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Media with passion



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

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Jason Kennedy discovers that high fidelity sells and wide bandwidth digital audio will change our lives.



If the cover has done its job you'll have noticed that we are taking DVD to musical task once again this month. The quest is to find one of these so-called digital versatile disc players that can play music with the same degree of fidelity as a budget CD player. See Alvin's conclusions on p39 for the final analysis on how the least expensive CD players fared against the least expensive major brand DVD players at two or three times the price. I'm not giving anything away, but matters have moved on since our last format clash.

Richard Black has been listening to a small but diverse stack of valve amps. He's a hard man to please, and when it comes to a technology that's close to his heart the accolades are even harder to come by. The Canary CA 608, for instance, is an amp that I've thoroughly enjoyed on more than one occasion and Richard managed to find its good side, but to say he was impressed by its apparently good value for money would be stretching things. If you want the hard line, you've come to the right place.

Another Richard, Stevenson, does his first HFC review this month: a huge speaker stand round-up. Richard used to work for trade title ERT and is clearly a hi-fi maniac – he's got considerably more kit at home than any of us on the staff, and he paid for it all! I hope you enjoy his work and wit.

HI-FI IN THE REAL WORLD

The day after the last issue went to press I spent far too long scouting for good CD and LP prices on the Web only to find that when postage was taken into account a local independent shop looked really competitive (Selectadisc – a fine music store, but only in Soho and Nottingham to my knowledge).

Having selected titles on the basis of reviews, line-ups and some radio play (everything but sound quality, in fact) I was surprised to find that each one featured an element of audiophile practice in its creation. Pere Ubu's *Apocalypse Now* is a live recording from an early '90s concert that's captured on a mere two digital tracks; Yo La Tengo's *And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out* is a regular studio recording, but the double LP version is pressed on 150g vinyl, while Pullman's acoustic guitar homage to Kottke and Fahey, *Turnstyles & Junkpiles*, is another two-track recording, but this time direct to tape (also on vinyl). Despite the fact that the NME described the latter as "lo-fi", all three owe something to high-fidelity principles. What this translates to as I see it, is that despite the onslaught of compressed media, there is still a commercial place for decent software, even vinyl, so we need not fear a lo-fi future.

In fact, if the signs from the competing high-res digital formats are anything to go

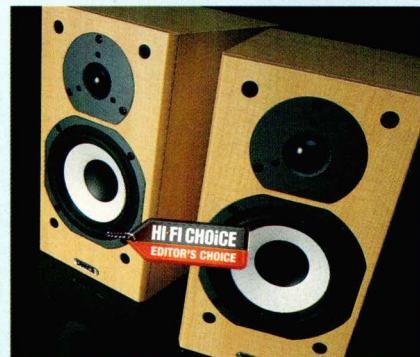
by, the end of the year could be a hi-fi homecoming. Sony announced its least expensive SACD player yet at £550 and Toshiba had two DVD-A machines at a recent trade show, one at the same price as the Sony and the other at £1,300. The latter is expected to arrive in September, the former sometime sooner – see *News & Views* for more.

Meanwhile, in the past couple of weeks I've been trying out a DVD-A player at home. The Technics DVD-A10 is the first sample of the breed that I've been able to listen to at leisure, and it was a thrilling experience despite the shortage of software. But it reminded me how good DAD software can be; this 24-bit/96kHz variant on the DVD-V theme was launched in January '98 but has received little coverage since, despite a growing catalogue of titles (see <http://www.classicrecs.com> for more).

The Technics has the sort of refined, luxurious balance that will be familiar to users of expensive Japanese gear, but it lacks a degree of attack by domestic standards. Nonetheless, with the better material it transcended the limits one expects of hi-fi and showed that we have a format to get excited about. It looks like DVD-A will be offering some serious competition for SACD come the Autumn.

JKennedy

EDITOR'S CHOICE



Speakers have taken the honours this month – and models from either end of the price scale at that. In the budget corner, Tannoy's new MX1 (p14) looks to be a strong successor to its popular M1 stand mount, and has fairer looks to boot. TAG McLaren's F1 beast is a somewhat more ambitious design whose bite is less scary than its bark, Paul Messenger explains all on p54.





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This month's first look at some of the hottest new kit on the market.



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CHORD SPM-4000

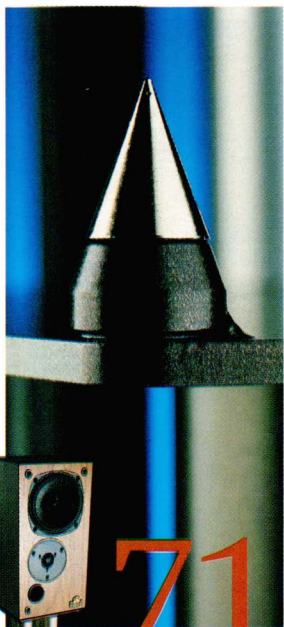
Paul Miller gets to grips with a hefty power amp costing £8,500.



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Richard Black warms up with five lovingly crafted valve amplifiers.



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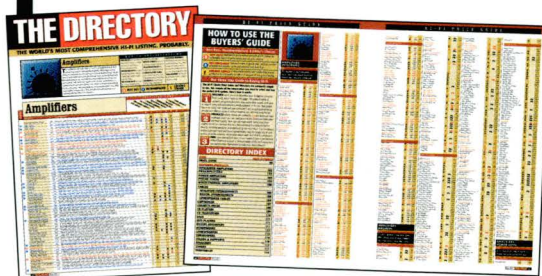
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NEWS & VIEWS

Tim Bown, Lee Dunkley & Jason Kennedy milk the news cow just to bring you the cream.

NEWS IN BRIEF



SNELL has introduced a floorstanding loudspeaker. The XA 60 (above) follows in the wake of the XA 70 and XA 90 models, and is designed to appeal to both hi-fi and home cinema enthusiasts. Its maker claims a tuneable bass response and tweeter level adjustment enabling 'fine tuning' to your particular room acoustic. The XA 60 costs £2,500.

☎ (01233) 813111

FUTURE PUBLISHING LTD, home to *Hi-Fi Choice*, has announced the launch of MP3 magazine. The new title will explain all you need to know about the format, from software and hardware reviews to the music industry revolution. The first issue will be on sale at your local newsagents from 19 April priced at £4.99.

☎ (01225) 442244

AIWA has revealed plans to introduce the company's first MP3 player. The MM-VX100 is the latest model to join the MP3 race but will only be sold through the manufacturer's own Web shop at www.aiwa.co.uk. It is set to cost £129.99 including delivery.

☎ (0870) 168 9000

ZENTEK MUSIC LTD has unveiled plans to distribute USA-based loudspeaker manufacturer Wisdom Audio's products throughout the UK. The American firm's line-up features the Adrenaline 50 and 75 models, two high-end speakers costing £13,500 and £22,500 respectively.

☎ (01892) 539595

GOLDRING has

announced a new outdoor loudspeaker model. The Sonance Mariner 100 is the smallest model in the three-strong line-up and claims to offer real hi-fi sound performance and is resistant to whatever weather Mother Nature chucks at it. It's available in the shops now priced at £265 per pair.

☎ (01284) 701101



DOLBY is introducing its surround sound headphone technology to Qantas Airlines. Passengers travelling on Boeing 747-400 aircraft will be able to experience in-flight movies in full surround sound using standard stereo

Sony's mid-priced SACD



Sony has unveiled plans to launch a mid-priced SACD player. The SCD-XB940 will be the third model in the company's SACD line-up and lowers the format's entry price to an anticipated £550 at its planned June debut. The new model will feature as part of Sony's Quality Standard (QS) range, a front-loader with uncompromised technical performance. It is intended bring the benefits of the format to a wider audience. Accompanying the player at its launch will be two matching integrated amplifier models: TA-FB940R and TA-FB740R, offering a claimed broadband frequency response from 5Hz to 300kHz for the high definition format.

In further announcements, Sony has unveiled plans to launch several other products this year. First up is the LISSA range of hi-fi components utilising i-LINK technology. The range of separates is set to include a receiver, CD and MiniDisc player all connected via a bi-directional



digital cable carrying both audio and system control data between components.

The successful Pascal range of satellite speaker systems is to have a new flagship model. The 8ED is claimed to combine the most successful features of the existing range with an improved specification to match the new high-density audio formats, combining performance with style.

All products are planned for launch this summer; keep an eye on *Hi-Fi Choice* for further details.

