a BNC socket on the back. Inside, however, there are two additional boards contributing to the unit's claimed low-jitter output. The DAC, by contrast, is all Trichord's own work, and unfortunately bears no visual resemblance whatsoever to the transport. Housed in a simple Medite sleeve it is functionally but smartly finished, and well-made internally with all kinds of high-quality components and various tweaks such as heatsinks on several ICs.

This combination undoubtedly offers the most features among the foursome tested here, what with Pioneer's extensive programming and track-access features, and Trichord's options of 18-bit or 20-bit filter mode, dither on or off, 'jitter-free' or 'synchronous' operation and phase inversion (all on a miniature rear-mounted switch). The

## CONCLUSION

Awarding Recommendations and Best Buys is often a touchy matter, and this review is no exception. There seems little wrong with three of the players, but unfortunately for Roksan and Audiolab the real star here was not the dearest combination. Thorens provided by far the cheapest offering but perhaps also sonically the weakest, and those ergonomic quirks niggle. So in a sense it seems all or nothing; sorry

Thorens, but it was ever so close... Nevertheless, there were aspects to admire in all three, and qualified Recommendations seem appropriate for the Roksan and Audiolab pairings.

Trichord's combination shows another way: detail, imaging, solid bass, smart treble, low fatigue — and the best user interface. How could we not award it our highest accolade? Best Buy!

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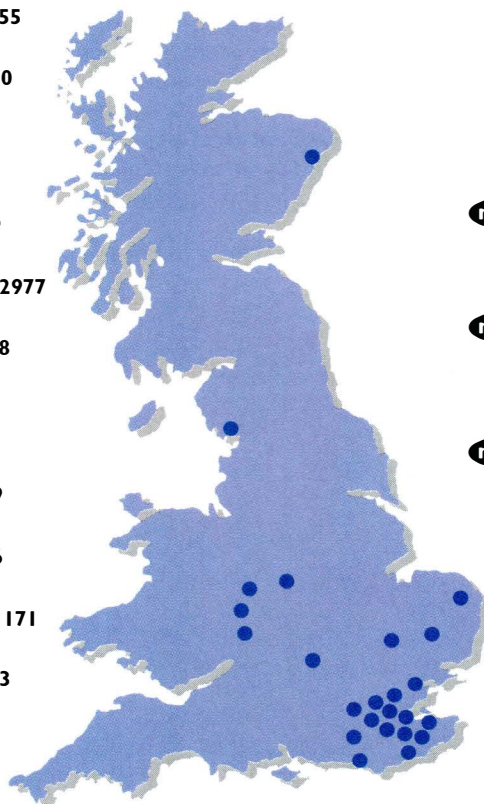
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# Volume Control

Amplifiers today are as diverse in character as they are in price. **Alvin Gold** and **Paul Miller** put 14 to the test to find out which ones top the pops.

**H**ere's what many long-term HFC groupies have been waiting for: a test of no less than 14 integrated amplifiers, at prices ranging from £200 to £700. This price-range more-or-less defines the integrated amplifier market, apart from a number of very low-end designs, and an equally select group of esoteric amplifiers that ordinary mortals like you and I will probably have to file under "if I win the lottery/if pigs learn to fly..."

Because our test group covers such a broad price range, we decided to subdivide them into three price bands — below £300, £300-£500 and above £500, which should help when making a real-life buying decision. Nevertheless, all the listening judgements were made with respect to the whole group, as you will see from the following tests.

The amplifiers chosen for this test are interesting in several ways. They cover a relatively limited range of power outputs — most fit between 35-70 Watts per channel. It became obvious early on, however, that real-life power did not always correlate with the numbers on the manufacturer's data sheets.

This is not altogether hard to understand. Power output ratings are long-term sustainable numbers, and are usually measured as if across high-power resistors. Music, however, is transient by nature, typically consisting of a few cycles at very high power (compared to the mean), followed by a longer period at much lower levels. The ordinary static power figures fail to say much about how loud an amplifier will actually go. For example, a doubling in Watts to a three dB increase in loudness may be hardly noticeable in prac-

tice. On the other hand, an amplifier which can't deliver large peak volts, or whose power delivery collapses into low impedances (remember that eight Ohm speakers will typically be seen by amplifiers as a much lower instantaneous impedance when delivering powerful transients) will sound less powerful, irrespective of the power output figure. Without giving away any secrets, the real-life range of volume levels achievable by the test group is much wider than 2:1, and this is only the beginning of the complications inherent in testing real-world amplifiers.

The models tested this time out were also diverse in other ways. Some were biased towards Class A, or had tailored response shapes designed to emulate (crudely or otherwise) the characteristics of valve amplifiers. Some had phono inputs, or made provision to add phono boards internally — a useful step in keeping vinyl alive without penalising those who simply want a line level amplifier. Some had tone controls, others had second sets of speaker sockets. As you can see, the permutations mount quickly: amplifiers are not just black boxes with gain. These days, they're not even all black!

## THE CAST LIST, IN ORDER OF PRICE

Denon PMA-350SE .....	£199.99
Sherwood AX-7030R .....	£249.95
Technics SU-A700 Mk III .....	£249.95
Harman/Kardon HK620 .....	£249.99
Arcam Alpha 8 .....	£349.90
Rega Elex .....	£398
Kenwood KA-7090R .....	£399.95
Pioneer A-300R Precision .....	£399.95
Magnum IA-200 .....	£495
Musical Fidelity A2 .....	£499.99
Talk Electronics Storm I .....	£499.95
Cyrus IIII .....	£598
Densen Beat B-100 .....	£599
Teac A-BX7R .....	£699.95

## HOW WE DID THE LISTENING TESTS

As usual, 'blind' listening panel tests were arranged for the amplifiers, using a high-quality source component (Wadia 23 CD player) and loudspeakers (Mission 753 column loudspeakers), which were chosen to allow the amplifiers to stretch their wings, so to speak, without unnecessary restriction. Interconnects were Nordost *Flatline Gold*, and the biwire speaker cables, also from Nordost, were *Red Dawn*.

Panel testing was spread over two days, allowing a number of repeats which were used, in part, to assess and weigh the reliability of the responses. Naturally, all equipment was heard 'blind', and levels were monitored using a test signal to ensure the volume level remained consistent between test runs to help eliminate as many variables as possible.

### WHAT MUSIC DID WE USE?

**Michelle Shocked:** *When I Grow Up* from *Short Sharp Shocked* on Cooking Vinyl 836 343-2

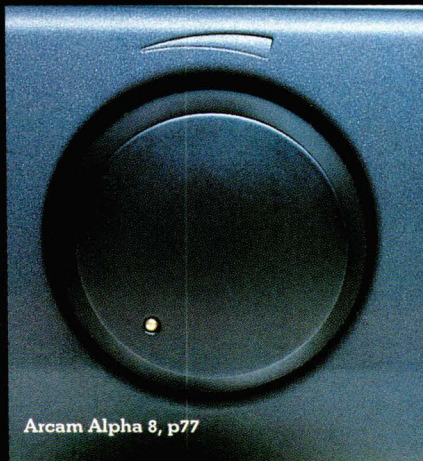
**Mozart Rondo:** *Allegro from Bassett Clarinet Concerto in A, K.622* — Colin Lawson/The Hanover Band on Nimbus NI5228

**Percy Grainger:** *Lincolnshire Posy (first mvt)* — Eastman Wind Ensemble on Sony SK47198

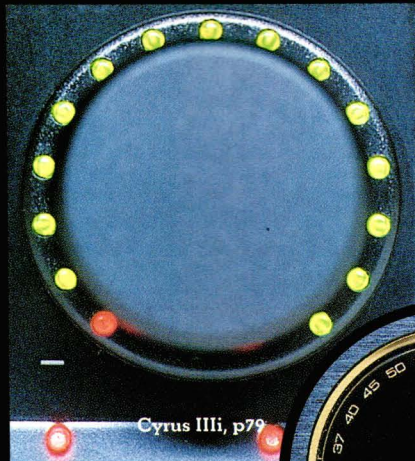
**John Lee Hooker:** *Mr Lucky* on Silvertone ORE CD519

The products were also assessed separately, using a wider variety of partnering source components and speakers from Silverado, Mission and Monitor Audio, Micromega CD players and Radio 3 and 4. The range of music was much wider of course; there was no need to be limited to a handful of discs.

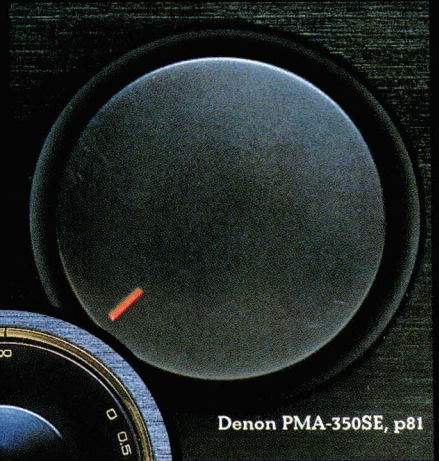
Special thanks for holding firm under fire go to those redoubtable souls who volunteered for the blind panel tests, without having been warned to wear flak jackets. They were Russell Kauffmann (Densen UK), David Inman (The Audio Marketing Department), Robin Marshall (Mission Research), Gary Mardell (Mordaunt-Short), and Alan O'Rourke (Ruark Loudspeakers), with Jason Kennedy and Alan Sircom from the *Hi-Fi Choice* editorial team, who also provided the Luncheon Vouchers.



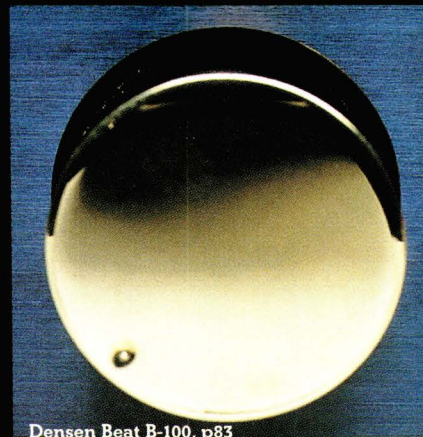
Arcam Alpha 8, p77



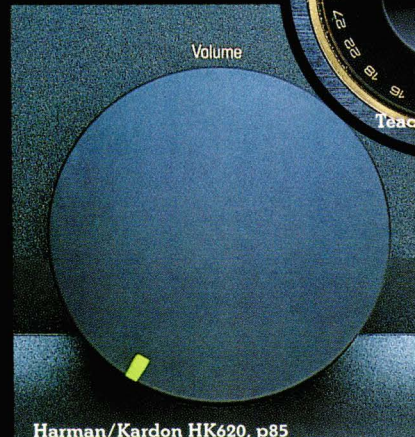
Cyrus IIIi, p79



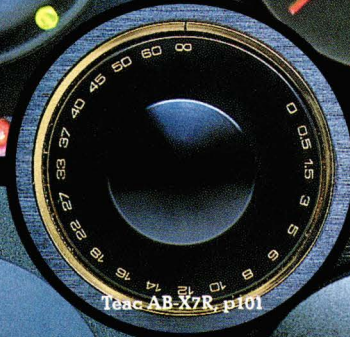
Denon PMA-350SE, p81



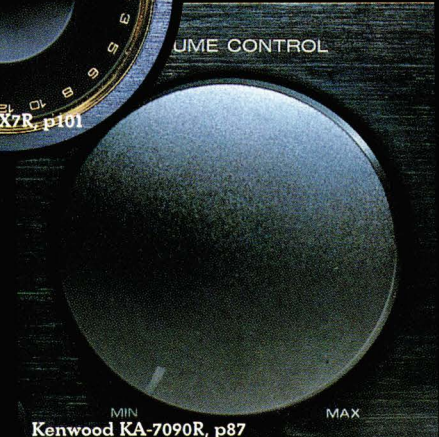
Densen Beat B-100, p83



Harman/Kardon HK620, p85



Teac AB-X7R, p101



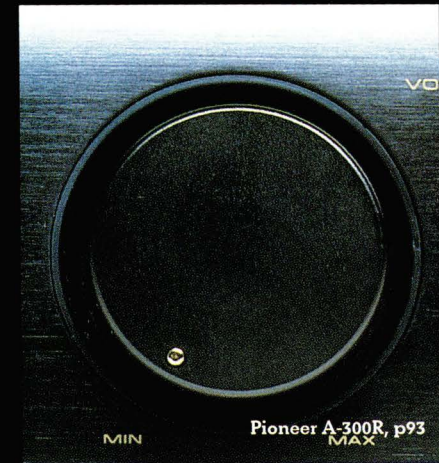
Kenwood KA-7090R, p87



Magnum IA-200, p89



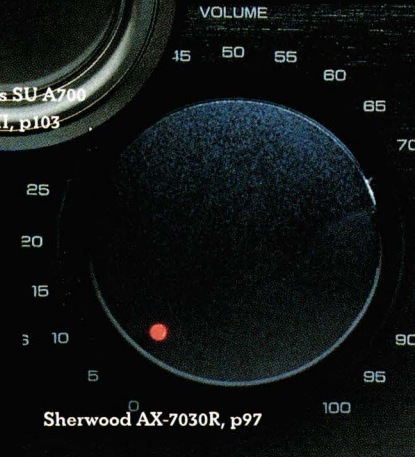
Musical Fidelity A2, p91



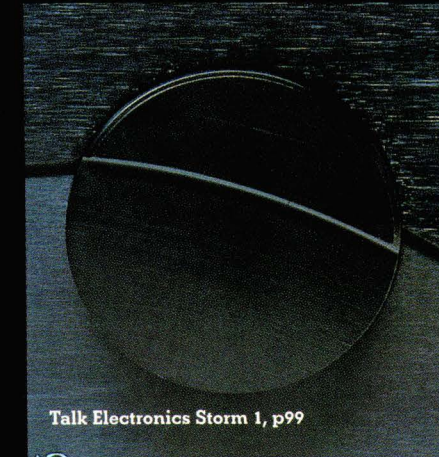
Pioneer A-300R, p93



Rega Elex, p95



Sherwood AX-7030R, p97



Talk Electronics Storm 1, p99

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# Arcam Alpha 8

From the UK's leading manufacturer of hi-fi components in general, and amplifiers in particular, the old *Alpha 6 Plus* has become the UK's single best-selling amplifier, which places a special onus of responsibility on its replacement, the *Alpha 8*.

The new *Alpha* features softer and more subtle styling. The look of the old *Alpha 6 Plus* has been improved, with updated panel graphics and new anti-vibration feet. Non-magnetic aluminium replaces steel for the top plate, and the base has been reinforced as an anti-resonance measure.

An internal redesign has improved sound quality; there were clear signs that the old *Alphas* had passed their sell-by dates sonically. The *Alpha 8* is easily upgradeable by using pre-amplifier output sockets, and the motorised volume control can be activated by any current Arcam handset, including the optional *CR30* 'Handi-Remote'. Two pairs of speakers can be fed, one of them through a front-panel switch.

Although the *Alpha 8* is equipped with a phono input, it can be switched to line operation if required. Rated power output is 50 Watts per channel into an eight Ohm load.

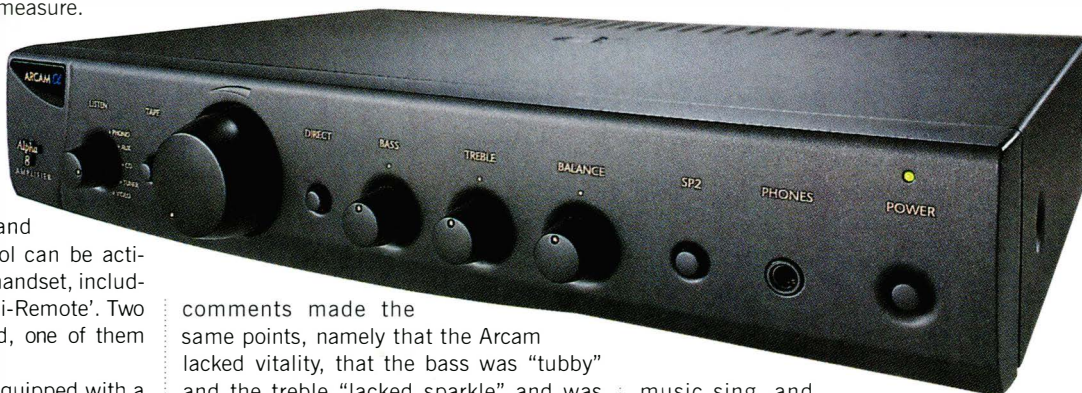
## Sound Quality

In many ways a likeable amplifier, and certainly a commercial-sounding one, the *Alpha 8* may prove disappointing to enthusiasts looking for a more vital, engaging product that's willing to tell the musical truth even when it isn't palatable. There was some disparity in scoring, but the average figure was well under five out of ten. Many of the panellists'

"beguiling and un-synthetic," though he also voiced the view, echoed by others, that the sound "lacked conviction" and was so laid back it was horizontal.

## Conclusions

Each of the views expressed above has validity. The *Alpha 8* is warm and forgiving, and it is certainly easy on the ear — there is little mileage in criticising an amplifier for what it was never meant to be in the first place. Valid criticism, however, can be directed at products that fail to make the



comments made the same points, namely that the Arcam lacked vitality, that the bass was "tubby" and the treble "lacked sparkle" and was "uninvolving". "There's a lot of bass," one panellist wrote about the Michelle Shocked track, "but it seems out of control."

Something more — or perhaps less — than mere coincidence is at work here. I suspect that the amplifier has been designed to sound precisely how we found it, to appeal to buyers who find traditional hi-fi systems too sharp and thin, too 'hi-fi-ish' if you like. Certainly, the *Alpha 8* attracted plenty of admiration for its smoothness and warmth: "good architecture and presence," wrote one panellist. Another described the Arcam as

music sing, and this is precisely where the Arcam is at its weakest. There are amplifiers, including models from Talk Electronics, Musical Fidelity and Magnum in this very group, which are smooth and relaxed but don't sap the tension and edge from the music. This is what the Arcam fails to achieve. In the end, I lost sympathy for a Mendelssohn *Octet* that was slack and distant, for a Gardiner Beethoven symphony set that was short of adrenaline, and for Scottish band Capercaillie who sounded half asleep at the wheel. AG

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £349.90

▲ Sensible, well-organised features, strong packaging and an easy-on-the-ear sound.

▼ A good starter model, but fails to satisfy when the going gets tough.

✉ A&R Cambridge Ltd, Denny Industrial Centre, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB5 9PB  
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## THE LAB REPORT

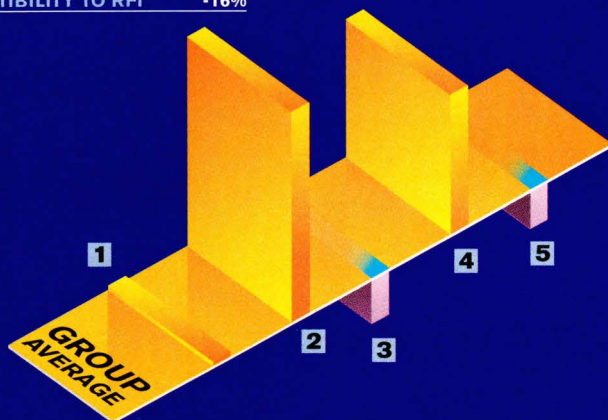
Other manufacturers may talk of their 'high current' designs but Arcam just goes right ahead and does it with models like the *Alpha 5* and *6*, the latter having now evolved into today's *Alpha 8* with its massive 22.1A current reserve (equal to bursts of 488W into one Ohm) making it the most speaker-tolerant design in our test. So, if you don't like the sound of the '8, it won't be for its inability to drive your loudspeakers!

In fact, its similarity in performance with the *Alpha 6 Plus* (issue 154) is quite uncanny. Design modifications include new electronic protection (instead of fuses), and a revised layout and driver stage to reduce noise and distortion. In practice, the volume control's channel matching has improved markedly but the huge 88.1dB S/N ratio (ref. one W/eight Ohms) remains unchanged, as does the pattern of distortion (typically 0.005 per cent mid-band and 0.05-0.08 per cent through the treble).

Sadly, it's the very low noise of the *Alpha 8* that serves to expose the worst excesses of its sensitivity to spurious RF noise, right up to 340MHz, while the very low 7.8 kOhm input load places added stress on the partnering CD player. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

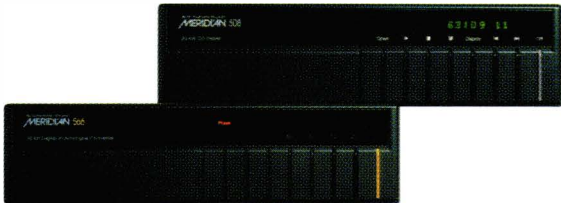
1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	2%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	89%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-19%
4	NOISE	59%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	-16%



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# Cyrus IIIi



Visually identical to the Cyrus III, this amp's 'IIIi' suffix brings with it myriad under-the-skin changes. Many are designed to improve ergonomics and operational versatility, others are directed at enhancing sound quality. The fine Cyrus die-cast alloy chassis, formed in a piece with the heat sink fins and the hallmark of the Cyrus range, is unaltered.

The shoe-box format means it continues to be one of the smallest and least intrusive amplifiers available. However, when placed alongside, the optional PSX power supply gives the combination the size and shape of a standard full-width amplifier.

Although the IIIi looks like a simple, linear development of the III, the reality is rather different. It is a distillation of the work that went into the pre/power amplifier, and uses a new generation of surface-mount devices in a novel configuration, which includes current feedback technology instead of voltage feedback. As a result, the IIIi is said to be faster and more linear than its predecessor.

The original solid-state input source switching has been replaced by relays on the grounds of reduced aural intrusion, and circuit paths are both shorter and more sym-

metrical than in the predecessor. Operationally, changes are strictly limited, but the phono input can be converted to line operation by a dealer. In this configuration there is a total of six line inputs and one tape circuit. A button-bound remote control is included with the package.

### Sound Quality

This pretty amplifier met with a lukewarm response from the panel, some of whom were distinctly underwhelmed. Their forcefulness reminded me that the amplifiers were presented to the panel blind, and that they did not know what they were listening to or even which models were included in the test. "How can music this dainty sound so full of lead boots?" said one ex-Christmas-card recipient, referring to the Grainger. "The bass in particular sounds too slow and cumbersome."

Other comments were slightly more moderate in tone — but not much. "Distant and confused," was an all too typical reaction, while another remarked on the lack of high-frequency detail.

The John Lee Hooker test track was described in these terms: "Huge swathes of

midband detail are being thrown out.

There's a curious accent on the Fender Stratocaster and nothing else. It sounds like J LH singing a duet with himself." This might be a real boon for those who like Fender Strats, but it's a real turn-off for those who don't. The average score for the test as a whole, across the panel, was close to three out of a possible ten.

It is true that the Michelle Shocked song impressed one with its "good separation," and the Mozart was praised for its "good balance," but these remarks were hedged by others pointing to the Mission's softness and lack of attack, common factors throughout. The bass was also felt to be too laid back, and vocals were "closed in".

### Conclusions

It is difficult to argue with the lack of balance noted above, but it is worth mentioning that the balance Mission has gone for here is out of character with previous Cyrus amplifiers. It may be that the amp will be improved with the optional PSX power supply, but the basic design lacks the instant appeal of its predecessors. AG

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £598

▲ Plenty of midband...  
 ▼ ...offset by congestion and lack of control at the frequency extremes.

✉ Centraforce Ltd, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED  
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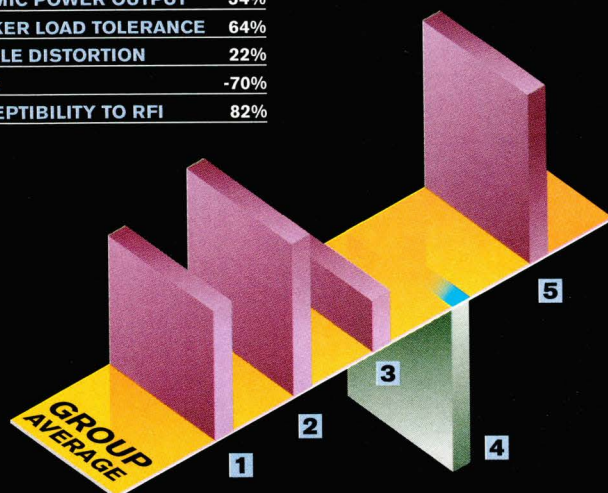
## THE LAB REPORT

Now equipped with a true complementary, instead of quasi-complementary, bipolar output stage, relay input switching instead of CMOS devices and a current rather than voltage-feedback topology, Mission's IIIi bears little technical resemblance to the Best Buy Cyrus III reviewed in issue 140. In many key areas, however, its performance remains quite unchanged. The same power supply is employed, so the 75W/111W eight/four-Ohm power output is identical even though its electronic protection has been relaxed (in line with Choice's earlier suggestion) to allow a maximum current delivery of 13A (this was previously just 8.5A).

Distortion remains vanishingly low at 0.0016-0.0028 per cent (midband, one W to two-thirds output) while the digital volume control now has its working dynamic range extended from 60dB to 76-77dB before dropping into mute. Even the 250mV line input sensitivity, the 22kOhm input loading and 0.038-Ohm output impedance remain unaffected. But there are differences. Specifically, the amplifier's S/N at one W/eight Ohms has deteriorated from 89.8dB to just 80.8dB even though the figure at two-thirds power has slipped just two to three dB from 98.9dB to 96.3dB. Could this be the root cause of the IIIi's poor showing? PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

- |   |                        |      |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT   | 54%  |
| 2 | SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE | 64%  |
| 3 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION     | 22%  |
| 4 | NOISE                  | -70% |
| 5 | SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI  | 82%  |



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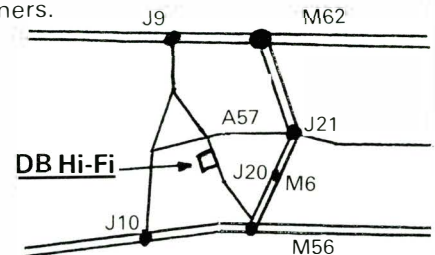
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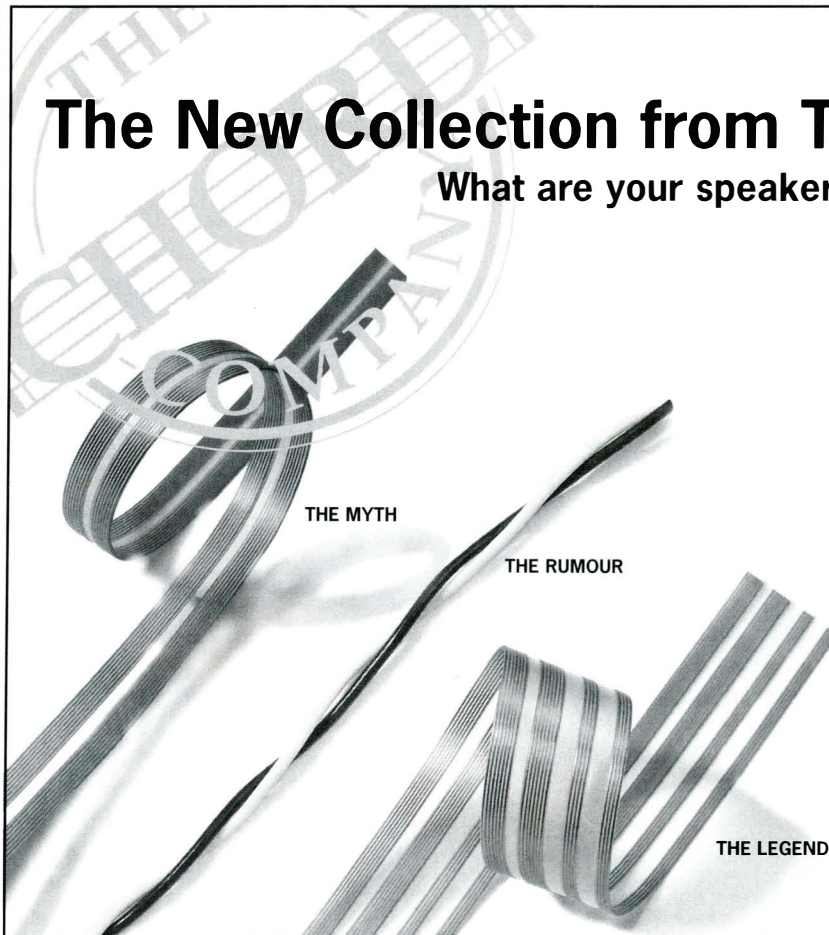
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# Denon PMA-350SE

The change in suffix from MkII to SE fails to do justice to a root and branch reworking of Denon's middle-ranking amplifier. This model bites the bullet with a control/feature set limited to volume, balance, source selection and a headphone socket — there are no tone controls or a tape monitor switch. On the plus side, the volume control is motorised, and can be driven by a remote control that costs an extra £15. An internal phono step-up will set you back

with a 'high' but unspecified current delivery. The main story here is the collaboration between Japanese engineers and a UK-based team, which led to the PMA-350SE.

### Sound Quality

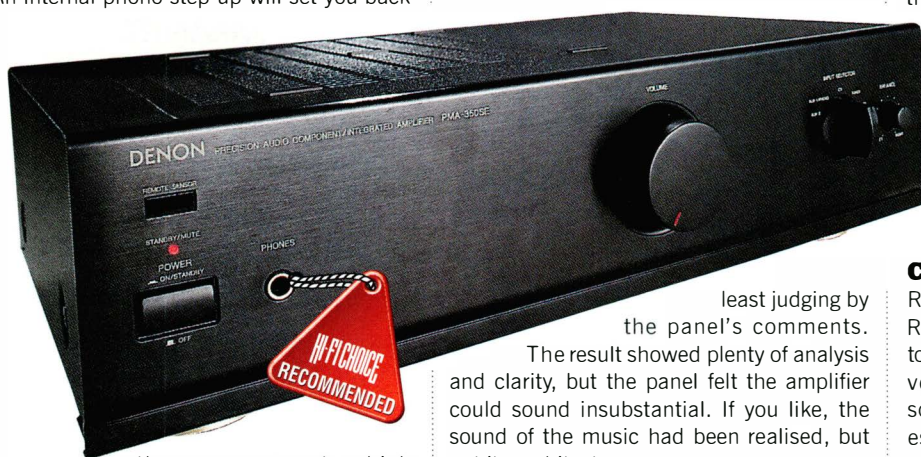
This is a very competently realised design whose only failing is a conceptual one: its balance hasn't been allowed to stray far enough from earlier Denon amplifiers, at

"bright, insubstantial treble... the clarinet has no wood in it," (Mozart).

One panellist wrote that the Denon was "forward, hard and not very satisfying," but this is perhaps more an indictment of the speakers than the electronics. My own hands-on with well-behaved budget speakers and the Silverados (see introduction) pointed towards an unusually articulate and intelligible amplifier, a little lightweight with the Missions, but almost ideally balanced with less forthright speakers. One errant panellist seemed to agree as he wrote: "Space, the final frontier," before describing the Michelle Shocked track as having "nice acoustic instruments and superb ambience," and the Grainger as "open and delicate with fine dynamics." I rest my case.

### Conclusions

Recognising differences of critical opinion, a Recommendation remains in order, subject to the qualification that system matching is very important. Speakers that otherwise sound blowsy or boomy may work well, especially in small rooms. Avoid bright-sounding speakers and sources. AG



the same amount, which raises the price of a fully configured PMA-350SE to £230. Four line inputs and one tape circuit are provided.

Changes are not confined to the controls. The circuit is said to include unusually heavy-duty power transistors with high-grade, point-to-point wiring and terminations, a symmetrical power-amp layout (very 'in' this season), low negative feedback, a 'substantial' transformer-cum-PSU and so on. Power output is rated at 50 Watts per eight Ohms and 80 Watts per four Ohms,

least judging by the panel's comments. The result showed plenty of analysis and clarity, but the panel felt the amplifier could sound insubstantial. If you like, the sound of the music had been realised, but not its architecture.

As the least costly model in the test group, the PMA-350SE attracted mixed comments, with scores ranging from three-and-a-half to seven out of ten. Most of the negatives concerned the bass. With the largish Mission 753s, it was thought thin and lacking authority. As one panellist put it: "there's bass extension, but no drive," (John Lee Hooker). Conversely, the bass was felt superior to that of larger amps, the Kenwood in particular. Comments about the lightweight bass included complaints of a

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £199.99 Options: system remote control, £15; phono step-up (dealer fit), £15.

▲ Articulate and clean-sounding amplifier with simple controls — an important step forward for Denon.

▼ Still too bright and thin for some tastes.

✉ Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 9UG

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## THE LAB REPORT

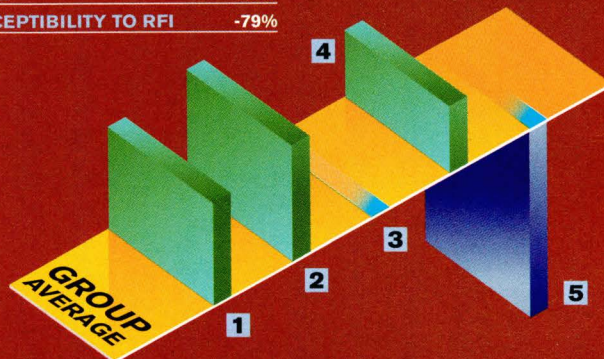
The full history of Denon's PMA-350 can be traced back almost six years to issue 92, though its nearest relative was the PMA-350II in issue 134. Denon's latest modifications have realised no practical increase in power output into eight or four Ohms (80W and 130W respectively) but its maximum current delivery has risen from 15.8A to 18.2A, suggesting it will be even more tolerant of errant loudspeakers.

The biggest changes, however, concern the amplifier's output impedance which has risen from 0.046 Ohms to 0.18 Ohms, possibly as a result of compliance with EMC regulations. More importantly, distortion now shows strong third, fifth, seventh harmonic components with the third coming to dominate at higher power outputs. I can't believe this pattern of distortion was intended, particularly as it's 30 times higher than that incurred by the earlier PMA-350II. Both channels showed the same effect, incidentally.

On a separate note, the amplifier's S/N ratio has been hugely improved from 80dB (mkII) to 85dB (SE) ref. one W per eight Ohms, though its sensitivity to RF interference has 'shifted' away from the 100-300MHz region right up to 900-950MHz. This is very unusual. PM

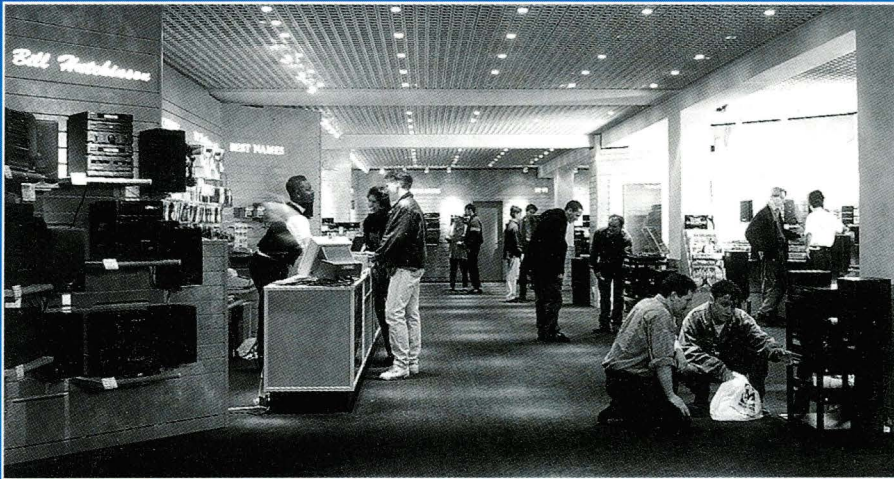
## HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	44%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	50%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	0%
4	NOISE	29%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	-79%



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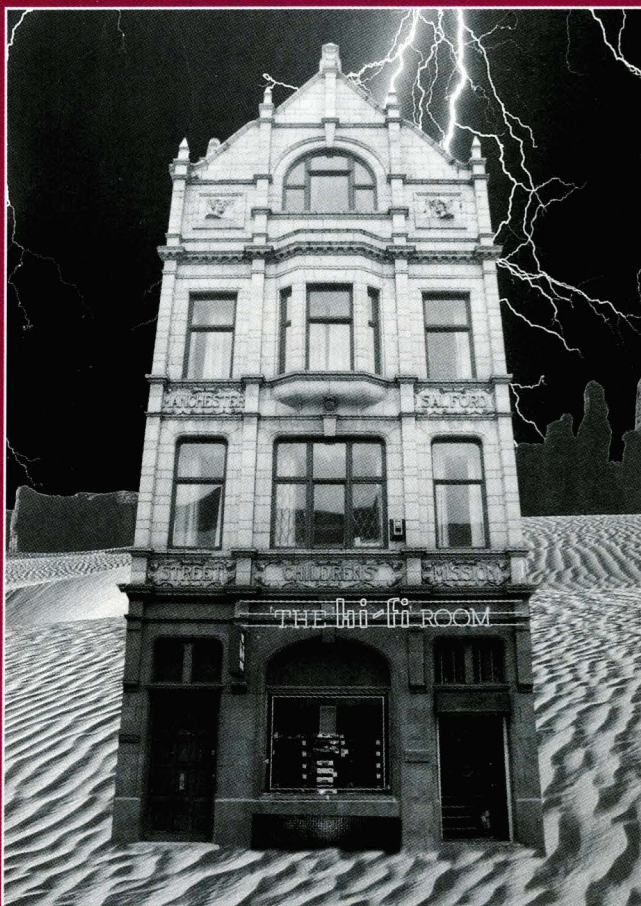
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# Densen BEAT B-100

**D**ensen is a Danish company of about five years standing, formed by the one-time local distributor for Onix. Densen subscribes to the 'air guitar' factor, in which musical involvement and the ability to boogie are determined by the equipment's rhythm and timing. These are the over-riding design priorities, though the designer seems to be aware of alternative prescriptions of amplifier excellence, such as imaging and transparency. As far as possible, Densen amplifiers are designed to satisfy both sets of criteria.

The heavy, solid and ultra-simple looking *Beat-100* consists of a passive pre-amplifier with the shortest possible signal path (switching and volume control are performed locally near the inputs) feeding a relatively massive power amplifier. Its 360VA transformer is backed by massive reservoir capability and a sophisticated power-supply design. The result is a high-current amplifier said to be capable of 60 Watts per channel into eight Ohms, and around 100 into four Ohms. Densen claims there is absolutely no overall negative feedback, though there is modest local feedback in places to preserve stability.

The design includes a demagnetiser, which operates automatically on powering up after a period of inactivity. The casework is solid and non-resonant. Much of the circuitry uses high-tech SMD (surface mount) devices. Last, but not least, a moving-magnet phono step-up is available for £150.

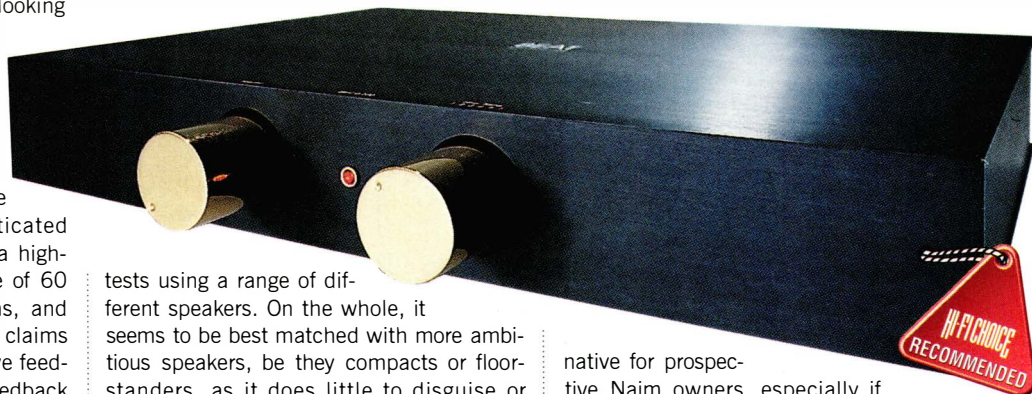
### Sound Quality

The *B-100* scored consistently in the panel tests, with an average just above seven out of ten. It continued to perform well in the subsequent hands-on

tests using a range of different speakers. On the whole, it seems to be best matched with more ambitious speakers, be they compacts or floor-standers, as it does little to disguise or smooth over the shortcomings of typical low-cost speakers. If you have a grainy, prominent tweeter, you had better change the amp — or the speakers.

that came in for the greatest praise, as the following comments indicate: "times well, big sound and easy to listen to" (general comment), "big, full-bodied sound" (John Lee Hooker), and "nice to hear some air and space for a change" (general comment). But one listener described the bass as 'one-note' and 'rubbery', a comment that may be a reflection on what sometimes appeared to be a slightly dirty treble quality.