Sony ☎ (0990) 111999

Right on Q



KEF has given its successful Q Series of speakers a complete overhaul. The new Q.2 Series is now in full production and features a number of improvements, both sonic and aesthetic.

Each speaker in the range uses KEF's patented Uni-Q drive unit – the tweeter is sited in the centre of the mid/bass cone, the aim being to improve imaging and create a uniform soundstage. The new speakers also feature an improved tweeter with a larger magnet and stiffer polypropylene mid/bass cones.

The line-up starts with the standmounting Q15.2 at £200. The Q35.2 floorstander costs £350, with the 2.5-way Q55.2 weighing in at £500. Top-of-the-range is the three-way Q65.2 at £700, while those building a multi-channel system can make use of the Q85s surround speaker (£180) and Q95c centre (£200).

This is the latest of several recent additions to KEF's line-up. The Concerto range has been joined by the Concerto Two, a three-way floorstander at £800, while the Cresta range now has its own floorstander – the £250 Cresta 3 – and a £100 centre speaker.

KEF ☎ (01622) 672261



Multi-Vitamins



Ruark claims its new Vita 100 loudspeaker system doesn't sacrifice sound for style, despite its elegant looks and compact dimensions. It's a subwoofer and satellite speaker combination designed for both stereo and multi-channel use.

The system centres around the Vita 100 Monitor, a two-way, 20cm tall speaker incorporating a 9cm Aerogel-coned mid/bass driver and a 25mm titanium dome tweeter. The Vita 100 Centre carries out centre channel duties in a multi-channel set-up, featuring two 9cm drive units placed either side of the tweeter, while the Vita 100 Sub-woofer is an active design with a built-in 100-Watt amp and a 25cm paper-coned drive unit.

All speakers are available in a slate grey and silver finish, or you can opt for the Monitor and Centre in 'steamed beech'. Ruark has decided on professional XLR connections rather than conventional binding posts – the connectors are supplied, plus a 5m interconnect for the sub.


The two-channel system costs £900 and includes two Monitors and a Subwoofer, while the 5.1 multi-channel set-up adds two more Monitors and the Centre for £1,500. Both packages include wall-brackets and stands are available as an option.

Ruark ☎ (01703) 601414



Ruark Vita 100.

DVD-Audio for a song!

 Toshiba plans to enter the DVD-Audio fray this September with two DVD-Audio/Video combination players – and one of them is expected to sell for just £550!

The SD500E is a twin tray model which appears to be based on an existing DVD-V chassis, adding DVD-A decoding to Dolby Digital and dts. It has what Toshiba calls a Class A specification, which differentiates it from the Class AA SD900E, although exactly how is not clear. However, it will be able to play both two-channel and multi-channel DVD-A discs and output audio data at the maximum 192kHz sampling rate.

The second combination player is the SD900E, considerably more pricey at £1,300 and billed as Toshiba's ultimate DVD-Audio/Video player. It's housed in an all new box, has THX certification and apparently includes a 'Mega Resolution Parallel DAC' to achieve a dynamic range above 120dB and total harmonic distortion of less than 0.0007%. How much better its performance will be compared with its range mate remains to be seen.

Toshiba has also unveiled two DVD-V players. The SD100E comes in at £300, claiming exceptional picture quality thanks to a new filtering process, and improved audio ability with a dynamic range greater than 105dB




Toshiba SD900E.

and total harmonic distortion of less than 0.002%. The result, says Toshiba, is superior performance with CDs as well as Dolby Digital/dts DVD-V discs. Then there's the SD200E at £400, which adds built-in Dolby Digital decoding and is said to deliver an even greater dynamic range, with an audio performance equivalent to Toshiba's current flagship model, the £800 SD9000.

In terms of disc compatibility, the SD100E will play CD and DVD-Video discs, while the SD200E adds CD-R discs to that list. The SD500E and SD900E play all three aforementioned formats, plus the forthcoming DVD-A discs. The SD100E and SD200E should be in the shops by the time you read this, with the SD500E and SD900E following this autumn. Got it? Good.

Toshiba ☎ (01276) 62222

Headbangable Olufsens

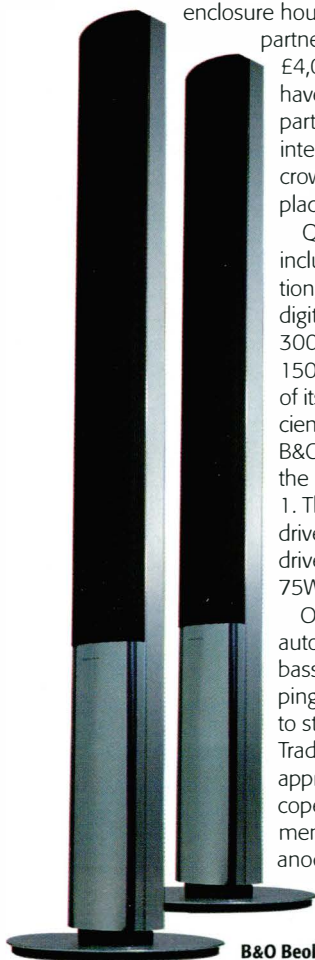
 Bang & Olufsen is celebrating its 75th year with the launch of its most ambitious speaker to date. The Beolab 1 continues the brand's line

of tall, slimline enclosures with a 1.84m aluminium enclosure housing four drive units and partnering amplification. Priced at £4,000 a pair, the Beolab 1s have their sights set beyond partnering B&O systems and intend to compete in the crowded loudspeaker marketplace on sound as well as looks.

Qualifications for this role include the use of ICE amplification, B&O's proprietary class D digital amplifier, which provides 300 Watts to drive the twin 150mm bass drivers. Because of its compactness and efficiency, ICE amplification allows B&O to fit a 300W amplifier into the base section of the Beolab 1. The 75mm dome midrange driver and 25mm tweeter are driven by more conventional 75W class A/B amps.


Other innovations include automatic level reduction if the bass units are driven into clipping and temperature sensors to stop the drivers overheating. Traditional B&O enthusiasts will appreciate the switchable EQ, to cope with different room placements, and the range of five anodised finishes.

Bang & Olufsen
☎ (0118) 969 2288



B&O Beolab 1.

JVC launches digital VHS

 JVC claims the future of video recording is in its hands and insists it is tape-based. The HM-DR10000 D-VHS VCR is launched this month, incorporating an MPEG-2 encoder/decoder to allow digital off-air recordings.

The news may come as a surprise following Pioneer's announcement that recordable DVD will hit the UK by the end of the year, leading many to assume that the days of tape are numbered. But JVC is confident the new digital tape-based format will succeed, claiming better performance than DVD because of a faster data transfer rate. D-VHS tapes are also claimed to have ten times the capacity of DVDs, and the format has compatibility on its side – the HM-DR10000 can record and playback existing VHS and S-VHS tapes, as well as D-VHS. But will consumers used to the exceptional convenience offered by disc-based formats be willing to invest in yet more tape? Only time will tell.

Of course, this is bigger news for home cinema magazines than it is for a hi-fi title like *HFC*. But D-VHS could actually prove useful as a hi-fi recording device as an adjunct to its audio/visual duties – offering eight hours of digital recording at normal speed and 21 hours in long-play mode, it could be the perfect way to make those lengthy Wagner compilations. If you're interested, it'll set you back £1,300.

JVC ☎ (020) 8208 7654



JVC HM-DR 10000.

NEWS IN BRIEF

headphones thanks to the Dolby technology.

☎ (01793) 842100



TEAC has a new component joining its low-cost Reference 100 range. The latest addition to the line-up is the MD-H100 MiniDisc recorder (above) designed to fit with existing Reference 100 components. The MDH100 costs £249.95.

☎ (01923) 819630

SONY MUSIC VIDEO is stepping up its DVD music releases with the launch of several new titles appearing in stores during the spring. Artists include: Pink Floyd, Mariah Carey, Will Smith, Manic Street Preachers and Jeff Buckley, among others.

TOM EVANS AUDIO DESIGN has brought out two Groovelettes or Micro Groove phono stages. Priced at £399 and £699, these units are like a cross between Tom's Iso design and the £1,500 Groove. The base model is an updated version of the HR Iso; the dearer unit adds the Lithos power supply regulation to the package and is effectively half of the full Groove.

☎ (01443) 833570

ELAC has unveiled the 'top-of-the-range' CL 330 i Jet speaker (right). Part of the company's aluminium monitor series, the model has a 6.5mm thick aluminium cabinet with an 18cm mid/bass driver and 'Jet' ribbon tweeter. At £2,500, including stands, it's available in black or silver.

☎ (01494) 551571



TDK has a new range of blank CD-R discs. The 650MB discs incorporate Cardflex for indexing and archiving your favourite Net downloads, project files and music files. The five multi-design inlay cards fit neatly into standard jewel cases for your personalised library. Cost is £1.49 per disc.

☎ (01737) 773773

LIVING CONTROL has added a timer to its MRS multi-room hi-fi system. The Event can switch on a selected CD or radio station at a designated time, and can be set to control lights and the like. Prices for the MRS start at £4,500, with The Event an extra £800.

☎ (01424) 720616

ERRATA

On further investigation, our assertion in the March issue that the Naim NAP180 power amplifier suffers from crossover distortion would appear to be incorrect. Our apologies to Naim Audio for the mistake.

Also, in the February issue our review of Elac's CL102 MkII loudspeaker stated the model came with a one year guarantee. In fact it carries a ten year guarantee.

ultimate statement

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THE MAIDSTONE



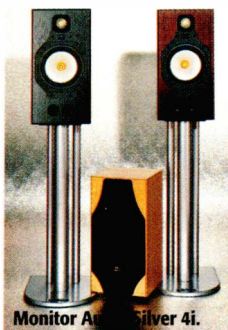
Pieces of Silver



Monitor Audio has added a 'bookshelf' speaker to its Silver range. The Silver 4i is claimed to offer all the attributes

of a high-end standmounter but at a fraction of the cost, incorporating a 16.5cm metal-coned C-CAM main driver for "an exciting dynamic punch". It's magnetically shielded to allow placement close to a TV and is available in black oak, cherry, rosewood and natural oak. Price is £349 per pair.

Monitor Audio ☎
(01223) 242898



Monitor Audio Silver 4i.

Multi-channel monster



Yamaha has unleashed its new flagship multi-channel amp: the DSP-AX1. Successor to the highly-acclaimed DSP-A1, this latest behemoth costs £2,000 in black or £2,100 in gold.

At the heart of its design is Yamaha's Digital ToP-ART, which stands for Total Purity Audio Reproduction Technology. The aim is to maximise digital quality while minimising analogue circuitry.

Yamaha claims each internal component has been chosen to maximise performance. The digital circuitry includes Burr-Brown 24-bit DACs for all ten channels, while the power amp section incorporates "superior" power transistors. Meanwhile, the Digital Signal Processing circuitry uses the first 44-bit DSP LSIs (chips) available in a consumer product, supplying 54 sound field programmes with 14 fine-tuning parameters each.

If this amp is a good as Yamaha suggests, it could prove an ideal partner for high quality DVD-Audio/Video players.

Expect a review...

Yamaha ☎
(01923) 233166



Yamaha DSP-AX1.

Kenwood's budget Brit



Kenwood has unveiled the KAF3030R, a budget stereo amp priced at £250. Designed with British ears in mind, it features a 'high resolution' input designed for new disc formats, and is claimed to deliver a frequency range of nearly 100kHz.

Available in black or silver, the amp's facilities include by-passable tone controls and a phono input. Two sets of cable terminals are supplied to facilitate bi-wiring or allow two pairs of speakers to be driven.

This product represents something of a return to old hunting grounds for Kenwood, once well known for producing good quality budget amps. Hi-fi separates have been on the back burner for some time – lets hope this is the start of a renaissance! In the meantime, *HFC* will review the KAF-3030R as soon as it hits the office.

Kenwood ☎ (01923) 816444



Kenwood KAF3030R.



PAUL MESSENGER

Our style guru discovers hi-fi imitating art.

It was about ten years ago that the first 'Style' audio systems started appearing, 'Style' being as good a word as any for describing products which differ dramatically in appearance from one another, yet are also a long way from the micro/mini/midi stereotype – or traditional hi-fi separates. B&O and Bose set that early agenda, with cute, compact 'designer' packages that cost much more than a typical budget hi-fi system. They didn't sound any better, but were good enough to satisfy the majority, and cute enough to persuade the better off to pay the price premium.

By the end of 1995, when I did a group test for *HFC*, a number of other brands including Sony, Pioneer and Marantz had joined the hunt for Style customers. The Arch, from Marantz, was the most ambitious, and also arguably the first Style system from a specialist hi-fi brand. Marantz has been persistent with its 'hi-fi quality' Style systems, introducing other models like Slim and Layla along the way. Sales have been healthy enough in some European countries, but rather disappointing in the Britain, a situation which probably has rather more to do with distribution channels involved than the products themselves.

Our specialist hi-fi shops and customers seem to be too conservative to take these systems seriously, and the customer looking for added style and convenience is more likely to find the upmarket Denon and Teac mini systems on the shelves among the separates.

Outside the odd department store, we simply don't have lifestyle-oriented stores which handle electronics products.

Compare the approach of our major electronics chains with the much more laid-back 'coffee bar' experience of visiting a branch of major Franco-Spanish chain Fnac, which cleverly soft-sells hardware and software together. Which explains why B&O has been setting up its 'solus' (one make) shops – carefully designed and fitted outlets that look much more like the sort of places from which upmarket fitted kitchens are sold than the typical hi-fi shop.

Although the British retail environment might still pose some problems, a number of brands have recently introduced packages which could give the concept of 'Style hi-fi' a real boost (see next month's group test). Linn caught everyone by surprise with the Classik back in 1998. Style isn't perhaps the first word that comes to mind when seeing its understated midi-width box, but it's available in five colours, and the combination of good quality CD player, AM/FM tuner and 75Wpc amplifier, complete with clock/timer at about £1,000, has gone down very well.

Myryad's Cameo system, first seen at the Bristol show, is also quite conservative, essentially packaging a separates system in pretty super-slim-'n'-silver casework. Bus links make Cameo "as easy and convenient to operate as a Japanese mini system", according to managing director Chris Short. Unlike the Marantz Slim system, Cameo components are also available separately. Much more ambitious (and expensive at £2,990), the single-box Aphrodite from TAG McLaren is just coming onto the market. Combining a top-loading CD player with RDS FM tuner and stereo amp, the curvaceous styling and a silver-and-purple finish has attracted lots of trade interest and won plenty of compliments.

Going further down the Style road than anyone to date, and certainly laying down a challenge to B&O and Bose, Nakamichi is re-launching itself with an ambitious collection of four bijou SoundSpace systems priced from £500 to about £5,000. And there are more on the way! Powered satellite/subwoofer speaker systems help keep the sources very compact, while most use three or five-disc changer mechanisms for added convenience. Three are straight stereo CD-based, while the fourth has full AV surround sound capabilities with DVD changer alongside five channels of sound at the core, and with optional slim LCD displays for showing the pictures. It's too early yet to say whether these systems will retain the sort of hi-fi credibility the Nakamichi name invokes. Sub/sat speaker systems might be the lifeblood of bijou Style products, but they've yet to win the affection of British audiophiles.

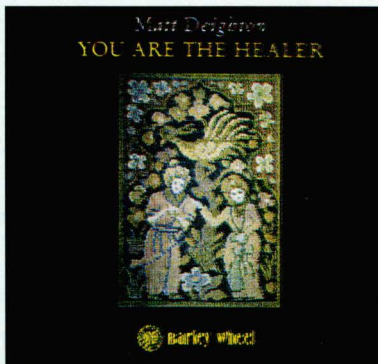
Those who value design and operating convenience as well as sound quality now have an increasing choice. But don't overlook the fact that specialist hi-fi companies have been creating style-oriented products for years. Today you can even have a silver mini system with valves inside, courtesy Audio Note. Long live pluralism!



TAG McLaren Aphrodite.

PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD

Phil Strongman digs out rare and classic tracks appearing on CD or virgin vinyl for the first time. Turn on, tune in, bliss out....