Of all the amplifiers tested, this one comes closest to the quintessential sound of Naim, so the *B-100* is a potentially interesting alter-



native for prospective Naim owners, especially if extra power is required. I should stress, however, that no direct comparison with any Naim amplifier was undertaken. The *B-100* seems capable of coping with most types of load, but it isn't quite transparent or subtle enough for most panel speakers.

This is an amplifier I had some experience of before this test began. I already knew it to be a forceful, dynamic amplifier with strong musical architecture, if slightly lacking in subtlety and finesse. Broadly speaking, this is just how most of the panel saw it — or rather didn't, as the tests were conducted 'blind'. Predictably, it was the temporal and spatial elements of the sound

### Conclusions

A bold, powerful and authoritative amplifier with strong pace and timing, the *B-100* boogies along with the best. Recommended, especially where pace and space take precedence over grace! AG

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** £599

▲ Has the 'air guitar' factor: great rock and roll amplifier which is both authoritative and vital.

▼ Slightly unsubtle when used in certain refined amp/speaker combinations.

✉ Densen Audio Technologies, Randersvej 28, 6700 Esbjerg, Denmark

☎ (01582) 561227

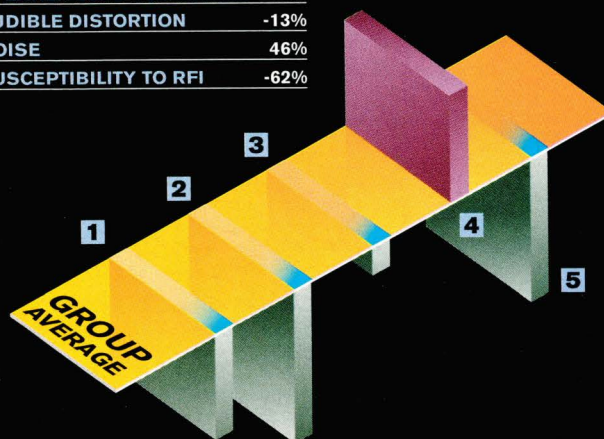
## THE LAB REPORT

Last tested in issue 154, the *BEAT B-100* has apparently enjoyed a number of performance-enhancing revisions. Specifically, the high DC offsets are now reduced to a manageable -seven mV (from 90mV) while crossover-like distortions have been reduced from 0.6 per cent (re. 20kHz/one W/eight Ohms) to 0.3 per cent in this instance. Nevertheless, distortion is still pretty high and remains dominated by extended odd-order (third-ninth) harmonics, particularly through the midband and lower treble, while the second harmonic picks up at higher frequencies.

Otherwise the *B-100* retains all its previous hallmarks, including the very flat and extended response and 70W/117W eight/four Ohm power output. As before, this represents an increase of some +2.5dB, suggesting Densen is using a very stiff and well-regulated power supply (which diminishes its dynamic headroom to just +0.75dB or 83W/80hms). Unfortunately, electronic protection still limits its maximum current output to 6.2A, preventing it from tackling really tricky speakers head-on. The 10kOhm input loading may also be unsuitable for some CD player/interconnect combinations while its sensitivity to RF noise in the 30-70MHz and 120-250MHz bands is further cause for concern over compatibility. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

- |   |                        |      |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT   | -46% |
| 2 | SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE | -65% |
| 3 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION     | -13% |
| 4 | NOISE                  | 46%  |
| 5 | SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI  | -62% |



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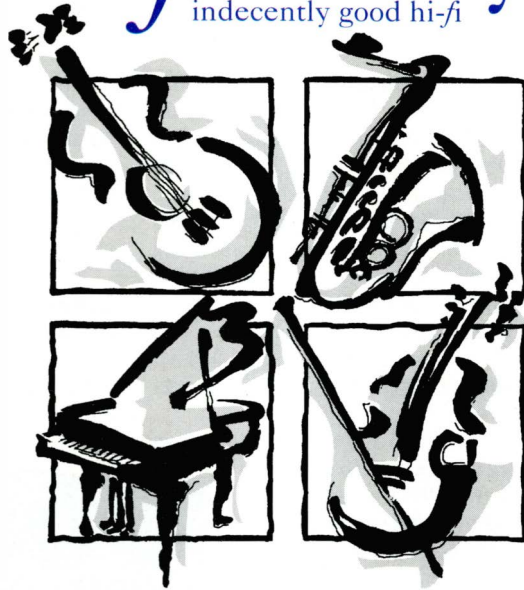
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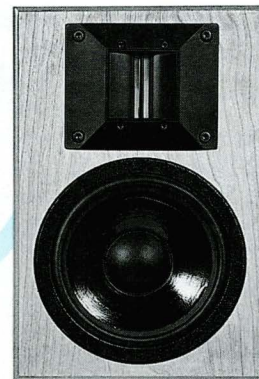
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# Harman/Kardon HK620

The *HK620* hardly represents a break with tradition, but successive generations of Harman/Kardon amplifiers are simpler and more refined than their predecessors, and the *HK620* is no exception. Bass, treble and balance controls have been retained, and two pairs of speakers can be connected and switched independently. The ergonomics are basically sound, though some may stumble over the slightly awkward input selector rocker switches. There are four line inputs and two tape circuits, with a tape copy mode. One of the tape circuits supports off-tape monitoring, which is useful for three-head tape deck users and is invaluable for those with Dolby Pro-Logic systems.

The modest power output is proof that H/K is not playing the numbers game. With 40 Watts per channel, it is towards the bottom of the acceptable general-purpose range. The selling price of £250 is undercut by a number of similarly powered and specified amplifiers, though not in this group. The +/-40 Amps peak current capability, however, is impressive, and bodes well for use with real-world, low impedance and/or reactive loads.

A rather crowded remote-control handset, capable of handling the basic functions

of a complete system, is included. The options list includes a discrete MM/MC add-in board (model *PH601*, cost £40), though it wasn't supplied for this test.

### Sound Quality

In the wake of many worthy amplifiers that didn't quite grasp this listener by the short and curlies, along comes the *HK620*, with no obvious distinguishing features other than its low price tag. It costs the same as

better than that of any other budget amps here. The *HK620* was also praised for its focus and coherence: "A good, spacious presentation with lots of depth and height," wrote one panellist of the Mozart, and timing was specifically mentioned on several occasions by three of the listening panel.

The only substantial criticism, and this was a one-off, suggested that the bass was "a little vague," and that the treble was "sharp, even strident," but the test Mission



the Technics *SU-A700* and appears to offer less on paper, but the situation is reversed when it comes to musical performance. The only model to undercut the *HK620* in our group is the Denon *PMA-350SE*.

It would be tedious to plough through the panel comments, which contain far too many phrases using the word 'good' to make, er, good reading. Only one listener had any substantial criticism, and even he scored the amp at five out of ten, which is one of his better marks. The others scored it much higher, the arithmetic average being a shade under seven.

Just about every performance area was singled out for praise. The frequency extremes, in particular, were thought tidy and in control, and the bass end was liked

speaker is a toughie for any budget amp. My own listening found the *HK620* had an easy, relaxed presence and a strong sense of detail right across the frequency band.

### Conclusions

The *HK620* is presentable, does everything reasonably well (usually better) and is cheap, which makes it an obvious candidate for a Best Buy flag. I was especially impressed by the *HK620*'s ability to ride roughshod over quite taxing musical passages, and its apparent disdain for difficult speakers. However, there isn't enough power for low-sensitivity speakers in big rooms. AG

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★★  
**PRICE** £249.99

- ▲ Easy going, lucid amplifier, which has no obvious vices...
- ▼ ...apart from awkward input selection switches.
- ✉ Gamepath Ltd, 25 Heathfield, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes MK12 6HR
- ☎ (01908) 317707

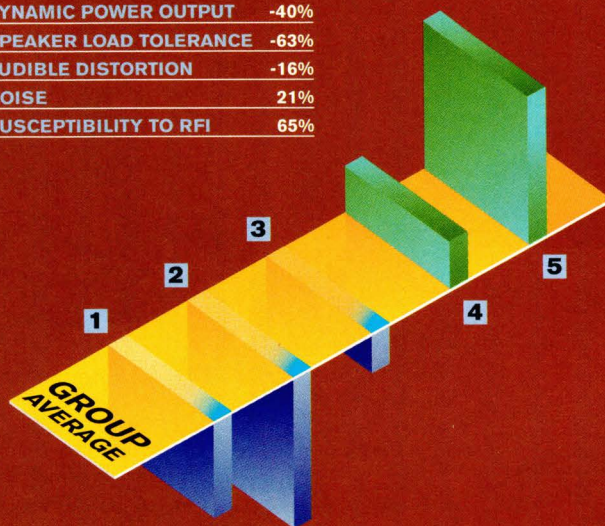
## THE LAB REPORT

The very same ingredients that ensured Harman/Kardon's *HK610* earned a Best Buy back in issue 149 are back, albeit in a beefed-up form, inside the bigger *HK620*. Power is up from 50W to 70W into eight Ohms, while the healthy +1.9dB boost to 110W into four Ohms load tells us that the amp is rather less 'speaker fussy' than the bar graph implies. In this instance, HK's electronic protection circuitry prevents five-msec bursts of current in excess of 14.3A. Harman's claim of 40A is typically extravagant and though 14A should be sufficient for most applications, it is lower than the 18.2A and 17.0A achieved by the Denon and Technics models in this same group. Hence the droopy bar graph.

Immunity to RF interference is very good indeed and has been achieved without squandering the wide 85dB S/N ratio (ref. one W per eight Ohms). The pattern of distortion is also comparable to the *HK610*, with a lone third harmonic tending to take over at higher frequencies and output levels (0.007 per cent midband to 0.04 per cent at HF). There is also a little boost to both upper bass and midrange, further enhancing the colour and character of this popular amplifier. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-40%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-63%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-16%
4	NOISE	21%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	65%



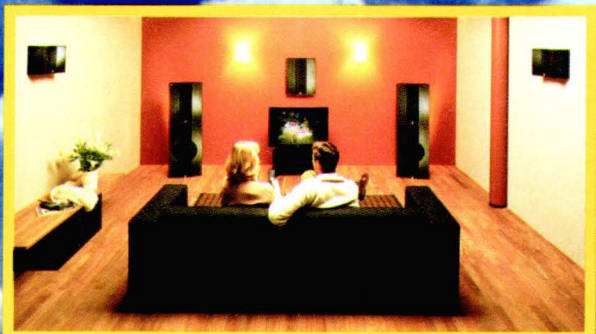
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# Kenwood KA-7090R

The obvious parallel for the Kenwood in this test is the Sherwood AX-7030R (the familiar sounding model name is entirely coincidental it seems). The casework is similarly massive and heavy, and the insides are well stuffed with circuit boards, a massive frame trans-

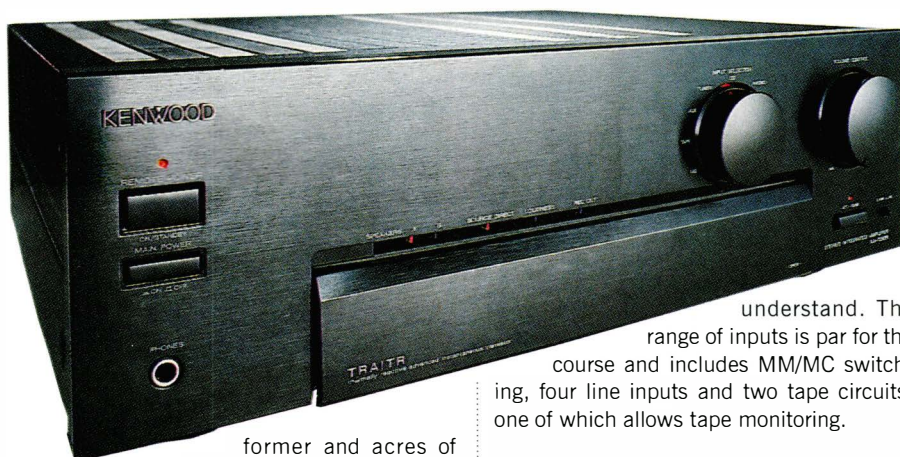
The Kenwood definitely gains on the ergonomics front, however, even without a remote control. The rotary controls are better shaped and easier to use. Most of the monitor controls are hidden behind a flap, though why this doesn't include the set-once-and-forget MM/MC switch is hard to

understand. The range of inputs is par for the course and includes MM/MC switching, four line inputs and two tape circuits, one of which allows tape monitoring.

I found the Kenwood's clarity, projection and consistency impressive. Only the bass was clearly open to criticism on the grounds of being lightweight and lacking in focus. The bottom line? This is a fair-sounding amplifier, but not one of the best. The Kenwood's sound quality turns out to be somewhat sensitive to volume levels. By common consent, it seemed slack and uneven at higher volume, but snapped into focus nicely as the volume dropped away. In both cases, however, the bass came across as light in balance. There was plenty of reasonably usable power on tap, however, and there are grounds for describing the Kenwood as an alternative to the amplifier that looks most like it in this group, the aforementioned Sherwood AX-7030R.

## Conclusions

The Kenwood has a somewhat enigmatic combination of virtues and vices, which in two blind panel listening sessions received well spread scores ranging from four all the way up to nine out of ten. It has the benefit of being more powerful than most, and its crisp and tidy (if lightweight) sound certainly has appeal. However, it misses out on formal Recommendation by a whisker. AG



former and acres of heat sinking, though the Kenwood uses better quality components. It is also more sensibly endowed, with a full tape-record output selector that operates independently of the main input selector (a rotary-encoded control serves both purposes). Tone controls and a bypass switch are included, but no mono switch. You do get a mute switch, a loudness control — this is just another tone control, and a superfluous one — and either/both switching for two pairs of speakers. On paper, the Kenwood and Sherwood have a similar power output, as far as can be judged given the obstructive and non-standard way both brands choose to specify power output.

## Sound Quality

The panel had difficulty getting to grips with this amplifier. "Alive from the first moment — clarinet well focused and reproduced," was one comment that greeted the Mozart, but another thought the amp "sweet and refined, but (it did) not set the pulse racing." The Grainger was variously described as "messy spatially," "coloured and bland," "short on vitality" and "spirited and musical with a grasp of dynamics and good detail." There were other debates, but you get the picture.

It is not easy to explain these contradictory findings except to say that, on the whole, the problems were fairly mild. That was my impression from extended listening, undertaken separately from the blind panel

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£399.95
▲ Big, brassy and powerful amplifier with loads of fruit.	
▼ Enigmatically mixed blessings on sound quality front: generally competent but lean and not altogether transparent.	
✉	Kenwood Electronics UK Ltd, Kenwood House, Dwight Road, Watford, Herts WD1 8EB
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## THE LAB REPORT

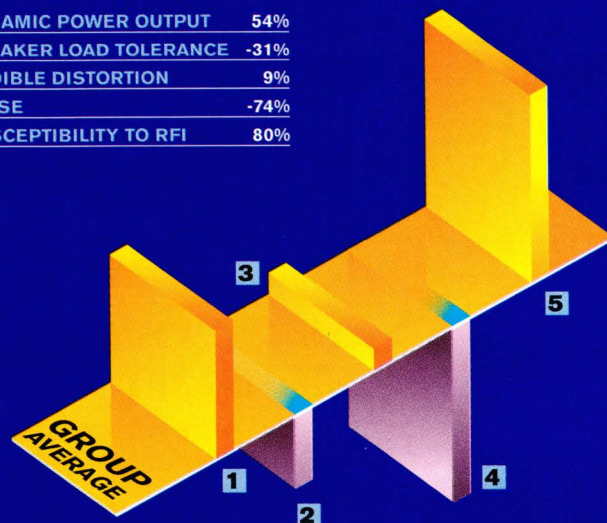
No less than two pairs of Kenwood's flavour-of-the-season 'TRAITR' power transistors are employed per channel yielding a substantial 130W into eight Ohms and some 220W into four Ohms, leaving its electronic relay-protection to curtail bursts of current above 14.4A. This is equivalent to 207W into one Ohm — high but not sufficient to maintain the powerful aspirations of the KA-7090R into dodgy loudspeakers.

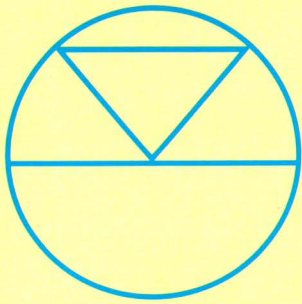
'TRAITR' stands for 'Thermally Reactive Advanced Instantaneous Transistor', a new output device that includes its emitter resistor and thermal compensation on the same substrate. This ensures that changes of gain vs. temperature are compensated for very accurately indeed. Distortion, as Kenwood suggests, is low at a 0.0025-0.0036 per cent midband but a greater variation of THD vs. power output still seems to open up at higher frequencies (typically 0.016-0.036 per cent at 20kHz).

In practice, other amplifiers employing conventional power transistors still achieve greater consistency in terms of distortion vs. frequency vs. power output (the MF A2 and Pioneer A-300R are good examples). Meanwhile, immunity from incoming RF interference is achieved, in part at least, by fairly brutal input filtering — hence the 900pF input load! PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	54%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-31%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	9%
4	NOISE	-74%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	80%





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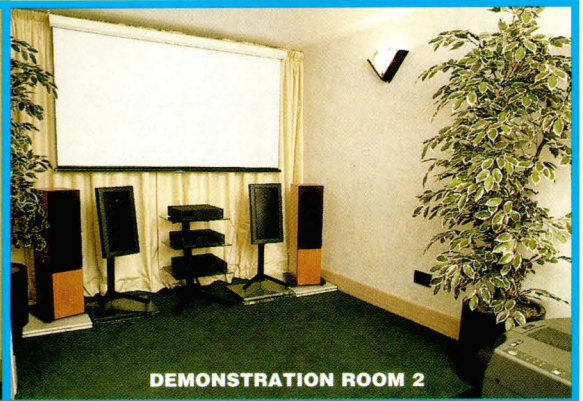
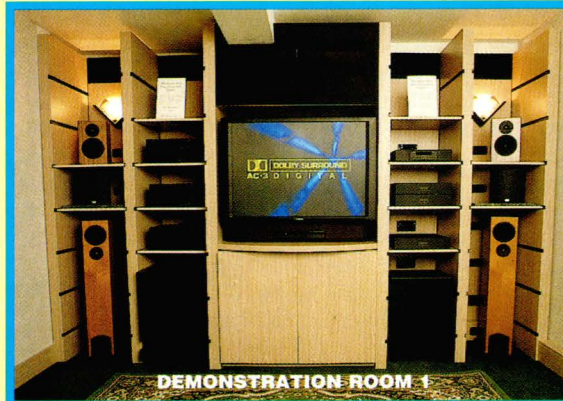
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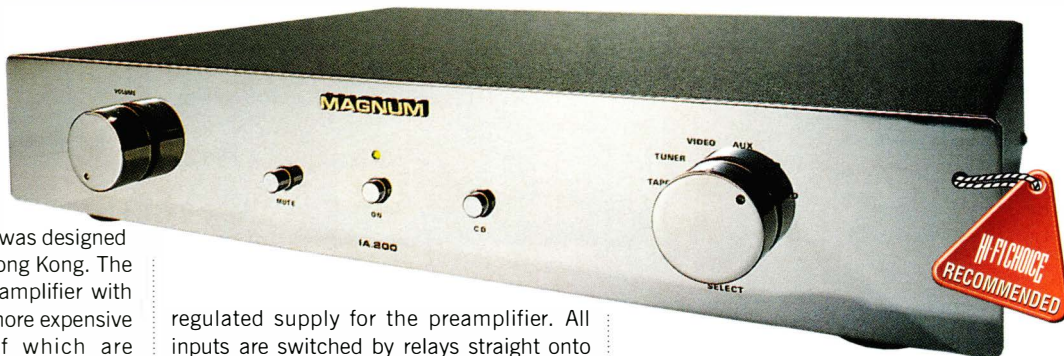


# Magnum IA-200

The most striking visual feature of this amplifier is its chromed front panel and controls. Traditionally, the UK market hasn't taken to such extravagances with any enthusiasm and, sure enough, the IA-200 was designed to meet a requirement from Hong Kong. The brief called for an affordable amplifier with the classic Class-A virtues of more expensive Magnum designs, most of which are exported. The IA-200 is available in black, and a phono step-up board is also available but was not tested.

The circuit is derived from Magnum's own Class A circuit, but with less quiescent current (about 40-50mA instead of 900mA) and a suitably slimmed-down power supply. But the rest of the circuit hasn't been altered. Power is quoted as 100 Watts per channel peak into eight Ohms. No continuous power figure is given, though it is sounds less than the rating would suggest, and the amplifier is not suitable for speakers with a nominal impedance of less than six Ohms — if only because the heat sinks won't cope.

The IA-200 has twin power supplies — one per power amplifier channel — from a common transformer, and another highly



regulated supply for the preamplifier. All inputs are switched by relays straight onto the volume control, allowing short signal paths. The power-amp output stage is based on Hitachi MOSFETs.

### Sound Quality

Magnum is perfectly open about the fact that the amplifier is designed to provide a valve-like sound rather than one that is clinically accurate. High frequencies, they claim, are contoured to reduce odd harmonic distortions, especially above 50kHz, which are said to cause downband problems through intermodulation. The bass sounds warm and full, though Magnum insists that this is a side effect of the tailored treble rather than an excessive bass output.

The extent to which this amplifier was enjoyed by members of the testing panel was a fair measure of their personal tastes for amplifiers with a tailored balance (most valve amplifiers, for example, are tailored in just this way, though not always as obviously as here). The comments all made similar observations, however. "Big expressive sound, bass a touch heavy and one-note," said one, and another described the amplifier as "soggy and one-note," though the ultimately more important midband was thought to be "expressive and enjoyable."

My own hands-on listening was in broad agreement with the panel's, though, like some, I would not want to live long-term with the creative misinterpretation afforded by an amplifier such as this. The preponderance of darker tonal colours does help reinforce the sense of presence and the physical stature of the music, and the basic sound quality of the amp is good, for the most part. The only real negative was noticed in some higher-level passages with a strong high-frequency content — strings or percussion, for example — which sometimes caused a momentary and uncomfortable tizziness. A similar effect was noted by one of the panellists.

### Conclusions

This is an attractive if rather old-fashioned-sounding amplifier which views music as though through rose-tinted glass. In many ways it is reminiscent of certain Class A valve amplifiers, even though it is not Class A and doesn't use valves. It is Recommended anyway, but needs to be carefully auditioned — listeners need to be aware that, although it nearly always sounds good, the IA-200 does not always present the complete musical truth. AG

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £495 Phono version available: £520.

- ▲ Creative story-telling at its best — and don't be put off by the garish chromed fascia.
  - ▼ Load sensitive, tends to gloss over the sharper edges and lacks fine detail and real dynamic clout
- Hailey Audio Ltd, 328 Ware Road, Hailey, Herts SG13 7PG  
 (01992) 442425

## THE LAB REPORT

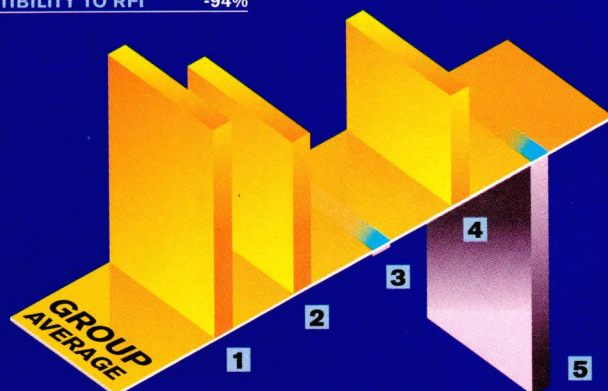
This hot little number is a derivative of the MOSFET-based Class A model reviewed way back in issue 116, now modified to run in Class AB with a higher 160W eight Ohm power output. Many of the same character-forming bugs remain, however, including its slewing at high frequencies. This causes distortion to increase from 0.035 per cent to a whopping 2.8 per cent at 20kHz and effectively restricts its HF output (with respect to one per cent THD) to just 34W into eight Ohms.

Whether this distortion is especially 'valve-like' is debatable; in my view, though, with its colossal 29A current delivery, the IA200 will certainly be more tolerant of low-impedance speakers. Meanwhile, Magnum appears to have missed the whole point of a 'CD Direct' facility which, ordinarily, is employed to bypass extraneous circuitry including tone, balance and line amplification.

Instead, Magnum's 'CD Direct' appears to add an extra +4.2dB of gain (normal = +36.6dB, CD Direct = +40.8dB). As a result, THD is actually higher via CD Direct (0.05% compared with 0.018% ref. 1W/80hms). The noise performance remains largely unaffected, but I'd still recommend leaving the IA200 in 'normal' mode for best results. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	88%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	65%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-1%
4	NOISE	47%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	-94%



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# Musical Fidelity A2

The A2 is an extensive update of the venerable Musical Fidelity A1, a hot-running, semi-Class-A, low-power amp with a giant slayer's reputation, but which was also undeniably coloured and incapable of dealing with loads that did not closely approximate a high-Wattage, eight Ohm resistor. The new model is a little more powerful on paper: 25 Watts into eight Ohms, where the old one was rated at about 20 Watts, depending on what distortion was deemed acceptable. However, the real difference relates to the A2's new-found ability to deliver power into low-impedance loads, even two Ohms, which drew a negligible response from the A1's tight-fisted output stage. Another quality the A2 is said to bring to its task is a more accurate and less coloured frequency balance.

Out with the bathwater, in with the baby: the unique and highly successful aesthetic treatment of the A1 has given way to a more conventional oblong box, but the rounded, gloss-finished front panel and the gold-trimmed controls bring their own rewards, as does the complete absence of extraneous

gadgetry. Musical Fidelity seems to be saying that if it can't be done with an on/off switch, input selector, tape monitor or a volume control, it ain't worth doing. In the final analysis, the company's probably right.

### Sound Quality

On the whole, the A2 achieved fairly strong scores in the panel tests. One or two performance areas received a certain amount of criticism, of which the midband was the

ment (even if I knew what 'thrummy' meant), but there does seem to be a slight upper bass prominence. On the whole, compact speakers are better suited than most floorstanders, which will often be less than well controlled in just the same part of the audio frequency band.

Coincidentally, I have been using the A2 for test and pleasure listening since before this test started. While it is not the sharpest or most analytical amplifier in its class, and



main, albeit intermittent, offender. "Upper midband prominence — a bit nasal," said one panelist of the Michelle Shocked recording; he also thought that the Grainger track was "a bit flat and undynamic." Another wrote that the upper bass was "lumpy" and this, perhaps, is closer to the truth than a blanket criticism of the midband. I felt it was open and transparent, and there were plenty of comments in support of this view: "a nice, liquid quality" and "restrained but engaging" were typical remarks, both referring explicitly to the midband.

The bass achieved some contradictory notices: "overall big, powerful bass," "solid firm bass" and "good bass weight" were offset by a suggestion that the A2 had a "thrummy bass, lacking in real extension." Again, I see little justification for this com-

can sometimes sound coloured (the upper bass artefact has already been mentioned, and a marginally rolled-off treble should also be factored into the equation), the A2 is a supremely musical tool. It makes much of good recordings and gives those that are less than perfect a helping hand. It is also an excellent antidote to the sterility of some amplifying machinery.

### Conclusions

Recommended. A mildly valve-flavoured amplifier with a strong Class-A bias — metaphorically as well as literally. Tends away from literal accuracy at all costs towards the musical side of the line, though much less so than the A1. AG

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £499.99

- ▲ Attractive and practical pseudo-Class A transistorised amplifier which sounds graceful, smooth and musical.
- ▼ Some obscuration of fine detail and mildly coloured upper bass means it suits compact speakers better than floorstanders.

✉ Musical Fidelity Ltd, 15/16 Olympic Trading Estate, Fulton Rd, Wembley HA9 0TF  
 ☎ (0181) 900 2999

## THE LAB REPORT

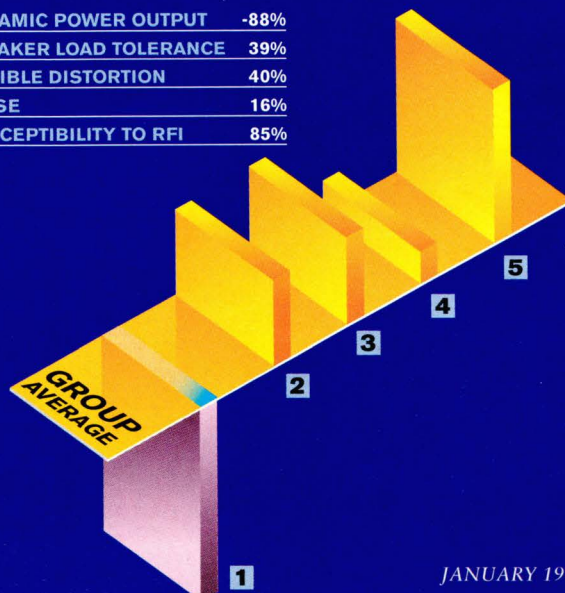
This is a new-ish design, derived from Musical Fidelity's *Elektra* series and employing power MOSFETs biased largely into Class A. Claims for low distortion are met with a low and very consistent 0.0063 per cent achieved across the entire audio range at one W/eight Ohms. Indeed, THD only really begins to creep up at very high frequencies and high power, resulting in a generally agreeable pattern of simple second/third harmonics, free of crossover distortion.

Pairs of supply electrolytics per channel supplement the main reservoir bank, helping to reduce supply ripple and maintain its wide 86dB S/N ratio (ref. one W/eight Ohms). The 36W, eight Ohms power output seems modest but with some 11A of current on demand (equal to bursts of 123W into one Ohm), the A2 will still stand its ground with sub-eight-Ohm speaker loads.

Otherwise, it's not uncommon to discover some bass 'reinforcement' with MF's amplifiers. The A2, however, has a very even response that's rolled off at both low and high frequencies (already -2.2dB at 20Hz and -1dB at 20kHz). This, together with its immunity to RF interference, can only encourage its sweet and relaxing sound. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-88%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	39%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	40%
4	NOISE	16%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	85%



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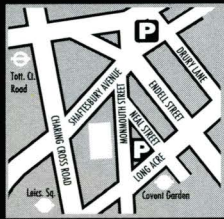
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OPEN SUNDAYS

# Pioneer A-300R Precision

Pioneer invented the killer budget audiophile amp with the A-400, combining UK optimised sound with Japanese consistency and economies of scale.

The A-300R follows in the same tradition and is a joint project between Pioneer High Fidelity UK, Tom Evans Audio Design (wholly or partly responsible for the GTE version of the A-400, Trichord 'clocked' CD players and Michell Iso, among others) and Pioneer's manufacturing arm in West Yorkshire.

Described more fully by Jason Kennedy in the

tape-monitor switch, a balance control and a headphone socket. Power output is quoted at 35 Watts/eight Ohm per channel.

### Sound Quality

The Pioneer achieved an average score of a little above five out of ten, dragged down by an exceptionally poor set of comments from one panellist. One commented on the strong percussion, timing, well-projected vocals (Michelle Shocked), and more generally on the realistic retrieval of ambience and the vivid,

apart. It is a transparent and analytical design, and minor setting-up inadequacies (placing the amp on top of another, for example) have a drastic effect on the music.

Use the Pioneer in anger with a really vital recording, however, and the music takes off in a way that lies outside the range of any of the other models tested. First to demonstrate what the amp was capable of was the *Presto* movement from Mendelssohn's *Octet Op. 20* (L'Archibudelli & Smithsonian Players on Sony), in particular the way it gained in vitality and subtly. It swelled in volume as the movement progressed until it was cooking up a storm and demanded attention. None of the other amplifiers had the Pioneer's fine discrimination, and none could follow where the music was leading with the impassioned and compelling quality it brought to the task.

### Conclusions

This amplifier has 'instant classic' written all over it, though you'll have to burn it in for some days and use top-class ancillaries to find out just how good it is. Make sure it's up to temperature before each listening session. Painstaking care pays dividends with this exacting design. Best Buy. AG



November issue (no. 159), the A-300R Precision is less a redesign than a thorough reworking of the existing product using exotic components where required. For once, the word 'exotic' is not misplaced — some of the components are military spec, cost as much as 100 times the norm and have lead times of six months. Manufacture involves painstaking component matching and is very labour-intensive.

Apart from the Precision badge, the A-300R/P looks like the standard article. It is simply kitted out with an input selector (MM phono, three line and two tape circuits), a

well-varied tonal colours. Another pointed to the strong dynamics, describing the amplifier as "capable and engaging." After the Mozart, one panellist wrote: "There is a lot of presence and the soundstage is very tightly focused, though the sound is not always very graceful." The more critical listener, meanwhile, described the bass as "thrumming along," and the midband as "congested and rhythmically sluggish."

My view after extended listening is that this is an exceptional amplifier, though not in ways that are immediately obvious, possibly because the sound of the amp is no better than several others. Instrumental timbre in particular is readily equalled elsewhere, and you can plough through many recordings without finding anything to set the Pioneer

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★☆

**PRICE** £399.95

▲ Propels Pioneer right back to the top of the killer "affordable amplifier" stakes.

▼ Limited availability, and it needs top-class ancillaries and set up.

✉ Pioneer High Fidelity (GB) Ltd, Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Slough, Berks SL2 4QP.

☎ (01753) 789789

## THE LAB REPORT

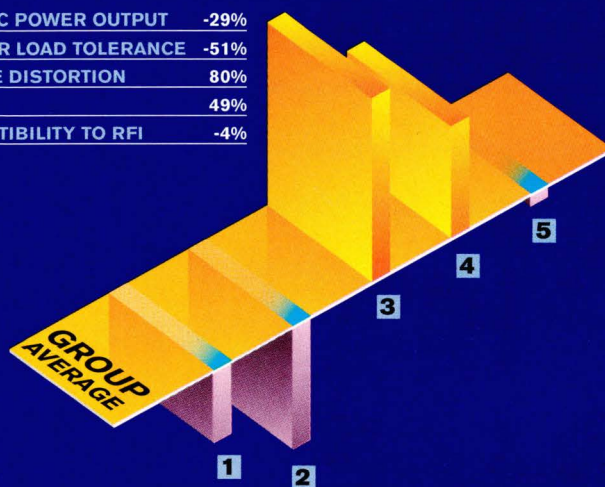
Pioneer's original A-300R was fully lab-tested and heartily Recommended back in issue 149. Pioneer's use of new op-amps in the preamp and (power amp) voltage gain stages appears not to have caused any obvious harm. After all, the one W/eight Ohm S/N ratio still clocks in at a very creditable 87.6dB, though the input sensitivity has increased slightly to 272mV for full output (as opposed to 257mV).

This reflects a very small increase in output, now amounting to some 57W into eight Ohms, which rises to 87W into four Ohms. However, this performance remains slightly undermined by a relatively weak 8.6A reserve of current so, evidently, the A-300R is still best partnered with relatively easy-going loudspeakers.

Otherwise, if there's a 'secret' to the A-300R Precision, then this probably lies with the remarkably symmetrical nature of its distortion — a lone second harmonic at low power, joined by a hint of third as power increases, all adding up to a very consistent 0.03 per cent across the entire audio range and over 80-90 per cent of its available power. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

- |   |                        |      |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT   | -29% |
| 2 | SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE | -51% |
| 3 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION     | 80%  |
| 4 | NOISE                  | 49%  |
| 5 | SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI  | -4%  |





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# Rega Elex

This model splits the three-strong range of Rega integrated amps, flanked by the baby *Brio* and the slightly sinister sounding *Elicit*. In fact, the *Elex* is essentially a cost-constrained *Elicit* based on the same core of ideas: a fully symmetrical, dual-mono circuit with a single transformer rather than two, a bipolar output stage, a moving-magnet phono input, three line inputs, a single tape circuit and four-mm sockets for a single pair of speakers.

It is a very matter-of-fact design which eschews tone controls, headphone sockets, speaker switching and so on. The heavy machined case doubles as a heat sink and is less microphonic than standard pressed steel. Rated power output is 50 Watts per channel into eight Ohms which, according to the maker, comes close to doubling into four Ohms. In theory, the *Elex* should work satisfactorily with a wide range of loudspeakers. In practice, it isn't quite that simple...

Ergonomically, the *Elex* is one of the best, thanks to an ultra-basic set of controls (just volume, an input selector and a power switch). The unusually compact box make

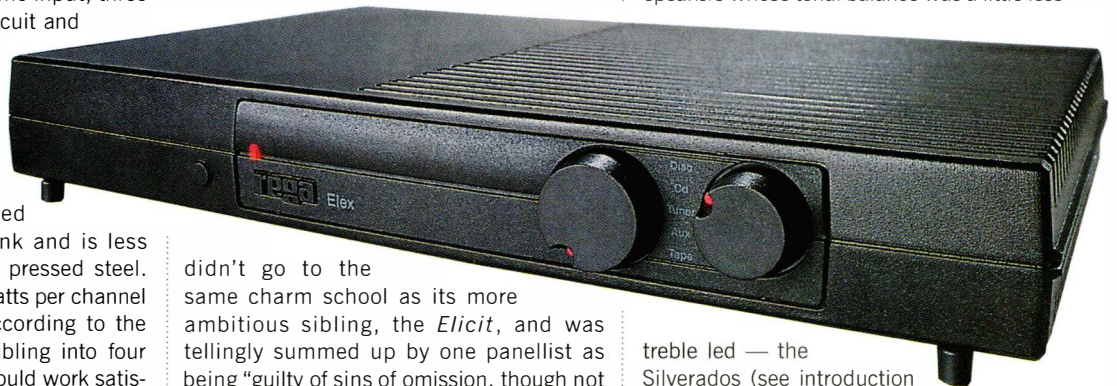
the *Elex* much less intrusive than most of its peers. The best feature, however, is the matching tuner, which is inspiringly called — wait for it — *Radio*.

### Sound Quality

Clearly not one of the best-liked models in the fairly strong group on test, the *Elex*

parency and timing,” and for “decent (stereo) perspectives.”

As one listener put it, this is a respectable amplifier, but a little short of inspiration in the final analysis. My own listening suggested that it was rather more comfortable with smaller speakers than the Mission 753s used for the main panel tests, and that it preferred speakers whose tonal balance was a little less



didn't go to the same charm school as its more ambitious sibling, the *Elicit*, and was tellingly summed up by one panellist as being “guilty of sins of omission, though not of commission.” It achieved an average score of four out of ten, with fair agreement between listeners on the character of what they heard.

Indeed, very little was said about the Rega that sounds very devastating, but there was little to get excited about either. “No bass weight or drive — boring,” wrote one panellist following the Michelle Shocked presentation. The Mozart concerto was described by another as having a “forward, lively balance that does not have much bass power or extension,” and by a third as “thin through the upper midband.” “A small soundstage” (Grainger) was another criticism, echoed in different terms by others.

At the same time, the Rega received full credit for “more than acceptable trans-

treble led — the Silverados (see introduction to reviews) were an excellent choice on all grounds apart from sensitivity. Tanno, KEF and a number of others produce suitable designs, and Rega's own less costly speakers should provide a suitable match.