MATT DEIGHTON *You Are The Dealer*

Although obvious influences like Nick Drake, John Martyn and Curtis Mayfield spring to mind, ex-Mother Earth lad Matt Deighton also has something unique about him and this, his follow-up to the highly-acclaimed *Villager* LP, is a winning selection. Hammond king Brian Auger is among the backing musos, but it's the haunting vocals and well-recorded acoustic pieces that linger longest in the brain with their fingers-on-strings authenticity. It's taken Deighton some four years to get this mastered, but it's been worth the wait. A modern classic that just has to be the *HFC* Album of The Month. Barley Wheel CD/Vinyl LP

Music ★★★★★ Sonic ★★★★★

THE BYRDS (untitled)/(unissued)

In 1970 the partly live (untitled) deservedly restored the jingly-jangly Byrds to favour with its dynamic *Lover of The Bayou*, a 16-minute *Eight Miles High* and the tastefully tuneful *Chestnut Mare*. The (unissued) disc is 50 minutes of previously unheard pieces, including takes of *Ballad of Easy Rider* and *This Wheel's On Fire* as well as a haunting *Yesterday's Train*. Produced for CD by Bob Irwin.

Columbia double CD

Music ★★★★★ Sonic ★★★★★

LOU REED Lou Reed

Mr Reed's eponymous debut missed out in early '72, partly because it got squeezed between the Warhol years and the platinum, Bowie-produced *Transformer* album. For a set that featured Steve Howe, Rick Wakeman and Clem Cattini, it's often surprisingly raw-edged, despite piano-laced pieces like *Berlin* (which later blossomed into an entire album). Hardcore Reed fans will, however, warm to its lazy chill.

Camden CD

Music ★★★★★ Sonic ★★★★★

VIRAGI Moving The Air

Leftfield dance with more than a touch of bleepy ambient from the Mediterranean guitar virtuoso. Quality chill-out noises with an edge, bought to you in recycled sleeves by just-music, an all instrumental label from the folk who bought you Morcheeba and The Egg.

justmusic.co.uk CD

Music ★★★★★ Sonic ★★★★★

VARIOUS Cool Swing

Twentyone gems from the golden age of swing – the jewel in the crown being the original, extended version of Bunny Berigan's *I Can't Get Started*, as used on the *Chinatown* soundtrack. Part of a series that includes *Young Sinatra Swings*.

ABM CD

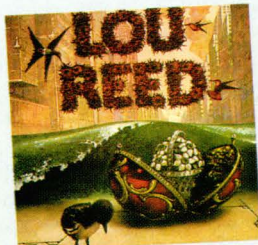
Music ★★★★★ Sonic ★★★★★

SPLODGENESSABOUNDS I Don't Know

Max Splodge and his merry band of new wave jokers racked up half a dozen Eighties hits, each more ridiculous than the last. Although his voice now makes the late, great Ian Dury sound like a choirboy, Max is still the Frank Zappa of British punk, making this a highly entertaining little disc.

Ahoy CD

Music ★★★★★ Sonic ★★★★★



Bass explosion!



Bass specialist REL has revamped much of its line-up in a bid to maintain its place at the forefront of active sub-woofer design.

First up is the REL Q201E, replacement for the popular Q200E. Its aim is to provide high quality bass from an attractive and compact enclosure, and the new version features a specially designed grille and larger feet to raise the driver further from the floor. It costs £700, or £800 in one of four optional veneers.

It's joined by the £1,500 Stadium III, latest version of the long-running and highly regarded Stadium design. Here the changes are more substantial, featuring a redesigned cabinet made from 30mm MDF, a new 30cm Volt driver and a different amplifier – a 200 Watt, fully-discrete MOSFET design. It comes with a full complement of connection options and REL's Active Bass Control cross-over circuitry, calibrated in 24 musically correct semi-tone increments for the most accurate system integration.

REL's designs are well known for providing a highly musical solution for those who crave deep bass. Watch out for a review of the equally-new £800 Storm III in our next issue.

REL ☎ (01656) 768777



Good Morgan



Morgan Audio Systems, previously better known by its Deva Audio brand name, has released details of its cute mini-width range.

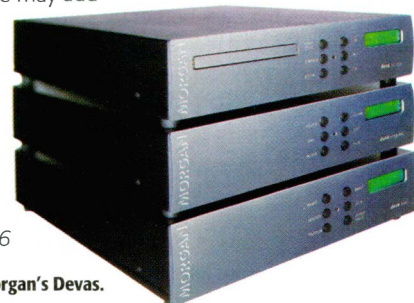


At the front-end is the Deva CD Player, a £700 machine sporting a 16-bit DAC, discrete analogue filter stages and individual power supplies for its digital and analogue circuits. It's joined by the Deva Tuner, a three-band analogue model with 33 station presets, at £600.



On the amp side of things there's the £650 Deva Integrated Amplifier, a line-level design complete with discrete bi-polar output devices, a custom-built toroidal transformer and a "unique" regulated single rail power supply. To this one may add the £999 Deva Power Amplifier, so bi-amping the system.

All models are available now. Morgan Audio Systems ☎ (0151) 255 0946



Morgan's Devas.

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The Dawn Of DVD-Audio

Guess what? We've got our hands on the first player from chief DVD-A protagonist Technics. *Tim Bownern* sets the scene, while *Jason Kennedy* gives his early thoughts on the DVD-A10's performance.

Since DVD-A was announced, everyone working in hi-fi has been straining to get hands-on experience with the first wave of players. The prospect of a DVD-based format created purely for music could prove the biggest news for music fans since the launch of CD. In fact, along with SACD, this is the first format in aeons to make plausible claims about taking our listening pleasure to uncharted realms, so when our badgering finally resulted in a player winging its way to *Choice Towers*, our excitement knew no bounds. The man from Technics... he say yes!

The DVD-A10 is one of two machines due this year from Matsushita Corporation of Japan. The company's UK arm is talking optimistically of a July launch, but the autumn seems more realistic. A price of £899 is expected for the DVD-A10, and it will be joined by the DVD-A7, a less costly, lower specified player from Technics' sister brand, Panasonic.

The other company heavily involved in DVD-A's initial assault is Pioneer – two players are expected in Europe at about the same time, although at a slightly higher price. At the last time of asking, the DV-939A had a projected price of £1,400, with the DV-AX10 pitched at about £3,500. Denon is also expected to launch this year.

This Technics player is a pre-production model, so a full test would not be appropriate. Another problem is the paucity of DVD-A software. However, the Ed's got his hands on some DVD-A demo discs, and gives his first impressions of its performance with CD, DVD-V and DVD-A opposite. A full review will follow closer to the player's launch date.

DVD-Audio: The story so far

First there was DVD, a versatile medium designed to store digital data. The discs were to be the size of CDs but incorporate a finer pit-size and multi-layer construction to provide far greater capacity. The potential uses were huge, not least for the PC and home entertainment industries, and working groups were formed to hammer out specifications.

Most people are aware of DVD-Video, made mainly for movie replay. Much of the disc is used for video, with a smaller portion allocated to

compressed multi-channel audio and the rest for features like subtitling. It has proved a huge success, with a more rapid take-up than any format in history. Yet DVD-V is only part of the story. A version was needed that put audio first. In 1995, Working Group 4 (WG4) was set up to develop a DVD-A standard. A large portion of the disc would be used by the 'Audio Zone', meaning most of the disc's capacity would be dedicated to high-resolution stereo and multi-channel sound. A smaller 'Video Zone' would also exist, allowing the inclusion of clips and stills, interviews, videos of specified tracks and extras like lyrics.

As late as last summer, the industry was hopeful of an autumn 1999 launch for hardware and software. But the date slipped, then late last year a hacker cracked DVD-V's Content Scrambling System (CSS), publishing the results on the Internet. DVD-A used a CSS variant, so labels refused to publish any software until a better system was developed. Matsushita delayed its hardware launch indefinitely and, although

“There are people talking about a music industry renaissance, but will DVD-A really heighten our listening experience?”

Pioneer went ahead with a Christmas launch in Japan due to frenzied consumer expectation, it delayed its launch elsewhere.

A new protection system called CPPM has been proposed by WG4, and ratification by the Big Five record companies is expected as we go to press. Hopefully, full software production will have been given the green light by the time you read this. However, many argue the delay has been useful, giving the time to allow for a concerted hardware/software launch in 2000. Meantime, musical content production has continued, ready for the protection to be added before release.

What can we expect from a DVD-Audio disc?

Audiophiles will find the prospect of super-high definition stereo tempting enough, but that alone won't persuade large numbers of people to invest in technology and re-buy their music collections. Not surprisingly, the record companies are keen on the other 'new' things DVD-A can offer – discrete multi-channel audio, selected videos, on-screen liner notes and biographies – which make it easier to sell.