### Conclusions

There is something curiously unambitious — “static”, as one listener wrote — about this amp. Somehow it fails to rise to more challenging programme material, and it can sound shut in and sloppy with the wrong combination. Carefully matched to compact speakers of average or better sensitivity (say 88dB/W or more), the *Elex*'s inherently good timing and mid/treble control will stand it in good stead, but this is not enough to earn it a gong. AG

### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £398

- ▲ A fundamentally well-poised amplifier, self-contained mid/top and good timing to its credit.
- ▼ Nondescript and not very tightly focused overall sound, especially in bass; needs careful speaker matching (balance and bandwidth).
- ✉ Rega Developments Ltd, 119 Park Street, Westcliff on Sea, Essex SSO 7PD
- ☎ (01702) 333071

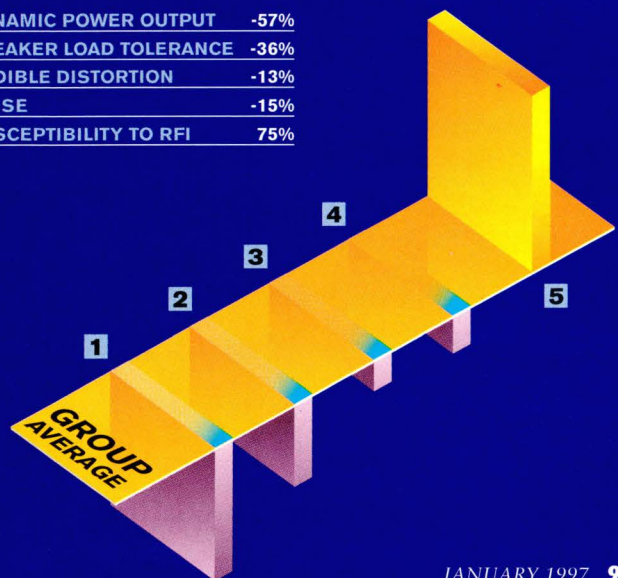
## THE LAB REPORT

Adhering to its policy of continual development, Rega has done some very successful ‘housekeeping’ within the confines of its *Elex* amplifier since we last tested the model in issue 116. The 51/88W eight/four Ohms capacity has not altered but the maximum current delivery has been squeezed up from 7.1A to 8.3A, while its output impedance has been trimmed from 0.210hms to 0.1530hms. Interestingly, momentary outputs into one Ohm almost always hover around 0.8-0.9 per cent THD, reaching our one per cent target at 8.3A (69W) and two per cent at 11.0A (121W). So perhaps the *Elex* is just a little more accommodating of difficult speakers than we first thought.

Otherwise, distortion has been reduced from 0.1 to 0.03 per cent (ref. one kHz/one Watt/eight Ohms) but there's still some evidence of crossover distortion at low power/high frequencies where third/fifth harmonics tend to dominate. This residual pattern of distortion is not without some ‘character’, helping to define the *Elex*'s ‘sound’ along with its very extended treble and gently rolled off bass (-1.8dB at 20Hz). Other improvements include its noise performance, now reduced from -81.9dB to -84.1dB (ref. one W/eight Ohms, A-wtd) and from -88.6dB to -93.1dB (ref. two-thirds power/eight Ohms, A-wtd). PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

- |   |                        |      |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT   | -57% |
| 2 | SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE | -36% |
| 3 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION     | -13% |
| 4 | NOISE                  | -15% |
| 5 | SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI  | 75%  |



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# Sherwood AX-7030R

Vital statistics are undeniably the Sherwood AX-7030's most impressive asset. As well as a full set of tone controls, speaker switching and the practically obligatory outside volume knob, this impressive package has a number of features that were once common but have largely disappeared from most of its rivals. This doesn't

mean they have no use. Mono switching can be useful for diagnostic purposes as well as reducing background noise from mono sources, while the subsonic filter can help clean up the sound from record decks and conserve amplifier power that would otherwise be wasted trying to reproduce unwanted low-frequency signals.



Muting and a tone bypass facility are also included. A record-mode switch can route some inputs independently of the one you're listening to, and allows tape A-B/B-A dubbing between the two tape decks. Moving-coil and moving-magnet cartridges can be accommodated along with two inputs, but

the grand total of three line inputs is less than might have been expected from such a well-endowed amplifier. Headphones can be connected, of course, and the amplifier is festooned with LED status indicators.

In short, with the Sherwood AX-7030R you know you are getting an amplifier. It is large, heavy, extremely powerful, impressively equipped

and has more controls and buttons than many complete systems. But this is not the purist's approach, and many will find the over-dressed front panel intimidating. Remote control (a system handset is supplied) helps make the amplifier more accessible, but many of the minor features are only available locally.

### Sound Quality

The consensus view, with which I agree, is that this amplifier is a mixed blessing. It was felt to have strong attack and clarity, but ambience retrieval was poor, and there were clear signs of programme-dependent harshness and coloration. One listener commented on the Sherwood's '2D' imaging, and described the Grainger piece as "a bit squeaky, small sounding and constrained."

The frequency extremes attracted persis-

tent criticism: the treble for its rather ragged, coloured quality (the 'sound of transistors' in my own notes), and the bass for its lack of control and for sounding "hollow, rounded and insubstantial". More than one panelist thought the amp sounded inarticulate, making vocals (John Lee Hooker especially) hard to follow. However, not all the comments were negative. The amp has more convincing volume than some, and will suit those with large rooms or a taste for high-level listening — though there are other amplifiers in this report that should be included on any such shortlist, for example the Kenwood.

In my own hands-on listening following the panel tests, the Sherwood still failed to shine. It has a matter-of-fact quality, a lack of grace and a rather superficial analysis. The panel's comments about coloration are justified by the rather coarse sound with some chamber music and other recordings, and a 'clanky' piano sound. Both problems appeared to become worse as the listening levels were increased.

### Conclusions

Extremely powerful, but ultimately rather coarse and wearing. This is not the most graceful or involving of amplifiers at the price. If power is your main criterion, however, this could be the one for you. AG

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆

**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆

**PRICE** £249.95

▲ A lot of amplifier for the money, though the number of inputs is strictly standard fare.

▼ Quantity has been achieved at the cost of quality.

✉ Hi-Fi Direct, Hankey Place, London SE14BB

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## THE LAB REPORT

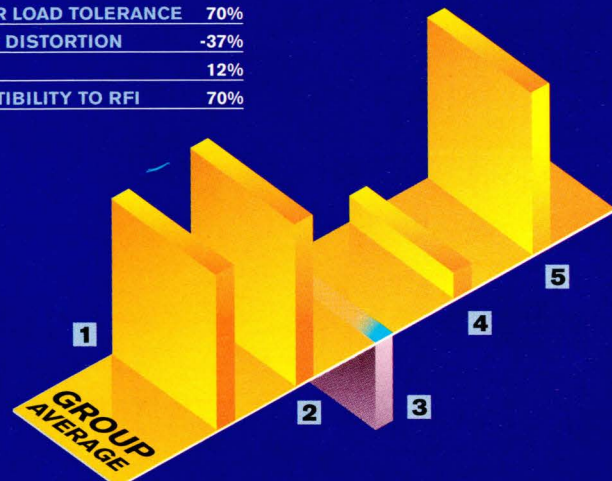
Rather like Kenwood's KA-7090R, Sherwood's AX-7030R is a very powerful amplifier capable of sustaining some 140W into eight Ohms and 230W (+2.2dB) into four Ohm loads. Importantly, the Sherwood beats Kenwood's 14.4A current delivery with a full 27.1A into one Ohm (equivalent to bursts of 734W), ensuring that its muscular performance is not compromised by insensitive or low-impedance loudspeakers. This amp will sound LOUD even when connected to the dimmest speaker.

Noise is also low at -85.8dB (ref. one W/eight Ohms) while immunity to RF interference is high. Channel balance is kept to within 0.5dB over a 60dB dynamic range and the high 100kOhm input load should ensure an easy drive for even the least capable CD players.

Where the AX-7030R seems to fall down is in respect of distortion vs frequency. Midband figures of 0.0013-0.0022 per cent are great, but as the circuit compensation (feedback) dies away, this increases to 0.018-0.03 per cent through the treble. This fluctuation in distortion of over 20dB that's more important to sound quality than the absolute percentage value. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

- |   |                        |      |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT   | 67%  |
| 2 | SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE | 70%  |
| 3 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION     | -37% |
| 4 | NOISE                  | 12%  |
| 5 | SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI  | 70%  |





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**[ON SALE 14 NOVEMBER]**

# Talk Electronics Storm 1

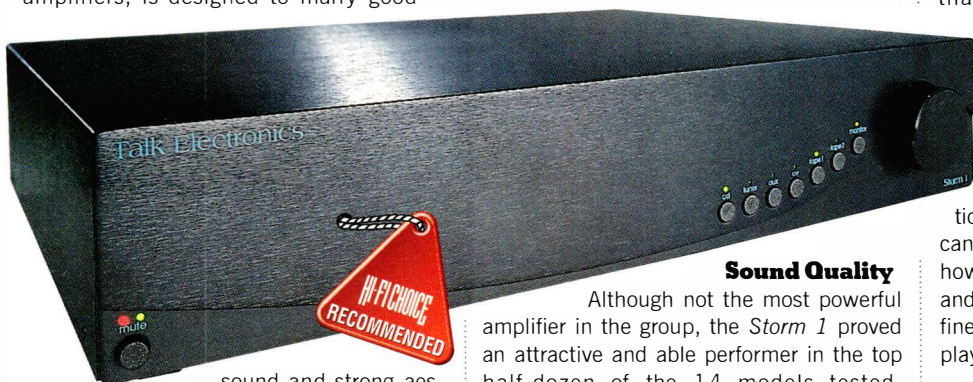
Launched at the recent Heathrow 'Hi-Fi' show, Talk Electronics is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cable Talk, which claims to be the leading quality cable producer in the UK. The range, consisting of two integrated amplifiers (the *Storm 1* is the baby), four preamplifiers and four power amplifiers, is designed to marry good

load tolerant', offering an unspecified but probably modest increase in power into low impedances. The design employs FET gain stages and MOSFETs at the output. It is fully current and heat protected, and is designed to cope with short circuits and other common forms of abuse.

sound coarse or intrusive in the HF region.

The finest complement of all, however, came from the panellist who pointed out that "differences between recordings have become noticeable once more," and that the Talk Electronics amplifier "has a sense of cohesion not heard before." He further noted that the amplifier was "detailed and dynamic, with an infectious rhythmic ability."

There were some criticisms, too, but they were generally muted. The *Storm 1* was sometimes felt to lack body and stereo depth, and this certainly tallies with my own observations. It is not a big-sounding amplifier, and can easily run out of steam if pressed. It did, however, sound impressively bright, clean and airy, retaining the edge of tension from a fine musical performance, if mildly underplaying the physical aspects of the sound.



### Sound Quality

Although not the most powerful amplifier in the group, the *Storm 1* proved an attractive and able performer in the top half-dozen of the 14 models tested. Whether it can mix it with the heavyweights from Audiolab or Naim, however, is debatable. The *Storm* isn't engineered to the kind of standards that are typical of those brands, and it doesn't have their track record. Still, from little acorns...

The panel scored this model with fair unanimity in the nature of the praise and approbation heaped on it, and complete agreement was reached in the scoring from each listener, achieving seven out of ten. "There's quite a lot going on at the top... and the midband is the best of the lot so far," wrote one panellist. Another, commenting specifically on the Mozart track, remarked on the "good soundstaging, with plenty of detail, especially in the high-frequency region", also noting the absence of 'shout'. A number of the more detailed amplifiers do

### Conclusions

A fine first-time amplifier means Talk Electronics is a brand to watch. The *Storm 1* looks good, is easy to use if you don't need masses of power, and sings in an accomplished, musical voice. AG

sound and strong aesthetics. If the company creed is to be taken at face value, it's pitched somewhere between Audiolab and Naim. This sounds like an uncomfortable place to be!

The aesthetic brief is amply fulfilled. The simple, brushed casework is both elegant and attractive, and the logic-controlled J-FET input switching gives easy, light-touch input-source selection, with LED tell-tales. The only extras are mute and tape monitor switching. The *Storm 1* will accommodate four line sources and two tape decks, though a version of the amplifier is available with a phono input for a £50 premium. It is possible to convert a line-stage amplifier to phono operation, though at £100 this carries a financial penalty.

This is nominally a 50 Watt per channel amplifier, which is said to be 'reasonably

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★

**VALUE** ★★★★★☆

**PRICE** £499.95 (MM/MC version £549).  
Can be adapted for £100.

- ▲ Excellent newcomer from start-up company which gives a clean, detailed and articulate sound.
- ▼ Appears to be a little load sensitive, and is best adapted to low-sensitivity speakers (below, say, 87dB/Watts/mtr).

✉ Talk Electronics, Unit 12, Farnborough Business Centre, Exmoor Road, Farnborough, Hants GU14 8XA  
☎ (01252) 373434

## THE LAB REPORT

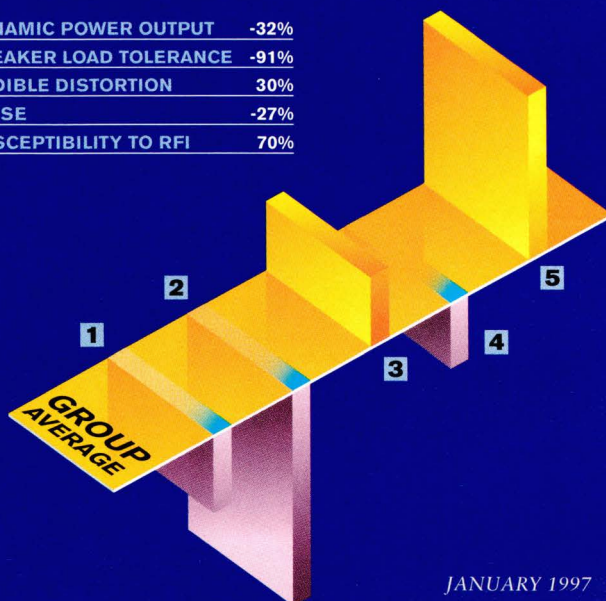
With its main PCB pre-printed and drilled to accept components for an MM/MC phono stage (not included here), Talk Electronics is clearly keeping its options open. Otherwise, the performance of the *Storm 1* could seem rather dated. For example, the mere +0.8dB increase from 54W into eight Ohms to 65W into four Ohms implies some rather 'soft' supply regulation without the benefit of an appropriately large dynamic output (just +1.1dB or 70W is achieved in practice).

And with just 6.5A current in tow, through a high 0.20hm source impedance, this amplifier is unlikely to kick up a storm with insensitive or low-impedance loudspeakers. Like Rega's *Elex*, the *Storm* also incurs a high residual distortion (typically 0.5 per cent) when driving very low impedance loads under dynamic conditions.

Hum pushes the residual noise to -67.8dBV, though the A-wtd figure at one W/eight Ohms is a respectable -83.2dB. It's pleasing to note that immunity to RF interference is also very good. Conventional distortion, however, is typically in excess of 0.5 per cent above one W/20kHz/eight Ohms, while IM distortion is dominated by extended odd-order patterns, all contributing to the 'flavour' of this particular *Storm*. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-32%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-91%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	30%
4	NOISE	-27%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	70%



**AUTHORISED DEALER**

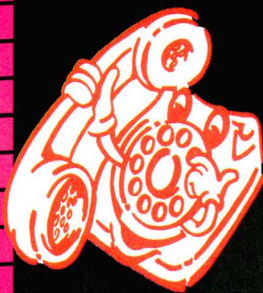
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# TEAC A-BX7R

Here's an unusually well-endowed integrated amplifier aimed unashamedly at the enthusiast, and probably the American enthusiast, given the provision of balanced operation (using XLR connectors) for one of the line inputs. On the other hand, there are no balanced outputs to drive an outboard power amplifier, and the gain stages are strictly

operate. You even get a very basic remote control for the motor-driven volume knob only. There are three line and two tape inputs, with off-tape monitoring possible on the Tape 2 circuit. An MM/MC phono step-up can be fitted internally. Specified power output is 50 Watts per channel into eight Ohms, rising modestly to 70 Watts/four Ohms from a cir-

cuit boasting low negative feedback and high stability margins.

With the benefit of a lot more listening time and a number of different loudspeakers to try, I ended up feeling a little more favourably disposed to the Teac than the panel. Its bass can indeed sound rather smudged, and the treble somehow isn't quite right, but underlying it all is a solid and believable sound from an amplifier with natural poise and authority. Moreover, it rose to the occasion with some of my more taxing recordings, especially orchestral and chamber ones, which remain among the most testing of them all. Nevertheless, the Teac lacked the lightness of touch to excel with jazz and some of my better rock vocal recordings. Nearly, but not quite, seems a fair epithet.



... unbalanced, which rather limits the usefulness of the balanced provision.

The amplifier looks austere and technical, thanks in part to the volume control which looks like a refugee from a piece of Hewlett-Packard test equipment. It is scaled in decibels below a notional 0dB, which represents full gain. Of course, this will often result in hard clipping, or it could be well below the maximum permissible input level, depending on programme content and the nominal output of the source component connected at the time. But if you don't take it too literally, it all looks very impressive — it is sure to scare off Granny.

In fact the A-BX7R is very simply equipped and could scarcely be easier to

### Sound Quality

The Teac scored a straight four out of ten from each of the panellists, and there was strong agreement on the amp's performance. "Another one with potential", was one comment at the conclusion of the presentation. "Like crispbread, it fails to live up to its potential — it's thin and lacks substance." Well, you can see what he means about crispbread at least. Another described the sound as "wooden", which I think is closer, though he also described the amp as "reasonably dynamic and fluidly coherent," which is dangerously close to high praise from this listener. He later marked the Teac down for what he described as a "big but messy" bass and its lack of midband control. "No control, and no finesse," wrote a third, echoing a point that seemed to be the lowest

### Conclusions

An interesting but flawed amplifier that gets most of the ingredients right. The Teac's voicing seems to be awry, perhaps because it was designed for a different market with other requirements in mind. At a lower price it could have held its own, but at £700 it is blown away by several of the lower-priced alternatives. AG

**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆

**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆

**PRICE** £699.95

▲ Well built techie amplifier from an important source of high-grade CD hardware.

▼ Promising and fundamentally capable, the Teac is undermined by clumsily optimised voicing.

✉ Teac UK Ltd, 5 Marlin House, Marlin Meadows, The Croyley Centre, Watford, Herts WD1 8YA

☎ (01923) 819699

## THE LAB REPORT

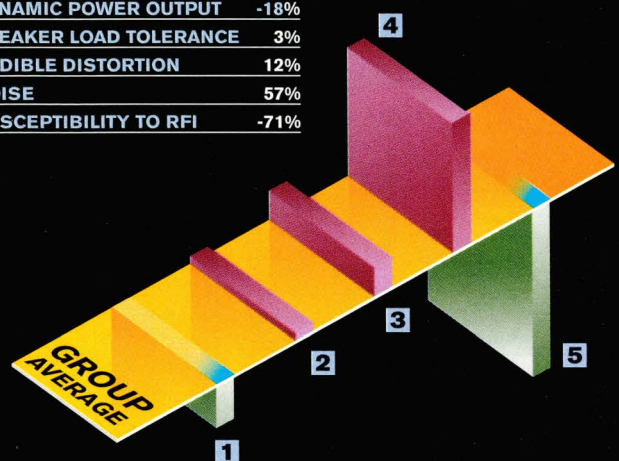
Judging by the board design of this Danish-built amplifier, I'd say the Teac A-BX7R has its origins in the Thule factory, along with models like the Thule IA50, reviewed in issue 140. Technically, neither amplifier has much else in common, with the A-BX7R managing a similar 64/105W eight/four Ohm power output, but a limited current delivery of just 8.9A renders it less tolerant of difficult loudspeakers.

Alvin mentions the dB scaling of Teac's volume control, though I am bound to mention that its calibration is completely erroneous. In practice, the control has an unusual law, offering a mere 27dB adjustment over 80 per cent of its rotation (equivalent to -40dB on Teac's scale). The volume control's -20dB position, for example, actually represents a cut of just -11dB. My advice? Ignore the annotation and use your ears instead!

Otherwise, the A-BX7R enjoys a very low noise (-88dB, A-wtd, ref. one W/eight Ohms) but a fairly modest 0.015 per cent distortion, increasing to 0.05 per cent at medium-to-high output and 0.1 per cent at high frequency. There is also a marked sensitivity to spurious RF noise in the 1-70MHz 'CD band'. PM

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-18%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	3%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	12%
4	NOISE	57%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	-71%

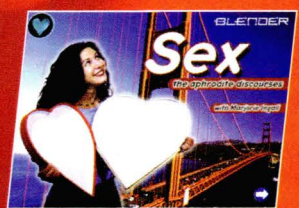


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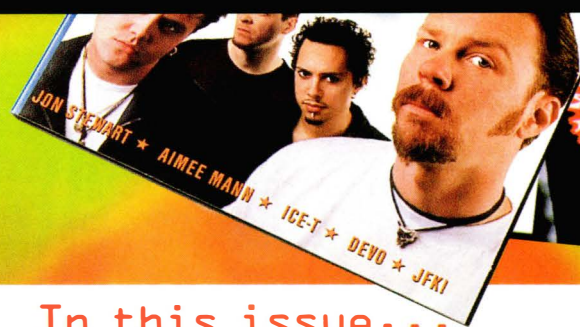
New to the UK

"Funky graphics complement trendy music/lifestyle content... a spiky editorial slant and a few surprises". *Esquire*

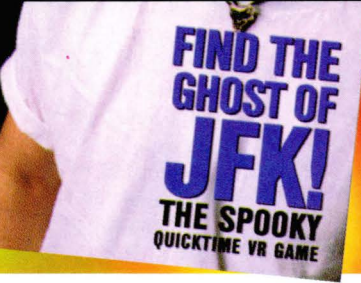
"Blender, the first mainstream youth mag on CD-ROM provides hours of fun: interviews with the celebs actually talking; music... and film reviews". *Time Out*



Music, films, computer games reviews



OVER 50 MOVIES AND GAMES



## In this issue...

- Metallica Cuts Loose. Music from the new release. Plus music videos, guitar solos, the music video women, the imagery, the clothes.
- "Find the Ghost of JFK": Tour the site of his assassination (Dealey Plaza) in Quicktime Virtual Reality. Discover clues, 1963 facts, and other famous ghosts—Marilyn Monroe, Kurt Cobain, Jim Morrison, Andy Warhol. Find JFK and you could win an Apple Powerbook!
- Devo's Digital Rebirth: Their new *Adventures of the Smart Patrol* CD-ROM, and the Evolution /De-evolution of the band.
- "What is Aimee Mann Doing Wrong? Theories as to Why Her Albums Keep Tanking."
- Video interviews with Ice-T and Actor Martin Donovan—including movie clips.
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**SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
**Windows**  
 MCP22 strongly recommended  
 Windows 3.1 (or later) with DOS 6.2 (or later)  
 486 or Pentium PC required  
 4 Megabytes FREE RAM (6 recommended)  
 Sound Card (Most modules)  
 13" VGA or SVGA monitor  
 Quicktime 2.02 for Windows (supplied)  
 CD-ROM drive (double speed or better recommended)  
**Macintosh**  
 Macintosh System 7  
 68030 processor required  
 60040 or better strongly recommended  
 4 Megabytes FREE RAM (6 recommended)  
 13" colour screen (256 colour)  
 Quicktime 2.0 + Apple Multimedia Tuner (supplied)  
 CD-ROM drive (double speed or better recommended)



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# Technics SU-A700mkIII

Although it has become unfashionable of late, Technics clings to the traditional Japanese way of designing amplifiers, of which this *SU-A700* is as good an example as they come. It will set you back just £250, yet the finish is exemplary and the controls have the sweet precision of a Swiss watch. The circuit design is very high-tech: the output stage uses a proprietary combination of MOSFET and bipolar devices, Master series capacitors, an R-Core low-flux leakage transformer, and a THCD anti-vibration base.

## Sound Quality

Scoring was numerically consistent from listener to listener and from session to session, with an average of just under five out of ten. There was less consistency about how this amplifier sounded. There was general agreement that the Technics did certain things well, but that it was let down because it failed to treat music consistently.

"This amplifier sounds rhythmic but a bit too bright," said one panellist of the Michelle Shocked track; then: "Sound staging is dif-

certain strengths of the Technics should not be overlooked. The amp is capable of imposing an effective discipline on the music. The Grainger, for example, was described as having a "small, tight image (which is) compact but honest, and not as overblown as some of the others." The word "control" cropped up on several occasions though, if anything, the Technics's control was overdone. The Grainger recording, for example, is deliberately spacious and open, yet much of the ambient information is lost through this amp. "Not perfect, but enjoyable," was one listener's final remark.

## Conclusions

The majority view is, regrettably, right in my view. The Technics is surprisingly messy and inarticulate at worst, and bland at best. The standard of music-making achieved was disappointing when judged against the impressive nature of the technology. It is worth noting that at least some Technics amplifiers have performed better than this one. Offsetting the criticisms, the Technics is very flexible and is well put together and cheap. But today's amplifier market is crowded, and the reality is that there is no real shortage of talent elsewhere. *AG*



More important from the user's point of view, the *SU-A700mkIII* makes no concessions to the current trend for minimalism. The amplifier offers independent switching for two pairs of speakers, tone controls, a tone defeat switch (a couple of minutes spent with the latter should show anyone why tone controls are not wanted on quality amplifiers), a headphone socket, tape monitor switching on one of the two tape circuits, a moving-magnet phono input, three line inputs and more indicator LEDs than you can shake a stick at.

fuse to the point that it seems defocused, almost as though it was out of phase." Needless to say, the two channels were in the same absolute phase. Following a presentation on a different day with another panel, a similar point was made: "The music isn't cohesive spatially, and it sounds muddled and diffuse," said one, referring to the same music. Another confined himself to observing that "(this amplifier) could become fatiguing."

The Technics appears to have a lightweight balance. "Voices have a papery quality," as one put it. "It is fast, but not very compelling," said another. A more charitable point was that the amplifier displayed "a strong sense of detail... it's clean and open, with good separation and intelligibility."

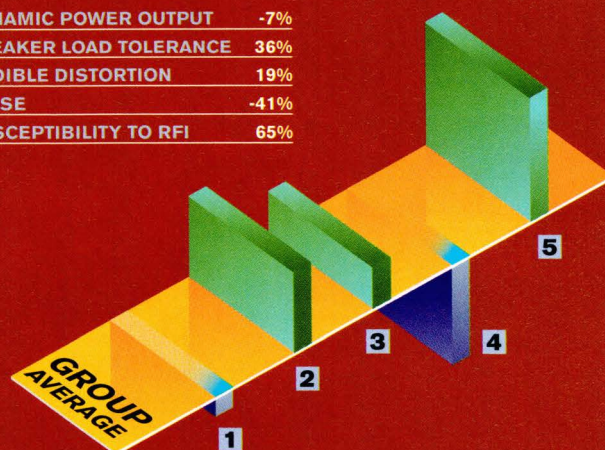
## THE LAB REPORT

Although we have never formally tested any earlier versions of the *SU-A700*, the basic performance of this *mkIII* version seems to bear an uncanny resemblance to Technics' *SU-A800mkII*, reviewed in issue 134. Same 78W/121W eight/four Ohms output power, very healthy 17A maximum current delivery and low 0.001-0.01 per cent distortion across the audioband. And all this from two large integrated power output modules bolted onto some equally substantial internal heatsinking.

The *A800* suffered a slight loss in extreme treble but the *SU-A700 mkIII* betrays a surprisingly droopy treble that's a full -1.8dB down by 20kHz (top of the audioband). I'm bound to say this is a little unexpected and may well have exacted some repercussion in the listening tests. Whether any of Technics's more elaborate ideas have any appreciable effect is doubtful. The use of bamboo separators between the anode and cathode of its supply electrolytics springs to mind. Here at least, there's no obvious influence on its technical performance which, aside from the loss in treble, is pretty much textbook stuff. *PM*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-7%
2	SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	36%
3	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	19%
4	NOISE	-41%
5	SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RFI	65%



**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆

**VALUE** ★★★★★

**PRICE** £249.95

▲ Well-built, well-equipped and keenly priced design, with some intriguing technology under the skin.

▼ Somehow, sound quality doesn't match the hype, though it did frequently sound promising.

✉ Panasonic UK Ltd, Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 8FP

☎ (0990) 357357

# Conclusions

It would be good to be able to report that our test amplifiers came in all shapes and sizes, and that they all did a fair job in relation to price. In fact, the only different looking amplifier was the now-familiar shoeboxed model from Cyrus. The legislators have managed to beat most of the more obvious individuality out of most of the rest. To give just one example, stringent requirements concerning the temperature of accessible surfaces now rule out some of history's startling variations, such as Musical Fidelity's *A1* waffle top. Similarly, designer looks now appear to take a back seat to more utilitarian considerations.

Still, time has not reduced the real divide that exists between those amplifiers with loads

of fruit and the simpler, more purist kind. The schism does not reside in the fact that 'widget' features exist at all, but rather that they are still offered after years of evidence indicating their deleterious effect on sound quality. Although there is no absolute proof that this is the case, it is surely the only reasonable inference from the way the amplifiers performed on test.

There is a central dilemma in choosing amplifiers and loudspeakers. The natural tendency is to choose inexpensive amplifiers to partner compact loudspeakers, but this flies in the face of real world requirements. Compact speakers are usually less sensitive than floor standers and, as pointed out by Paul Messenger in his recent loudspeaker roundup (December

'96), compacts often have superior midrange transparency, making them a natural enthusiast's choice. In principle, then, you require more power and better quality from an amplifier to partnering stand-mount compact speakers, than one hooked up to floor standing columns, which usually cost more. Of course there are a number of gross oversimplifications in this argument, but anyone with experience in these matters will confirm the kernel of truth in this statement, and any gathering of audiophiles will provide anecdotal evidence of some wonderful systems based on expensive and sometimes inexpensive compacts, driven by high-power amplifiers costing several times as much. As they say, it's the way to go.

## GROUP A (UP TO £299.99)

<b>Denon PMA-350SE</b>	<b>£199.99</b>
<b>Technics SU-A700 Mk 3</b>	<b>£249.95</b>
<b>Harman/Kardon HK620</b>	<b>£249.99</b>

Three different design approaches characterise these three sub-£300 models. The Technics is the all-dancing amp, but is chiefly distinguished by its use of high-tech internal components, notably in the power supply, the

active gain devices, and the use of anti-resonance casework, which shows a fine sensibility to the importance of mechanical resonance in the design of an audio amplifier. (This makes it all the harder to explain a nondescript performance.) The Denon is one of a new range of amps, with the minimum of unnecessary controls or circuit features, and a very

respectable, if slightly lightweight sound. The Harman/Kardon strikes a middle path, with a modestly traditional set of widgets, and only lip service is paid in the published propaganda to the nature of the electrical design. Which is interesting when you look to see which model came out smelling of roses in our tests!



The Technics SU-A700 Mk 3.

## GROUP B (£300-£500)

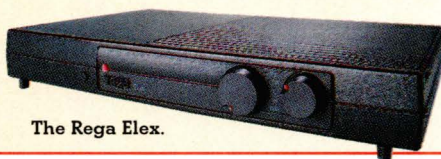
<b>Arcam Alpha 8</b>	<b>£349.99</b>
<b>Rega Elex</b>	<b>£398</b>
<b>Kenwood KA-7090R</b>	<b>£399.95</b>
<b>Pioneer A-300R Precision</b>	<b>£399.95</b>
<b>Sherwood AX-7030R</b>	<b>£249.95*</b>
<b>Magnum IA-200</b>	<b>£495</b>
<b>Musical Fidelity A2</b>	<b>£499</b>
<b>Talk Electronics Storm I</b>	<b>£500</b>

The eight amplifiers that make up the middle ground in our test fall into several mutually exclusive groups. The Sherwood and Kenwood are recognisable for their comparatively massive size and power outputs, and the plethora of facilities they offer. The Sherwood is especially powerful, and in large rooms, or where high SPLs are required, it may

be a good choice, despite its relatively crude sound quality. However, the Kenwood is only a little less powerful, and has better audio manners. The Talk Electronics Storm *I* is a more modest amp, with less power, greater transparency and a similarly open, vivid tonal balance.

The Pioneer *A-300R* Precision is a minimum-features amplifier that has been re-engineered to a high standard with components more often found in £4,000 amplifiers than in £400 ones. The Rega is a more conventional, and relatively compact low-features amplifier.

Neither is the kind



The Rega Elex.

of product that can simply be dropped into existing systems willy-nilly: they need careful system matching, and by the same token should be auditioned carefully before purchase. That said, the Pioneer's capabilities are considerably greater than those of the Rega, which arguably sounds most comfortable with Rega's own speakers.

Despite important differences, the Arcam, Magnum and Musical Fidelity all exemplify a trend away from the kind of sharp sterility that used to be synonymous with a certain type of hi-fi, and to varying degrees all will work well with a range of systems where a certain warmth and involvement come higher up the menu than simple information retrieval.

**\*STOP PRESS**  
Due to a clerical error we began this review on the basis of the Sherwood's original price: £400. In fact, it retails for £249.95. Ed.

## GROUP C (OVER £500)

<b>Cyrus IIII</b>	<b>£600</b>
<b>Densen Beat B-100</b>	<b>£600</b>
<b>Teac A-BX7R</b>	<b>£700</b>

In common with Group A, the top-priced Group C shows a similarly disparate set of design approaches. The gleaming new Cyrus *IIII* is as radical inside as it is out, being based on the top-of-the-line Cyrus pre/power amp, with extensive use of surface-mount devices and slit-foil

capacitors to partner the superb external coachwork. The Teac is designed to appeal to a different kind of audiophile with its techie visuals and balanced input, which incidentally could not be put to the test here since there



The Cyrus IIII.

were no balanced source components to hand. Indeed, there are few source components with balanced

outputs available at a price that makes sense with the Teac. The Densen Beat is also a minimalist amplifier of the 'no bullshit' school; all you get is a black box with a couple of macho rotaries, one for volume and the other to select the source, and a circuit that has been designed more to provide good pace and timing than the classical virtues of low distortion, wide bandwidth or good loudspeaker drive capability. Yet this is the one that comes closest to being the best all round in just these areas, not so much on paper, but in the acid test, when fired up and used in anger.

# BEST BUYS

**A** Best Buy provides exceptional performance at a given price. Being cheap or sounding good alone is not enough. There are just two amplifiers that fall into this category, of which the Harman/Kardon is the most obvious in this group, and in some ways the most gratifying to industry watchers. Harman/Kardon amps have generally had integrity, but rarely have been front runners. The Harman/Kardon *HK620*, one of the less expensive models, is a honey. It's an attractive amplifier, which offers fine detail, strong dynamics, and consistent behaviour across the



frequency band, all for just £250. It is no powerhouse, though, so avoid large rooms and choose speakers with reasonably high sensitivity. The Pioneer *A-300R* Precision is a different



kettle of fish, one that received mixed notices from the listening panel. In the end, however, I felt it was able to achieve truly excellent results in my own hands-on listening. It is demanding of the system it is used with, and it can sound rather matter-of-fact and unglamorous, but it allows the music to speak for itself with an honesty and freedom unusual at the price.

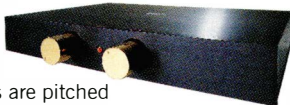
# RECOMMENDATIONS

**A**s the least expensive amplifier in the test group, the Denon *PMA-350SE* (£200) has a stripped-down control system, and a stripped-down sound to match. Its transparency and intelligibility are its best points, but it can sound a little lightweight in the wrong kind of system.



who like valve amps and can't afford to pay for one.

Three of our recommendations are pitched at almost the same price: they are the Magnum *IA200* (£465), the Musical Fidelity *A2* (£499) and the Talk Electronics *Storm 1* (£500). Apart from the coincidence of their price, they share very little in common.



The Musical Fidelity sits somewhere between the two in balance, and on the whole is the most capable all-rounder, though a suggestion of upper bass excess was noted on test, and on balance the *A2* is better used with stand mount compacts than floor standing monoliths. Incidentally, its meagre 25 Watt per channel output is as good as anyone else's 35 Watts.



The *Storm 1* is the most neutral and transparent of the three, but is a little less powerful than its moderate paper specification suggests.



The Magnum is a different story: a deliberately soft, warm amp designed to appeal to those



Finally, the Densen Beat *B100* (£600) also has a very particular kind of sound. This is a muscular, dynamic amplifier which revels in the kind of music for which rhythm and timing are particularly important. Arguably it is not as transparent or as subtle as some, but it makes compelling music. Give it a whirl.

## BEST OF THE REST

**I**t hardly needs saying that the introduction of new amplifiers doesn't invalidate the charms of existing designs, especially as technological progress in amplifiers is steady rather than spectacular, and not always in the right direction. For those interested in a sweet, valvey sound, the Audio Innovations *A/fo* (£300) practically invented the class, and remains the one by which others are measured. Don't ignore the Musical Fidelity *E100* (£600) either: it is sweet and forgiving, though more mainstream than the *A2*, and the extra cost buys improved build quality and much higher power output.

Firm favourites of the middle ground in integrated amplifiers include the Audiolab *8000S*, which at £650 is the company's first

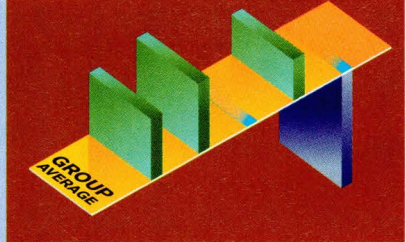
minimum features-integrated design, and a clear step up from the familiar *8000A*.

Technics' *SU-A900 Mk 2* (£450), though unimpressive on phono, is transparent and lucid as a line amp, and a clear improvement on the models tested elsewhere in this project. The £400 Harman/Kardon *HK1400* has earned widespread admiration, and the Denon *PMA-450SE*, the senior brother to the *350* tested here, is a 'fast and furious' model at an even more attractive £280.

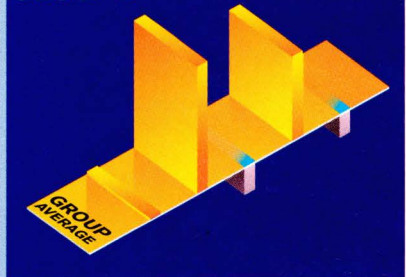
Those looking for real bargain basement models should investigate the NAD *310* and the Rotel *RA820AX*, superb bargains at £100 and £120 respectively. Still inexpensive but more than routinely worthy are the evergreen £200 Kenwood *KA-3020SE* and £260 NAD *314*.

## UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPHS AND GROUP AVERAGES

GROUP A



GROUP B



GROUP C



**T**here are great differences between an amplifier that costs £200 and one that costs £700. For this reason we have divided our 14 amplifiers into three groups to extract meaningful 'group averages' for our bar-graph lab-test summaries. The three groups (A, B and C) are explained in our introduction (pages 74-75), but just so that you can tell which amp is in which group throughout the reviews, here is the key to the colour codings shown above:

<b>Group A</b>	<b>(Up to £299.99)</b>
<b>Group B</b>	<b>(£300 - £499.99)</b>
<b>Group C</b>	<b>(Over £500)</b>

Using this information, you can work out with which of its peers each amplifier is being compared. Our aim is to assess every product's measured performance in the context of its closest rivals.

The bar-graphs themselves are derived from measurements performed by our Technical Editor, Paul Miller, using instruments controlled by his own award-winning, PC-based 'Virtual Instrument' software. Actual measured parameters are weighted and statistically processed to give the bar-graph values, relative to the group averages explained above. For more information, e-mail Paul Miller at 100576.3021@compuserve.com .

# Five Stars

**Does the best price always mean the best deal?**

“I thought I had this buying hi-fi business sorted out. I bought all the hi-fi magazines and read them thoroughly, because I reckoned their experts knew exactly what they were talking about - at least a lot more than I did! It was reassuring to see the same product names cropping up regularly and I figured the writers’ experience and guidance would steer me straight to the system of my dreams. The trouble is I’ve ended up more confused than when I started.



One reviewer said a product I fancied was absolutely brilliant but another said it was nothing special at all. How can that be? Surely one CD player is pretty much the same as another? And how can a loudspeaker that’s one magazine’s top recommendation not get so much as a mention in any of the others? I don’t mind admitting it, I’m completely lost.”

## **Plan B — I’m going for a deal**

“So, I’ve decided to adopt plan B. I’m sure there can’t be any really dramatic differences between all this gear and it’s all bound to work together properly, so I’m going to check the price lists and the adverts and shop around for the best deal. I know getting the right hi-fi is important — hey, I’m as mad about music as anyone — but if I can get close to the mark and save a few quid, I’m sure I’ll end up with a good system and be happy. I know there are specialist shops out there that do demonstrations and reckon they’ve got all the solutions but, to be honest, I’m a bit scared of going to one. I’d really welcome some advice and guidance but I don’t know all the technical jargon and I’d feel daft sitting there trying to “hear the differences” if I couldn’t. Anyway, a friend told me that these shops only sell the really expensive gear and that they’re not interested if you don’t have loads of money to spend.”

And so another hi-fi buyer starts his journey down the road to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a permanent overdraft.

There is only one way to buy a hi-fi system that will prove satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money, and that’s through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Let’s face it, you wouldn’t think about buying a car if you couldn’t take it for a test drive. You wouldn’t buy a house solely on the strength of seeing the estate agent’s details and a photograph. Even if you’re spending far less, say buying a jacket or a pair of shoes, you want to try them on to make sure they fit you.

Buying a hi-fi system is no different. It doesn’t matter what the specifications say or what the “experts” think: if it doesn’t measure up to what you want from a system, then it’s not the right choice. Knowing that you’ve bought a room full of five-star favourites or best-buys is no consolation when you can’t bear to listen to them for more than five minutes. Even that ten per cent discount on the price won’t make them sound any better.

## **Buying or being sold to?**

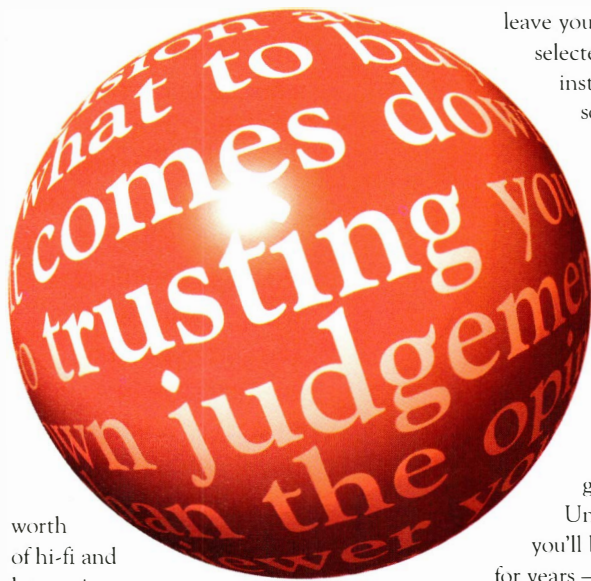
Mind you, most of us are easily suckered when it comes to buying hi-fi. Given the choice of venturing into the unknown territory of a specialist dealer’s shop and exerting some influence over what we buy, or taking what looks like the easy route — having adverts and magazine reviews push us along a path sweetened with discounts and special offers — we opt for the latter. We don’t buy a system, we allow ourselves to be sold one. We side-line our own ideas about quality and personal satisfaction and buy someone else’s opinion of what’s good for us and good value for our money.

## **Take control!**

Now there’s a group of long-established, independent specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer back in the driving seat. They’re encouraging the buyer to take control ... with a little help and guidance provided where required. They know how difficult it can be to establish the true quality and

# For Value

Ask the UK's top twenty specialist hi-fi dealers.



worth of hi-fi and home cinema systems. They know that without experiencing the performance of the systems they offer, you can't possibly assess the value of them. That's why their idea of "selling" is to play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.

Listening to your choice of music in a peaceful, well organised demonstration room, you may be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to hear the differences between components and between systems. With the dealer's help and advice you will be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy. It comes down to trusting your own judgement rather than the opinion of a reviewer you've never met ... and who won't refund your money if you're not satisfied or be at the end of a phone to sort out any problems you might encounter.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand into your pocket. They won't

leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure that you're entirely happy with the way it works.

## Why bother?

There is, of course, one question that hasn't been answered: why should you and these dealers go to all this trouble? Well, from your point of view maybe it's because a good deal is about a great deal more than just price. Unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years — years during which most of those five star products will probably stop shining quite so brightly.

As far as the dealers are concerned, maybe they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

Listed on the right of this page are the best hi-fi shops in the country. They all have lots of stars. You'll find them on the shop floor: they're the people waiting to guide customers towards hi-fi that will give them years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.



## STAR QUALITIES

value for money  
service  
facilities  
verdict



## 20 OF THE BEST HI-FI DEALERS IN THE UK

### LONDON N1

Grahams Hi-Fi  
190a New North Road  
0171 226 5500

### SW11

Oranges & Lemons  
61/63 Webbs Road  
Battersea  
0171 924 2040

### W4

Martin-Kleiser Ltd  
108 Chiswick High  
Road  
0181 400 5555

### SOUTH

**Ashford**, Kent  
Soundcraft Hi-Fi  
40 High Street  
01233 624441

### Chelmsford

Rayleigh Hi-Fi  
216 Moulsham Street  
01245 265245

### East Grinstead

Audio Designs  
26 High Street  
01342 314569

### Kingston-upon-Thames

Infidelity  
9 High Street  
Hampton Wick  
0181 943 3530

### Rayleigh

Essex  
Rayleigh Hi-Fi  
44a High Street  
01268 779762

### Southend-on-Sea

Rayleigh Hi-Fi  
132/4 London Road  
01702 435255

### Uxbridge

Uxbridge Audio  
278 High Street  
01895 465444

### MIDLANDS Banbury

Overture  
3 Church Lane  
01295 272158

### Birmingham

Sound Academy  
152a High Street  
Bloxwich  
01922 493499

### Leicester

Cymbiosis  
(Formerly known as  
Listen Inn)  
6 Hotel Street  
0116 262 3754

### Northampton

Listen Inn  
32 Gold Street  
01604 37871

### Shrewsbury

Creative Audio  
9 Dogpole  
01743 241924

### NORTH

#### Cheadle (Stockport)

Audio Counsel  
14 Stockport Road  
0161 428 7887

#### Oldham

Audio Counsel  
12/14 Shaw Road  
0161 633 2602

#### Sheffield

Moorgate Acoustics  
184 Fitzwilliam St  
0114 275 6048

### SCOTLAND Edinburgh

Russ Andrews Hi-Fi  
34 Northumberland  
Street  
0131 557 1672

### Glasgow

Stereo Stereo  
260 St. Vincent Street  
0141 248 4079

# HI-FI CHOICE **Mail Order**

This month Hi-Fi Choice brings you a fabulous set of compact speakers. Don't delay - order now to guarantee your speakers for Christmas.

**Just Launched**

**Fantastic value**  
at just

**£59.99**

(inc VAT and p&p)

**JE45A Carbon Fibre**



## Features include:

- Pinpoint sound for precise staging and effective sound
- Ergonomic shape and compact size for flexibility in use
- A variety of finishes to suit any decor or taste
- Magnetic shielding for the best sound when using them with a computer or home theatre system
- Weather resistant for many outdoor uses, for extra speakers into the garden
- Attached 10 foot (3 metre) pre-tinned cable
- Very easy to install

**New Product**

## A **revolution in sound design!**

**Soundbites™ are multi-purpose, multi-directional speakers, perfect for a variety of home and business applications.**

Soundbites™ may be small but they are incredibly powerful. These stylish speakers include a built-in pivot in the base for infinite adjustment across virtually 360 degrees.

The base cleverly doubles as a wall mount bracket for vertical or horizontal mounting for the best in surround sound for your home cinema or hi-fi system.

**Pivot virtually 360°**



**JE43A Grey Fog**



**JE47A Molten Lava**



**JE46A Silversnake**



**JE44A Grey Stone**



**JE48A Burled Walnut**



# OR TAKE OUR FREE GOODS OFFER!

Buy goods to certain value and obtain goods of your choice from our vast range absolutely free (only applies when using Cash / Cheque / Credit Card or Debit Cards eg. Switch/Delta) The free goods voucher can be redeemed on the spot or within 3 months.

£100 = £15 goods FREE !!    £300 = £50 goods FREE !!    £500 = £85 goods FREE !!  
 £800 = £120 goods FREE !!    £1000 = £200 goods FREE !!    £2000 = £400 goods FREE !!  
 £3000 = £600 goods FREE !!    £4000 = £800 goods FREE !!    £5000 = £1000 goods FREE !!

The free goods voucher will be issued to the purchase of hi-fi or AV Separates Components and Speakers and not Vision products. However the voucher obtained can be redeemed against ANY product from our vast range, (including TV's, VCR's and Camcorder), NOT in conjunction with exclusive Hi-Spek deals or sale items listed on these pages or interest free credit.

## UP TO 36 MONTHS

### PIONEER CLDS315

PAL / NTSC LASERDISC PLAYER

SAVE £100  
**NOW ONLY £299**

### YAMAHA DSPE1000

Upto 36 months interest free when this product is purchased with a full speaker package.  
**NOW ONLY £699.99**  
 Deposit £99.99 then 10 equal payments of £35  
 TOTAL PAYABLE £699.99 0% APR

### PIONEER PDR05

**NOW ONLY £1299.99**  
 Deposit £129.99 then 12 equal payments of £84.75  
 TOTAL PAYABLE £1299.99 0% APR

### DENON DC1

**NOW ONLY £379.99**  
 Deposit £39.99 then 10 equal payments of £18.00  
 TOTAL PAYABLE £379.99 0% APR

### SONY TAVABES

Upto 24 months interest free when this product is purchased with a full speaker package.  
**NOW ONLY £699.99**  
 Deposit £99.99 then 10 equal payments of £35  
 TOTAL PAYABLE £699.99 0% APR

### YAMAHA DSPA2070

Upto 36 months interest free when this product is purchased with a full speaker package.  
**NOW ONLY £1099.99**  
 Deposit £109.99 then 24 equal payments of £41.25  
 TOTAL PAYABLE £1099.99 0% APR

### Technics SLPG580A

CD PLAYER

WHAT HI-FI? 1996 AWARD WINNER  
**£129**  
 SAVE UP TO £30

### SONY EXCLUSIVE MDS 303

MINI DISC

**£299**  
 SAVE UP TO £200

### marantz / TANOY SE system

WHAT HI-FI? 1996 AWARD WINNER  
**NOW £699.90**  
 24 Months Interest Free Credit Deposit only £69.90 Followed by 24 Equal Monthly Payments of £26.25  
 0% APR total payable £699.90

### marantz CD63 KI sig

WHAT HI-FI? 1996 AWARD WINNER  
**NOW £499**  
 24 Months Interest Free Deposit only £49 Followed by 24 Equal Monthly Payments of £18.75  
 0% APR total payable £499

### PIONEER CLDD925

AC3 PAL / NTSC LASERDISC PLAYER

**£799.99**  
 £150 FREE SOFTWARE OR 24 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT DEPOSIT £79.99 THEN 24 EQUAL PAYMENTS OF £30  
 0% APR TOTAL PAYABLE £799.99

### PIONEER CLDD515-1

AC3 PAL / NTSC LASERDISC PLAYER

**£549.99**  
 £100 FREE SOFTWARE OR 18 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT DEPOSIT £54.99 THEN 18 EQUAL PAYMENTS OF £27.50  
 0% APR TOTAL PAYABLE £549.99

## Hi-SPEK electronics

Hi-SPEK are one UK's leading retailers specialising in Home Cinema and Hi-Fi equipment as well as large screen TV's/VCR's & Camcorders. Ideal for first time buyers enthusiasts alike, our in-store consultants take pride in a first class advisory service to both personal callers to our extensive showrooms and mail order customers requiring assistance across the phone. With interest free credit available on almost all purchases over £200 and a price pledge guarantee, HI-SPEK is the ideal one stop shop for all your requirements. HI-SPEK are members of R.E.T.R.A., The Electrical Radio Traders and Retailers Association

### MAIL ORDER

Hi-Spek are one of the most reliable names in mail order today. Over the last 15 years we have earned a reputation and trust for efficient and faultless service in this field and prospective purchasers, by mail order, can buy with absolute confidence from people who care and are in touch with every aspect of your order. Furthermore, HI-SPEK are members of R.E.T.R.A. The Electrical and Radio Traders and Retailers Association which further ensures reliability and trust. We only sell boxed, brand new equipment. That is guaranteed. All our products come with a full manufacturers warranty. Nationwide delivery, Nationwide Installation Service and in-Home Service are just a few of the services that we have in order to ensure that our mail order customers are provided with the very best in service and feel confident to order even though they may be miles away from us. Please ask for more details on our Nationwide Delivery Service and Nationwide Installation Services. Furthermore, if you opt for one of HI-SPEK's Cover Plan Insurance Schemes, (underwritten by Pinnacle Insurance Plc), and in the unlikely event of you requiring a service call, we will guarantee to call out and either collect or service your item. This applies to any where on the UK mainland except some Scottish highland areas.

### 0% INTEREST \* FREE CREDIT

We offer up to 36 months Interest Free Credit on almost all of our products over £199.90. This service applies to callers to our extensive show rooms and to mail order customers as well.

### CALLERS TO OUR STORES

Callers to our stores wishing to purchase goods utilising our Interest Free Credit facilities should be 21 or over, in full-time employment, (part-time over 16 hours and housewives with working husbands are also welcome), holding a valid cheque/credit card, I.D. will be required in the form of a recent bill, eg. gas, phone, etc., or a drivers license. Up to £1000.00 instant credit is yours. Larger amounts of credit are available, up to £5000.00 subject to a small credit check.

**MAIL ORDER** If you require Interest Free Credit from the comfort of your home please call now on 0181 207-0000, or 0181 349-1166. You can apply as long as you are over 21 / in full-time employment / a retired person / a part-time worker of 16 + hours. We will ask a few simple questions and send you a credit form immediately to sign. Your goods will be sent out as soon as we receive the form back signed, it's that simple! Your deposit can be paid by credit card, switch. HI-SPEK are Licensed Credit Brokers. Subject to status ask for written details. We reserve the right to refuse Interest Free Credit on special offers, Hi-Spek exclusive deals and certain price match offers.

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Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	
ATACAMA MAIN DEALER	
BD21.....0%	£59.99
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SE20.....0%	£69.99
SE24.....0%	£69.99

AUDIO ALCHEMY MAIN DEALER	
DIAPHRAM.....0%	£149.95
DAC in the box.....0%	£239.95
DDE1V1 INC. P/SI.....0%	£399.95
DDE1V1.1 INC. P/SI.....0%	£599.95
DLC2 INC. P/SI.....0%	£449.95
OM150INC. P/S.....0%	£549.95
OM150.....0%	£1195.95
DD5111.....0%	£699.95

AURA MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

B & W MAIN DEALER	
DM 302.....0%	£139.95
DM 601.....0%	£199.95
DM 602.....0%	£299.95
DM 603.....0%	£499.95
DM 604.....0%	£399.95
P4.....0%	£675.00
P5.....0%	£875.00
P6.....0%	£1095.00
CC8.....0%	£199.95
CC9.....0%	£149.99
CC9.....0%	£399.99
AS6.....0%	£499.99

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Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

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Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

naim cable MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

Canon MAIN DEALER	
SV15.....0%	£99.95
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S35.....0%	£249.95
S70.....0%	£699.95
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V100W.....0%	£219.95
SB-20.....0%	£199.95
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SV15KIT2.....0%	£209.95
SC5.....0%	£99.95
SC10.....0%	£129.95
SC20.....0%	£199.95

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VS-12.....0%	£549.99
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CASSETTE DECKS	
DRM 350.....0%	£159.99
DRM 740.....0%	£269.99
DRW580.....0%	£199.99
DRS 640.....0%	£199.99
DRS 650.....0%	£229.99
DRS 810.....0%	£309.99

AMPLIFIERS	
PMA2050E.....0%	£159.99
PMA3050E.....0%	£199.99
PMA 4050E.....0%	£279.99
PMA 425R.....0%	£229.99
PMA735P.....0%	£349.99

TUNERS & CD PLAYERS	
TU2260.....0%	£119.99
TU215RD.....0%	£149.99
TU380RD.....0%	£199.99
DCD425.....0%	£149.99
DCD425.....0%	£199.99
DCD715.....0%	£234.99
DCD825.....0%	£239.99
DCD1015.....0%	£349.99
DCD3000.....0%	£999.99
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AUDIO VISUAL	
AV77.....0%	£399.99
AVC 1800.....0%	£549.99
AVR-600.....0%	£299.99
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AVR900.....0%	£549.99

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Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

Speakers	
MR CENTRE.....0%	£99.90
JBL REUS'LR.....0%	£1050.00
HTI THX PACKAGE.....0%	£1999.90

GOODMANS MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	
ARENA AV PACKAGE.....0% OR FG	£349.00
C100.....0%	£169.99
C110.....0%	£299.99

Harman Kardon MAIN DEALER	
AMPLIFIERS	
HK610.....0%	£179.95
HK620.....0%	£249.95
HK640.....0%	£399.95
HK660.....0%	£699.95
HK680.....0%	£999.95

HOME CINEMA	
AVI 100.....0%	£249.99
AVI 150.....0%	£399.99
AVI 200.....0%	£499.95
AVR10.....0%	£299.95
AVR21.....0%	£449.95
AVR25.....0%	£649.95
AVR70.....0%	£999.99
AVR80.....0%	£1499.99
ADP303.....0%	TBA

CASSETTE DECKS	
TD420.....0%	£249.95
TD450.....0%	£349.95

CD PLAYERS	
FL800.....0%	£299.95
HD710.....0%	£199.95
HD730.....0%	£299.95
HD775.....0%	£699.95

TUNERS	
TU930.....0%	£149.95
TU950.....0%	£199.95

CITATION MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

IXOS MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

JBL MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

LASER DISC PLAYER	
LVD280.....0%	£449.95

Jamo MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

KEF MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

KENWOOD MAIN DEALER	
Full range available PLEASE ENQUIRE	

AMPLIFIERS	
KA-1080.....0%	£139.95
KA-306R.....0%	£169.95
KA-3020SE.....0%	£199.95
KA-7090R.....0%	£399.95

PRO-LOGIC RECEIVERS	
KRA 4080.....0%	£219.95
KRV 3080.....0%	£279.95
KR 6080.....0%	£329.95
KRV 7080.....0%	£379.95
KRV 9000.....0%	£1299.95

PRO-LOGIC AMPLIFIERS	
KAV 3700.....0%	£150.95

CASSETTE DECKS	
KX3080.....0%	£159.95
KX5080S.....0%	£199.95
KXW4080.....0%	£159.95
KXW6080.....0%	£199.95

MINI DISC PLAYERS	
DM-7080.....0%	£599.95
DM-7090.....0%	£499.95

COMPACT DISC PLAYERS	
DP2860.....0%	£129.95
DP3080.....0%	£169.95
DPMS570.....0%	£249.95
DP7090.....0%	£399.95
DPR4080.....0%	£179.95
DPR6080.....0%	£249.95

TUNERS	
KT 2080.....0%	£129.95
KT 3080.....0%	£179.95

GRAPHIC EQUALISER	
GE7030.....0%	£229.95
GE2060.....0%	£149.95

MISSION MAIN DEALER	
Full range available please enquire	

TECHNOLOGY AMPLIFIERS	
PM-47.....0%	£149.90
PM-57.....0%	£199.90
PM-80II.....0%	£449.90
PM-500.....0%	£699.90
SM-500.....0%	£399.90

RECEIVERS	
SR-47.....0%	£249.90
SR-65.....0%	£299.90

CASSETTE DECKS	
SD-53.....0%	£199.90
SD-55.....0%	£299.90
CC-47.....0%	£249.90
CC-57.....0%	£229.90
CC-67.....0%	£249.90
CC-67.....0%	£269.90

EQUALISERS	
EQ-515.....0%	£199.90

AUDIOPHILE AMPLIFIERS	
PM-16.....0%	£1699.90
PM-17.....0%	£899.90

COMPACT DISC PLAYERS	
CD-17.....0%	£799.90

SPECIAL EDITION	
PM-66se.....0%	£229.90
CD-63se.....0%	£349.90
SE System.....0%	£699.90
CD-83IKI.....0%	£499.90
CD-17KI.....0%	£1299.90

HOME ENTERTAINMENT AMPLIFIERS	
PM171AV.....0%	£399.90
MA-500THX.....0%	£249.90
MM-500.....0%	£499.90
MC-500.....0%	£899.90
AV1030.....0%	£329.90
DPB70.....0%	£599.90

RECEIVERS	
SR-56.....0%	£299.90
SR-70.....0%	£699.90
SR-96.....0%	£1299.90
IR-92.....0%	£99.90

LCD PROJECTORS	
VP-500.....0%	£699.90
VP-600.....0%	£1299.90



We accept no responsibility for errors. Omissions and errors excepted. F.C. excludes Yamaha & B & W



## AKAI

### VSG745

**WHAT HI-FI?** 1996 AWARD WINNER

**NOW ONLY £299.99**  
Deposit £30 then 18 equal payments of £15  
TOTAL PAYABLE £299.99 0% APR

## LINN

### MIMIK / MAJIK / TUKAN\*\*

**LINE VERSION**  
**PASSIVE VERSION**

**NOW ONLY £2025**  
Deposit £225 then 30 equal payments of £60  
TOTAL PAYABLE £2025 0% APR

## SONY

### SS176EB

Upto 24 months interest free when this product is purchased with any AMP & CD

**NOW ONLY £249.99**  
Deposit £24.99 then 12 equal payments of £18.75  
TOTAL PAYABLE £249.99 0% APR

## SERIOUS PACKAGE

### MISSION 752 FREEDOM

black + MARANTZ CD63KISI + LINN MAJIK LINE VERSION

**NOW ONLY £1728**  
Deposit £178 then 30 equal payments of £51.66  
TOTAL PAYABLE £1728 0% APR

## VALUE PACKAGE 97

### MARANTZ CD67 + PM66SE

+ B&W DM601

**NOW ONLY £700**  
Deposit £70 then 24 equal payments of £26.25  
TOTAL PAYABLE £700 0% APR

## BUDGET PACKAGE 97

### MORDAUNT SHORT MS101 + TECHNICS SLP6580 + DENON PMA250SE

**NOW ONLY £460**  
Deposit £60 then 24 equal payments of £16.66  
TOTAL PAYABLE £460 0% APR

## DENON D-F07

**WHAT HI-FI?** 1996 AWARD WINNER

**NOW ONLY £649.99**  
Deposit £64.99 then 18 equal payments of £31.50  
TOTAL PAYABLE £649.99 0% APR

WE RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING SPEAKERS FOR THIS SYSTEM MISSION 7311 £129.99 or MORDAUNT SHORT MS101 or the B&W DM601 £199.99. Any of these can be added to the interest free above

## MISSION 752 FREEDOM

Upto 30 months interest free when this product is purchased with any amp & cd

**NOW ONLY £578**  
Deposit £58 then 24 equal payments of £22  
TOTAL PAYABLE £578 0% APR

PRICE ABOVE IS FOR BLACK, PRIMA VERA £648 AVAILABLE ON THE SAME TERMS

## AIWA NSX-AV90

**WHAT HI-FI?** 1996 AWARD WINNER

**SAVE £100**  
**NOW ONLY £399**  
INCLUDING ALL 5 SPEAKERS

## WHAT HI-FI SYSTEM 2

### HARMAN KARDON AV1100 + MISSION AV2 SPEAKER PACKAGE + PANASONIC NVHD605

**NOW ONLY £969.99**  
Deposit £96.99 then 24 equal payments of £36.25  
TOTAL PAYABLE £969.99 0% APR

## JBL TLX / REL Q50 PACKAGE

### Q BASS 50 JBL TLX121 / TLX103 / TLX111

**NOW ONLY £750**  
Deposit £75 then 24 equal payments of £28.12  
TOTAL PAYABLE £750 0% APR

## YAMAHA HOME CINEMA UPGRADE PACKAGE

### DSPE390 + NSE105 + NSC105

**NOW ONLY £440**  
Deposit £50 then 18 equal payments of £21.66  
TOTAL PAYABLE £440 0% APR  
+20m 79 strand speaker cable free!

## FERGUSON

### FV98HVX

**WHAT HI-FI?** 1996 AWARD WINNER

**SAVE £140**  
**NOW ONLY £359**  
+£30 VOUCHER FROM VIRGIN FREE

## Panasonic

### NVHD605B

**WHAT HI-FI?** 1996 AWARD WINNER

**SAVE £70**  
**NOW ONLY £329**

## SONY SYSTEM

### TAF 448E + CDPX900E + SS176EB

**NOW ONLY £799.99**  
Deposit £79.99 then 18 equal payments of £40  
TOTAL PAYABLE £799.99 0% APR

## ROTEL/INFINITY SYSTEM

### RA930AX MKII + RCD930AX + INFINITY REF1i

**NOW ONLY £400**  
Deposit £40 then 18 equal payments of £20  
TOTAL PAYABLE £400 0% APR

## AURA / B & W SYSTEM

### B & W DM601 + AURA VA100 II + CD100

**NOW ONLY £1050**  
Deposit £150 then 24 equal payments of £37.50  
TOTAL PAYABLE £1050 0% APR

## HOME CINEMA VALUE PACKAGE

**WHAT HI-FI AWARD WINNERS**  
YAMAHA DSPA590 MISSION AV2 PACKAGE

**NOW ONLY £700**  
Deposit £70 then 24 equal payments of £26.25  
TOTAL PAYABLE £700 0% APR

304.....SAVE £70.....£189.95  
314.....£259.95  
**TUNERS**  
412S.....£189.95  
414DS.....£249.95  
**COMPACT DISC PLAYERS**  
510.....£199.95  
512.....£249.95  
513.....£289.95  
514.....£369.95  
515.....£349.95  
517.....£399.95  
**CASSETTE DECKS**  
613.....£229.95  
614.....£269.95  
616.....£299.95  
**TURNTABLES**  
533.....£219.95  
**PRE AMPLIFIER**  
114.....£269.95  
116.....£369.95  
118.....£399.95  
**POWER AMPLIFIERS**  
912.....£499.95  
214.....£369.95  
216TH.....£469.95  
208TH.....£1099.95  
**HOME CINEMA**  
713.....£479.95  
716.....£599.95  
316.....£449.95  
310.....£399.95  
317.....£349.95  
808CC.....£169.95  
805RC.....£149.95

PD-S505.....£199.95  
PD-S705.....£299.95  
PD-S904.....£399.95  
**MULTI-PLAY CD**  
PD-F25.....£229.95  
PD-M603.....£199.95  
PD-F605.....£229.95  
PD-F805.....£329.95  
PD-F905.....£399.95  
**COMPACT DISC RECORDERS**  
PDR-05.....£1299.95  
RDD-60A.....Blank disc.....£7.99  
RDD-74A.....Blank disc.....£9.99  
**AMPLIFIERS**  
A105.....£129.95  
A203.....£149.95  
A400X.....£299.95  
**REMOTE CONTROL AMPLIFIERS**  
A204R.....£159.95  
A300R.....£199.95  
A405R.....£249.95  
A605R.....£399.95  
A-07.....£399.95  
A-09.....£399.95  
**AUDIO VISUAL AMPS**  
VSA303.....£299.95  
VSA805.....£449.95  
**AUDIO VISUAL PROCESSORS**  
VSP200.....£249.95  
SP-D07.....£799.99  
**AUDIO VISUAL RECEIVERS**  
VSA-40SRDS.....£249.95  
VSA-50SRDS.....£299.95  
VSA-80SRDS.....£399.95  
**AUDIO RECEIVERS**  
SX-200SRDS.....£199.95  
**TUNERS**  
F204RDS.....£139.95  
F304RDS.....£189.95  
F504RDS.....£249.95  
**DAT RECORDERS**  
D-08.....£899.95  
DB101.....£1199.95  
**CASSETTE DECKS**  
CT-S250.....£149.95  
CT-S450S.....£199.95  
CT-S550S.....£249.95  
CT-S830S.....£499.95  
CT-S9.....£599.95  
**TWIN CASSETTE DECKS**  
CT-W020R.....£159.95  
CT-W030RS.....£179.95  
CT-W040RS.....£299.95  
**GRAPHIC EQUALISER**  
GR-777.....£279.95

**REAR PROJECTION TV RECEIVERS**  
SD-T50W1.....£399.00  
SD-M1407.....£359.00  
**LASER DISC PLAYERS**  
CLDS315.....£299.95  
CLDS315-1.....£199.95  
CLDS315-1-1.....£549.95  
CLDS925.....£799.95  
**POLK AUDIO MAIN DEALER**  
**SPEAKERS**  
M311.....£219.95  
LSFX.....£449.95  
**CENTRE SPEAKERS**  
CS107.....£119.95  
CS200.....£169.95  
CS250.....£249.95  
CS350.....£449.90  
**REFERENCE MONITOR SERIES**  
RM2000L.....£349.95  
RM3000L.....£699.95  
RM5000L.....£899.95  
RM7000L.....£999.90  
SRT SYSTEM.....£850.00  
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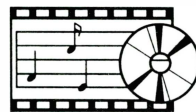
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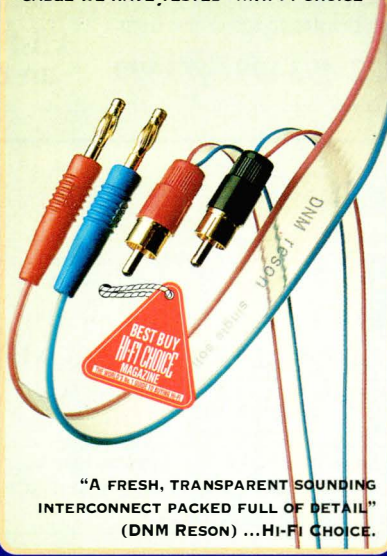
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# Glossary

Baffled by hi-fi jargon? Confused by technical terms? Fear not: **Paul Messenger** has the answers to your lexicographical questing, in the all-new Choice glossary.

## A

**ACTIVE:** Loudspeaker systems that contain, or partner, dedicated electronics — power amplification plus electronic crossovers and equalisers.

**AFC:** Automatic Frequency Control. A feature found in audio and TV/video tuners to ease station tuning and stability

**ALC:** Automatic Level Control. Used in audio recorder circuitry to avoid unwanted overload, usually by sacrificing much of the available dynamic range

**AM:** Amplitude Modulation. This is a broadcasting technique used for medium- and long-wave radio transmissions, and for television pictures.

**AMP:** 1) Ampere. A unit that measures the amount of electrical current flowing. 2) Diminutive of amplifier.

**AMPLITUDE:** Size or magnitude, hence loudness or level.

**ANALOGUE:** Signal-modelling technique using a directly analogous and continuously varying medium.

**AV or A/V:** Audio Visual. Software/programming in which audio and visual content is of similar importance.

**AUTO REVERSE:** Audio cassette tape transport, which changes direction at end-of-side.

**AZIMUTH:** Alignment of (audio cassette) tape-head gap with respect to tape path; inter-deck variations compromise high-frequency performance.

## B

**BALANCE:** 1) The relative loudness of the left and right channels of a stereo system 2) The relative loudness of different parts of the audio spectrum (for example, bass and treble) with respect to each other.

**BANDWIDTH:** The range of frequencies with defined upper and lower limits over which a system operates.

**BASS:** The lower part of the audible frequency range.

**BIAS:** 1) Lateral force applied to tonearms to assist tracking.

2) Electromagnetic preconditioning of audio tape recording; some cassette decks provide adjustable bias to 'fine tune' tape and machine co-performance.

## C

**CASSETTE:** Convenient system of housing, protecting and using magnetic tape in a plastic case.

**CD:** see Compact Disc

**CD-R:** Relatively new, pricey, but rapidly growing recordable-CD system; discs record once only; particularly useful for personalised compilations

**CD-ROM:** High-capacity optical discs based on CDs but configured as flexible computer



**A coaxial KEF drive unit featuring a concentric treble unit.**

read-only software; many applications including some AV potential.

**CLIPPING:** The consequences of overdriving an electrical circuit, resulting in waveform distortion and loss of control; especially common in power amplifiers.

**COAXIAL:** Made symmetrical about a common core — for example, shielded aerial cable or loudspeaker drive units.

**COLORATION:** A general term used to describe the audible effects of a whole range of different distortions in various hi-fi components, but especially record decks and loudspeakers

**COMPACT CASSETTE:** World standard for consumer tape recording/playback. Originated in the '60s and still going strong(ish).

**COMPACT DISC (CD):** World standard for laser-read digital-stereo music discs.

**COMPATIBILITY:** From the basic ability of different items of equipment to work together, to the subtleties of their interaction and optimisation of same.

**CONVERTER:** DAC, digital-to-analogue converter.

**CROSSOVER:** More precisely described as a dividing network, the electrical circuitry inside a loudspeaker that apportions the drive signal to the individual drive units.

## D

**DAC:** Digital-to-analogue converter. This is used to change digital-audio code to analogue, prior to amplification.

**DAT:** Digital Audio Tape. A digital cassette tape format that uses CD-type signals and is incompatible with compact cassettes. Used by the music business, but rare in the consumer marketplace.

**DCC:** Digital Compact Cassette. A medium launched in the early Nineties to little effect.

**DECIBEL (dB):** A logarithmic unit used to express relative loudness.

**DIGITAL:** Digital audio uses a variety of approaches to represent the essentially analogue music signal in digital code, for storage and/or transmission — for example, CD, DAT, NICAM stereo, MD, Dolby Digital.

**DIN:** German standards body, responsible for a popular range of standard plug/socket specifications widely used in Europe.

**DISTORTION:** Literally any deviation from the original, though often specified to particular mechanisms. Hence, non-linearities.

**DITHER:** Low-level noise added when digitally encoding a signal to randomise quantisation errors.

**DOLBY B:** Original domestic noise-reduction system for audio cassettes, now ubiquitous

**DOLBY C:** More extreme but less popular extension of Dolby B.

**DOLBY DIGITAL (aka AC-3):** Multi-channel surround sound system for movie soundtracks. To date, software is only on imported laser discs.

**DOLBY S:** Complex 'smart' noise-reduction system, which should help the compact cassette survive beyond the millennium.

**DOLBY HX:** Record-only system that increases high-frequency headroom, especially with cheaper Type-1 tapes.

**DOLBY PRO-LOGIC:** Technique that extracts additional centre-front (dialogue) and surround channels from stereo movie soundtracks, for home cinema reproduction. Used almost universally on movies.

**DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER:** The sources of acoustic output in a loudspeaker; includes woofers, tweeters and so on.

**DUB:** Copy — for example, on tape.

**DVD:** Digital Video Disc. A nascent high-density optical disc format intended to squeeze complete movies onto compact-size discs, with potential for better-than-CD sound-only applications. Still to be launched (and it's taking a time).

**DYNAMIC RANGE:** The ratio (dBs) between the loudest and softest sounds a system or component can handle.

## E

**ELECTROSTATIC:** A principle employed in some exotic loudspeaker and headphone transducers.

## F

**FILTER:** An electrical circuit used to limit the bandwidth of a signal.

**FM:** Frequency Modulation. A widely used method of encoding signals for transmission or recording.

**FREQUENCY RANGE/SPECTRUM:** This can refer to any spread of frequencies, but most commonly the audio band of human hearing, from 20 cycles per second (20Hz) in the extreme bass to 20,000 cycles per second (20kHz) in the highest treble.

**FREQUENCY RESPONSE:** The variation in output across a specified range of different frequencies.

## G

**GAIN:** The amplification ratio of electrical signals.

## H

**HARMONIC:** Harmonics are the whole number multiples of a base frequency called a fundamental.

**HARMONIC DISTORTION (THD):** The addition of unwanted harmonics to a signal.

**HF:** High frequency, such as treble.



**HI-FI STEREO:** Name specifically given to stereo FM soundtrack system used on upmarket domestic VCRs.

**H<sub>z</sub> (HERTZ):** Unit of frequency of vibration, 1Hz equals one cycle per second.

## I

**IMPEDANCE:** Measure of the electrical resistance (and reactance) of a component's inputs and outputs.

**INTERMODULATION (IMD):** A form of distortion whereby a high and a low frequency interact to produce sum and difference signals that are not harmonically related to either.

## J

**JACK:** Connector standard used for headphones and microphones; Walkmen begat mini-jacks.

**JITTER:** Perturbations in the timing clock used to reconstitute an analogue signal from digital data.

## K

**kHz (KILOHERTZ):** 1,000Hz or vibrations per second (1kHz actually corresponds to a tone nearly two octaves above middle C).

## L

**LED:** Light-emitting diode, usually a red indicator bulb.

**LF:** Low frequency, such as bass.

**LINEAR:** A linear device that produces an output that exactly mirrors the input over the required operating range, and so is distortion free.

**LONG WAVE (LW):** Low-quality AM radio band, loved by housewives, old dears and cricket fans.

**'LOUDNESS':** A switchable equalisation sometimes fitted to amplifiers, which boosts low and high frequencies. Intended for low-level listening but scorned by enthusiasts.

## M

**MD:** see Mini Disc.

**MINI DISC:** Sony-led compressed-digital audio record/replay format on tiny optical discs. Happening in Japan but not much UK activity yet.

**MEDIUM WAVE (MW):** Low-quality AM radio band loved by sports fans.

**MIDBAND, MIDRANGE:** The middle range of audio frequencies, where the ear is most sensitive.

**MODULATION:** In whatever medium, the variations or coding that describe the programme signal.

**MOL:** Maximum operating level, of audio tape, usually referred to five per cent mid-band distortion.

**MONITOR:** High-quality loudspeaker.

**MOVING COIL:** A transducer system, which changes mechanical energy into electrical energy or vice versa; used in high-quality pickup cartridges and in conventional loudspeaker drive units.

**MOVING MAGNET:** Inverting the moving coil technique, a transducer system whereby a magnet (or induced magnet) moves within a (relatively) static coil. Widely used in low-cost pickup cartridges.

**MULTIPLEX FILTER:** Device fitted to some cassette decks to avoid interference from stereo pilot tones when recording from stereo FM radio.

## N

**NICAM:** Acronym for digital-stereo-sound-with-TV system, currently widely available in UK terrestrial TV broadcasts.

**NOISE:** Random, unwanted low-level signals.

## O

**OCTAVE:** Span of frequency or pitch that represents a doubling or halving of frequency.

**OHM (Ω):** Unit of electrical impedance or resistance.



Get plugged in with a phono.

## P

**PHONO:** The most commonly used plug/socket system for audio signals; also abbreviation for record deck.

**PICKUP (CARTRIDGE):** Device with cantilever and stylus at the end of a record-playing tone arm.

**PORT:** In reflex-loaded loudspeakers, the opening that is 'tuned' to the box size and main driver characteristics, to improve output at low frequencies.

**POWER AMPLIFIER:** The final stage of an amplifier, which provides the urge to drive the loudspeakers.

**PREAMPLIFIER:** The first part of an amplifier, which accepts, switches and routes the signals from and to other components, applying any equalisation and adjusting volume prior to feeding the power amplifier(s).

## R

**RF:** Radio Frequencies. Used for the transmission of radio signals. Sometimes cited as a cause of distortion within audio kit.

## S

**SENSITIVITY:** 1) In loudspeakers, the amount of output (loudness) for a given electrical input (usually one Watt).

2) The electrical signal input required by an amplifier or tape recorder to deliver full power output or recording level.

**SCART:** 21-pin Euroconnector standard widely used for audio/visual applications, especially the connection of television to peripheral devices (aka Peritel).

**SEPARATION:** The separateness of the left and right channels of a stereo audio system.

**SIGNAL-TO-NOISE, S/N:** The difference between the maximum level of a signal and the background noise left when the signal is removed.

**STEREO:** Literally 'solid' — a system that uses two loudspeakers (or a pair of headphones) to create solid, spatial sonic images.

**STYLUS:** Carefully shaped piece of diamond that rides the extracts information from a vinyl record's groove.

**SUBSONIC:** Below the audible-frequency range — for instance, below 20Hz.

**SURROUND SOUND:** Systems that go beyond stereo in attempting to envelope the listener in sound from all around (see Dolbys Pro-Logic/Digital AC-3).

## T

**TREBLE:** The upper part of the audible frequency range.

**TWEETER:** Small loudspeaker drive unit used for higher-frequency (treble) sounds.

**TYPE I:** Basic ferric audio cassette tape.

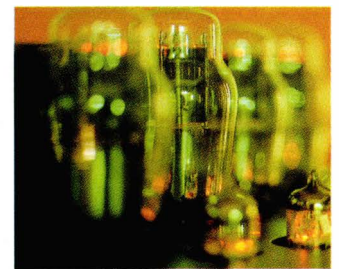
**TYPE II:** Premium chrome or superferric audio cassette tape.

**TYPE IV:** Upmarket metal-particle audio cassette tape.

## U

**ULTRASONIC:** Frequencies above the limit of human audibility — for instance, 20kHz.

**UNIT:** Loudspeaker drive unit.



The valve or vacuum tube.