For us it's the promise of better sound that counts. Like CD and DVD-V, DVD-A uses PCM (pulse code modulation) for its data. However, the big differences come down to quantisation (bit-depth or word-length) and sampling rate (measured in kHz). The higher these figures the better the quality. DVD-A offers the potential for up to 24-bit/192kHz quality in stereo, or up to 24-bit/96kHz in multi-channel, with six channels available. This compares with CD's 16-bit/44.1kHz in stereo.

One way of increasing disc capacity is to use DVD's dual-layer construction. A disc using a single layer has a capacity of 4.7Gb, around seven times that of CD, but if both layers are used the capacity jumps to 8.5Gb. In time, double-sided/dual-layer DVD-A discs should appear, increasing capacity further. But even with this storage potential, such high resolution stereo and multi-channel digital sound wouldn't be feasible without some form of compression to help get it on and off the disc. 'Lossy' compression technologies like Dolby Digital and dts are not of sufficiently high quality – they work by throwing away parts of the data that are deemed unnecessary, so the full character of an instrument and the ambience of a recording ends up being lost.

Inside the DVD-A10

You'll have to wait for a full review to get a complete run-down of this player's internal workings, but here's a taster:

Technics is particularly proud of the player's chassis, which it calls THCB, or Technics Hybrid Construction Base. This is a honeycomb of damping material which is designed to isolate sensitive circuitry from vibrations. Other components are culled from the company's audiophile amp technology: part-bamboo TAKE II capacitors in the audio output stage and Virtual Battery Operation to minimise the effect of power supply noise. It also incorporates a new multi-bit 'Super MASH' DAC, developed to make the most of DVD-A signals up to 192kHz and enable a potentially huge 24-bit dynamic range (144dB).

You won't just hear the benefits of this technology with DVD-A discs – Technics has made an effort to improve CD replay too. The player includes a proprietary feature called Digital Re-Master Processing, which employs double over-sampling and 24-bit conversion to expand the playback frequency range up to a claimed 40kHz, double CD's limit of 20kHz.

It uses digital signal processing to create a high frequency signal above 20kHz comprising a "virtually natural harmonic structure". This is then added to the data recorded on the disc, extending frequency response into the ultra-high region for a claimed fresher treble and sharper ambience.



That's where Meridian Lossless Packing (MLP) comes in. This technology, developed by the English hi-fi company, can be used by music producers to pack data without any the loss of audio quality, the result being decoded by software built into the player. Whether MLP is required depends on the elements the producer intends to include on a disc, storage capacity and the rate at which data can be streamed off. If the highest resolution standards are to be used, MLP is a necessity. Then there's the question of potential playing time, which varies according to quantisation and sampling rate, layer usage and compression or packing technology. For example, a single-layer disc carrying music in 24-bit/192kHz stereo using MLP has a potential playing time of 125 minutes. A disc containing 24-bit/96kHz 5.1 channel audio plus a two-channel PCM mix could last 74 minutes.

Discs will be more expensive than CDs, with plenty of back catalogue revamping in addition to new recordings. It seems to be the multi-channel aspects of DVD-A that have got the labels most excited. There are people talking about a music industry renaissance, but will it really heighten our listening experience?

The compatibility question

It seems unlikely that DVD-A-only players will ever exist. The machines that are on the way, like the Technics DVD-A10, are 'universal' or 'combination' players, compatible with both DVD-A and DVD-V discs, as well as CDs. To play both the 'Audio Zone' and 'Video Zone' on a DVD-A disc you'll need one of these players. However, for compatibility reasons the 'Video Zone' can also be played back on a standard DVD-V player (see p20), and on computer DVD-ROM drives.

The issue is further complicated by the existence of SACD, the rival CD-beating format from Sony and Philips. Technically it is very different, employing a technology called Direct Stream Digital (DSD) in place of PCM. HFC has already reviewed two Sony SACD players (see HFC 193 for a full technical report).

Another issue that needs clearing up is that of digital outputs. The first players are equipped with standard S/PDIF outputs, like those found on CD players. That means you can only output 24-bit/192kHz stereo or 24-bit/96kHz multi-channel signals in analogue form. This is for two reasons: the limitations of the connector – you simply can't squeeze the data out of an S/PDIF output – and issues of piracy. The use of a new IEEE 1394 'Firewire' connector has been proposed for future players, and if accepted this would eradicate both problems, enabling the output of all necessary data plus information relating to effective copyright protection. So, what's the betting that we'll have recordable DVD-A within two years?

The sound of DVD-A

Given the dearth of DVD-A software it was not easy to assess this unit at its fullest potential – with 192kHz oversampled, 24-bit material. But I managed to track down one demonstration disc courtesy of another DVD-A heavyweight, Pioneer. Possibly as a result of the recording style and content I didn't get as impressive results with this as I could with DVD-V compatible DAD discs from various sources (such as Classic Records and Chesky). The reason could well have been that my amplification and loudspeakers didn't have the bandwidth to fully resolve the improvement that the extra 48kHz of extension could offer. But the reason why higher sampling rates make higher perceived fidelity has as much to do with the gentle roll-off of high frequencies as it does with absolute extension. Which would explain why the 192kHz material sounded softer and more relaxed than the 96kHz, albeit with totally different recordings.

I was able to compare exact recordings on CD and DAD (24/96) formats, though, and they made a very strong case for the higher sampling and bit rates offered by DVD. Acoustic recordings sounded considerably more natural with greater harmonic richness and even better rhythmic drive. With material that is quite hard work on CD – the percussive tubes and bells of *Pulse* by the New Music Consort, for example – the DAD version had a musical coherence and naturalness I've not previously encountered, even with decent DVD-V players. 24/96 discs could also be played at considerably higher level than CDs – this is partly due to the high recording quality of the available discs, but is not in the least bit hindered by the DVD-A10's clean, smooth character. As a result, some of the tracks on a Technics/Chesky sampler could almost be reproduced at lifelike levels, albeit with a bit of complaint from the speakers at the dynamic peaks!

As a CD player, the DVD-A10 is an extremely smooth operator – so much so that when compared with an admittedly dearer dedicated CD player (the Acoustic Precision Eikos) it seemed to lack transparency and energy. In fact, the difference between the two was greater than the difference between 16/44.1 CDs and 24/96 DADs via the Technics, such was the extra vigour and low-level detail introduced by the CD player.

DVD-A's higher rates offer a smoother, cleaner sound, but with non-acoustic material the advantages may not be appreciated. Music lovers don't necessarily buy the cleanest sounding kit because the music they play sounds more vital with some extra 'edge'. The Eikos is among the cleanest sounding CD players I've heard, and some find it too laid back, but next to the DVD-A10 it sounds incisive.

The proof of the new format's advantages can be heard when playing well recorded material at high levels – levels that you wouldn't be want to endure with most CD-based systems. The introduction of wider bandwidth amps and speakers will also help the new medium, but software will be its master. If record companies back it, we'll be able to listen to classic and contemporary material as the engineer heard – it if not more so.

JK

O'HEOCHA D1-f £1,760

Jason Kennedy experiences a brand whose name he dare not speak.

O'hEocha, a memorable – if unpronounceable – name which leapt onto the scene earlier this year with a highly distinctive looking loudspeaker. If you haven't seen O'hEocha's chess pawn/Cluedo piece-shaped D2 speakers, you've not been reading magazines this year. The more conventional D1-f featured here is the company's current range-topper and weighs in at 25kg a channel, with a price tag of £1,760 per pair.

Built from a huge aluminium extrusion in a boat-tail section, the D1-f measures 107cm tall on its alarming 50mm conical spikes. The speaker itself sits on a 12mm metal baseplate and measures 15cm across its solid ash facia by 27cm back to front and, largely because of its shiny finish, looks extremely slim.

The driver array looks innocuous enough: a pair of 100mm polyprop cones supporting a big 28mm soft dome tweeter. As each driver is attached to the rear of the facia there's a considerable inset, and thus a modicum of horn loading. The presence of six terminals indicates that three way operation in being used, but doesn't give away the fact that the column is divided into bass and mid/top sections internally. The review sample was not supplied with any form of bridging connections for the terminals, but I imagine this will be remedied when the D1-f gets to market.

SOUND QUALITY

This slender O'hEocha put in an impressive performance for such an attractive newcomer. Once positioning had been optimised I managed to get some powerful if not obviously deep bass out of them, along with a better sense of timing than average. While not up with the best when it came to more dense material, there were few tracks that it didn't make good job out of.

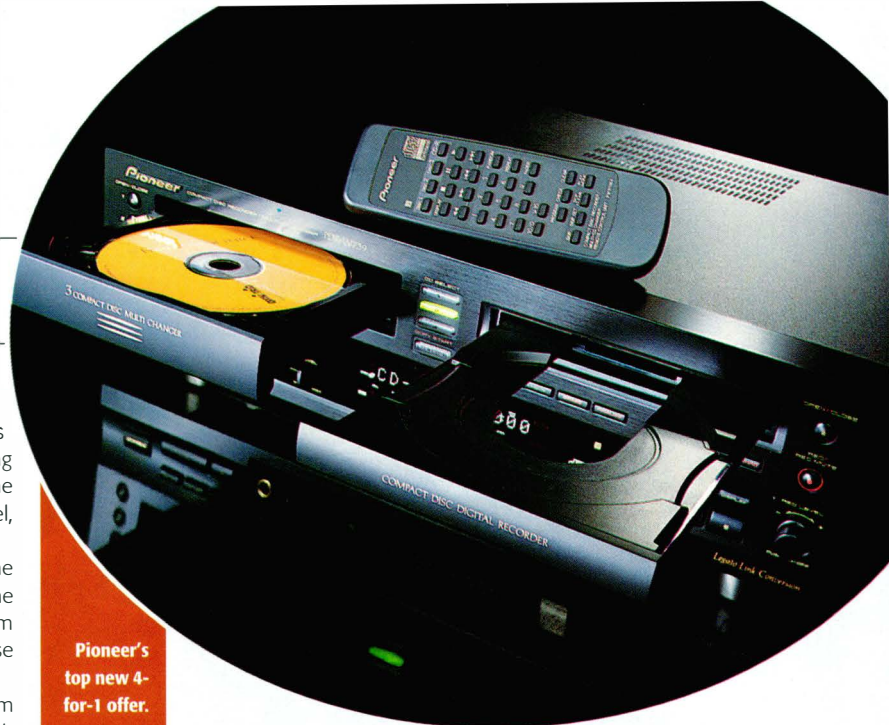
Imaging was clearly assisted by the slim profile and curved sides and the cabinet didn't balk at low or mid frequencies. If anything it was the drive units that showed the first signs of distress when things got nasty. But this effect seemed to die away as listening progressed and I suspect it may have been a factor of warming up, or lack thereof.

The D1-f is clearly a very capable speaker that looks good and is priced competitively. We'd encourage you to compare it with your favourites straight away.



O'hEocha ☎ (01564) 782502

O'hEocha: aye, they're new.



Pioneer's top new 4-for-1 offer.

PIONEER PDR-W739 £399

Lee Dunkley checks out a pioneering CD-Recorder with a difference.

Hot on the heels of the acclaimed Pioneer PDR-509 CD recorder (HFC 199) comes the PDR-W739. A one-box CD 'burner' and three-disc CD multiplayer, the PDR-W739 comes with a shedload of flexible editing facilities more typically associated with MiniDisc recorders. Costing £399, this twin-deck machine is based on the same core CD-R engine as the '509 with a Delta Sigma DAC and Pioneer's own Legato Link digital conversion filter.

The PDR-W739 is the most versatile model in the company's CD-R line-up, with particular attention paid to the host of user-friendly editing features. Insert a pre-recorded disc and the three-disc multi-play loading mechanism sounds a little clunky. But hit the play button and the Pioneer's sonic ability is reassuring and pleasing. Load up a blank CD-R disc and activate the 'copy mode' sequence and the front panel display guides you very intuitively through the set-up for making perfect digital copies.

A convenience feature found on many an analogue twin-deck cassette recorder is fast dubbing. This useful feature has now made the crossover to the digital domain and double-speed recording appears as the default on the automated copying routine. This can, of course, be set to normal speed recording should you wish to listen to a disc as it is recorded. Programming the three-disc multiplayer allows you to select specific tracks from each CD, which is handy for making your own compilations. Surprisingly, though, it does not allow you to replace one disc while recording from another.

SOUND QUALITY

Copy for copy the PDR-W739 is an adept performer with all manner of musical styles, and makes transparent and detailed digital copies of your favourite discs. In a direct comparison with Pioneer's flagship PDR-509 model, the PDR-W739 gives only the slightest indication of a lack of refinement, with slight treble harshness that can become fatiguing on some recordings. Standard and double-speed recordings displayed no obvious flaws, making it virtually impossible to distinguish between them.

As a CD player, the PDR-W739 gives an acceptable performance with anything from classical music to jazz and right through to blunted dance beats. It's possibly not the most involving of CD players at the price and has a tendency to give a rather two-dimensional presentation, but if it's an all-singing, all-dancing CD-Recorder and multiplayer combo you're after, our advice is to look to those that know. It looks unbeatable at the price.



Pioneer ☎ (01753) 789789

ROTEL RA-972 £450

Lee Dunkley thinks Rotel's latest amp is a bit of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The RA-972 is the newest integrated amplifier in the Rotel range and heads the company's four-strong line-up. Priced at £450 on the nose, it cost almost twice as much as the company's RA-971 MkII model (Best Buy in HFC 196).

So, what of the additional £200, you may ask? Both amplifiers offer a claimed 60 Watts per channel output, and the '972 comes supplied with a remote control for convenient armchair adjustments of source selection and listening level. The reason for the inflated price tag, Rotel claims, lies in its totally new design and custom-made components using the latest developments with 'T Network' capacitors and a high quality toroidal transformer, which combine its said to make a superior sounding integrated.

Build quality is to the usual high standards and is instantly recognisable by its trademark front panel layout and finish. The familiar fascia sports a centrally mounted volume control, with bypassable tone controls. There is no balance control provided. Source selection is via two rotary controls labelled 'recording' and 'listening', enabling you to listen to one source while recording another.

At the back, the RA-972 has four line-level inputs plus two tape loops and a preamplifier output for hooking up to additional amps. Two sets of speaker terminals accepting 4mm plugs are provided and are selectable from the front panel.

SOUND QUALITY

From the very first click of the relay switches, it was clear this was a superior integrated. Its slender fascia and understated looks disguise the amp's sonic thoroughbred abilities. Rated at 60 Watts power output, the RA-972 handles up-tempo tunes with enough authority and drive to keep even the most hardcore dance aficionado at home.

Crank up the volume and the Rotel really delivers with a solid bass, transparent midband and detailed, unfatiguing treble. Imaging is equally as impressive, conjuring a wide and tactile soundstage. Even at low listening levels the amp manages to communicate effectively, with a well-balanced detailed manner for those quieter, less intrusive, moments. Only on more acoustic pieces does the Rotel give any hint of a lack of neutrality, making piano and string pieces sound slightly warm and coloured.

The Rotel RA-972 has a luxurious appeal with smile inducing sonic abilities. It may lack sensitivity with delicate classics but careful matching of source components may provide a leaner overall balance here. Definitely worthy of consideration.



Rotel ☎ (01908) 317707



mX1: small but perfectly formed.

TANNOY mX1 £120

Tim Bovern gets his ears around Tannoy's new entry-level speaker.

Tannoy's Mercury range has dominated the budget speaker charts for the past three years, so a major revamp is big news. Last month we tested the range-topping mX3 floorstander and found it to be a very capable performer – at least as good as its acclaimed M3 predecessor. And now we've got our hands on the baby mX1...

Many felt the little M1 was the strongest of the original three-strong line-up. It was an attractive, smart, versatile box at an impressively low price, equipped with a cohesive and carefully balanced sound. Now its successor has earned its 'X' with changes both sonic and aesthetic.

The most fundamental change is a production move from Hungary to the Far East, allowing further cuts to manufacturing costs and, according to Tannoy, facilitating a better quality of manufacture. The new speaker certainly looks even more impressive for the money – its 10cm mid/bass cone is now strikingly white and both drive units fit flush to the front panel. The cabinet has a wood-effect finish, looking particularly fetching in the 'light maple' of our review sample, and the whole thing is topped off with a distinctive silver grille. Nice.

And so to those sonic changes. The 30cm tall cabinet has been substantially revamped, with the front baffle screwed and glued, additional internal bracing and marginally improved damping, the result of which should be reduction of box resonance. The frames of both main driver and fabric tweeter have been cut away to allow closer mounting for better integration, and sensitivity in the midband region has been increased. The mid/bass cone itself is made from paper pulp and treated with a ceramic film to improve stiffness.