## V

**VALVE:** Early thermionic electronic device, still highly regarded by many enthusiasts.

**VCR:** Video cassette recorder or video recorder; sometimes VTR (video tape recorder).

**VOLT:** Unit of electrical potential difference; a varying voltage is used to 'model' audio signals in transducers and electronic components.

## W

**WATT:** Unit of electrical power (the product of voltage and current).

**WEIGHTING:** Equalisation applied in measurement techniques to improve relevance.

**WOOFER:** Loudspeaker drive unit that handles lower-frequency (bass) sounds.

**WOW & FLUTTER:** Low- and high-frequency pitch variations due to poor mechanical performance in tape transports and turntables.



MiniDisc or MD has its sights set on replacing the compact cassette as the mass market medium of choice.

# Virtual Audio Reality

**Guy Sargeant** has some advice for audiophiles with an urge to splurge.

**A**s *Hi-fi Choice* is aimed at the more sophisticated consumer I will make the assumption that the majority of readers are already enthusiasts, and that they have some knowledge of what comprises a normal home audio system.

The key to buying anything new or even improving what you already have is to become better informed. You have to ask yourself questions like: why do I need this? What do I expect it to do? How will I know whether it's doing it? And, will it satisfy my needs?

It's always worth looking at the motive for buying anything. People want different things from what they buy. In Milan many people seem to have a fascination with hand-made fountain pens. Like clothes, these pens are a visible symbol of taste and affluence. The same goes for wrist watches: a Swiss-made, analogue, wind-up chronograph may not be as accurate as the plastic quartz digital model you get free when you buy 10 gallons of unleaded, but it would still be the more popular choice if price wasn't an issue.

Hi-fi is the same. There are many different reasons for having it. None are more right or wrong than others. I'm not that bothered about the appearance of the equipment I use but I appreciate that for some, looks are a major consideration. Ergonomics aren't such a big deal either. I have three sources: vinyl, CD and radio. One day I'll get round to putting a second line input on the pre-amp — it's a pain to have to keep changing the leads over! Flexibility and ease of use may be important too.

What's important to me is that hi-fi can create the illusion that musicians are performing the music I've chosen to listen to, in my living room. The music is a thrill but so is that illusion. Since the phrase 'virtual reality' entered the language a few years ago it has been applied to almost every form of media, but none of these simulations actually convince anyone that they are real. Neither cinema nor VR headsets make you think that what you are seeing is actually happening in your presence. What sets a good hi-fi system apart is that it can be really convincing.

While you're working out meaningful reasons for buying some new equipment you should take time to examine the way the equipment you already own is installed. I find that the majority of systems I hear only realise a fraction of their potential, because the installation is poor. Get the equipment onto proper racks and the speakers onto good stands. Tighten up any spikes. Solder the plugs onto your speaker leads. Only when you are absolutely

alike as they hurtle towards perfection, the diversity of approaches increases. Weird!

You'll be relieved to hear that there are far fewer really bad products around now than there were 20 years ago. Blind testing of the type carried out by this magazine tends to magnify the slight differences between products, as the 'golden-eared' panellists tend to latch onto any discernible variation in performance, and attempt to accurately describe it. The differences are there but their significance can sometimes be exaggerated.

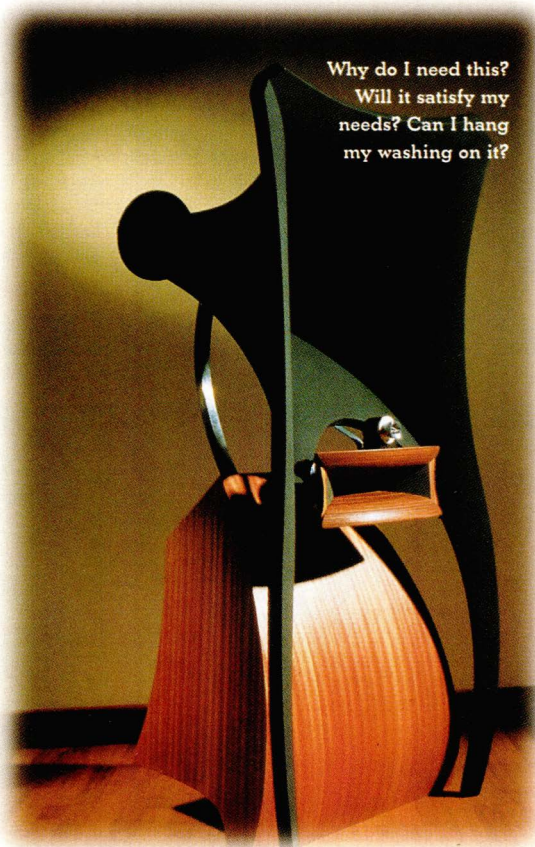
Decide which types of product seem interesting. If you can, try to find out something about what the manufacturer was intending the product to be capable of, and what they prioritised in its development. Many reviews will give you that insight.

Above £300 or so the performance of CD players does not continue to improve at the same rate as that of amplifiers or loudspeakers. In CD there is a price threshold above which greater investment brings only incremental returns. Bear this in mind when deciding where to allocate your funds!

You'll need a sympathetic dealer who'll listen to the requirements you've identified and let you hear several appropriate options, in a relaxed environment. Don't let the dealer tell you what's good for you. You'll have to live with it, he won't! Take some of your own music along, and try to hear the system with a variety of music. And remember, if it doesn't do anything for you in the shop, it won't when you get home.

Unfortunately the majority of hi-fi isn't bought like this. It's bought on impulse by people with cash burning a hole in their pocket, or a credit card on fire in their wallet. It's like an itch

they have to scratch or another fix from their pusher. They've got to have it. They haven't really thought why. It's usually a mistake because the original need wasn't identified carefully, the fix doesn't cure the ailment and so it goes on. It's too easy for dealers to take money from these people. Make it harder. If you feel the urge to splurge this weekend go and buy £100 worth of new music. It's a relatively painless upgrade and will buy you the time to make a better decision. ▲



sure that you have done everything possible should you proceed. If you don't, you won't be able to gauge the nature and level of improvement any change brings about, and you won't know whether you're making progress.

By reading this magazine you are becoming more informed. You'll see that there are many different approaches to the design of hi-fi components and that as they get more expensive, rather than becoming increasingly

# THE DIRECTORY

## 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 1** Discover which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide (starts on page 122). 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 2** Read about the hi-fi equipment that we have reviewed in the Directory (starts on page 130). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy and Recommended awards, which denote 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 3** Find your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (starts on page 147) to book a demonstration of the products you are interested in.

## 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** Red signifies the Best Buy swing-tag, which indicates products of the best quality and superb value for money in their price category.

**R** Blue Recommended products offer excellent quality and value, but not the same cost-effectiveness as a Best Buy.

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

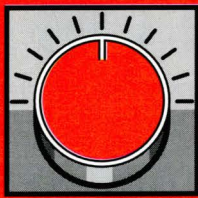
### Using Best Buys and Recommendations to buy hi-fi.

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 belief at *Hi-Fi Choice* is that you must consider the hi-fi system as a complete entity, not as 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!



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<b>PREAMPLIFIERS</b>	<b>131</b>
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<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>	<b>132</b>
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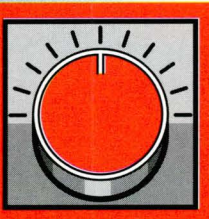
AMPLIFIERS

Integrated Amps  
Up to £250

Aiwa XA-003	140
Arcam Alpha 7	250
Cambridge Audio New A1	100
Cambridge Audio A2	120
Cambridge Audio A3	200
Creek OBH-11	129
Grundig V11	160
Harman/Kardon HK610	200
JVC AX-R5BK	200
JVC AX-V6BK	230
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200
Luxman A-312	200
Luxman A-331	250
Marantz PM- 47	150
Marantz PM-34	150
Marantz PM- 57	200
NAD 310	100
NAD 312	200
Onkyo A-801	200
Pioneer A-105	130
Pioneer A-103	130
Pioneer A-203	150
Pioneer A-204R	160
Pioneer A-300R	200
Pioneer A-303R	200
Pioneer A-300X	230
Pioneer A-405R	250
Rega Brio	229
Rotel RA970BX	250
Sony TA-FE200	130
Sony TA-F300	150
Sony TA-F246E	200
Sony TA-F448E	250
TEAC AR300	200
TEAC AR500	250
Technics SU-V300	170
Technics SU-A600 MK3	200
Technics SU-V500	200
Technics SU-V620	230
Technics SU-A700 MK3	250
Yamaha AX-390	170
Yamaha AX-490	249
<b>£251 to £500</b>	
Alchemist Axiom	289
Alchemist Maxim	319
Analogue Jupiter	330
Arcam Alpha 8	350
Arcam Alpha 9	500
Audio Innovations Alto	300
Audiolab 8000A	500
Aura VA100 II	400
CR Developments Kalypso	499
Creek 4240	279
Creek 4240SE	350
Denon PMA-450SE	280
EMF Audio Sequel	349
Harman/Kardon HK620	280
Harman/Kardon HK1200	300
Harman/Kardon HK1400	400
Harman/Kardon HK640	450
Luxman A-353R	350
Luxman A-373	400
Magnum IA170	299

Marantz PM-66SE	300
Marantz PM-65	300
Marantz PM-711AV	400
Marantz PM- 801I	450
Mission Cyrus III	500
Moth 30 Integrated	320
Musical Fidelity E10	299
Musical Fidelity E101	499
Musical Fidelity A2	499
NAD 314	260
NAD 317	470
Onix OA32LE	479
Onix OA31	480
Onix OA32M/C	499
Onkyo A-911	350
Onkyo A850	370
Orale SA-100	449
Pioneer A-400X	300
Pioneer A-503R	300
Pioneer A-602	350
Pioneer A-605	400
Pioneer VSA-701S	500
Pro-Ject Model 7	300
Rega Elex	398
Shearpe 2.5	489
Sony TAFA-3ES	400
Talk Electronics Storm 1	500
Technics SU-A800D	400
Technics SU-A900 Mk2	450
Technics SU-A900D	500
Yamaha AX-590	299
<b>£501 to £700</b>	
Alchemist Kraken Anniv	549
Alchemist Nemesis	650
AMC CVT3030	529
Audiolab 8000S	700
DPA Renaissance	595
DPA Renaissance	595
Exposure XX Super	700
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699
Harman/Kardon HK660	650
LFD Integrated 0	549
LFD Integrated 0 (Ph)	679
Linn Majik (Line)	650
Lynwood Opal	685
Magnum Class A	675
Micromega Tempo 1	700
Musical Fidelity A220	699
Myrrad MI 120	530
Naim Audio Nait 3	549
Onix OA31LE	579
Pioneer VSA-D802S	600
Quad 77IA	700
Roksan Caspian	695
Rose Scion	545
Shearpe Phase 2	649
Stemfort Audio SF60	549
Talk Electronics Storm 1P	549
Talk Electronics Storm 2	650
TEAC AB-X7R	700
<b>£701 to £1000</b>	
Alchemist Forsetti	899
Arion Acoustics Adonis Export	999
Aura VA150	800
AVI S2000MI	799
Copland CSA 8	950
CR Developments Romulus	998
Creo IMP702	938
Creo IMP703	1,000
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	990
Exposure XV Super	800
Harman/Kardon HK680	1,000
LFD Integrated 0 LE	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	725
Marantz PM-170	900
Meridian 551	795
Micromega Tempo 2	900
Minstrel Ultra Linear	900
Monrio MC-200S	895
Naim Audio Nait 3 R	724

Pioneer A-07	1,000
Rega Elicit	730
Shearpe Phase 2 Reference	799
Sony TAFA-5ES	1,000
Stemfort Audio SF100	849
Talk Electronics Storm 2 P	730
TEAC AB-X10	1,000
Thule IA100	949
Unison Research Simply Two	995
<b>£1001 to £2000</b>	
Arion Acoustics Elektra	1,399
Arion Acoustics Talos	1,499
Arion Acoustics Nereus SE 300B	1,850
Arion Acoustics Tycho	1,999
Art Audio Integra	1,499
Audio Innovations Classic 25	1,099
Audio Innovations S500	1,999
Audio Innovations S700	1,199
Bryston B-60	1,090
Bryston B-60R	1,249
Copland CSA-14	1,100
Copland CTA-401	1,699
Creo LIM 702	1,191
Creo LIM 703	1,249
EAR 859	1,595
EAR 834	1,599
Electrocompaniet ECI-2SF	1,173
Graaf Venticinque	1,995
LFD Integrated 1	1,099
Marantz PM-16	1,700
Meracus Intrate	1,095
Minstrel Partridge	1,499
Monrio MC-205	1,545
Musical Fidelity A1000	1,399
Rogers E-20a	1,090
Rogers E-40a	1,900
Sonic Frontiers SFC-1	1,795
Sonus-Faber Quid	1,223
Tube Tech Unisis S'Line	1,399
Tube Tech Unisis phono	1,399
Unison Research Simply Four P	1,555
Unison Research Simply Four T	1,595
Woodside ISA230 Line	1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	1,249
<b>Over £2000</b>	
Adyton Opera	2,595
Electrocompaniet ECI-1	2,233
Electrocompaniet ECI-1 SF	2,415
Gamma Acoustics Rhythm	2,499
Jadis DA30	3,490
Krell DA60	5,490
Krell KAV-300i	2,490
Mcintosh MA6800	3,735
Meracus Onesta	2,595
Pioneer A-09	4,000
Tube Tech Synergy 1	3,999
Unison Research Performance One	4,500
<b>Preamps</b>	
<b>Up to £500</b>	
Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380
AMC AV81 Control	289
AMC 1030	379
AMC S84	479
AMC AV81 H.T. Control	499
Analogue Saturn	75
Analogue Saturn MC	75



<b>Preamps</b>	
<b>Up to £500</b>	
Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380
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
Creek OBH-8	99
Creek OBH-9	110
Creek P42	279
Crimson CS610C	450
Denon PMA-425R	230
DPA DSP 200S	495
EAR 834P	399
EAR 834L	449
Harman/Kardon AP2500	499
LFD Linstage LSO	499
Lumley Reference PP70	325
Lumley Reference PP1	325
Magnum MP330	475
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
Musical Fidelity E20	399
Musical Fidelity F2	499
NAD 114	270
NAD 116	430
Naim Audio Prefix	334
Naim Audio NAC32	148
Qed Vector	499
Rega EOS	398
Roksan Art Axerxes	395
Rose RV-23	450
Rotel RC970BX MkII	175
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	500
Technics SU-C1000	350
Thorens TTP-2000	500
Unison Research Simply Phono	500
<b>£501 to £2000</b>	
Adyton Chorus	1,995
Alchemist Forsetti Pre	919
Arion Acoustics Eros	1,199
Arion Acoustics Eros Phono	1,399
Art Audio Headline	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-7	1,598
Audio Research LS-3	1,845
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	595
Audio Synthesis Passion	695
Audio Synthesis Passion 6	1,195
Audio Synthesis Passion 8S	1,695
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	1,695
Audiolab 8000C	550
Audiolab 8000PPA	900
Audiolab 8000Q	1,100
Aura CA-200	700
Aura CA-200C	750
AVI S2000MP	849
AVI S2000MP + P	1,049
Bryston .4	546
Bryston BP1	673
Bryston BP5	757
Bryston BP4	802
Bryston BP20	958
Bryston BP-25	1,129
Bryston BP-25P	1,355
Bryston 4B-ST PRO	1,495
Bryston BP-25MC	1,580
Chord CPA 1800	1,730
Concordant Exhilarant	900
Concordant Exquisite	1,950

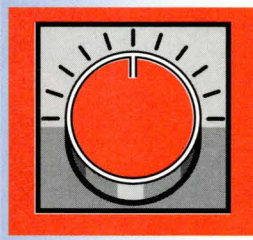
Copland CSA-303	1,155
Copland CTA-301MKII	1,349
Counterpoint SA-1000E	1,195
Counterpoint Solid 8E	1,195
Counterpoint SA-2000E	1,695
Creo CMP004	1,246
Creo CMP005	1,876
Drawn Audio Prelude +50	951
DNM 3 Start	950
DNM 3A Start	1,500
DPA Enlightenment	695
DPA DSP500S	2,000
Dynavector L200	1,195
Dynavector P100	1,495
Dynavector L100	1,995
ECA Vista S	760
ECA Vista HD	880
ECA Prisma	880
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	680
Electrocompaniet ECP-1 SF	575
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5	1,200
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5SF	1,343
Electrocompaniet EC-4 Line	1,466
Electrocompaniet EC-4 SF Line	1,648
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC	1,953
Exposure XIX	800
Exposure XVII	850
Gamma Acoustics Era Std	999
Graaf WFB Two	1,195
Graaf WFB One	1,895
Heybrook Signature II	1,600
Jadis DPL2	1,790
LFD MC1 PhonoStage	949
LFD LS1 Linstage	999
LFD MC2 PhonoStage	1,499
LFD LS2 Linstage	1,599
LFD Linstage LS2P	1,750
LFD Linstage LSB	1,999
Linn Wakonda/L	750
Linn Wakonda	850
Linn Kairn Line	1,400
Linn Kairn Phono	1,700
Lumley Reference PS1	795
Lumley Reference WAP1.5	895
Lumley Reference LV1.5	895
Lumley Reference LV1	1,000
Lumley Reference LV1	1,150
Lumley Reference WAP1	1,150
Lumley Reference L/R PV1.5	1,350
Lumley Reference PV1.5	1,500
Lumley Reference PV1	1,500
Lumley Reference PV1	1,700
Marantz AC-500	700
Marantz EC-500	900
Marantz SC-23	1,000
Mcintosh C712	1,479
Meracus Ingredi	925
Meridian 501	695
Meridian 562	765
Meridian 501V	875
Meridian 562V	995
Meridian 502	1,295
Michell Argo	730
Michell Argo HR	895
Michi RHC-10	795
Michi RHQ-10	1,150
Michi RHA-10	1,150
Micromega Tempo P	1,250
Monrio ADN	625
Monrio PLUR1-L	960
Musical Fidelity F25	1,499
NAD 118	1,000
Naim Audio NAC32R	599
Naim Audio NAC72	690
Naim Audio NAC 102	998
Onix OA36L	999
Onix OA36	1,100
Quad 77PR	850



# PRICE GUIDE

Rega HAL	998
Roksan ROK-L2.5	1,250
Rose RV-23S	525
Shearpe Phase 6 Pre	895
Shearpe Phase 1 Pre Ref	1,399
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1	1,095
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1	1,395
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Sig	1,495
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Sig	1,795
Sumo Ulisses II	629
<b>Sumo Athena II Line</b>	<b>767</b>
<b>Sumo Polaris III</b>	<b>950</b>
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS	987
Sumo Artemis OP	1,695
Sumo Audiomeda III	1,810
Sumo Model Five	1,975
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1 P	550
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2	650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2P	730
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3P	1,000
Technics SU-C2000	700
Tesseract TAADA	1,500
Tesseract TALA	1,500
Tesseract TAHA	1,800
Thorens TTP-200F	650
Thorens TRP-3000	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	949
Woodside SC27 Phono MM	1,099
Woodside SC27 Phono	1,249
Woodside SC26 Line	1,557
XTC PRE-1	1,000
Yamaha CX-2	650
<b>Over £2000</b>	
Adyton Temper	2,495
Adyton Modus	2,695
Alchemist Control	4,995
Arian Acoustics Midas Phono	2,250
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 LS22	4,125
Audio Research LS-5 II	5,690
CAT SL1 Sig line	5,500
CAT SL1 Sig phono	6,000
Chord CPA 2200	2,298
Chord CPA 2800	3,090
Chord CPA 3200	3,352
Chord CPA 4000	6,025
Counterpoint SA-3000E	2,195
Counterpoint SA-5000E	3,995
Counterpoint SA-9	3,995
Credo LPR 001	2,815
DNM 3B Twin E	3,050
DNM 3B Primus E	3,630
DNM 3B Six E	4,780
<b>EAR 802MC</b>	<b>2,599</b>
<b>EAR G88</b>	<b>6,999</b>
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC SF	2,135
Gamma Acoustics Era Ref	3,999
Graaf GM13.5B	3,950
Jadis DP60L	2,800
Jadis DPL	3,190
Jadis DPMC	3,190
Jadis DEFY-P60	3,774
Jadis JPL	4,720
Jadis JPP-200	4,998
<b>Jadis JP-30MC</b>	<b>5,978</b>
Jadis JP-S2	7,900
Krell KRC3	3,198
Krell KSL-2	3,331
<b>Krell KRC-2</b>	<b>4,190</b>
Krell KRC-HR	6,949
Krell KRC	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
Marantz Model 7	3,500
Marantz SC-5	7,000
Mark Levinson 38	3,995
Mark Levinson 38S	6,495
Matisse Fantasy	2,300
Matisse Reference	3,500
McIntosh C28	2,095
McIntosh C32	2,099
McIntosh C39	3,129
McIntosh C40	3,239
Meracus Pretare	2,195
Meridian 601	2,750
Naim Audio NAC82	2,058
Naim Audio NAC52	3,190
Roksan ROK-L1.5	2,250

Sonic Frontiers SFL-2	3,795
Sumo Model Ten/M	4,200
Tesseract TAP-A	5,300
<b>Woodside SC26 Line &amp; Phono</b>	<b>2,233</b>



## Power Amps Up to £500

AMC 2445	299
AMC 2030	449
Arcam Alpha 9P	400
Arcam Delta 290P	400
Creek A42	279
Crimson CS620C	450
Denon PMA-250SE	160
Denon PMA-350SE	200
Denon PMA-725R	350
Harman/Kardon PA2100	400
LFD Powerstage PA0	499
Marantz MA-500	250
Marantz SM-500	400
Marantz MM-500	450
<b>Moth 30 Series Power</b>	<b>239</b>
Moth 30 Mono/40	459
Myryad MA 120	450
Naim Audio NAP90/3	428
<b>Rotel RB970BX MkII</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Rotel RB980BX</b>	<b>450</b>
Talk Electronics Tornado 1	450
Technics SE-A1000	400

## £501 to £2000

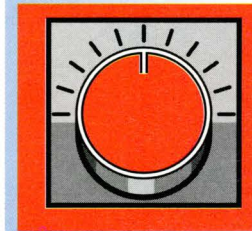
Alchemist Forsetti Pwr	1,309
Arian Acoustics EOS	1,299
Arian Acoustics Triton	1,399
Arian Acoustics Tycho	1,850
<b>Art Audio Quintet</b>	<b>1,393</b>
Art Audio Quintet SE MB	1,500
Art Audio Concerto	1,669
<b>Audio Innovations Ser 800</b>	<b>999</b>
Audio Innovations First Audio	1,749
Audio Innovations Ser 1000	1,799
Audio Synthesis Desire	1,695
<b>Audiolab 8000P</b>	<b>750</b>
<b>Audiolab 8000M</b>	<b>800</b>
Aura VA-150C	850
Aura PA-200	1,200
Aura PA-200 C	1,250
AVI S2000MA	849
AVI S2000MM	1,249
Bryston 2B-LP	639
Bryston 3B-ST PRO	987
Bryston THX3B	1,074
Bryston 3B-NRB	1,159
Bryston 7B-ST PRO	1,545
Bryston THX7B	1,605
Bryston 5B-ST PRO	1,610
Bryston 4B-NRB	1,756
Bryston 7B-NRB	1,815
Bryston THX4B	1,858
Bryston 8B-ST PRO	1,868
Chord SPM 400	1,290
Chord SPM 600	1,680
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 PMP 804	1,876
Crimson CS630C	800
Dawn Audio Cmd 2 by 200	890
DNM PA1	1,750
DPA Enlightenment	995
<b>ECA Lectern S</b>	<b>880</b>
ECA Lectern HD	1,480
Electrocompaniet AW60B	1,185
<b>Exposure XVIII Super</b>	<b>850</b>
Exposure XVIII (pr)	1,599
Harman/Kardon PA2200	700
Harman/Kardon PA2400	1,000
Jadis DA5	1,997
LFD PA1 Powerstage	999
LFD Powerstage PA2	1,599
LFD Powerstage PA2M	1,999
Linn LK100	650
Linn Klout	2,000
Lumley Reference ST40	1,250
<b>Lumley Reference ST70</b>	<b>1,950</b>
Lynwood Ruby	985
Naim Audio MFC30	685
Marantz MA-23	1,800
McIntosh MC7100	1,259

Meracus Ciere	1,095
<b>Meridian 555</b>	<b>750</b>
Michell Alecto Stereo	1,150
Michell Alecto Mono	1,989
Michi RHB-05	1,100
Michi RHB-10	2,000
Micromega Amp	1,250
Monrio Cento	1,495
Monrio HP1	1,995
<b>Moth 30 Stereo/60</b>	<b>549</b>
Moth 30 Mono/100	879
Musical Fidelity FX2	799
NAD 218THX	850
<b>NAD Monitor 208</b>	<b>999</b>
Naim Audio NAP140	722
Naim Audio NAP180	1,016
Naim Audio NAP135	1,576
Naim Audio NAP250	1,576
Onix OA601	699
Onix OA801	849
Onix OA701	899
Papworth TVA50	1,425
Quad 77SA	600
Quad 707	800
Rega EKS	598
Rega Exon	598
Roksan ROK-S1.5	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	550
<b>Rotel RB990BX</b>	<b>625</b>
Shearpe Phase 3	619
Shearpe Phase 3 Reference	689
Shearpe Phase 5 Mono	879
Sonic Frontiers SFS-40	1,695
Sumo Andromeda XXI	1,975
Talk Electronics Tornado 2	600
Talk Electronics Tornado 3	750
Talk Electronics Tornado 4	1,100
Technics SE-A2000	1,100
<b>Thorens TTA-2000</b>	<b>550</b>
Thorens TRA-3000	2,000
Thule PA200	1,798
Tube Tech Unisig Pwr Amp	1,099
Woodside SA240	1,199
Woodside MA100	1,733
Woodside STA50	1,880
XTC POW-1	2,000
Yamaha MX-2	750

## Over £2000

Adyton Cordis 1.6	3,495
Alchemist Stereo	3,995
Alchemist Mono	8,995
Arian Acoustics Nemesis SE 300B	3,000
Art Audio Tempo	2,499
Art Audio Quintet SE	2,500
Art Audio Maestro	3,524
Art Innovations Ser 1000SE	2,499
Audio Innovations Second Audio	3,299
Audio Research D130	2,497
<b>Audio Research VT60</b>	<b>2,645</b>
Audio Research VT120	2,645
Audio Research VT60SE	3,190
Audio Research VT120SE	3,190
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 VT130SE	8,145
Audio Research VT150SE	8,400
Audio Research VT140	8,960
Bryston THX8B	2,030
Bryston 8B-NRB	2,195
Chord SPM 800	2,155
Chord SPM 1000B	2,650
Chord SPM 1200	3,840
Chord SPM 200	4,890
Chord SPM 1600	4,890
Chord SPM 3000	7,960
<b>Copland CTA-505</b>	<b>2,099</b>
Counterpoint Solid 2E	2,495
Counterpoint NPS-200E	2,995
Counterpoint SA4	3,575
Counterpoint Mat Progress	4,125
Counterpoint NPS-400E	4,395
Counterpoint NPM-E	8,995
Credo LPO 804	2,456
Credo PMP 155	2,676
Credo LPO 155	3,714
Credo LPO 455	4,975
DNM PA2BE	4,250
DNM PA2BS	5,250
DNM PA2BS-1	5,650
DNM DPA500S	3,000
Dynavector HX75	2,195
Dynavector HX1.2	3,995
<b>EAR 509 Mk II</b>	<b>3,499</b>
EAR 519	4,699
EAR 549	6,999
Electrocompaniet AW100DMB	2,115
Electrocompaniet AW100MB-SF	2,298
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB	3,983
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB-SF	4,215

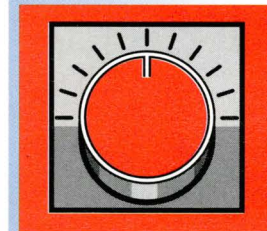
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	4,673
Electrocompaniet AW180MB-SF	4,910
Exposure IV	2,199
Exposure XVI	4,000
Gamma Acoustics Aeon 211/VT4C	4,999
Gamma Acoustics Space Ref	5,999
Graaf 5050	2,150
Graaf GM 100	4,490
Graaf GM200	8,000
<b>Jadis JA-30</b>	<b>2,880</b>
Jadis DA8	3,333
Jadis JA300B	4,500
Jadis JA-80	4,956
Jadis DA7	5,290
Jadis DEFY-7	5,290
Jadis JA-200	7,759
<b>Krell KSA-50S</b>	<b>3,690</b>
Krell KSA-100S	5,843
Krell KSA-200S	7,987
Krell KSA-300S	9,500
Lumley Reference M120	3,200
Marantz Model 8	3,500
Marantz Model 9	4,000
Marantz SM-5	5,000
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	2,295
McIntosh MC7104	2,729
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	6,295
Meracus Tentare	2,245
Meracus Cantare	8,995
Musical Fidelity F16	2,499
Musical Fidelity F19	3,999
Papworth M100	2,645
Papworth M200	3,825
Roksan ROK-M1.5	2,250
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	2,199
Sonic Frontiers SFS-80	2,895
Sonic Frontiers SFS-160	5,495
Tesseract TAMP-60	7,350
Tube Tech Genesis	2,599
Unison Research Smart 845	3,250



## AV Amplifiers/Receivers

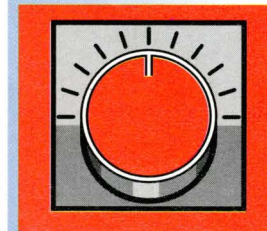
Arcam Xeta One	1,000
Audio Research SDA1	4,391
Citation 7.1	2,500
Denon AVR-900	350
Denon AVC-1800	550
Denon AVC-2800	800
Exposure XXV	1,000
Grundig V1000DPL	360
Harman/Kardon AV1100	300
Harman/Kardon AVR-10	380
Harman/Kardon AV1150	400
Harman/Kardon AVR-21	500
Harman/Kardon AV1200	500
Harman/Kardon AVR-25	650
Harman/Kardon AVR-30	1,000
Heybrook Parasound HCA 806	1,495
JVC AX-V6BK	230
JVC RX-416VBK	270
JVC RX-616VBK	345
Krell KAV500/2	3,485
Krell KAV500/3	3,985
Krell KAV500/4	4,250
Krell KAV500/5	4,985
Marantz MM-500	400
Marantz PM-711AV	450
Mission AV-Master	650
NAD AV-316	450
NAD 216THX	470
NAD 917	550
NAD 716	600
NAD ASV 620	700
Onkyo A-SV610	600
Onkyo TX-SV525PRO	600
Onkyo TX-SV919THX	2,000

Pioneer VSA - 303	300
Pioneer VSA - 805S	450
Rotel RB956AX	350
Rotel RSP960AX	400
Sony TA-VE700	350
Sony TA-VE 800G	400
Sony TA-VA BES	700
Yamaha RX-V390RDS	300
Yamaha DSP-A590	349
Yamaha RX-V590RDS	449
Yamaha DSP-A780	599
Yamaha DSP-A970	799
Yamaha DSP-990	900
Yamaha DSP-A2070	1,099
Yamaha DSP 3090	1,700



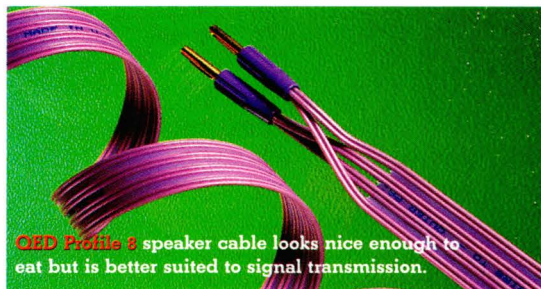
## Surround Sound Processors

Arcam XETA 2	650
Audio Research SDPI	3,293
Exposure XXIII	750
Exposure XXI	1,050
Heybrook Parasound PSP 1000	995
Kenwood SS-3300	200
Marantz AV-1030	330
Marantz AV-1040	400
Marantz DP-870	600
NAD 117	470
NAD ED 901	700
Naim Audio NAV1	1,600
Onkyo SR121PRO	340
Pioneer VSP-200	250
Sanyo HT F450	180
Sherwood ES5030R	200
Sony SDP E300	230
Technics SH-AV500	280
Yamaha DSP-E390	250
Yamaha DSP-E580	450
Yamaha DSP-E1000	700



## Surround Sound Receivers

Denon AVR-600RD	300
Grundig R14DPL	280
Grundig R1000DPL	400
Harman/Kardon AVR-20	499
Harman/Kardon AVR-25	699
Harman/Kardon AVR-30	1,000
JVC RX-416VBK	270
JVC RX-616VBK	350
Kenwood KR-V5080	280
Kenwood KR-V6080	330
Kenwood KR-V7080	380
Kenwood KR-V9900	1,300
Marantz SR-66	300



**QED Profile 8** speaker cable looks nice enough to eat but is better suited to signal transmission.

Sherwood RV7050R	400
Sony STR0 E405	280
TEAC AG-V600	400
Technics SA-EX100	200
Technics SA-EX300	250
Technics SA-EX500	350
Technics SA-EX700	450
Technics SA-TX50	1,000
Yamaha RX-V390RDS	299
Yamaha RX-V590RDS	449



**CABLES**  
**Analogue Interconnects**

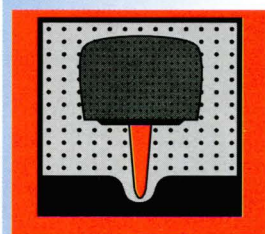
Art Yam Church 5000	515.00
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	26.00
Cable Talk Advanced 2	35.00
Cable Talk Improved 2/T	50.00
Cable Talk Studio 2	65.00
Cable Talk Professional 2	85.00
Cable Talk Broadcast 2	130.00
Cable Talk Reference 2	180.00
Cable Talk Signature Gold	300.00
Cambridge Audio Atlantic	10.00
Cambridge Audio Artic	20.00
Cambridge Audio Pacific	30.00
Cambridge Audio Studio Ref	40.00
Chord Chrysalis	30.00
Chord Cobra	49.00
Chord Siren	65.00
Chord Chameleon	68.00
Chord Solid	99.00
DPA Slink	41.00
DPA White Slink	75.00
Heybrook Inter/BS Blue STRK	95.00
Ixos 104	20.00
Ixos 103	40.00
Ixos 102	60.00
Ixos 101	100.00
Kimber Cable Illuminati DX50	350.00
Kimber Cable Orchid	750.00
Kronos Konnekt 3	49.00
Kronos Konnekt 2	99.00
Kronos Konnekt 1	199.00
Naim Audio SNAIC-5	47.00
Nordost Magic	30.00
Nordost Black Knight	50.00
Nordost Blue Angel	80.00
Nordost Blue Heaven	120.00
Nordost Red Dawn	250.00
Qed P2 Gold	20.00
Qed Incon P2 Screened	23.00
Qed Incon P1 Screened	26.00
Roksan High Def 0.6M	75.00
Roksan High Def 1.0M	85.00
Roksan High Def 1.5M	95.00
Silver Sound S53	49.00
Silver Sound S52	99.00
Silver Sound S51	199.00
Sonic Link Bonus 1m	15.00
Sonic Link Silver pink	30.00
Sonic Link Black	45.00
Sonic Link White	50.00
Sonic Link Brown	60.00
Sonic Link Violet HPMC	65.00
Sonic Link Violet	85.00
Sonic Link Violet HPMC	100.00
Sonic Link Blue Nickel	105.00
Sonic Link Vermillion	170.00
Sonic Link Red earth	260.00
Sonic Link Black earth	350.00
Sonic Link Blue earth	495.00
Sonic Link Rare earth	1,200.00
Sumo IC-50	37.00
Sumo IC-80	60.00
Trichord Pulswire 75	150.00

**Digital Interconnects**

Art Yam Church 5000	275.00
Audioquest Video Z	50.00
Audioquest Digital PRO	90.00
Cable Talk Digital 2	75.00
Chord Codac	33.00
Chord Prodac	50.00
DPA Digi-link	28.00
Ixos 105	25.00
Monster Datalink 100	45.00
Moth Leyline Datalink	140.00
Nordost Moonglo	135.00
Nordost Moonglo-XLR	165.00
Qed DigiFlex	20.00
QLN Nordost Moonglo	130.00
QLN Nordost -XLR	165.00
Roksan High Def 0.6M	45.00
Roksan High Def 1.0M	55.00
Roksan High Def 1.5M	65.00
Sonic Link Silver Pink	15.00
Sonic Link Green	50.00
Sonic Link Green Earth	110.00
Sumo IC-100	73.00
Sumo IC-200	151.00

**Speaker Cables**

Art Yam Church M2000	470.00
Art Yam Church 5000	795.00
Bandridge LC7409	4.00
Bandridge LC4110	28.00
Bandridge LC3410	40.00
Bandridge LC3210	75.00
Bandridge LC3219	75.00
Bandridge LC3220	90.00
Bandridge LC3310	95.00
Bandridge LC3240	125.00
Cable Talk Overture 2.1	4.00
Chord Myth	6.00
Chord Legend	15.00
DPA Black Sixteen	345.00
Electrocompaniet EC-K2	119.00
Gale XL315	2.00
Gale XL160-2	3.00
Grado 450CM	25.00
Ixos 607	2.00
Ixos 605	5.00
Ixos 606	8.00
Ixos 605/5	15.00
Linn K2	4.00
Linn K400	10.00
Linn K600	15.00
Lumley Reference Silver	35.00
Naim Audio NACA 5	5.00
Puresonic 7845	2.00
Rega REGA	2.00
Silver Sound 12 Gauge	15.00
Silver Sound 10 Gauge	35.00
Silver Sound 8 Gauge	75.00
SME S2LB-4	37.00
SME S3LB-4	42.00
SME 4900A	62.00
SME 5900A	83.00
Sonic Link Nickel plated	3.00
Sonic Link Gold plated	5.00
Sonic Link Silver aero	18.00
Sonic Link Silver aero SX00x2	35.00
Sonic Link rare earth metal	90.00
Sumo SS-1000-D	323.00
Trichord Pulswire 75/D	64.00



**CARTRIDGES**  
**Up to £100**

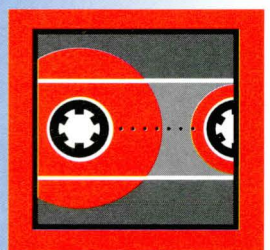
Audio Technica AT-91	13
Audio Technica AT-95E	19

Audio Technica AT-110E	24
Denon DL110	70
Denon DL160	90
Denon DL103	100
Goldring Elan P	17
Goldring Elan	19
Goldring Elektra	29
Goldring 1006	59
Goldring 1012GX	65
Goldring 1012 GX Cartridge	79
Goldring 1022GX	99
Grado ZTE+1	27
Grado ZCE+1	37
Grado Z3E+1	47
Grado Prestige Black	49
Grado Prestige Green	59
Grado Prestige Blue	69
Grado ZF1+	82
Grado Prestige Red	99
Linn K5	65
Nottingham Analogue Tracer I	98
Ortofon VMS2	14
Ortofon OMP-5E	20
Ortofon OM-5E	20
Ortofon OM10 Super	30
Ortofon OMPRO-S	38
Ortofon OM Pro S	38
Ortofon 510	38
Ortofon OMDI's	50
Ortofon OMPRO-S+2	60
Ortofon OM Night Club S	65
Ortofon 520	65
Ortofon OM20 Super	70
Ortofon OM Night Club E	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	70
Ortofon Concord PRO-S	70
Ortofon Concord DJ's	80
Ortofon OM30 Super	90
Ortofon Concord PRO-S +2	95
Ortofon OMNC+2	100
Ortofon MC10 Super	100
Ortofon 530	100
Pickering TE-15	20
Pickering VE-15	25
Pickering T-E	25
Pickering V15-DJ	28
Pickering TL-E	35
Pickering TL-2E	45
Pickering XV15-625E	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	50
Pickering TL-2-S	55
Pickering XV15-757S	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	60
Pickering TL3S	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	100
Pickering TL-4-S	100
Pro-Ject 78rpm Kit	20
Rega Bias	39
Rega RB78	39
Rega Super Bias	59
Rega Elys	85
Shure SC35C	80
Shure ME95ED	38
Shure M70BX	38
Linn 500AL II	34
Stanton 500EL	37
Stanton 680AL/X	56
Stanton 680EL/X	70
Sumiko Oyster	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	50
Sumiko Pearl	70
Sumiko Blue Point	100