SOUND QUALITY

The mX1's balance errs on the side of caution, and those after a more overtly 'exciting' listening experience should perhaps look elsewhere. But its smooth, slightly laid-back presentation is also among its greatest assets, carefully pitched to appeal to the majority of tastes and work effectively with all manner of budget electronics. This is a highly intelligent, low-cost, small-room design.

However, it loses a little weight in the bass and adds some pace and punch through the midrange, the overall effect appearing more agile and informative. There is perhaps some loss of apparent scale, but the gain in terms of overall poise outweighs this by some margin. There's more insight with classical music, while pop/dance fare is delivered with greater pace.

Treble is still a touch blunted, and one or two similarly priced rivals deliver more sonic bite – Acoustic Energy's Aegis One, for example. But for all-round guile at a remarkably low price, the mX1 is definitely five-star material.



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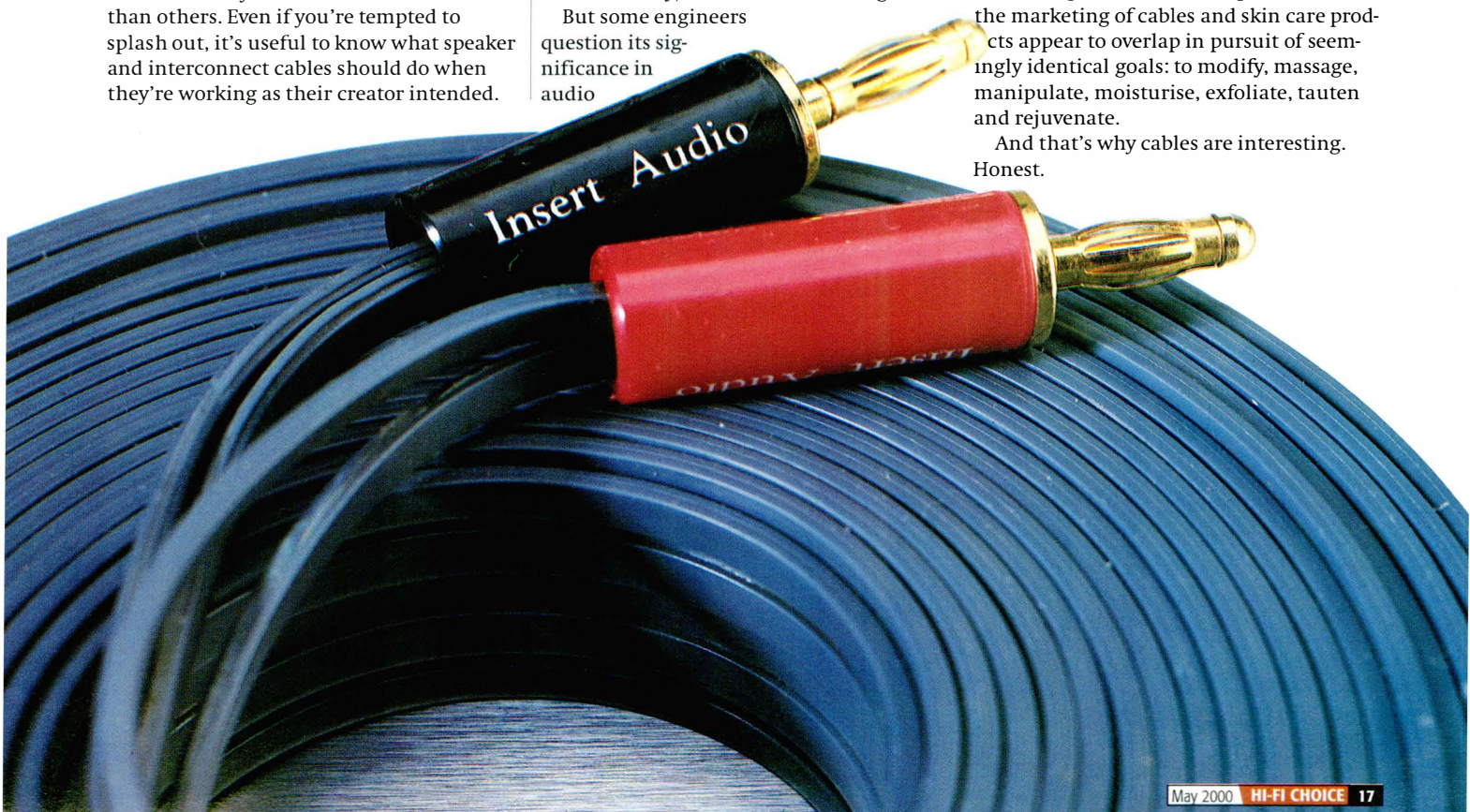
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instant of control
close but not closing
make someone's dream
shock diesel power
shell shock confusion

crystal clear



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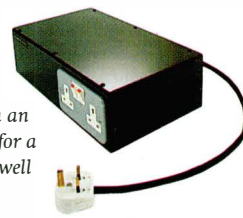
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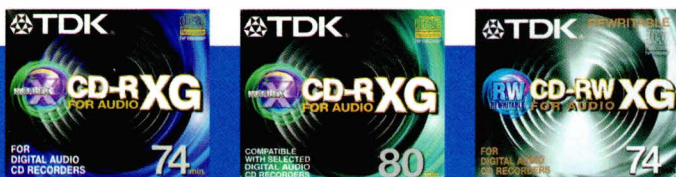
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at the heart of it

CD Players & DVD Players

Wondering whether to go for a new budget CD player or dive into this newfangled DVD thing? Let Alvin Gold and Paul Miller test the waters for you.

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The promise of a dedicated version of DVD optimised for high quality multi-channel audio has held back moves to exploit the audio capabilities of DVD-Video. Although a small number of high resolution, two-channel recordings are available from Classic Recordings and others. Meanwhile, DVD-Audio has been delayed further, probably until the end of the year, which has given CD an unexpected reprieve.

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That kind of money for a player that invariably still doesn't sound as good as a budget CD player really isn't much of a bargain, and it's interesting that this fact seems to have been recognised in the market. In the first year or so of DVD, CD player sales were very depressed, but over the past year there has



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In this test, we've taken six budget DVD players, with prices ranging from £300 to £500, and compared them in the role of compact disc

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Some care will be needed to compare like with like, especially in the case of the DVD players. There are considerable differences in their specifications (which are covered in detail in the reviews), the main one being that some include Dolby Digital decoders and provide a six-channel output suitable for use with any non-digital surround amplifier or TV with a six-channel input, while others don't. Videophiles

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Marantz CD5000	£150.00
NAD C520	£170.00
Sony CDP-XE330	£100.00
Technics SL-PG390	£90.00
DVD PLAYERS	
JVC XV515GD DVD	£300.00
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Toshiba CD-3109	£380.00

How the tests were done

The test programme included unsighted panel tests and sighted listening by the author. Panel testing, spread over two days, included a large number of repeats, with no panel member knowing the identity of the player on test, and with levels normalised between test runs. The system used included Krell and Arcam amplification, and Focal JM Labs Mezzo Utopia speakers and others for the unsighted and hands-on tests. Our listening panel included David Inman (Castle

Acoustics), Steve Harris (TAG McLaren, ALR), Alan O'Rourke (Ruark), Julian Maddock (Quad), Keith Haddock (REL, Myriad) and Mike Martindale (Arcam).

All published measurements were taken on the QC Suite v3.1 high-speed functional testing station.

What music did we use?

ALICE IN CHAINS: *No Excuses* from *Unplugged* (Columbia CK67703)

BRAHMS: *Variations on a Theme of Paganini: Theme & Variation 1*/Evgeny Kissin – piano (RCA Victor 09026 68910-2)

THE CORRS: *Runaway* from *Unplugged* (Atlantic 7567 80986-2)

MAHLER: *Symphony No 6*, opening of second movement/City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Simon Rattle – conductor (EMI CDS754047-2)

Other titles were used in the hands-on tests.