**Over £100**

Audio Technica AT-OC9	245
Audio Technica ART-1	944
Audioquest MC5	250
Audioquest 404L	599
Audioquest 404IMH	899
Audioquest 7000NSX	1,495
Denon DL304	200
Dnm Reson Mica	150
Dnm Reson Aciore	199
Dnm Reson Recla	225
Dnm Reson Elite	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 Eroica LX	110
Goldring Eroica	110
Goldring 1042	120
Goldring Elite	220
Grado Prestige Silver	119
Grado Signature Gold	149
Grado Signature Junior	149
Grado Signature 8M2	250
Grado Signature MCZ	375

Grado Signature TLZ	650
Grado Signature XTZ	975
Koetsu Red T	1,550
Koetsu Red K Sig	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	2,297
Koetsu Signature	3,218
Koetsu Gold PR	5,498
Linn K9	150
Linn K18/II	250
Linn Klyde	500
Linn Arkiv	1,000
London Decca Maroon	259
London Decca Gold	299
London Decca Maroon Dp	339
London Decca Gold Dp	379
London Decca S Gold	399
London Decca S Gold Dp	479
London Decca Jubilee	999
Lyra Lydian	699
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069
Lyra Parnassus	2,295
Nottingham Analogue Tracer II	175
Nottingham Analogue Tracer III	350
Nottingham Analogue Tracer IV	550
Ortofon Concord NC S	110
Ortofon OMDI's+2	115
Ortofon OMNC+E	120
Ortofon Concord NC E	120
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130
Ortofon MC15 Super II	130
Ortofon 540	130
Ortofon Concord NCS+2	150
Ortofon Concord DJ's+2	150
Ortofon Concord NC+E	165
Ortofon MC25E	180
Ortofon MC25FL	249
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	300
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	425
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	525
Ortofon MC2000II	750
Ortofon MC Rohman	1,000
Ortofon MC3000II	1,100
Ortofon MC5000	1,500
Ortofon MC7500	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	175
Pickering TL-4004	150
Pickering XSV-5000U	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	200
Pro-Ject 6/A30	1,000
Pro-Ject 6/A35	2,350
Roksan Corus Black	130
Roksan Shiraz	970
Stanton 890AL/X	118
Sumiko BPS	250
Transfiguration SPIRIT	1,000
Transfiguration AF-1 MkII	1,595
Transfiguration TEMPER	1,950
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 Super	1,150
Van Den Hul MC-Two	1,349
Van Den Hul The Frog	1,700
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIGSLA	2,200
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIGLNL	2,999
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIGCLA	2,999
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIGCMN	3,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIGCHN	3,400
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIGVLA	3,450



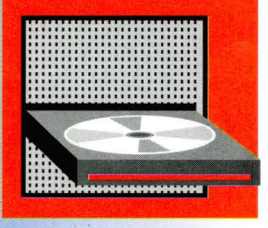
**CASSETTE DECKS**  
**Up to £200**

Aiwa AD-F450	120
Aiwa AD-WX727	170
Denon DRM-550	160
Denon DRM-580	200
Denon DRS-640	200
Dual CC8000 RS	200
Grundig CCF3	200
JVC TD-W218BK	170
JVC TD-X372BK	170
JVC TD-R472BK	200
JVC TD-W318BK	200
Kenwood KX-W4080	160
Kenwood KX-3080	160

Kenwood KX-W6080	200
Kenwood KX-5080S	200
Luxman K-322	200
Marantz SD-53	200
Marantz SD-55	200
NAD TARW 311	20
Pioneer CT-S250	150
Pioneer CT-VV205R	160
Pioneer CT-VV505R	180
Pioneer CT-S450S	200
Sony TC-KE200	120
Sony TC-WE405	150
Sony TC-KE400S	180
Sony TC-WE505	180
TEAC W-416	100
TEAC V-610	100
TEAC W-780R	170
TEAC R-560	180
Technics RS-TR373	200
Technics RS-BX501	200
Yamaha KX-390	150
Yamaha KX-W392	180
Yamaha KX-490	199

**Over £200**

Aiwa AD-F850	230
Aiwa AD-S950	300
B&W DR-3	450
B&W DR-2	750
B&W DRAGON	2,350
Denon DRM-740	270
Denon DRS-810	310
Harman/Kardon TD420	280
Harman/Kardon TD450	350
Harman/Kardon TD470	450
JVC TD-V562BK	220
JVC TD-W718BK	250
JVC TD-V662BK	270
Kenwood KX-7060S	330
Luxman K-373	400
Marantz SD-63	300
NAD TA 6210	230
NAD 613	230
NAD 614	270
NAD 616	299
NAD TARW 311	320
NAD TA 6310	330
NAD TARW 411	370
Onkyo TA-RW311	320
Onkyo KR-609	350
Onkyo K-W606	370
Onkyo K-611	430
Pioneer CT-S550S	250
Pioneer CT-VV803RS	300
Pioneer CT-S830S	500
Pioneer CT-95	1,000
Sony TC-KE500S	230
Sony TC-WE80S	250
Sony TC-KE600S	300
Sony TCK-661S	300
Sony TC-KA6ES	500
TEAC W-850R	250
TEAC V-1030	250
TEAC W-6000R	450
TEAC V-6030S	550
TEAC V-8030S	650
Technics RS-TR474	220
Technics RS-A26	230
Technics RS-TR575	280
Technics RS-A27	300
Yamaha KX-W592	280
Yamaha KX-690	400
Yamaha KX-W952	599



**CD PLAYER**  
**Up to £250**

Aiwa XC-300	150
Cambridge Audio CD4	150
Denon DCD-625	200
Denon DCD-825	240
Denon DCD-825	240
Dual CD1135RC	140
Dual CD1150RC	150
Dual CD1000RS	200
Dual CD1180RC	180
Eclipse Model 30	50
Eclipse model 50	60
Eclipse model 101	80
Eclipse CD101	80
Grundig CDII	170
Harman/Kardon HD710	250

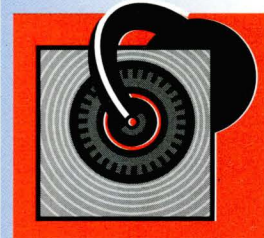


**Pioneer CT-S830S** This impressive recorder is expensive but still great value for keen recordists.

JVC XL-V184BK	120	<b>Denon DCD-1015</b>	350
JVC XL-V284BK	140	Grundig CDC14	300
JVC XL-F116BK	180	Harman/Kardon HD7325	299
JVC XL-F216BK	200	Harman/Kardon FL8450	300
JVC XL-V574BK	250	Harman/Kardon HD730	300
Kenwood DP-M5570	250	Harman/Kardon HD7425	349
Kenwood DP-S060	250	Harman/Kardon HD7525	400
Luxman D-322	200	JVC XL-Z674BK	300
Marantz CC-47	250	Micromega Minium	350
NAD 510	199	Musical Fidelity E60	300
NAD 512	250	NAD 513	290
Onkyo DX-710	200	NAD 515	350
Onkyo DX-703	240	NAD 514	370
Philips CD111	120	NAD 517	400
Philips CD721	130	Onkyo DX-7210	260
Pioneer PD-104	130	Onkyo C721	290
Pioneer PD-204	150	Onkyo DX-7510	400
Pioneer PD-M603	200	Onkyo CM716	450
Pioneer PD-S505	200	Orelle CD-100	500
Pioneer PDF-605	230	Pioneer PD-S705	300
Rotel RCD-930AX	180	Pioneer PDF-805	330
Sony CDP-XE200	120	Pioneer PD-F905	400
Sony CDPM-303	130	Pioneer PD-S904	400
Sony CDP-XE300	140	Rotel RCD-965BX	300
Sony CDPCE-105	150	Rotel RCD-970BX	375
Sony CDP-XE500	160	Sony CDP-XE900E	300
Sony CDP-CE405	180	Sony CDPXC-200	380
Sony CDP-XE700E	200	TEAC CD-5	350
Sony CDP-C325M	200	<b>£501 to £1000</b>	
Sony CDP-761E	250	Arcam Alpha 8	520
TEAC CD-P1800	130	Arcam Alpha 6	600
TEAC CD-P3450	150	Arcam Delta 250	800
TEAC CD-P3450SE	200	B&W MB-2s	700
TEAC PD-D2200	250	Harman/Kardon HD7625	550
Technics SL-PG380A	120	Harman/Kardon HD7725	800
Technics SL-PG480A	140	Heybrook Signature 11	989
Technics SL-PG580A	160	Linn Mimik	875
Technics SL-PG570A	170	Luxman D-373	550
Technics SL-PG670A	200	Meridian 563	795
Technics SL-PS770A	250	Meridian 200	895
Yamaha CDC-555	199	Meridian 506	995
Yamaha CDC-655	249	Monrio Privilege	995
<b>£251 to £500</b>		Myriad MC100	700
Aiwa DX-C100M	500	Naim Audio CD3	977
AMC CDS	349	Quad 77B	700
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	480	Quad 77M	900
Audio Innovations Alto	399	TEAC VRDS-10SE	850
Audio Innovations Alto	400	Technics SL-P2000	1,000
Aura CD100	450	Thule CD100	849
B&W MB-4s	350	<b>Over £1000</b>	
Creek CD42	500	Audio Research CDI	3,290

AVI S2000MC	1,249	Pioneer D-07	1,150
Copland CDA-288	1,799	Pioneer PDR-05	1,300
Copland CDA-277	1,800	Sharp MD-R1H	400
Jadis JS-1	8,068	Sharp MD-MS100H	400
Krell CD-DSP MkII	5,000	Sony MDS-SE7	300
Krell CD-DSP1I 5000	5,000	Sony MDSJE-500	300
Krell KPS-20i	9,990	Sony MDS-S1	550
Luxman D500XS	4,500	Sony MDS-503	550
Marantz CD-17KI	1,300	Sony DTCZE-700	699
Marantz CD-23	4,000	Sony MDA-JA3ES	700
Mcintosh MCD7008	2,195	Sony MXD-D1	800
Mcintosh MCD7009	2,635	TEAC R-9	1,200
Meracus Auriga	1,295		
Meracus Flagrare	2,495		
Meracus Amago	3,995		
Meracus Imagio	4,495		
Meridian 606	1,350		
Meridian 508	1,685		
Micro-Seiki CD-M2DC	3,695		
Micro-Seiki CDM-200CX	4,689		
Mission Disc/Dacmaster	1,900		
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,499		
Naim Audio CD2	1,977		
Naim Audio CD5	3,751		
Roksan ATT-DP3P	1,595		
Audio Alchemy DDS III	700		
Audio Research CDTI	3,290		
Audio Synthesis Transcend	1,395		
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,400		
Audiomeca Damnation	950		
Audiomeca Damnation SE	1,100		
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,199		
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,299		
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,450		
Audiomeca Talisman	1,850		
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,100		
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,350		
Cambridge Audio New CD-4	200		
Cambridge Audio Discmagic One	300		
Cambridge Audio CD6	300		
Counterpoint DA-11E	1,495		
DPA Enlightenment	725		
Jadis JD2	4,990		
Jadis JCDT	8,000		
Jadis JDI	9,950		
Krell KSP-20i/1	1,100		
Krell MD-20	4,999		
Krell MD-10	7,990		
Krell KPS-20T	8,490		
Krell DT-10	9,090		
Linn Karik	1,750		
Marantz CD-57	230		
Marantz CD-63E	350		
Marantz CD-63IKI	500		
Marantz CD-17	800		
Meridian 500	1,245		
Meridian 602	1,750		
Micromega Drive 1	700		
Pink Triangle Cardinal	875		
PS Audio Lambda TR	2,250		
PS Audio lambdaB AT&T	2,778		
Roksan ATT-DP3	1,295		
TEAC VRDS-T1	550		
TEAC VRDS-7	599		
TEAC P-700	900		
TEAC P-30	2,500		
Theta Data Basic II	2,298		
Theta Data Basic II AT&T	2,877		
Theta Data BasicII S MDE	3,490		
Theta Data III NTSC	5,345		
Theta Data III NTSC/PAL	5,879		
Thorens TCD-2000	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	1,400		
Pink Triangle Ordinal	837		
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,400		
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCCD	2,590		
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550		
TEAC D-T1	500		
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	1,395		

Pioneer D-07	1,150
Pioneer PDR-05	1,300
Sharp MD-R1H	400
Sharp MD-MS100H	400
Sony MDS-SE7	300
Sony MDSJE-500	300
Sony MDS-S1	550
Sony MDS-503	550
Sony DTCZE-700	699
Sony MDA-JA3ES	700
Sony MXD-D1	800
TEAC R-9	1,200



<b>HEADPHONES</b>	
<b>Up to £40</b>	
Aiwa HP-X201	13
Aiwa HP-A360	13
Aiwa HP-X301	20
Aiwa HP-VX303	25
Aiwa HP-X705	25
Audio Technica ATH-P1	10
Audio Technica ATH-P3	15
Audio Technica ATH-P5	20
Beyer DT111 Alpha	13
Beyer DT111 Beta	17
Beyer DT111 Gamma	21
Beyer DT211	34
Denon AH-C33	26
JVC HA-22	6
JVC HA-CD88	40
JVC HA-D525	20
JVC HA-F65	20
JVC HA-D626	25
Kenwood KH-535	15
Kenwood KH-757	20
Kenwood KH-959	25
Kenwood KH-1000	25
Kenwood KH-2020	40
Maxell EB-125	4
Maxell HP-200	6
Maxell EB-225	7
Maxell HBS-150	8
Maxell HP-300	8
Maxell EBS-325	9
Maxell EB-425	10
Maxell HP-700	10
Maxell HP-800	11
Maxell HBS-250	13
Maxell HBS-350	13
Maxell HP-1000	20
Maxell HP-2000	25
Maxell HP-3000	30
Pioneer SE-A10	8
Pioneer SE-A20	13
Pioneer SE-A40	20
Pioneer SE-A20V	23
Pioneer SE-M250	25
Pioneer SE-M350	30
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 MX3	9
Sennheiser HD26	10
Sennheiser HD36	15
Sennheiser MX4	15
Sennheiser HD56	18
Sennheiser MX5	25
Sennheiser Vegas	30
Sennheiser Manhattan	30
Sennheiser HD60TV	40
Sony OPEN MDR-005EL	6
Sony MDR-E807	8
Sony MDR-007-MK2	8
Sony MDRW-08L	10
Sony MDR-009	10
Sony MDR-E817V	12
Sony MDR-A009	12
Sony MDR-V50	13
Sony MDR-E827 KIT	15
Sony MDR-15	15
Sony MDR-W24V	15
Sony MDR-E837	18
Sony MDR-E846MP	20
Sony MDR-009TV	20
Sony MDR-A34L	20
Sony MDR-E848	20
Sony MDR-CD170	20
Sony MDR-P1TV	25
Sony MDR-IF120	30
Sony MDR-CD270	30
Sony MDR-CD370	40
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
<b>Over £41</b>	
AKG K222IR	100
AKG K333IR	150
AKG K444IR	180
AKG K1000	700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	90
Beyer DT311	57
Beyer DT411	69
Beyer IRH790	79
Beyer DT331	82
Beyer DT431	98
Beyer IRH 890	99
Beyer DT511	117
Beyer DT770 Pro	129
Beyer IRS790	130
Beyer DT351	135
Beyer DT990 Pro	160
Beyer DT100	160
Beyer DT801	172
Beyer DT811	200
Beyer IRS890	222
Beyer DT901	222
Beyer DT911	235
Denon AH-D210	45
Denon AH-D350	65



**Meridian 508 20-bit** Technological wonder that sets new standards for natural-sounding music!



<b>DIGITAL RECORDERS</b>	
Meridian CDR	4,500
Philips DCC730	250
Philips DCC170	250
Pioneer D-05	800



**Beyers DT321** Just one of this German company's extensive range of ear-cossetting cans.



Mordaunt-Short MS10i Officially declared "a kickin' little box" in our July/August review.



LOUDSPEAKERS

Up to £130

Allison Micro Monitors	95
Allison Black Gold Centre	99
Allison AL100	100
Allison Mini References	120
AMC WM50	120
B&W Solid HCM1S	125
B&W DM302	130
B&W Solid HCM2	130
Bose XL1000	130
Canon SV15	100
Canon S-C10	130
Celestion CC1	90
Celestion Little 1	99
Celestion Impact 10	129
Celestion CSC	129
Denon SCM2	80
Gale Mini Monitors	60
Gale Centre 1	80
Gale Gold Hotshots	80
Gale Gold Monitors	90
Gale Ref Monitors	100
Gale Centre 2	120
Genexxa STS-50	25
Genexxa GX300	80
Genexxa GX330	80
GLL Arena HF	99
Goodmans Active 75	65
Interaudio XL1000	100
Jamo Studio-80	70
Jamo D-100	80
Jamo SAT-90	90
Jamo Studio-110	100
Jamo D-110	100
Jamo Cornet 20.4	100
Jamo SAT-170	110
Jamo Artina	120
Jamo D-115	120
Jamo Cornet 30.4	100
Jamo 28	125
Jamo SAT-200.II	130
JBL Control One	115
JPW Sonata Vinyl	100
JPW Sonata	120
JVC SC-SX1VBK	60
JVC SP-V50	80
JVC SP-X220TBK	100
JVC SP-X550BK	130
KEF Coda 7	129
Mission 73	100
Mission 731i	130
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100
NAD 801	100
Pioneer CS-3030	120
Realistic Minimus 3.5	30
Realistic Minimus 21	30
Realistic Minimus 26	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-7	60
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100
Revolver Beretta	100
Sony SS-E300	50
Sony SS-E500	80
Sony SS-86E	100
Sony SS-126E	130
TDL NUCLEUS 1	60
TDL NFM1	120
TEAC LS-C78	80
TEAC LS-X8	80
Technics SB-CS55	80
Technics SB-CS75	100
Visonik 5202	129
Wharfedale Centre Cube	49
Wharfedale Modus CUBE	60
Wharfedale Valdu 100	79
Wharfedale Valdu Centre	100
Wharfedale Diamond 7.1	100
Wharfedale Diamond 6R	109
Wharfedale Valdu 200	109
Wharfedale Modus Micro	109
Wharfedale Modus Centre	119
Yamaha NS-C80	99

£131 to £200

Acoustic Energy AE100	200
Allison Model 4A	170
Allison AL105	170
AMC WM75	160
Audio Innovations Alto	200
B&W CWM5	150
B&W DM601	199
B&W Solid Monitor	200

Bose L01 M'ble Monitor	190
Bose XL2000	200
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 351	180
Boston Acoustics CR7	199
Boston Acoustics Runabout II	200
Canon S-25	150
Canon S-30	180
Canon S-B20	200
Celestion CS135	139
Celestion 3 MKII	139
Celestion Impact Centre CH	149
Celestion MP1	149
Celestion Centre 2	189
Celestion Style 1	199
Celestion Impact 15	199
Cerwin Vega HED165	200
Denon SC-E313	160
Gale 2is	139
Gale 3s	150
Gale Model 4	200
Genexxa GX650	140
GLL Arena SW	139
GLL Imagio IC100	170
Grundig BX1	160
Harman/Kardon LS0200	149
Harman/Kardon LS0300	199
Heybrook Prima	139
Heybrook Solo	199
Infinity SM65	150
Infinity Reference 1i	150
Infinity Reference 11i	200
Interaudio XL2000	140
Interaudio XL3000	160
Interaudio XL4000	200
Jamo Studio-140	140
Jamo SAT-300.II	150
Jamo D-135	160
Jamo Studio-180	180
Jamo 38	180
Jamo Converta	180
Jamo D-165	200
JBL TLX111	140
JBL TLX121	170
JPW P1 Vinyl	150
JPW P1	170
JPW AP2	200
KEF Coda 8	189
KEF 60S	199
Kenwood LS-200G	200
Mission 73C	150
Mission 732	200
Monitor Audio MA301	200
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140
Mordaunt-Short MS20i	200
Naim Audio NA PX0	133
Ortofon Concord 2	170
Pioneer CS-5030	170
Polk RT3	200
QLN Projekt A3	135
QLN Projekt A4	180
QLN Qubic111	200
Rega Kyte	198
Revolver Colt	139
Revolver Purdey MKII	199
Rogers LS1	149
Rogers LS1	149
Royd The Herald	198
Sequence 200	199
Sony SS-176E	200
Tannoy 631	149
Tannoy 632	189
TDL RTL1	180
TDL SBR	200
Technics SB-CS95	150
Technics SB-M20	200
Visonik 6003	143
Visonik 5001	170
Wharfedale Modus Mini	139
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140
Wharfedale Valdu 300	149
Wharfedale Modus Music Two	150
Wharfedale Modus Music Two	170
Wharfedale Valdu 400	199
Wharfedale Modus Music Four	200
Wharfedale Diamond 7.3	200
ZYP A1	199

£201 to £300

Allison Mini Ref Sub	210
Allison MS200	220
Allison AL110	220
Allison AL115	280
Allison RA LABS HTS One	299
Allison CD6	300
AMC WM100	210
Audio Gem Opal	230
B&W CWM6i	240
B&W Solid HCM1	249

Denon AH-D550	80
Denon AH-D650	95
Denon AH-D750	130
Denon AH-D950	150
Ergo 1	120
Ergo Model2	140
Grado SR80	110
Jecklin Float Model 1	79
Jecklin Float Model 2	99
Jecklin Float ELS	399
JVC HA-D727	43
JVC HA-D910	65
JVC HA-D1000	250
JVC HA-F25	699
Kenwood KH-5000	70
Sennheiser HD445	45
Sennheiser HD414 Class	50
Sennheiser HD455 II	55
Sennheiser HD465	65
Sennheiser IS360/UK	70
Sennheiser HD475	80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	90
Sennheiser HD535	105
Sennheiser IS450	120
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	125
Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	150
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	150
Sennheiser HD25	160
Sennheiser IS550	180
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	200
Sennheiser HD600	250
Sennheiser LUCAS	280
Sennheiser IS850	859
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	998
Sennheiser Orpheus	9,652
Sony MDR-IF120K	50
Sony MDR-CD470	50
Sony MDR-IF50K	70
Sony MDR-CD570	70
Sony MDR-LF320RK-MK2	80
Sony MDR-CD770	100
Sony MDR-CD770	100
Sony MDR-D77	130
Sony MDR-NC20	150
Sony MDR-NC10	150
Sony MDR-IF610K	160
Sony MDR-CD1700	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
Vivanco IR5700	50
Vivanco IR5000	50
Vivanco SR850	50
Vivanco SR650	50
Vivanco SR750	60

Vivanco IR6000	70
Vivanco SR909	70
Vivanco IR6500	90
Vivanco SR10001FL	110
Vivanco IR7100	120
Vivanco IR7600	140
Vivanco SR2001FL	140



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Speaker Stands

Canon STD525	70
Deadrock 903	60
Deadrock 902	60
Deadrock 901	60
Harbeth HL-Stands	199
QLN Signature	75
Royd Royd	99
Sound Organisation 2037	55
Sound Organisation 2027	55
Sound Organisation 2026	55
Sound Organisation 2040	70
Sound Organisation 2055	72
Sound Organisation 2010	82
Sound Organisation 2018	84
Sound Organisation 2024	86
Soundstyle X016	100
Soundstyle X012	100
Soundstyle X024	105
Soundstyle X020	105

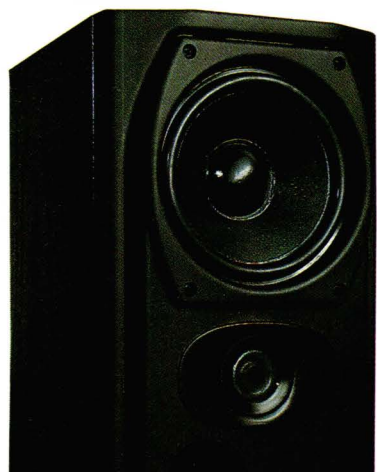
Equipment Supports

Audiophile Furniture Base	480
Deadrock 701	60
Deadrock 703	130
Deadrock 704	190
Deadrock 705	230
FI-Rax R4	321
Ixos 800	35
Ixos 701	40
Ixos 711	60
Ixos 802	70
Ixos 803	90
Ixos 802P	100
Ixos 703	100
Ixos 803P	110
Ixos 804	110
Ixos 713	130
Ixos 804P	140
Ixos 704	140

Ixos 705	170
Ixos 714	190
Ixos 715	230
Jamo TLS-1	40
Jamo ST-80	130
JPW MS2	45
JPW MS3	55
JPW MS1	80
JPW 3 Tier	80
JPW 5 Tier	100
Kenwood SR-CM7	45
Kenwood SR-WB7	100
Mana Acoustics Sound Frame	125
Mana Acoustics Mini Table	150
Mana Acoustics Sound Table	235
Mana Acoustics Reference Table	350
Mana Acoustics 2 Tier Amp stand	375
Mana Acoustics 3 Tier Amp Stand	450
Mana Acoustics 4 Tier Amp Stand	500
Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand	600
Mana Acoustics 6 Tier Amp Stand	700
QLN A3	125
QLN Modulux	125
QLN A4	165
QLN A5	205
QLN A6	245
Quadraspire Q4M5C	60
Quadraspire QK5C	80
Quadraspire QAV5C	120
Quadraspire Q4MC	200
Quadraspire Q4	200
Quadraspire Quadraspire	300
Quadraspire Q4C	400
Sound Organisation 2022	60
Sound Organisation 2230	70
Sound Organisation 2021	75
Sound Organisation 2030	95
Sound Organisation 2060	115
Sound Organisation 2550	125
Sound Organisation 2038	130
Soundstyle X300	180
Soundstyle X053	200
Soundstyle X050	200
Soundstyle X305	210
Soundstyle X100	220
Soundstyle X058	230
Soundstyle X310	250
Soundstyle X120	250
Soundstyle X105	250
Soundstyle Select 6105	280
Stands Unique Tuned Speaker supp	220
Stands Unique Midi Sound Support	222
Stands Unique Midi Sound Tower	249
Stands Unique Sound Tower	269
Stands Unique Sound Support 10	299
Stands Unique Sound Tower 10	349
Stands Unique High	349
Stands Unique Ultimate	449
Stands Unique Ultimate High	529
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	599
Target 85	175



B&W DM602	300	Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Castle Eden (STD)	430	Rogers LS55	429	Orelle Orator II	699
B&W Solid Powerbass	300	Mordaunt-Short MS25i	300	Castle Severn	500	Rogers LS55	429	Origin Live Resolution	732
B&W CWM8i	300	NAD 802	279	Celestion Impact 25	399	Rogers Studio 3	499	Origin Live Victory	750
Bandor Loudspeakers Voice	270	Ortofon Concord 4	230	Celestion Style 4	399	Royd The Squire	350	Pentachord 8	519
Bandor Loudspeakers Pictures	300	Pioneer CS-7030	230	Celestion Style 3	399	Royd Doublet	450	Pentachord Pentode	729
Bang & Olufsen Beovox CX50	300	Pioneer S-40K	250	Celestion Impact 30	429	Ruark Swordsman Plus II	329	Pioneer S-200	600
Bose XL3000	230	Pioneer S-60	270	Celestion SL65i	429	Ruark Icon	359	Polk RT12	600
Bose 151 Environmental	270	Pioneer CS-9030	280	Celestion CS6i	449	Ruark Sabre II	449	Polk LS50	800
Bose 161 Freestyle	275	Pioneer S-LC1	300	Celestion CS8i	499	Ruark Templar	449	Proac Response CC One	599
Bose 201 Ser III	290	Polk M3 II	220	Cerwin Vega VS10	350	SD Acoustics SD3R	499	Proac Tablette 50	599
Bose XL4000	295	Polk RT5	250	Clements 300si	395	Sequence 400	329	Proac Studio 100	699
Boston Acoustics 360 Ser II	209	Polk RT7	300	Dali 104B	370	Spendor 2020	399	QLN 313	600
Boston Acoustics 361	210	Polk M5	300	Dawn Audio Chorus BS	482	Tannoy Subsat3	399	QLN 929	700
Boston Acoustics CR8	239	QLN Projekt A5	225	Epos ES12	499	Tannoy 636	419	QLN Classic One	800
Boston Acoustics 380	249	QLN Projekt B3	240	Faraday SG	345	Tannoy 625	450	Quad Q7710L	600
Boston Acoustics 381	250	QLN Qubic 121	250	Faraday Siren	445	Tannoy 637	499	Rogers AB1	549
Boston Acoustics CR9	279	QLN 122	270	Fullers Sultan	349	TDL RTL 3	400	Rogers LS3/5A	699
Boston Acoustics Voyager	299	QLN A6	270	Fullers Sultan H.E.	475	TDL RTL 3	400	Rogers Studio 5	699
Boston Lynnfield VR10	250	QLN Projekt B3i	285	G.L.L. Imagio IC120	420	Technics SB-M300	350	Roksan Roksan 1	595
Boston Lynnfield VRS	300	Rega EL8	298	Grundig BX3 Mk II	350	Technics SB-M500	450	Roksan Ojan 3S	795
Boston Lynnfield VR12	300	Rogers LS33	249	Heybrook Heylios	339	Totem Mite	495	Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795
Canon SV15KIT2	210	Rogers LS33	249	Heybrook Trio	373	Triangle Titus TZe	349	Royd The Sorcerer	595
Canon V-100	210	Royd Minstral	269	Heybrook Heylo	389	Triangle Comete TZe	499	Royd Abbot	665
Canon V-100W	220	Royd Merlin	298	Heybrook Heystak	499	Ukd-Opera Oera Solo	395	Ruark Talisman II	749
Canon V-100EX	240	Sequence 300	249	Infinity SM105	350	Ukd-Opera Opera I	450	Shahinian Super Elf	790
Canon SV15KIT1	250	Sequence FW120	249	Infinity SM115	450	Visonik TB1S	366	Silverado Raider	695
Canon S-35	250	Sony SS-176SEB	250	Infinity SSW-10 Sub	500	Wharfedale Modus MFM3	350	Sonus-Faber Concertino	595
Castle ISiS	229	System Audio 905	250	Jamo 407A	350	Wharfedale Modus Music Eight	360	Spendor 2030	599
Castle Keep (STD)	250	Tannoy 633/III	300	Jamo 98	360	Wharfedale Modus MSC One-Six	460	Spendor LS3/5A	630
Castle Durham 900	300	TDL RTL 2	280	Jamo Classic 6	360			Spendor SP3/1	795
Celestion Impact 20	279	Visonik 7003	203	Jamo BX-100A	370	Acoustic Energy AE1-II	795	Tannoy 638	599
Celestion CSW	299	Visonik SUB5	259	Jamo D-365B	400	Allison RA LABS HTS Two	509	Tannoy D100	649
Celestion Style 2	299	Wharfedale Modus MFM1	250	Jamo THX Sub One	400	Allison Model 3A	525	TDL T-Line 2	550
Celestion Impact 23	300	Wharfedale Modus Music Six	280	Jamo THX LCR One	400	Allison CD8	550	TDL RTL 4	650
Cerwin Vega HED265	300	Wharfedale Valdus 500	299	Jamo Graphic	400	Allison AL125	650	TDL T-Line3	750
Cerwin Vega SAT-6	300	Yamaha NS10M	300	Jamo Classic 8	430	Allison AL130	800	Totem Rokk	695
Dali 102B	260	ZYP A1T	219	Jamo BX-150A	460	Audio Gem Emerald	540	Triangle Zephyr	749
Faraday FS1	245	ZYP A2S	275	Jamo 128	500	Ukd C6/20	533	Ukd-Opera Operetta II	770
Gale Model 5	220	ZYP A2ST	295	Jamo 477A	500	Avanti C6/25	763		
G.L.L. Imagio IC110	300			Jamo Concert Centre	500	B&W CDM1	600	Acoustic Energy AE2-II	1,095
Heybrook HB1	269			Jamo Silhouette	500	B&W P4	675	ATC SCM10	1,000
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Jamo D-265C	300			Keswick Audio Centrale	359	Castle Avon	700	B&W DM604	1,000
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JBL TLX60	300			Lumley Reference LM4	375	Celestion Impact 35	529	Bandor Loudspeakers Mora	1,260
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Monitor Audio Monitor 1 Gold	245			Monitor Audio MA303	500	Fullers Sultan H.E.	625	Celestion 300	1,099
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Monitor Audio Sub JW/200/92	300			Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	500	G.L.L. Imagio IC130	530	Cerwin Vega VS15	1,300
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				Origin Live OL-1AS	399	Jamo BX-200A	550	Harbeth HL-K6	975
				Origin Live Monarch	399	Jamo THX Surr One	550	Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,259
				Origin Live OL-2A	470	Jamo Classic 10	700	Harbeth HL-Compact 7	1,329
				Ortofon Concord 6	330	Jamo 507A	800	Heybrook Sextet	1,129
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				Polk LS 1/x Surround	449	KEF Q50	529	Jamo Concert 8	1,300
				Polk RT10	500	KEF LS3/5a	649	JBL L20	850
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				Prof Monitor Co TB1SM	403	Keswick Audio Volante	599	JBL L60	1,200
				Prof Monitor Co TB1	410	Keswick Audio Volante	629	JBL L80	1,300
				Prof Monitor Co TB1M	447	Linnaeum LFX Wood	649	JBL L90	1,300
				Prof Monitor Co XB1	499	Linn Keilidh Passive	700	Jordan Watts JH400	820
				QLN Projekt B4	320	Lumley Reference LM6	650	Jordan Watts JH400M	970
				QLN Projekt B3ii	329	Lumley Reference Premenade SP4	650	JPW Ruby 3	1,000
				QLN Projekt C3	330	Mantecore Minaret	580	JPW Ruby 4	1,300
				QLN Projekt B MULTI	330	Meridian A500	695	KEF Model One	1,099
				QLN Projekt D3	360	Mission 752	578	KEF Model Two	1,499
				QLN Projekt C3i	370	Mission 735	650	Keswick Audio Torino	899
				QLN Qubic 222	400	Mission 735 Freedom	798	Keswick Audio Figaro Evolution	899
				QLN Projekt C3ii	400	Monitor Audio Studio 2	600	Keswick Audio Milano	1,099
				QLN Projekt B5	400	Monitor Audio 702PMC	799	Keswick Audio Alto	1,299
				QLN Projekt C3iii	400	Monitor Audio MAG901	800	Keswick Audio Amber	1,399
				QLN Projekt D3i	440	Mordaunt-Short MS50i	550	Linn Sekrit Aktiv	850
				QLN Projekt C4	440	Naim Audio INTRO	596	Linn Tulcan Aktiv	1,000
				QLN Projekt C3iv	440	Naim Audio NA PX03	705	Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,200
				QLN Projekt D3ii	470	Naim Audio S-NAXO 3-6	719	Living Voice Auditorium	1,300
				QLN Projekt D4	480	Naim Audio S-NAXO 2-4	719	Lumley Reference LM3	895
				QLN Projekt CMULTI	500	Neat Petite	595	Lumley Reference L/M3.5	1,050
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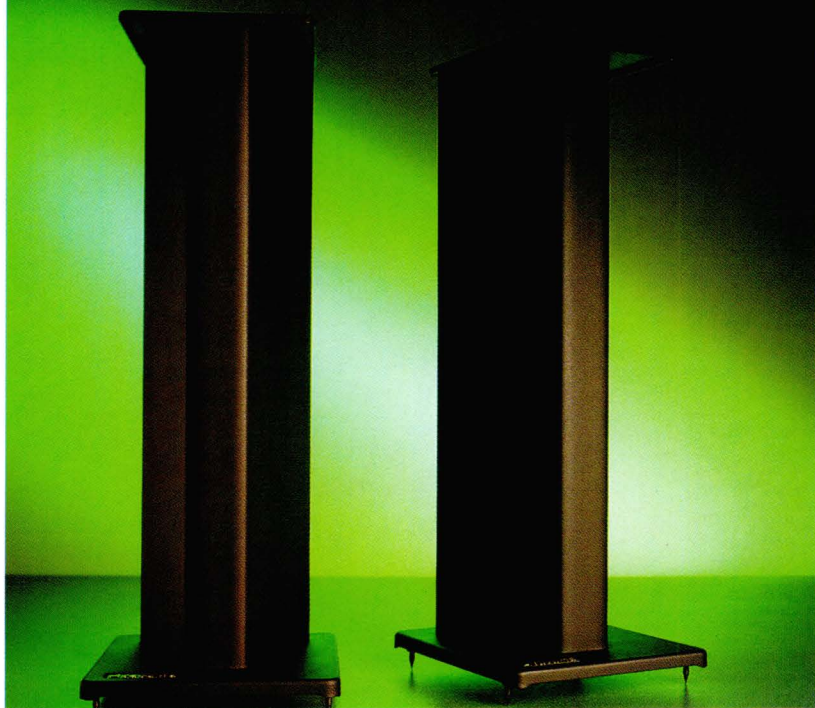


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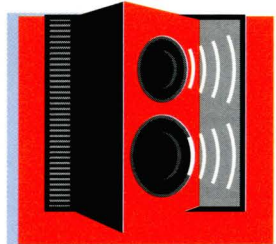
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Meridian DSP6000	9,400
Monitor Audio Studio 50	4,000
Monitor Audio Studio 60	7,000
Naim Audio DBL Active	7,414
Neolith NEO 2	3,499
Neolith NEO 3	4,999
Proac Response 3.5	4,250
Prof Monitor Co MB1	4,370
Prof Monitor Co MB1P	4,681
Prof Monitor Co BB5	6,270
Prof Monitor Co BB5P	6,754
QLN Artec 1600	4,500
Quad ESL63	3,450
Rehdeko RK145	4,250
Rehdeko RK175	7,750
Shahinian Hawk	4,950
Shahinian Diapason	8,350
Sonus-Faber Extrema	5,991
Spendor SP9/1	3,400
Tannoy GRFM TW	3,500
Tannoy Canterbury 12 ^	5,500
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000
Tannoy Canterbury 15 ^	7,000
TDL Ref Standard-m	4,999
Thiel CS3.6	3,899
Triangle Nemo Altair	3,850
Wilson WAP Puppy II	5,600
Wilson Puppy 5	7,290
Wilson WATT 5	8,800
Wilson WITT	8,88



**AV Loudspeakers  
Dedicated Centre Speaker**

B&W CC3	150
B&W CC6	200
Boston Acoustics 404V	100
Boston Acoustics CR1	100
Boston Acoustics Centre 6	130
Boston Acoustics Centre 7	200
Boston Acoustics VR12	300
Canon S-C10	129
Canon S-C20	199
Celestion Centre 2	189
Jamo Centre 50.II	80
Jamo Centre 40	100
Jamo Centre 100.II	130
Jamo Centre 18	150
Jamo Centre 160	180
Jamo Centre 200	200
JBL MR Centre	100
JBL SC305	150
KEF 80C	129
KEF 200C	699
Kenwood CS-6	150
Keswick Audio Centrali	359
Martin-Logan Logos	1,949
Meridian M60C	1,125
Meridian DSP5000C	1,750
Meridian DSP6000C	4,900
Mission 75C	248
Monitor Audio CC200	200
Monitor Audio CC900	400
Polk CS200	170
Polk RM2500C	249
Polk CS250	250
Polk CS350	450
Rogers C33	222
Royd AV77	250
Sony SS CN15	40
Sony SS CN35	70
Sony SS CN65ES	130
Triangle Sat 1	375
Yamaha NS-C60	60
Yamaha NS-C105	80
Yamaha NS-C150	110
ZYP A1TAV	109

**Dedicated Surround Speaker**

B&W SCM8	550
Boston Acoustics CRX	200
Boston Acoustics VRS	429
Boston Acoustics 575X	450
Canon V-100	210
Jamo Surround 40	60
Jamo Surround rear	60
Jamo Surround 50	70
Jamo Surround 100	90
Jamo Surround 200	180
Jamo Surround 300	280
Kenwood RS-05	80
Kenwood CM-5ES	80
Kenwood CM7ES	100
Martin-Logan Stylos	2,872
Musical Technology Merlin	200
Musical Technology HOBBY	250
Musical Technology Osprey	250
Polk M3 II	220
Polk M5	300
Polk LS 1/x Surround	449
Sony SS SR65ES	170
Triangle SAT II	250

**Subwoofer**

Aiwa TS-W9	170
B&W Solid Powerbass	300
B&W AS6	500
B&W PCS8	750
B&W 800ASW	1,500
Boston Acoustics VR500	450
Boston Acoustics SW10	450
Boston Acoustics 595X	455
Canon S-B20	200
Canon VSB-100	250
Credo SDC 001	3,054
Jamo SW25	140
Jamo SW170.II	240
Jamo SW200.II	300
Jamo SW400E	330
Jamo SW300.II	370
Jamo SW505E	400
Jamo SW600E	530
JBL PS60	399



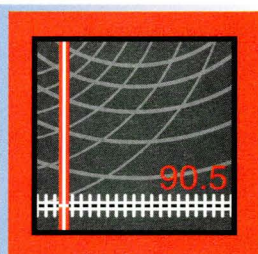
**KEF 30B** Packaged with the 60S surrounds and 80C centre, won two major awards last year.



Wilson benesch Turntable. Deploys high-tech carbon fibre in the name of harmonious sound.

JPW Satellites	80
JPW Subwoofer	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
KEF Model 20B	349
KEF 30B	499
KEF 40B	759
KEF AV1	2,499
Kenwood SW500	250
Linn Sekrit	298
Linn S150	2,850
Meridian Sub 1	1,500
Meridian M2500	1,595
Mission 73PS	180
Mission 73AS	450
Mission 75AS	550
Polk PSW100	500
Polk PSW300	750
REL Strata 2	575
REL Storm	700
REL Stadium II	1,000
REL Stentor2	1,800
REL Studio2	4,000
Rogers AB33	379
Rogers ASB60	469
Solid Powerbass	300
Solid Verticale	400
Sony SA W101	230
Sony SA W301	330
Tannoy 625ALF	595
Triangle SATIII	650
Yamaha YST-SW40	140
Yamaha YST-SW80	180
Yamaha YST-SW150	280

Air Tangent Tangent 10B	7,777
Air Tangent Ref. Sig.	11,000
Audiomeca SL5	1,999
Decca LI Arm	49
Decca LIR Arm	99
Dynavector 507	2,200
Graham 1.5T	2,550
Helius Orion 4 Copper	549
Helius Orion 4 Silver	725
Helius Cyclane 2	1,495
Linn Akitu	350
Linn Ekos	1,500
Manticore Musician	425
Manticore Magician1	750
Manticore Magician2	850
<b>Moth Arm</b>	<b>95</b>
Moth MkIII	146
Arcam Alpha 8	280
Arcam Alpha 7	230
Arcam Delta 280	399
Audiolab 8000T	800
Aura TU80	350
AVI S2000MT	599
B&W ST-3s	350
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
Grundig T12	170
Harman/Kardon TU930	180
Harman/Kardon TU950	200
Harman/Kardon TU9400	299
Kenwood KT-2080	130
Kenwood KT-3080	180
Linn Kudos Sneaky	500
Linn Kudos	775
Linn Kremlin	2,600
Luxman T-353	200
Marantz ST-57	150
Marantz ST-65	200
Mcintosh MR7084	1,550
Meridian 504	695
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



TUNERS

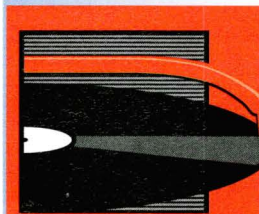
Arcam Alpha 7	230
Arcam Alpha 8	280
Arcam Delta 280	399
Audiolab 8000T	800
Aura TU80	350
AVI S2000MT	599
B&W ST-3s	350
Day Sequerra FM Ref	5,937
Day Sequerra S B'dcast Mon	14,640
Denon TU-260L	120
Denon TU-215RD	150
Denon TU-380RD	200
Grundig T12	170
Harman/Kardon TU930	180
Harman/Kardon TU950	200
Harman/Kardon TU9400	299
Kenwood KT-2080	130
Kenwood KT-3080	180
Linn Kudos Sneaky	500
Linn Kudos	775
Linn Kremlin	2,600
Luxman T-353	200
Marantz ST-57	150
Marantz ST-65	200
Mcintosh MR7084	1,550
Meridian 504	695
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

NAD T 4210RDS	180
NAD 412	190
NAD 414RDS	250
Naim Audio NATO3	566
Naim Audio NATO2	1,028
<b>Naim Audio NATO1</b>	<b>1,645</b>
Onix TU39	800
Onkyo T-409	230
Onkyo T-411RDS	280
Onkyo R-811RDS	420
Pioneer F-203RDS	130
Pioneer F-204RDS	140
Pioneer F-303RDS	180
Pioneer F-304RDS	190
Pioneer F-504RDS	250
<b>Quad FM66</b>	<b>554</b>
Rega Radio	229
Rotel RT-990BX	500
TEAC T-R400	120
TEAC TB-X10	400
<b>Technics ST-GT350L</b>	<b>150</b>
Technics ST-GT550L	200
Technics ST-GT650L	250
<b>Thorens TRT-2000</b>	<b>450</b>
Yamaha TX-480L	120
Yamaha TX-590RDS	180

Sony PS-J10	90
Sony PSLX-300H	150
<b>Systemdek I/920</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Systemdek IIX/900</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Systemdek I/920/Moth</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>Systemdek IIXE/900Ap</b>	<b>388</b>
Systemdek 960	500
Technics SL-BD20	160
Technics SL-BD22	180
Technics SL-1210MKII	500
Technics SL-1200MKII	500
Thorens TD-180 AT91	190
Thorens TD-180/S500	200
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	200
<b>Thorens TD-166 VI/UK/BC</b>	<b>200</b>
Thorens TD-280 IV UK AT95E	209
Thorens TD-180 Stanton 500	219
Thorens TD-166 VI/UK/AT	270
<b>Thorens TD-166 VI/UK/RB</b>	<b>300</b>
Thorens TD166 VI REGA 250	400
Thorens TD-3111 TP50	500

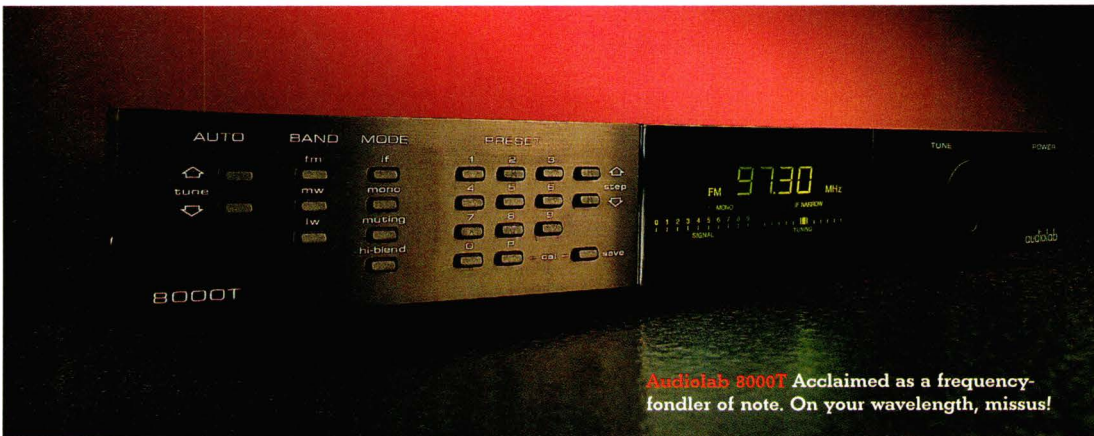
Over £500

Audiomeca Romance	1,675
Audiomeca J1	2,500
Audiomeca J1/SL5	4,250
Basis Basis 2001	2,750
Basis Ovation II	4,800
Basis Debut Gold Std III	7,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	9,250
<b>DNM Rota 2</b>	<b>4,800</b>
Dnm Reson Rota 1	3,500
Impulse Moskito	695
<b>Linn LP12 Basik</b>	<b>1,050</b>
Linn LP12 Valhalla	1,200
<b>Linn LP12 Lingo</b>	<b>1,750</b>
Lumley Reference Strotosphere ST1	6,250
Manticore Mantra	950
Manticore Magister	3,990
Marantz TT-1000	6,000
Michell Mycro/arm	577
<b>Michell Gyrodek</b>	<b>825</b>
Michell Gyrodek/arm	967
Michell Orbe	1,950
Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck	600
Nottingham Analogue Illusion	600
Nottingham Analogue HyperSpacedeck1,200	1,200
Nottingham Analogue Graphic	1,200
Nottingham Analogue Mentor	2,200
Nottingham Analogue Mentor Ref	4,800
<b>Pink Triangle Export</b>	<b>948</b>
<b>Pink Triangle Anniversary</b>	<b>1,797</b>
Pink Triangle Anni/DC PSU	2,173
<b>Pro-Ject 6/Sumiko</b>	<b>850</b>
<b>Rega Planar 9</b>	<b>1,598</b>
Roksan Xerxes 10	1,295
Roksan TMS	2,750
SME Model 20	3,240
<b>SME Model 20/2A</b>	<b>3,941</b>
SME Model 30	8,652
SME Model 30/2A	9,836
Technics SL-1200LTD	1,000
Thorens TD-146 V1 TP50	550
Thorens TD-300LBC	630
Thorens TD-2001 TP90	700
<b>Thorens TD-2001</b>	<b>700</b>
<b>Thorens TD-3001/UK</b>	<b>770</b>
Thorens TD-520	900
Thorens TD-520 SME	1,050
Townshend MkIII Rock	1,499
<b>Well Tempered Record Player</b>	<b>1,850</b>
Well Tempered Classic	2,980
Well Tempered Super	3,900
Well Tempered Reference	5,300
Wilson Benesch	1,550



TONEARMS

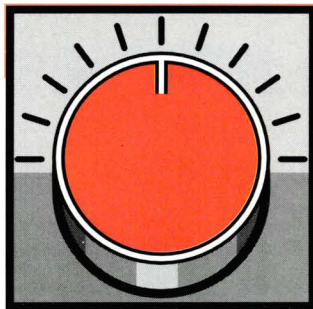
Air Tangent IC	3,333
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Audiolab 8000T Acclaimed as a frequency-fondler of note. On your wavelength, missus!

Remember that all entries printed in **RED** refer to hi-fi products that we have reviewed. Turn to page 130 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.



**Best buy**



**Recommended**

KEY	MC PHONO INPUT:	POWER OUTPUT (W):	information page
LINE INPUTS: Amount of input sockets for non vinyl sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.	If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving coil (low output) cartridges.	Lab tested power output in Watts per channel.	RECEIVER: If an amp has a built in radio tuner.
MM PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving magnet (normal output) cartridges.	REMOTE CONTROL: If amp is couch potato ready.	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
	HEADPHONE SOCKET: If an amp is can friendly.		BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

## INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

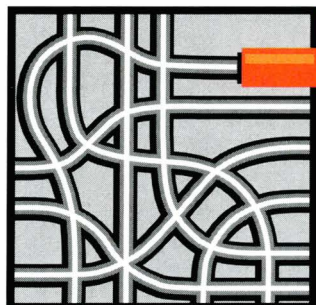
Product	Price (£)	Comments	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Maxim APD30A	299	Vivid and colourful sounding amp that's just too bold and brassy	5	●				30	1737	154	
AMC 3050	220	Low-price NAD-alike amplifier that is polite and modest but rather wooden. Phono better than line	4	●				45	1738	154	
AMC CWT3030	529	Attempt to mix transistors with valves only shines with simple musical styles	6	●				30		116	
Arcam Alpha 8	350	Enjoyably soft-centred amp won't frighten the animals. Upgradeable via preamp output, and R/C (not supplied)..	5	●				50		162	
Audio Innovations Alto	300	Probably because of a lack of deep bass, this stylish amp 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-350SE	200	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, the new SE model is a control freak, but can sound wonderful	5					50		162	
Denon PMA-450SE	280	Based on the original '450 and offers a fast, furious and entertaining sound	5	●				60	1258	142	
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation but musically unexciting	5	●	●	●	●	97	1802	157	
Densen Beat B-100	600	Low feedback amp with passive internal preamp gives a bold, pacey and thoroughly involving sound. Phono option listed.	5					60		162	
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	5	●				55	1743	154	
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but low power, mundane sound and poor build	3					12	1416	148	
Grundig Fine Arts V-11	160	Rhythmically dull. Never gets out of first gear	5	●			●	55	1803	157	
Harman/Kardon HK610	200	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●				30	1465	149	
Harman/Kardon HK620	250	Capable and musical amplifier which is among the nicest available at the price. Optional add-in MM/MC board available.	6				●	40		162	
Harman Kardon HK1200	300	Big sound with little bite. Becomes confused with complex music	7					45	1804	157	
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 Shearman 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-V4	200	Respectable performance for a Pro-Logic AV amplifier. Lacks resolution and sparkle, though	5	●			●	63	1805	157	
JVC AX-R5	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●			●	45	1466	149	
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	
Kenwood KA-7090R	400	Power with responsibility here, but the Kenwood can sound lean and lacks transparency	6	●	●			85		162	
LFD Integrated Zero	499	Lively and brisk, but at the same time cold and unsympathetic	6					50	1584	140	
Linn Majik-I (Phono)	725	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 IA-200	465	Sweet, valve -flavoured solid state amplifier flatters where it doesn't cast light. Note: power output listed is peak	7					100		162	
Magnum Class A	599	Lashings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A trades lushness for accuracy.	4	●	●			60		116	
Minim Amp	350	Excellent musical performance but doesn't like high levels or low impedance speakers	6	●			●	40	1806	157	
Mission Cyrus IIIi	600	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance and other anomalies were not liked on test. Upgradeable using PSX unit PSU.	6	●			●	50		162	
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 A2	499	Lucid, transparent midband and a full upper bass are provided by this highly proficient A1 replacement	5	●				25		162	
Myrrad MI 120	530	Despite an ultra-modern appearance, the old-fashioned cold, dry transistor sound	5				●	60	1747	154	
NAD 310	100	Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness	5					20	1468	149	
NAD 314	260	Lively if coloured presentation that is musically engaging and easy on the ear	6	●			●	53	1807	157	
Naim Nait 3	550	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5					30	1748	154	
Onix OA31	480	Eager to please, dynamic and fresh sounding, but it's grip is wafer thin	5	●	●		●	60	1587	140	
Orelle SA-100	449	A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble	5					50	1749	154	

## INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT		MC PHONO INPUT		HEADPHONE INPUT		POWER OUTPUT(W)		FACTS		ISSUE NUMBER	
			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	RECEIVER	RECEIVER	RECEIVER	RECEIVER
▶ 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				
▶ 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				
▶ Pioneer A-300R Precision	400	Sophisticated breathed-on variant of the A-300R is not an obvious winner, but it will slowly win you over with its subtle charms	5	●	●	●	●	35		162				
Pro-ject Model 7	300	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 derived from Elicit is a little uninspiring, though at least it is not badly behaved.	4	●	●	●	●	50		162				
▶ Rotel RA920AX	120	Commendable performance at the price. Tuneful, robust bass	4	●	●	●	●	32	1808	157				
▶ Rotel RA970BX	250	Lively, fresh and perky with plenty of power, but not so clever with complex recordings	6	●	●	●	●	60	1546	138				
Sherwood AX-7030R	400	Versatile, and with truck-loads of power on tap, this model is disappointingly coarse and uninvolved on audition.	5	●	●	●	●	95		162				
Sonic Frontiers SFC-1	1,795	Smooth, sophisticated Canadian valve amp with a decent direct input and more features than average	6	●	●	●	●	50		126				
Sony TA-F448E	250	Confused and coloured sounding, it needs a large dose of delicacy adding to its presentation	5	●	●	●	●			1809	157			
▶ Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model	6	●	●	●	●	50		162				
TEAC A-BX7R	700	Characterful balance mars an otherwise meticulously designed amplifier. Includes a balanced input, optional MM/MC stage.	5	●	●	●	●	50		162				
Technics SU-A700 Mk 3	250	Fully equipped, high tech amplifier ultimately fails the 'is it Stork...?' test, and can sound messy and inarticulate	5	●	●	●	●	45		162				
Woodside ISA230 Disc	1,249	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			
<b>Preamplifiers</b>														
▶ 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 XVII 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	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. Tested with 555	5	●	●	●	●			1303	145			
Meridian 562V	995	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			
▶ 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	2,233	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				
<b>Power amplifiers</b>														
Acurus A150	1400	Price includes RL11 preamp with which it was tested. Powerfull remote control US combo with a slightly forward inclination	1	●	●	●	●			150				
▶ Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless	1	●	●	●	●			60				
▶ 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				
▶ Audio Innovations S800 Anni	1475	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				
▶ Cyrus Power	450	Tested with Cyrus Pre. Punchy, light footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth (bridgeable)	1	●	●	●	●			50				
▶ DPA 200S	750	Dramatic but crisp, open sound belies power rating (tested with DSP-200S)	1	●	●	●	●			60				
▶ EAR 509 Mk II	3,499	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with £2599 802)	1	●	●	●	●			100				
▶ 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				
▶ Jadis JA-30	2,880	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange (tested with £5978 JP30)	1	●	●	●	●			30				
Krell KSA-50s	3,690	Stretches the performance margins of difficult speakers - state of the art at the price	1	●	●	●	●			50				
Meridian 555	750	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				
▶ Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. While demonstrating solid, even balance it proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1	●	●	●	●			100				
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	1100	Truly a beefy amplifier, but no mad cow!	1	●	●	●	●			250				
Rotel RB-970BX MkII	225	Tested with RC970BX MkII in Sessions (see preamp section)	1	●	●	●	●			60				
Rotel RB-980BX	475	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid back and occasionally smeared sound (tested with RC980BX)	1	●	●	●	●			120				

## POWER AMPLIFIERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	HEADPHONE INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
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 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 un-terminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary with brands.

B
Best buy
R
Recommended

### KEY

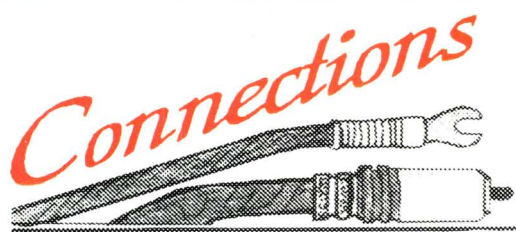
<b>SYMMETRICAL:</b> A twisted pair of conductors.	<b>SOLID CORE:</b> single or multiple individually insulated strands.	<b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	<b>BACK ISSUE:</b> The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
<b>COAXIAL:</b> A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.	<b>COPPER:</b> Material used for conductor.		
<b>STRANDED:</b> Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.	<b>SILVER:</b> Material used for conductor.		
	<b>DIG CABLE TYPE:</b> O - optical digital, E - electrical digital.		

## CABLES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>Analogue Interconnects</b>											
Audio Note AN-A	29.50	Not especially impressive, warm but well rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is not unclear	●			●	●			1687	131
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
Audioquest Turquoise	40	A fit and forget cable that sounds distinctly lazy	●			●	●			1688	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
Bandridge ProfiGold PG301	65	A perfect cable for enlivening a system, but too cold for most systems			●	●	●			1690	131
Cable Talk Studio 2	65	A first-class performer from tonal, dynamic and rhythmic standpoints	●		●	●	●			1690	131
Cambridge Audio Studio Ref	40	Dynamic cable with strong soundstaging and only a slight lack of detail			●	●	●			1691	131
Chord Chameleon	68	Anomalous treble with a dry but vaguely sibilant quality, sometimes sounds smooth, sometimes harsh!			●	●	●			1691	131
Chord Solid	99	Thin but very stiff with excellent resolution of subtle timbral detail and fine dynamics			●	●	●			1691	131
Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare	●		●	●	●			1691	131
DNM TCC75	34	Price for 0.75m length. High resolution cable, but best in short runs due to higher than average series impedance					●	●		1692	131
DPA Slink	41	Slightly bright and zingy sound with flat soundstaging and hollow sounding bass, vocals and strings sound convincing though				●	●			1692	131
DPA White Slink	75	Highly expressive, very easy on the ear and attractively detailed though not entirely characterless at high frequencies				●	●			1692	131
DPA Black Slink	220	Initially dark and meaty but becoming lucid and transparent with running in. Quad geometry, Gore-tex dielectric	●		●	●	●			1692	131
Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble			●	●	●			1693	131
Ixos 103	40	Even handed and generous sound, bass has a well rounded, bouncy quality			●	●	●			1693	131
Ixos 102	60	A tad bright and undynamic, this cable is nevertheless a good all-rounder, whose faults are largely subtractive			●	●	●			1693	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 nthe 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	●				●	●		1697	131
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 splotchy 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	●				●	●		1698	131
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	●				●	●		1698	131
Nordost Black Knight	55	Flat black cable that is distinctive, but slightly coloured — but not in a wholly negative manner	●				●	●		1699	131
Panasonic RP-CA910	50	Uncongested and even handed balance if slightly flat imagewise, retains impact but has a vaguely untransparent quality			●	●	●			1699	131
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight			●	●	●			1699	131
SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. Unsure about the flesh-coloured finish though...	●				●	●		1699	131
SonicLink Black	49	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						ISSUE NUMBER	FAXBACK NUMBER
			SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER		
Tara Labs Prism 11	45	Very compatible cable that wins through with a naturally balanced and realistically dynamic sound. 6N purity copper	●			●	●	1699	131
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
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
van den Hul Source HB	50	(Priced for 0.8m) Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness. Airy and well controlled		●	●		●		160
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
XLO Type 0.1	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals				●	●	1703	131
<b>Digital Interconnects</b>									
Audio Note AN-V	110	Ostensibly an analogue cable but gives a meaty and natural performance when used for digital duty	●			●	●	E 1704	131
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
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						0	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
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						0	108
DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound			●	●	●	E	108
Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colourations, plenty of weight, smooth vox		●		●	●	E 1707	131
Kimber Kable 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						0	108
LFD DigiLink Copper	30	Slightly grainy highly compatible cable with coherent and forward dynamic quality		●		●	●	E 1708	131
Monster Interlink LS100	45	Well constructed stepped-index fibre with polished ends and connectors. Lean, fuzzy, engaging performance						0	108
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
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 Green	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a tad over crisp at times, very compelling however		●		●	●	E 1709	131
van den Hul MC Videolink 75	48	An AV-cum-digital cable that nearly beats QED's DigiFlex, but emphasises sibilants		●				E	108
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
<b>Loudspeaker Cables</b>									
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
Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical			●		●	1711	133
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
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
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
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 <sup>2</sup> conductor produces weighty but ploddy music that lacks transparency	●		●		●	1714	133
Bandridge LC7409	3.85	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings			●		●	1800	157
Cable Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained			●		●	1800	157
DNM LSCB500	5.95	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire				●	●	1716	133
DPA Black Sixteen	90	Unflappable resolution of fine musical details, there's no dampening of dynamics simply oodles of taut information	●			●	●	1717	133
Gale XL315	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value			●		●	1800	157
Gale XL160-2	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy sounding bi-wire cable. Slightly manipulative sounding			●		●	1800	157
Heybrook Heywire	4	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven				●	●		109
Ixos 603	2	Big and expansive sounding cable, full and engaging while retaining a high degree of neutrality				●	●	1718	133
Ixos 604	5	Midrange is detailed and surprisingly smooth but treble is hard and synthetic and the bass no better				●	●	1719	133



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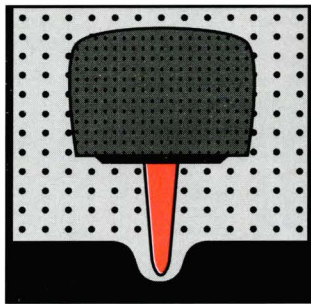
Contact us by phone, fax, or letter and we'll do our best to help you achieve your goal.  
(Auditions may be subject to a handling charge)

CONNECTIONS

13 John Princes Street, London W1M 9HB (A division of Connection 90' Travel Ltd.)

## CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
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	5.11	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
Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound — but too messy and bloated for its own good				●	●		1800	157
Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design, shame about the sound quality	●			●	●		1800	157
QED Qudos	2.50	Despite high tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, the music failed to gel				●	●		1800	157
QED Profile 8	5	Sophisticated flat cable that lacks decent bass and get up and go				●	●		1800	157
SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced				●	●	●	1800	157
Tara Labs Rectangular SCM	725	Price for terminated 2m pair. Dynamics are exquisite, luxurious smooth sound, brimming with enforced detail				●	●	●	1725	133
Transparent Audio MusicHord	11.42	Sweet, open and refined treble, a bit of breathy exuberance and can sound slightly lackadaisical				●	●	●	1728	133
Transparent Audio Wave	22.84	Very close to the sound of 'no cable', one of the very best. Slightly softens treble detail	●			●	●	●	1728	133
Tech + Link OFC79	1	Bargain basement cable that sounds cosy, but suffers from a wobbly bass				●	●		1800	157
van den Hul The Clearwater	16	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	133
XLO Pro Type 625	4	Lively but natural and relaxed sounding but a hint of congestion at frequency extremes				●	●	●	1726	133



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.  
MC: Moving coil cartridge with a low output only suitable for high

sensitivity vinyl disc amplifier inputs.  
REPLACEABLE STYLUS: Most MM cartridges have a stylus that can be removed and replaced

OUTPUT (MV): Cartridge output in millivolts.  
MASS (g): Cartridge mass can affect arm choice.  
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax

copy of the review.  
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

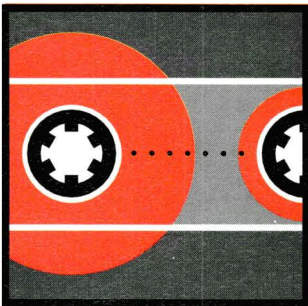
## CARTRIDGES

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	MM	MC	OUTPUT (MV)	MASS (g)	FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
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		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	Slightly 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 Karat 17D2 mk2	449	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent.			●	0.15	5.3	158	
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	
Grado Prestige Gold	150	Rich sounding, with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●	●		4	6	158	
Linn K5	65	Not as crisply focussed as the other Linn magnetics, but the K5 is smoother.		●	●	4.5	6	67	
Linn K9	150	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 iconoclastic 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 Lydian	699	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed		●	●	0.3	7	158	



CARTRIDGES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS MM	OUTPUT MG	FAXBACK NUMBER MSS (g)	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>A</b> Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard		●	0.1	7	143
<b>A</b> Milltek Aurora	299	An overall feeling of relaxed ease characterised this clear and atmospheric Kiseki-built cartridge.		●	2.0	0.1	299
<b>A</b> Ortofon 510/P	32	For the price, a good blend of virtues - weight, clarity and neutrality	●	●	3.0	5	85
<b>A</b> Ortofon 520/P	55	Sensitive to load capacitance, the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound.	●	●	3.0	5	6
<b>A</b> Ortofon MC10 Super	85	'What a delightfully sweet-sounding cartridge this is....' we said.		●	0.3	7	48
<b>A</b> Ortofon MC3 Turbo	110	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unobtrusive - take it as it comes.		●	3.3	4	103
<b>A</b> 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 MC30 Supreme	450	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings		●	0.5	10.7	158
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> Rega Elys	74	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is both more detailed, accurate and convincing.	●	●	5.0	5	67
<b>A</b> Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but more civilised and smoother.	●	●	6.5	5	91
<b>A</b> van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●	●	5.5	6	103
van den Hul DDT	699	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy		●	0.35	7.6	158
<b>A</b> van den Hul MC-10	799	A neutral, balanced performer gives, fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass		●	0.4	6	60
<b>A</b> 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
<b>A</b> van den Hul MC-Two	1,349	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal.		●	0.4	6	72
<b>A</b> van den Hul G' hopper IIIGLA	2,999	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available, it has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse.		●	0.4	6	122
<b>A</b> Wilson benesch Matrix	689	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive.		●	0.58	6	158



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.

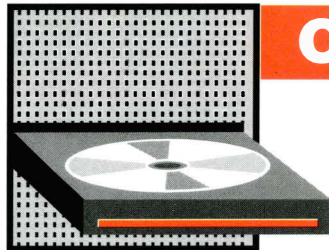
**B** Best buy **R** Recommended

KEY			
DOLBY C: A rather extreme noise reduction system not usually associated with high sound quality.	for cassette recording.	AUTOREVERSE: Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
DOLBY S: A desirable derivative of the Dolby SR professional noise reduction system.	3-HEAD: If you want to monitor a recording whilst you are making it a third head is essential.	AUTO CALIBRATION: The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
DOLBY HX PRO: System designed by B&O to extend headroom	TWIN DECK: Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play, in most instances only one deck will record.	ADJUSTABLE BIAS: Bias can be manually set to suit the tape being used.	

CASSETTE DECKS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN HEAD	AUTO CALIBRATION	AUTOREVERSE	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>A</b> Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well designed budget deck, astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away.	●								1513	136	
<b>A</b> Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High class twin for those who want bells, whistles - and music.	●								1377	146	
<b>A</b> Denon DRM-550	160	There are some technical limitations, but this remains a fine sounding deck, and excellent value.	●								158		
<b>A</b> Denon DRS-640	200	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	
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	
<b>A</b> JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●									158	
<b>A</b> JVC TD-V562BK	220	Ultra-sophisticated transport at a silly price; sound quality is stable but slightly opaque.	●									123	
<b>A</b> JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class.	●								1380	146	
<b>A</b> Kenwood KX-5060S	235	Well engineered transport and Dolby S star in this refined and detailed design.	●									1593	140
<b>A</b> 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
Luxman K-373	350	Decent performance, but a little costly. Includes microphone inputs.	●									158	
Marantz SD-53	200	Modestly equipped player is short-changed by a rough transport, and dull prerecorded quality.	●									1383	146
Marantz SD-63	270	Poor pitch stability is a major snag in an otherwise nondescript design.	●									158	
NAD 602	199	Minimalist deck for the audiophile market. Unfortunately engineering is minimalist too.	●									127	
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise.	●									158	
NAD 616	320	Double deck whose music sounded shut in and prosaic, as though its energy content had been ironed flat	●									1648	152
<b>A</b> Onkyo K-611	430	Cute drawer loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport.	●									1384	146
<b>A</b> Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound.	●									1385	146
<b>A</b> Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open and un-cassette-like sound.	●									158	
<b>A</b> Technics RS-A27	300	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in the state-of-the-art.	●									158	
<b>A</b> Yamaha KX-490	199	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck, whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter.	●									158	
<b>A</b> Yamaha KX-580	250	Stable and clean, if bright. Play Trim helps wake up recalcitrant recordings.	●									1388	146

# CD Players brought to you in association with



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	AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT:	MULTI-DISC:	bitstream, PWM etc
ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.	High speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.	Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.	The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT: Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT: Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.	DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue convertor: BS - Philips	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For optical connection to an outboard DAC.	HEADPHONE SOCKET: For can users.	Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH,	
	VARIABLE OUTPUT: Remotely adjustable volume controlled		

## CD PLAYERS

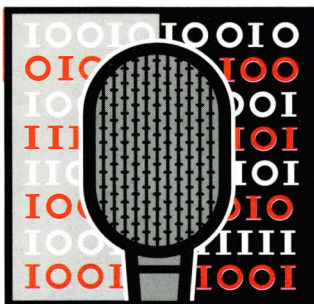
Product	Price(£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
AMC CD6	349	Based on Rotel's RCD-965BX, but has a raunchier, beefier but less transparent sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	124
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
Cambridge Audio CD6	300	A sharp, lively and articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	159
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1269 147
Denon DCD-825	240	Despite extensive revisions, this latest player still sounds like a typical 18-bit Denon, which is no bad thing!	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1531 137
Denon DCD-1015	350	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
Harman/Kardon HD710	250	Player of integrity, but can sound a tad hard and rough when extended, and is somewhat amplifier fussy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159
Harman/Kardon HD7625	550	Crisply styled, well equipped and slick, sound quality is fast and assured, if slightly 'obvious'	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1761 155
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-2574	250	Strong resolving power and good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159
JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1637 151
Kenwood DP-3080	170	Bold, dynamic and outgoing sound, though somewhat aggressive. Poor build quality and finish	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159
Kenwood DP-7060	380	Fleet-footed, but will appear bright in lightweight systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1601 141
Krell KPS 20i	9,900	Forthright, edge of the seat sound with outstanding bass performance (tested in Statements)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1734 155
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multiroom features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1762 155
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-67	270	Dynamic, authoritative, and wide tonal response, but also shut-in and mid-forward balance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 bit	159
Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1763 155
Meridian 506	995	Crisp, clean and detailed player now seems a little flat and mechanical: a dated balance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1764 155
Meridian 508	1,685	Excellent partner for Meridian digital systems, and one of the best neo-high end systems (tested in system)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	140
Micromega Minium	350	Dynamically weak and some roughness offsets the pleasing tonal balance, articulate mid and strong bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 bit	159
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	Simple, well focused presentation, and articulate with it, though hard nosed quality is not everyone's cup of tea	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 bit	159
NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1639 151
Naim Audio CD3	978	The idiosyncratically packaged CD3 is solid and highly articulate. Always has its feet on the ground though	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1765 155
Nakamichi MB4s	350	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	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1640 151
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	1766 155
Philips CD-721	130	Surprisingly well sorted, articulate if slightly lossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 bit	159
Philips CD-740	170	One of several Philips players using hybrid DAC technologies. Still sounds insufferably boring, however	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1567 139
Pioneer PD-204	150	Generally easy on the ear, but can bite back, especially with complex high frequency music content. Well endowed	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 bit	159
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	1767 155
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	1767 155
Sherwood CD-4030R	180	Easy on the ear, smooth sounding player, with limits set by the slightly soft, compressed quality - and messy facade	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	159
Sony CDP-361	150	Bantamweight it capable and resolute machine with no serious shortcomings at the price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1628 151
Sony CDP-XE500	160	Fine all-rounder, and a good match for middle ranking systems. Jog dial works well, but display is messy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	159
Sony CDP-761E	250	Tarted up CDP-561E with less widgets and a slightly overcooked but nonetheless fine performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1267 147
Sony CDP-XE900E	300	Refined and analytical disc scavenging tool, but there are some distinctive colourations making auditioning vital	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	159
Sony CDP-XA2ES	400	Strong-willed, heavyweight sound; not for the feint-hearted	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1642 151
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	1769 155
Teac VRDS-10	770	A basic analogue stage compromises performance. Lacks bass energy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	119
Technics SL-PG480A	140	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unsubtle, slightly harsh top end	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1 bit	159

AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT  
OPTICAL DIGITAL OUT  
AT&T OPT DIG OUT  
BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT  
HEADPHONE OUTPUT  
VARIABLE OUTPUT  
MULTI-DISC  
FACTSBACK NUMBER  
ISSUE NUMBER  
DAC TYPE

CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE OUTPUT	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	DAC TYPE		
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		
Thule CD100	849	A little muddled via single ended output, but the sound comes alive when balanced connections are used	●	●				●		BS	1770	155		
Trichord Genesis	599	Modified Pioneer PD-S504 that's a bit like a Williams Renault Clio — astonishing at the price (tested in Sessions)	●	●					●●	BS	1753	155		
Yamaha CDX-490	170	Big, blowy sound, is undermined by lack of precision and focus							●●			1 bit	159	
<b>TRANSPORTS</b>														
Arcam Delta 250	800	Arcam's best effort yet is a new design based on Philips CDM9 transport. Specification includes Sync Lock facility	●	●					●		-	1491	130	
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,400	Super-slick transport and basically very honest sound, but lacking the last degree of fine detail	●	●								-	162	
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	1,750	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing	●	●							-	1323	144	
Meridian 500	1,245	Used with the 563 DAC, the combination is thin, brash and uncomfortable	●	●							-	1103	133	
Mission Discmaster	1,500	Powerful performance - large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Dacmaster)	●	●							-	1104	133	
Pink Triangle Cardinal	875	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	
Roksan Attessa ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material	●	●							1 bit	162		
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	
Thorens TCD2000	900	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble.	●	●							-	162		
Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer.	●	●							-	162		
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	
<b>DACS</b>														
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	900	Basically very honest sound, but lacking the last degree of fine detail.										BS	162	
Audiomeca Elixir	745	DAC was tested with Kreatura SE - see above										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	1,400	A new 20 bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a tad dry and humourless.										MB	1323	144
Meridian 563	795	Warmer but no less detailed than the earlier 200-series, the 563 flies with a top rate transport										DS	1103	127
Mission Dacmaster	1,500	Powerful performance - large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Discmaster)										MB	1104	133
Pink Triangle Ordinal	925	The cheapest dual-differential DAC7 converter available offers top-flight sound quality										BS	1524	136
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,765	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	1,750	Battery power supply for Cardinal and DaCapo										-	1324	144
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590	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	
Roksan Attessa ATT-DA2/DS5	1,145	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material.										1 bit	162	
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	
Thorens TDA2000	700	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble.										BS	162	
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer. Switchable phase, dither etc										Hyb	162	

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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 death 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.

**B Best buy** **R Recommended**

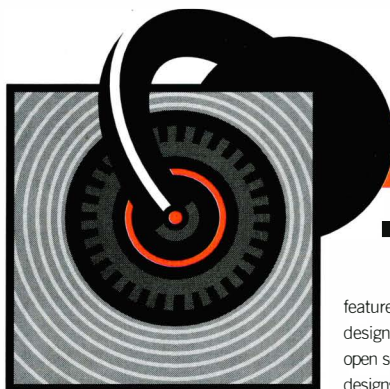
KEY	ADC TYPE:	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS:	BACK ISSUE:
FORMAT: type of recorder, see above for descriptions.	Analogue to digital converter types as per DACs.	Digital sockets for electrical cable.	The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue converter: BS - 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.	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital sockets for optical cable.	
		FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	

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	●	●	●	1652	152

## DIGITAL RECORDERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS		ISSUE NUMBER
							OPTICAL	ANALOG	
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	CLOSED BACK:	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR:	to find the Factsback information page.
TYPE: Operating principle: D - dynamic, E - electrostatic.	Keeps out external noise.	Can be used with mini-jack-equipped components such as personal stereos.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
SUPRA-AURAL: Style where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.	WEIGHT (G): Mass in grams	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page	
CIRCUMAURAL: Style which encloses the ear.	IMPEDANCE (Ω): Load offered to the headphone amplifier. The higher the impedance the louder the sound for a given amplifier output.		
OPEN BACK: Offers an open sound but lets in noise.			

## HEADPHONES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SUPRA-AURAL TYPE	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	WEIGHT(G)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
4 AKG K1000	646	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs.	D	●	●	●	270	120	●	99	
4 Audio Technica ATH910PRO	80	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found with headphones.	D	●	●	●	280	40	●	55	
Beyer DT100	152	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail.	D	●	●	●	350	600	●	157	
Beyer DT311	49	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone.	D	●	●	●	124	40	●	1098 133	
4 Beyer DT331	82	Tonally bright and deficient in bass, but exceptionally comfortable, articulate, detailed and refined.	D	●	●	●	210	40	●	1801 157	
Beyer DT411	69	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price.	D	●	●	●	120	250	●	111	
4 Beyer DT531	129	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D	●	●	●	245	250	●	144	
4 Beyer DT911	219	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps, these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans.	D	●	●	●	275	250	●	111	
Denon AH-D550	80	A competent 'phone with integrity, but little panache or charisma. Hard headband causes brain strain.	D	●	●	●	200	35	●	1801 157	
Grado SR-80	110	Clear, open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes.	D	●	●	●	60	8	●	1801 157	
4 Jocklin 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	
4 Jocklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in long term, despite lack of adjustment.	D	●	●	●	400	200	●	63	
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations.	D	●	●	●	220	32	●	121	
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	
4 Pioneer SE-400D	37	Acceptable, if unexciting all-rounder, this supra-aural phone has good long-term comfort levels.	D	●	●	●	185	35	●	1099 133	

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WHAT HI-FI  
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IR 7600



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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



"It sounds open and clean, with a warmth and graciousness denied most of its competitors"

Hi-Fi Choice  
August 1994

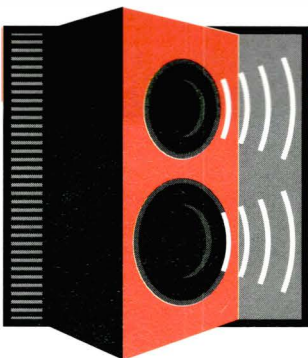


Vivanco UK Ltd, Unit C, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7SS  
Tel: 01442 231616 Fax: 01442 2355421



# HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TYPE	WEIGHT(g)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Ross RDH-300CD	17	In-lead controls are the highlights of this shoddy, sometimes aggressive sounding design.	D	●	155	8	●	133
<b>Sennheiser HD445 II</b>	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
<b>Sennheiser HD455</b>	50	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound, modular, but can become dislodged from head.	D	●	185	60	●	1801
<b>Sennheiser HD565 Ovation</b>	140	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable.	D	●	255	150	●	1801
Sony MDR-CD770	100	Neutrality and comfort make the Sony easy to live with. Technically correct sounding too, yet musically unrewarding.	D	●	-	-	●	1801
<b>Stax Lambda Pro</b>	449	Tested with SRD-7B PSU, this is an industry reference, and is frighteningly revealing.	E	●	325	-	●	55
<b>Stax Lambda Sig</b>	549	With SRM-T1. Electrostatic - the Signature must be the most transparent headphone available.	E	●	325	-	●	72
<b>Technics RP-HT700</b>	70	Well-finished but physically crass and grubby sounding.	D	●	255	-	●	1801
<b>Vivanco SR606</b>	40	Although slightly overblown at times, this model is easy on the ears and essentially enjoyable	D	●	225	32	●	1101
<b>Vivanco SR650</b>	50	Unusually comfortable phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive, thanks to tweeter resonance.	D	●	175	-	●	1801
<b>Vivanco SR750</b>	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound an pricing, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics.	D	●	188	-	●	1801
<b>Vivanco IR7100</b>	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

**A**s 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.

**Best Buy**

**Recommended**

### KEY

<p><b>SIZE WxHxD (cm):</b> Width by height by depth in centimetres.</p> <p><b>FLOORSTANDER:</b> As opposed to requiring a dedicated stand.</p> <p><b>SENSITIVITY (dB/W):</b> Efficiency: how much volume you get for a given input; the higher the louder.</p>	<p><b>IMPEDANCE (Ω):</b> 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.</p> <p><b>BASS FROM (Hz):</b> The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce, based on in-room measurements.</p> <p><b>FREE SPACE:</b> Speakers should be placed away from walls.</p> <p><b>CLOSE TO WALL:</b> It is recommended that these speakers be placed close (between 3 and 12cm) to the rear wall.</p>	<p><b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback page.</p> <p><b>BACK ISSUE:</b> The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.</p>
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# HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>Allison AL100</b>	100	Loud and lively budget wall-mount is big and beefy, but lacks sparkle and refinement	24,33,19	90	4	30	●	94
<b>Allison AL105</b>	170	Pretty enough in appearance, sonically the AL105 doesn't really make the grade at the price	24,37,21	90	4	45	●	78
<b>Allison AL110</b>	220	Compact bookshelf model is a little dry and mid-forward, but bass is extended and solid	24,40,23	90	4	28	●	102
<b>Allison AL120</b>	420	Pretty well balanced if slightly mid-forward, but sound quality is disappointing at the price	28,61,29	●	90	4	30	●
<b>ATC SCM20</b>	1,499	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable	24,44,31	83	8	28	●	86
<b>Audio Innovations Alto</b>	329	Styling makes competition look old-fashioned, but sound is thin and cold	20,38,26	88	6	45	●	1653
<b>Audio Note AN-J/B</b>	799	Light damping and local unevenness adds some colouration, but doesn't spoil the very speaker	38,58,25	93	8	25	●	110
<b>Audio Note AN-E/B</b>	1,299	Coherent dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity - but ugly!	36,84,28	●	94	8	20	●
<b>Audio Physic Tempo</b>	1,999	Tall and unusually styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47	●	88	8	28	●
<b>Audiovector 3X</b>	1,500	Superior time coherence, a wide dynamic range and exception bass/mid balance	19,32,98	●	89	8	20	●
<b>B&amp;W DM302</b>	130	highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22	88	4	45	●	1778
<b>B&amp;W DM601</b>	200	Great main driver for the price, entertaining dynamics	20,5,35,5,23	88	6	30	●	1779
<b>B&amp;W DM602</b>	300	Prefers tall stands and space, but offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension	24,49,31	90	8	30	●	1654
<b>B&amp;W CDM1</b>	600	Gorgeous stand-mount delivers unusually good bass for its size	22,38,28	88	6	30	●	160
<b>B&amp;W Matrix 805 V</b>	995	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low colouration	33,33,21	87	8	30	●	98
<b>B&amp;W Matrix 801S3</b>	3,795	Lacks transparency and the drama of the best dynamics, but acoustically a tour de force	44,100,56	●	87	8	20	●
<b>Bose 305</b>	430	Fine dynamic liveliness and a good room match counter strange imaging and treble	23,45,28	-	8	40	●	78
<b>Bose 401</b>	500	Cheaply built but distinctively styled, the 401 suffers from heavy midband	30,30,76	●	-	4	28	●
<b>Boston Acoustics HD5</b>	139	Pretty miniature lacks boxiness, but is short of drama and dynamic drive	16,25,18	89	8	30	●	110
<b>Canon S-30</b>	180	Moulded design has lively coherence, with 'wide imaging stereo'	23,27,24	90	6	50	●	114
<b>Canon S-75</b>	1000	Unique 'wide image' floorstander has great charm despite some sonic flaws	25,79,25	●	87	4	26	●
<b>Castle Isis</b>	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
<b>Castle Durham 900</b>	300	Lovely veneer and lots of engineering create a very upfront, coherent and exciting sound	22,40,23	90	8	60	●	1162
<b>Castle York</b>	370	Real wood compact has an engaging transparency: fine balance and timing, but could use some authority	26,43,22	89	8	50	●	110
<b>Castle Severn</b>	500	Light and bright, but sound is open and communicative. Looks good too	23,77,20	88	8	47	●	1655
<b>Castle Chester</b>	700	A brilliant throwback, using a horn type approach to provide startling dynamics and coherence	23,91,25	●	90	8	44	●
<b>Castle Harlech</b>	800	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33	●	88	8	28	●
<b>Castle Howard S2</b>	1,100	Able fills the gap between Chester and Winchester; has a rich, laid back balance	26,104,41	●	90	8	40	●
<b>Castle Winchester</b>	1,650	Large for its bass extension but engagingly agile, open and airy	42,108,23	●	90	8	35	●
<b>Celestion 1</b>	99	It sounds a bit scrappy and untidy, but its heart is in the right place	16,27,21	86	8	50	●	114
<b>Celestion 3 MKII</b>	139	Smooth and polished by budget speaker standards, if a bit laid back for some tastes	21,31,18	88	8	45	●	1036
<b>Celestion Impact 23</b>	300	Big, cheap and loud. Sounds coloured and old fashioned, lacks subtlety	28,82,29	89	8	30	●	1656
<b>Celestion 15</b>	389	Big box and but short on subtlety and control though long on both enthusiasm	21,100,25	●	89	8	28	●
<b>Celestion Impact 25</b>	400	Both capable and enjoyable these rock boxes are real contenders in the bang-for-the-buck stakes	27,82,29	●	90	8	43	●
<b>Celestion SL6Si</b>	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)

SIZE WxHxD(CM) SENSITIVITY(dB/W) IMPEDANCE(Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FACTSBACK (R) CLOSE TO WALL ISSUE NUMBER

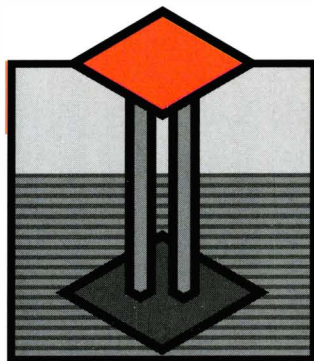
Product	Price(£)	Comments	Size WxHxD(CM)	Sensitivity(dB/W)	Impedance(Ω)	Bass From (Hz)	Close to Wall	Issue Number	
Celestion 300	1,099	Splendid bass extension and fine panel-like openness, but dynamics and timing are suspect	21,97,33	● 84	8	20	●	118	
Cerwin-Vega VS10	350	Not all that refined but ballsy as heck, these rock boxes have no shortage of gung ho	33,70,29	● 95	6	37	●	1758 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	
Electrofluidics Sonolith 2.2xi	5,999	Substantial polymer concrete cabinet with aluminium cones produces world class imaging and very serious bass	38,95,42.5	● 86	4	n/a	●	139	
Epos ES12	500	High quality luxury stand-mount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25		85	8	45	●	160
▲ 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	●	1780 156	
GLL Imagio IC130	550	Lots of speaker for the money, but sound is decidedly dull and shut in	22,112,29	● 88	4	20	●	160	
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 Heystak	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	
Infinity 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 BX100A	370	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	●	1758 155	
Jamo Classic 8	430	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	●	1758 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 JH 00	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	●	1781 156	
▲ JPW Gold Monitor	80	More informative than Mini Monitor - but fiercer too	18,27,17.5	86	8	50	●	1782 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	●	1783 156	
▲ KEF Coda 8	190	Outstandingly well balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29	86	6	28	●	1784 156	
KEF Coda 9	300	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	● 89	6	30	●	1785 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 Keilidh Passive	700	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive	20,83,28	● 87	4	22	●	1552 138	
▲ Linn Kaber Passive	1,800	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	●	1786 156	
▲ Mission 751	300	Gorgeous looking, very petite; boogies with a sting at the top	17,5,32,26	87	8	45	●	1788 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 MA703 PMC	800	Lovely but pricey floorstander has up-front, coherent 'shiny' sound	20,89,27	● 88	8	50	●	160	
▲ 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	●	1789 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	

# HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE	ISSUE NUMBER
Morel 704/2	1,000	There's real potential here, but it's not fully realised	23,80,21	● 88	8 20	●	1350 143	
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	1,878	Lively and punchy - smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	● 88	6 25	●	1352 143	
Neat Mystique	575	Elegant compact floorstander has good allround sound and value	20,85,18	● 84	8 25	●	160	
Neat Petite II	745	Compact design now utilising ribbon tweeter with a fine sense of timing and surprising musicality (tested in Sessions)	20,30,18	● 86	8 33	●	160	
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 Ventral	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	
PMC TB1	500	Superb transparency, subtle laid back sound, well worth seeking out	20,40,31	● 87	8 45	●	160	
PMC LB1	998	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited	18,53,25	● 89	4 33	●	110	
PMC AB1	1,598	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room	26,79,43	● 89	6 22	●	114	
Polk RT16	800	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39	● 91	4 22	●	160	
QLN Qubic 222	400	Ugly but good value floorstander with loads of bass and a smooth balance	21,87,29	● 88	6 25	●	160	
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	●	1790 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	●	1731 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	Pricy 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 ROKone	600	Large stand-mount is musically very communicative if a little coloured	21,45,33	● 89	6 30	●	160	
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 Doublet	450	Great value compact floorstander; lively and very informative, if a little uneven	18,93,19	● 90	4 28	●	160	
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	●	1756 155	
Spendor 2030	600	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid back sound	18,89,27	● 87	8 30	●	160	
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	●	1791 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 635	450	Beefy low-line floorstander packs real bass punch and an up-front balance	17-29,85,27	● 90	6 22	●	160	
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	
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	●	1758 155	
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun	14,22,12	● 88	8 30	●	110	

SUBWOOFERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	FLOORSTANDER	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>Boston Acoustics SW10</b>	450	A little thumpy but transparent with good timing and goes loud (active)	28.5,50,42	●			33		128
<b>Celestion CS135</b>	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass: for high sensitivity speakers	52,19,34	●	86	8	45	●	128
<b>Infinit RS10</b>	500	A very cute cube of an active sub but midbass is boomy with no real extension	34,34,34	●			38		128
<b>Jamo SW600</b>	530	Has some neat styling touches and remote control but deep bass is limited (active)	38,41,53	●			30		1736 154
<b>KEF Model 30B</b>	500	Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension (active)	38.5,37,43	●			45		1736 154
<b>KEF AV1</b>	2500	Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky	56,43,50	●			45		128
<b>M&amp;K VX-7B</b>	450	Baby of a big range this active design delivers deep, plenteous bass albeit lacking in transparency	35,25,37	●			40		1736 154
<b>Mordaunt-Short SW1</b>	150	Fair value, can help sensitive small speakers but no serious extension to match upper bass	58,24,25	●	85		45		128
<b>REL Q-Bass</b>	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**

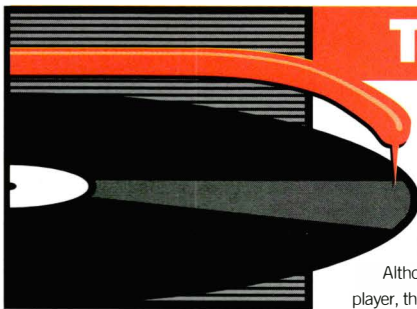
KEY

<b>HEIGHT (CM):</b> Height of stand or equipment shelf.	lead to increase mass, which affects sound.	rack or support.	copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
<b>TOP PLATE SIZE (CM):</b> Dimensions of top plate on speaker stand or equipment support.	<b>WELDED:</b> The better stands and supports are welded rather than bolted together.	<b>SHELF TYPE:</b> Material that shelves are made of on an equipment rack. Wood generally means MDF.	<b>BACK ISSUE:</b> The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
<b>FILLABLE:</b> Some speaker stands can be filled with sand and/or	<b>NUMBER OF SHELVES:</b> The amount of tiers on an equipment	<b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The Factsback reference for ordering a fax	

STANDS & SUPPORTS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TOP PLATE SIZE(CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	FACTSBACK SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>Equipment Supports</b>								
<b>Audiophile Furniture Base</b>	480	Easy to set up, well ordered sound	40			4	Wood 1633	151
<b>Fi-Rax R4</b>	250	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass				5	Glass 1633	151
<b>Mana Acoustics Ref. Table</b>	350	King of its type, angle iron, chipboard and glass combined to make a significant difference to sound quality				1	Glass	147
<b>Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand</b>	600	Infinitely upgradable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle iron design that adds speed and bandwidth to components upon it				5	Glass 1633	151
<b>Quadraspire Q4</b>	200	Easy to live with, and tonally neutral				4	MDF 1633	151
<b>Sound Organisation Z038</b>	130	Too lively and lacking order - but cheap	50	40,84	●	5	Wood 1633	151
<b>SoundStyle Select 6105</b>	280	Respectable sonics, structurally solid and smart				5	Glass 1633	151
<b>Stands Unique Sound Tower</b>	249	Adds colouration, and lacks weight. Optional Isolation Platform	81	72,42		5	Glass 1633	151
<b>Target B5</b>	175	Free of colourations, fine grip and good value				5	Wood 1633	151
<b>Speaker Stands</b>								
<b>Alphason NC I</b>	45	Filled single column design without threaded spike holes that's appropriate for non-critical applications	40-60	16,16	●			1373 146
<b>Alphason NCII</b>	80	Tall, slim and elegant, though sound and value are unexceptional	40-60	17,17	●			159
<b>Alphason Titan</b>	120	Excels in the midband and allows voices to come across in a detailed and expressive fashion	40-60	16,16	●	●		1373 146
<b>Apollo AZ6</b>	80	Fine engineering value, but sound unexceptional and top-plate small	66	15,13	●	●		159
<b>Atacama BD21</b>	55	Good looking and good value but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17	●			159
<b>Atacama SE24</b>	70	Stand out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of the performance	61	19,5,17	●	●		1373 146
<b>AVF Tower 400</b>	35	Ridiculously cheap and much better than no stand at all	54	17,20	●			159
<b>Ixos Deadrock 903</b>	50	Smooth and tonally even but short on definition. Deep bass is soft which doesn't help timing	60					1373 146
<b>Gale Reference 600</b>	60	Smooth sounding with impressive bass well suited to less civilised speakers				●	●	1373 146
<b>Kudos S50</b>	100	Better sound than the budget stands, particularly at the bottom end	60	15,21	●			159
<b>Kudos S100</b>	270	The best all round stand around. . . Probably. . .	63	15,21	●			159
<b>Mana Soundframes</b>	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks these make music effortless and natural, can be stacked for greater effect	5			●		1373 146
<b>Partington New Merlin</b>	60	Although light in weight, the stands performance seemed remarkably muscular but musical rendering lacked a little precision				●		1373 146
<b>Partington Discovery</b>	80	The depth and substance of the presentation truly added to the convincing nature of the system's portrayal				●	●	1373 146
<b>Partington Trophy</b>	100	Four column design with damped top and base plates, sound is tight and cogent with smoothly integrated detail				●	●	1373 146
<b>Revolver RS1</b>	70	A good blend of performance and appearance for the price	53	18,18	●			159
<b>RMS/Stands Unique Vivus</b>	550	Pricey carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A				159
<b>Soundstyle 124</b>	100	Big, shiny and solid, with fine midband projection	65	17,16	●			159
<b>Sound St le 2024</b>	100	Three pillar triangular based design with high gloss finish. Enthusiastic sound suited to better systems	61		●	●		1373 146
<b>Stands Unique HP</b>	220	Real wood disguises high performance tuned technology	59	22,23				159
<b>Sound Organisation Z124</b>	80	Atacama style big pillar. A pleasantly balanced performer, tonally even with good timing and dynamics, but leaks sand!	61		●			1373 146
<b>Sound Organisation Z129</b>	110	Heavy four pillar design, extracts detail well and very little colouration together with an excellent sense of timing	74		●			1373 146
<b>Target R1</b>	280	Truly high mass four pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack and outstanding imagery	53	15,21	●	●		1373 146
<b>Target TR60</b>	67.50	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less than audiophile oriented twin column design	60	15,15	●			1373 146





# Tonearms

**T**urntables 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

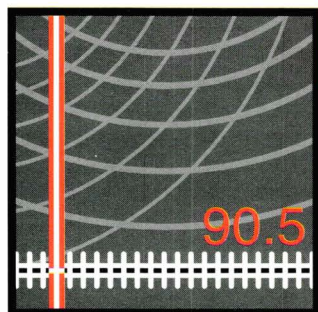
its construction and design have a significant bearing on sound quality. There are three basic types of arms listed in the key and each has its strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, for reasons both practical and economical.

**B** Best buy **R** Recommended

<b>KEY</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE MASS:</b> This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.	<b>PARALLEL TRACKING:</b> An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.	<b>PIVOTED:</b> Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.	<b>UNI-PIVOT:</b> Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.	<b>EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm):</b> Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.	<b>ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT:</b> Important for accurate cartridge set-up.	<b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback.	<b>BACK ISSUE:</b> The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
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## TONEARMS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alphason HR100S	490	S-shaped arm sounds smooth, but nevertheless reproduces transients with fine attack.	Medium	●	●	●	●	229	●	86
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000	Large, solid and well made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness.	High	●	●	●	●	229	●	79
Linn Ekos	1,297	Superb, state of the art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths.	Medium	●	●	●	●	229	●	6
Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural.	Low	●	●	●	●	237	●	60
Rega RB300	139	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high end turntables.	Low	●	●	●	●	237	●	60
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	●	91
SME Series 300-309	657	Beautifully made and finished: fully adjustable and a highly neutral performer.	Low	●	●	●	●	238	●	79
SME Series IV	936	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low colouration.	Low	●	●	●	●	233	●	60
SME Series V	1,391	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price.	Low	●	●	●	●	233	●	60



# Tuners

**T**he 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.

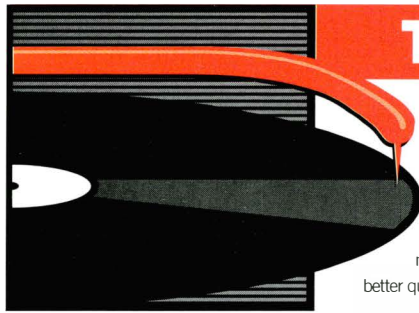
**B** Best buy **R** Recommended

<b>KEY</b>	<b>WAVEBANDS:</b> Only the FM (VHF) bands give stereo hi-fi sound, though AM (MW & LW) are useful for receiving certain transmissions in the UK.	<b>PRESETS:</b> Number of station frequencies that can be stored.	<b>RDS:</b> (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.	<b>REMOTE CONTROL:</b> Couch-potato friendly.	<b>SIGNAL STRENGTH METER:</b> Indicates strength of signal from aerial, useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation	<b>ROTARY TUNING KNOB:</b> The ergonomically attractive approach to dial-surfing.	<b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page	to find the Factsback information page.	<b>BACK ISSUE:</b> The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
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## Tuners

Product	Price(£)	Comments	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	REMOTE CONTROL	FACTSBACK 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	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Arcam Delta 280	399	Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. remote £60 extra	FM	20	●	●	●	●	1254	120
Audiolab 8000T	750	Unusually combination of fine sound quality and RF performance (inc AM), and superb ergonomics	FM,M,L	39	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound.	FM,M,L	20	●	●	●	●	1810	93
Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Sound quality is among the best in its price range, only exposing its rough edges at high playback levels	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	●	1810	157
Harman/Kardon TU9400	299	This striking tuner exceeded our expectations. On stereo FM, it's HK's best yet	FM,M	24	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price. The reviewer's saving up but you should check it out for yourself.	FM	80	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation.	FM		●	●	●	●		72
Micromega Tuner	700	Has digital output but even without the Micromega DAC, this provides exceptional sound quality. Looks good too.	FM	39	●	●	●	●	1810	157
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	Open, generous soundstaging gives the music plenty of foundation, if a touch shut in at the top	FM	29	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and with a subjectively larger than life presentation	FM	20	●	●	●	●	1810	157
Naim NATO1	1,645	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one.	FM		●	●	●	●	1254	142
Onkyo T-430RDS	190	Pleasingly neutral, but rather undynamic and congested	FM/MW	30	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Quad FM66	554	Very pretty and compact but technically unadventurous. Sound is smooth, but only makes sense in Quad system context.	FM	19	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to its best	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	●	1810	157
Technics ST-GT350L	150	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Thorens TRT2000	450	Not exactly neutral sounding, it nonetheless makes listening fun	FM,M	59	●	●	●	●	1810	157

# 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.



<b>KEY</b>	<b>MANUAL:</b> You do it all: put the needle on the record and take it off. <b>AUTO:</b> The record player does it all. <b>SEMI-AUTO:</b> You share the work: you put it on, it takes it off. <b>SPEEDS:</b> In RPM to correspond with your platters. <b>SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS:</b> Sprung suspension to minimise structural interference.	<b>EXTERNAL PSU:</b> Outboard power supply; generally it indicates high quality. <b>SUPPLIED WITH ARM:</b> Many turntables require a separate arm to be fitted; if not, this tells you so.	<b>SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE:</b> Most turntables do not come supplied with a needle. <b>FACTSBACK NUMBER:</b> The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	<b>BACK ISSUE:</b> The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
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## TURNTABLES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS	EXTERNAL PSU	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE	FAXBACK 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 Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		91
Linn LP12 Basic	1,050	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●	●	●	33	●	●	●		103
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	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 to Rega RB300 arm	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		55
Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	1,125	No frills, just a first rate, outstandingly natural sounding deck that will last forever.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		159
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,980	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	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		48
Rega Planar 3	274	The '3 (with RB300 arm) sounds musical in a balanced and coherent manner, needs decent isolation	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		48
Rega Planar 9	1,598	Featuring the RB900 arm and a ceramic plinth this deck puts Rega into contention with the best decks available	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		151
Reson RS1	675	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		159
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 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		159
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 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 2X2	499	Neutral, flexible and dynamic deck that begs to be used with a good arm and cartridge.	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		159
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	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled	●	●	●	33/45	●	●	●		159
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	6,962	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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 Kenwood • Trio-Kenwood UK • tel 01923 816444 • fax 01923 819131 • Dealers 1000  
 Keswick Audio • tel 01977 671823 • Dealers 13  
 Kimber Cable • RATA Ltd • tel 01539 823247 • fax 01535 823317  
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 Koss • HW International • tel 0181 808 2222 • fax 0181 808 5599  
 Krell • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962 • Dealers 17  
 Kronos Distribution • tel 018687 48632 • fax 018687 48281  
 Kudos • tel 01732 461648 • fax 01732 462949  
 Kuzma • Audiofreaks • tel 0181 948 4153 • fax 0181 948 4250 • Dealers 12

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LAT International • Audusa & Co • tel 0181 942 6241 • fax 0181 395 0793  
 LFD • tel 01255 422533 • fax 01255 221370 • Dealers 7  
 Linaeum • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962  
 Linn Products • tel 0141 644 5111 • fax 0141 644 4262  
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 London • Presence Audio • tel 01444 461611 • fax 01444 461510 • Dealers 10 + direct  
 Lowther Voight Ltd • tel 0181 300 9166  
 Lumley Reference • Reference International • tel 01435 868004  
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 Lynwood Electronics • tel 01709 873667 • Dealers 25  
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 Magnepan • Audionord UK • tel 01235 813058  
 Magnum • Hailey Audio Ltd • tel 01992 442425 • Dealers 6  
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 Mana Acoustics • tel 0181 868 2788 • fax 0181 429 0118  
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 Maxell UK Ltd • tel 01923 777171  
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 Meridian Audio Ltd • tel 01480 434334 • fax 01480 432948 • Dealers 98  
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 Michell Engineering • tel 0181 953 0771 • Dealers 8  
 Michi • Gamepath Ltd • tel 01908 317707 • fax 01908 322704 • Dealers 18  
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 Moth Marketing • tel 01234 741152 • Dealers 30  
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 Musical Technology • tel 01494 793137  
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NAD Marketing Ltd • tel 0181 343 3240 • fax 0181 346 4925 • Dealers 380  
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 Onkyo UK • tel 0181 343 2082 • fax 0181 346 4925 • Dealers 120  
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 Sennheiser UK Ltd • tel 01628 850811 • fax 01628 850958 • Dealers 850  
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 Shure • HW International • tel 0181 808 2222 • fax 0181 808 5599  
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 Spica • Presence Audio • tel 01444 461611 • fax 01444 461510  
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 Theta • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962  
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 Thorens • Portfolio Marketing • tel 01494 890277  
 Thule • Virtual Reality Audio Systems • tel 01277 227355 • fax 01277 224103  
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 Transparent Audio • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962  
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 Trichord Research Ltd • tel 01684 573524 • fax 01684 577380  
 Tube Technology • tel 01932 850354

## U

UKD-Opera • UK Distribution • tel 01753 652669  
 Unison Research • UK Distribution • tel 01753 652669

## V

van den Hul UK • tel 0181 810 9388 • fax 0181 810 9365 • Dealers 160  
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 Wheaton • Audiofreaks • tel 0181 948 4153 • fax 0181 948 4250  
 Wilson • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962 • Dealers 7  
 Woodside Electronics • tel 01934 520248

## Y

Yamaha Electronics UK Ltd • tel 01923 233166 • fax 01923 244930  
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## Z

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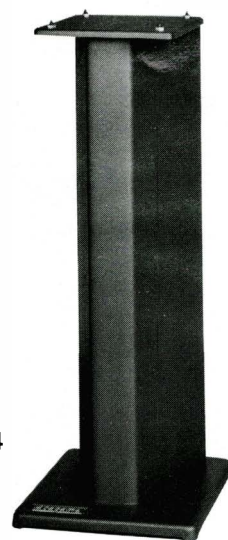
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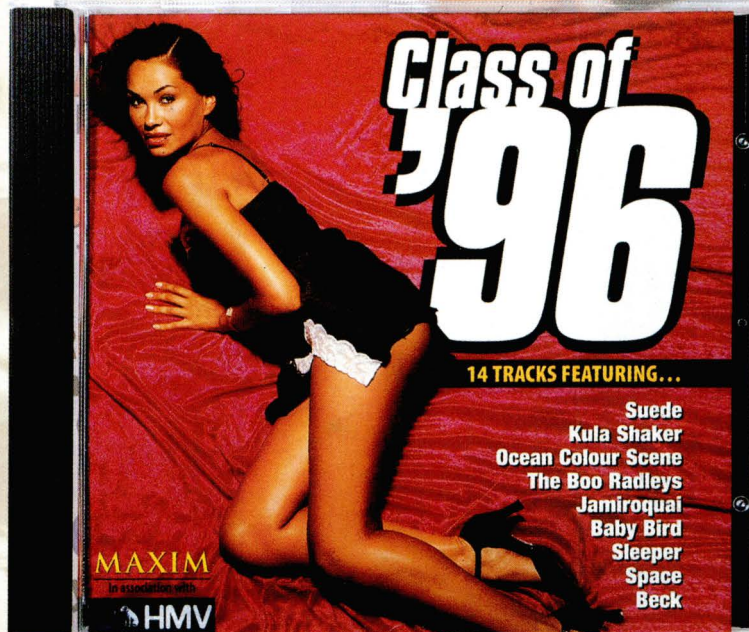
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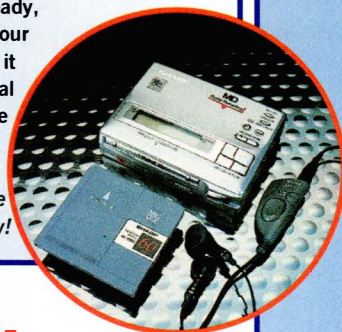
# SHARP

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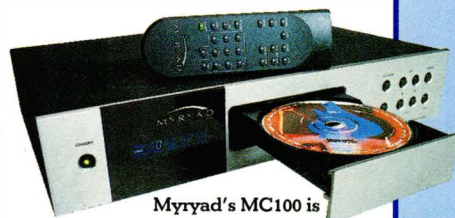
This 32-page magazine will be available FREE with the February edition of *Hi-Fi Choice* — reserve your copy now!



## MEANWHILE, OVER IN HI-FI CHOICE...

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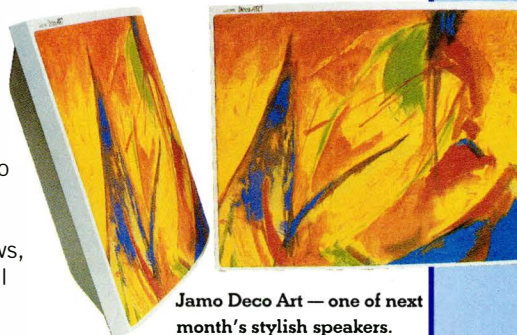
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# Ultra

When it comes to hi-fi, variety is the spice of life.

David Vivian offers some tips for listening satisfaction.

# Vivian Scene

Someone very grumpily and publicly ended it all the other day, by writing to a hi-fi magazine and bleeding messily over his letter. He pleaded about the futility of it all, the pointless years of slavery to the pursuit of perfect sound. Oh, the tweaking, he groaned—the endless upgrades; the fascism of fashion; the crushing imprisonment of audiophilia.

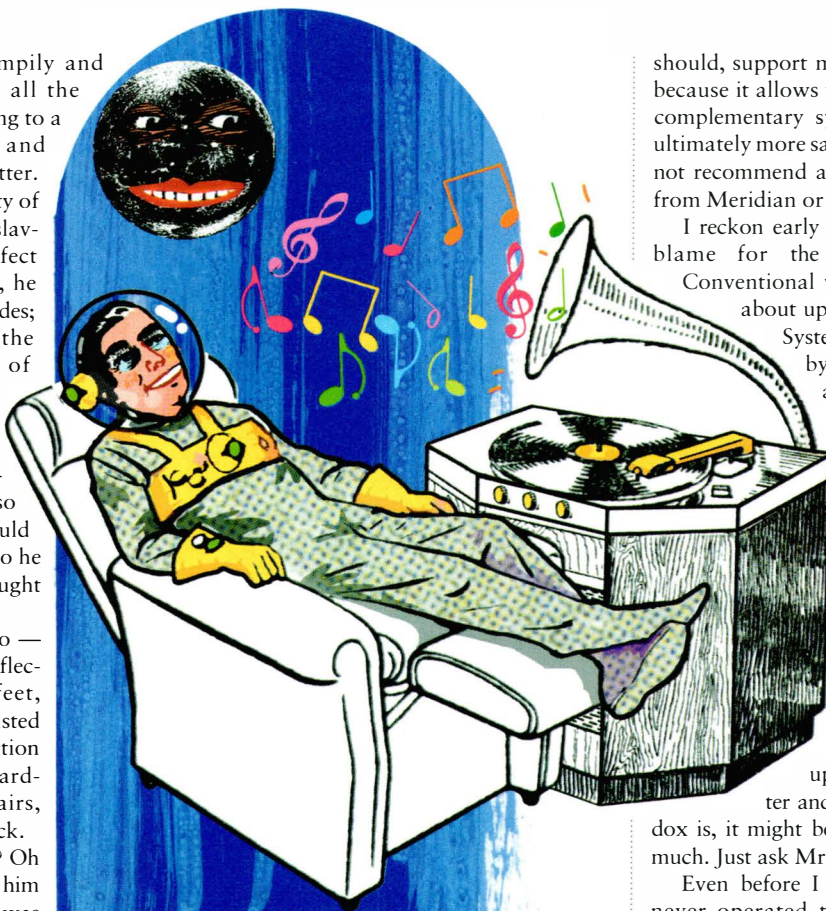
What had he gained? A tense, nervous headache and a very expensive, cutting-edge hi-fi with a sound so detailed and analytical he could hardly bear to listen to it. So he sold it all in a huff. And thought ‘good riddance’, no doubt.

End of sad story. But no—after a period of solemn reflection, he sprang to his feet, bounded up to his attic, dusted off a long-forgotten collection of antique radiophonic hardware, humped it downstairs, plugged it in and settled back.

Was it warm and lovely? Oh yes, the music lapped over him like a gentle, milky surf. It was easy to listen to, effortlessly beguiling, invitingly musical. He was enraptured again. Something of a result, then, for Mr Disillusioned of Tunbridge Wells. True enlightenment at last and a wad of money to spend on music to boot. He was probably about to live happily ever after.

But I doubt it. My guess is that something else happened—that soon after he wrote the letter, the niggles began to wriggle and he started to fidget in his seat. What had seemed like balm for his ears turned out to be heavy-duty mufflers. Where were the leading edges, the transients and the dynamics? Where was the stereo? Maybe this wasn't Shangri-La at all. Maybe it was Sesame Street.

So it wouldn't surprise me if, before long, he was missing his shiny, state-of-the-art stereo and devising plans to buy it back. I could be wrong, but I think it's being plain, dumb romantic to suppose that super-annuated audio is the answer to all our frustrations, uncertainties and insecurities. I know it's fashionable to say that despite the enor-



Even Buck Rogers got pangs of hi-fi nostalgia!

mous technological strides, old hi-fi is intrinsically more musical, but does anyone honestly believe it? No.

An occasional overwhelming desire for a change, though, is understandable and, I believe, a Good Thing. The trick is to realise this early on and use it to your advantage. It can provide a surprisingly effective fix when your senses have become jaded by ‘the same old sound’, even if that sound is, by all reasonable criteria, very good. Familiarity does indeed breed contempt. In the end, it comes down to following your instincts (rather than a blueprint from a magazine or a hi-fi dealer) and accepting a few painful home truths.

One, the perfect hi-fi system (singular) is a myth. The more money you spend trying to achieve hi-fi Nirvana, the more irritating its imperfections will seem. Two, getting music into the main areas of your house is a much more important and enjoyable exercise. Important because music can, and

should, support many activities. Enjoyable because it allows you to build two or three complementary systems which, I feel, are ultimately more satisfying than one. I would not recommend a multi-room system (say, from Meridian or Linn) for this reason.

I reckon early conditioning is largely to blame for the ills outlined above.

Conventional wisdom gets us hung up about upgrading. The focus is The System. The System is sustained by The Budget. The Budget is allocated to replacing single components according to strict doctrines that, in theory, improve the overall performance of the system in neat, logical and cost-effective steps. You sell one component to part-finance the next. And so it goes on, possibly until you're old and grey. And, yes, it works. Obey the rules and you're bound to end

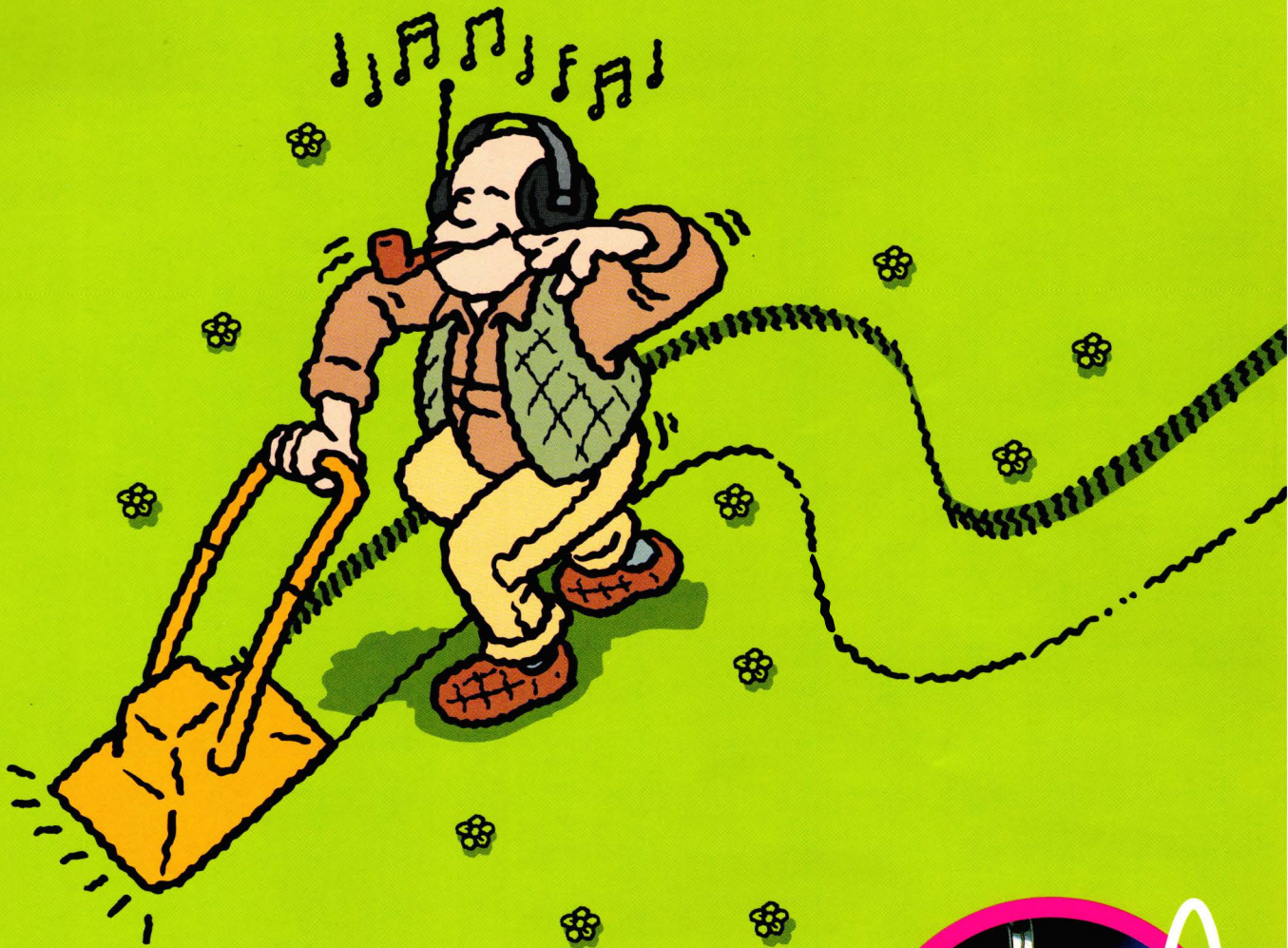
up with a progressively better and better system. The paradox is, it might be one you don't like very much. Just ask Mr Disillusioned of T. Wells.

Even before I started reviewing hi-fi I never operated this way. I bought hi-fi because I liked it and recognised it, in the run of consumer products, as being good value. I liked the idea of having enough kit to make several systems. I liked to mix ‘n’ match, experiment in system synergy. I suppose over the years there was a drift towards a better standard of hardware, but this was seldom the guiding principle. I was always able to satisfy my thirst for enjoyably reproduced music with what I had. And I hardly ever sold one piece of equipment to finance the next. Maybe I was just lazy and undisciplined. Maybe that's why I write about hi-fi now.

But I firmly believe there's something in it. I currently run three systems. One in the lounge, another in the dining room and a third in my study. The first has plenty of grunt, drive and detail, the second is warm and laid back, the third cosy and intimate. Which is best? Number one system without a doubt, but it doesn't really matter. I enjoy them all and use them all equally. Mine truly is a musical house. And believe me, it's a lot more fun than worshipping The System. ▲

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