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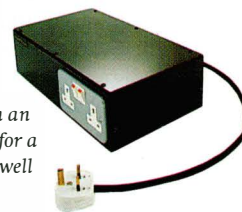
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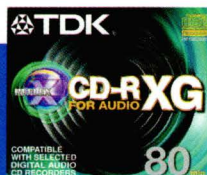
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How the tests were done

The test programme included unsighted panel tests and sighted listening by the author. Panel testing, spread over two days, included a large number of repeats, with no panel member knowing the identity of the player on test, and with levels normalised between test runs. The system used included Krell and Arcam amplification, and Focal JM Labs Mezzo Utopia speakers and others for the unsighted and hands-on tests. Our listening panel included David Inman (Castle

Acoustics), Steve Harris (TAG McLaren, ALR), Alan O'Rourke (Ruark), Julian Maddock (Quad), Keith Haddock (REL, Myryad) and Mike Martindale (Arcam).

All published measurements were taken on the QC Suite v3.1 high-speed functional testing station.

What music did we use?

ALICE IN CHAINS: *No Excuses from Unplugged* (Columbia CK67703)

BRAHMS: *Variations on a Theme of Paganini: Theme & Variation 1/Evgeny Kissin* – piano (RCA Victor 09026 68910-2)

THE CORRS: *Runaway from Unplugged* (Atlantic 7567 80986-2)

MAHLER: *Symphony No 6*, opening of second movement/City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Simon Rattle – conductor (EMI CDS754047-2)
Other titles were used in the hands-on tests.

NAD

Compact Disc Player C 520

NUYORICAN SOUL

THE REMIXES

1. I AM THE BLACK GOLD OF THE SUN MAW REMIX (featuring Q-TIP)
 2. I AM THE BLACK GOLD OF THE SUN 4 HERO REMIX
 3. THE NERVOUS TRACK HORNY MIX
 4. IT'S ALRIGHT, I FEEL IT! MOOD II SWING REMIX
 5. YOU CAN DO IT (BABY) NUYORICAN STYLE MIX
 6. IT'S ALRIGHT, I FEEL IT! RONI SIZE REMIX
 7. RUNAWAY ARMAND RASCAL EDIT
 8. RUNAWAY SPANISH UNDERGROUND MIX
- SPECIAL BONUS TRACK -
9. "PIENSO EN TI" (I Think Of You)
MAW featuring LUIS SALINAS (NUYORICAN MIX)

COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO



HINTS & TIPS

Extracting the best from your CD player is, to a large extent, a matter of common sense. CD players don't like to be run from cold, so don't expect the best sound for the first half hour or so, unless (and sometimes even if) yours is one of the growing number of models with a standby feature. Ideally, try to avoid stacking the player on top of other hi-fi components, especially if it's a copious heat generator like an amplifier; but if needs must, try to arrange some space and mechanical isolation between the components. We have found that compliant isolating feet can give good results.

GLOSSARY

DIGITAL CONVERTERS: The slice of silicon that converts the digital signals into an analogue waveform.

Converters come in various forms: the traditional multi-bit or ladder type are the best known, and have known strengths and weaknesses which designers are more or less adept at accommodating.

A recent introduction to the field, by Arcam is the Ring DAC, a radical topology that goes a significant way towards addressing the failings of previous converter types.

FILTERS: Intrinsic to digital audio is the extensive use of filters, both analogue and digital. These are often very sophisticated in design, and in total they probably have rather more to do with the 'personality' of CD player sound than many other better known factors.

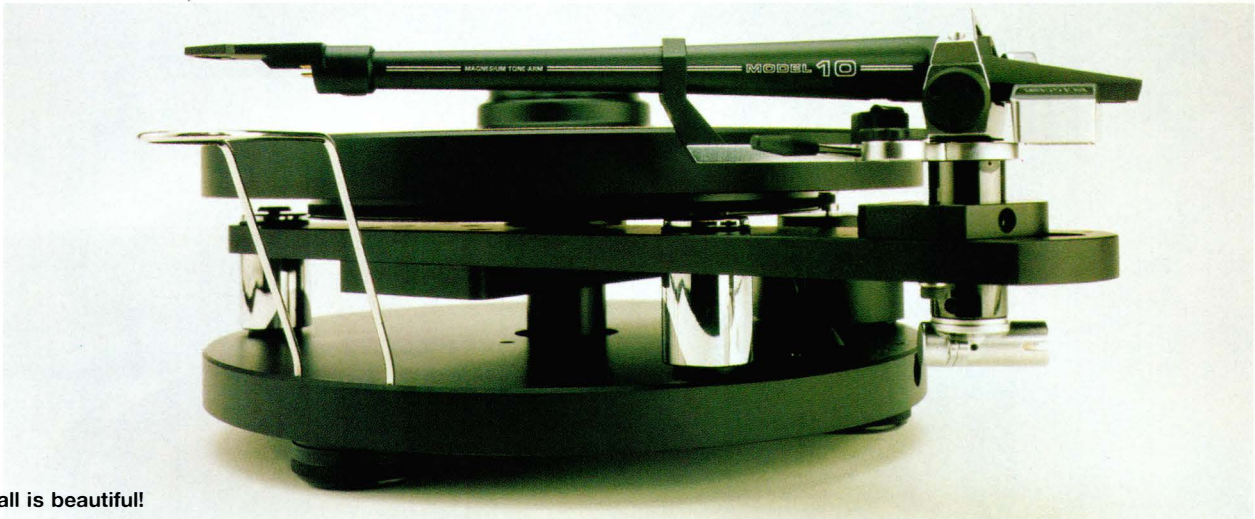
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE: A measure of resistance to alternating current, a low output impedance (say, below 100 Ohms or so) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even when using long or unusual designs of interconnect cables.

A high impedance, especially in conjunction with an amplifier with a low input impedance (some are as low as eight kOhms, although the standard is 47 kOhms) can result in audible treble losses.

JITTER: Jitter represents the uncertainty in the timing of digital signals, which translates into a muddling and loss of detail and defocused imagery. State of the art is below 150psec, but figures over 1,000psec are not uncommon.

SME

MODEL 10

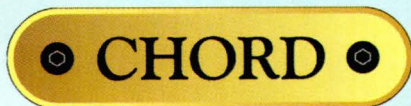


Small is beautiful!

The stiffer a structure the less it will flex and vibrate. The more massive the less it will vibrate. Therefore to be structurally inert, with a given weight of metal, a turntable should be a compact as possible. The extreme opposite, *ie* the same weight of metal spread over a large enough area, would be aluminium foil. These simple facts of physics should be borne in mind if you aim to hear your records rather than your turntable!

Details and reviews on request from:

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CAMBRIDGE AUDIO D500



From the outside, the D500 is a master of understatement, with some poor looking switchgear, a plasticky front panel (in fact it's an alloy extrusion that just looks like plastic) and a display that is too feeble-minded to strip out leading zeros – track 9 is shown as 09.

Inside there's a 20-bit Crystal Delta Sigma DAC, which doesn't sound very exciting on paper, and features are limited to skip, search, random, repeat and programme play. The remote control includes a set of numbered keys for track selection. About the nearest the D500 comes to striking out on the wild side is a spring-loaded track skip rotary on its front panel. It's not a patch on its Sony counterpart, though.

However, it turns out there's more to the D500 than this rather dismissive summary suggests. It's as well we don't listen to DACs on paper, because the 20-bit Crystal part is based on the same substrate as the '24-bit' equivalent, but with no practical dilution of performance (according to Paul Miller, see below). Particular care has been exercised over the DAC's

"It provided a cleaner, more open window, and more of a feel of solid, propulsive timing than the opposition could muster."

power supply, and regulated supplies drive the digital and analogue circuits and the clock.

Proprietary jitter reduction strategies have been instigated, too. Unusually, Cambridge Audio even gives jitter levels in the specifications as less than 180psec weighted, an impressive figure. The player is equipped with electrical (BNC) and optical digital S/PDIF outputs.

SOUND QUALITY

My initial impressions of this player weren't entirely positive. On the whole it sounded rather underwhelming and soft around the edges, but what it lacked in immediate upfront appeal is made up for in long term use – although to their credit, the panellists didn't take long to latch onto its virtues.

There were early comments that the D500 was rather "dull and flat" and "lacked sparkle and life"

arising from separate presentations, but there was praise also for its "drive and rhythm" (Alice in Chains), and for the "great acoustic, the presence of lots of detail and the way it builds the tension in the music" (Mahler).

There is some evidence from the tests that the D500 takes rather longer to come on song than some of the other players, although it may sound like this simply because it has more to give. Either way, its strengths don't exactly hit you between the eyes, and there are times with energetic rock when it sounded a little too relaxed for its own good – *John the Revelator* from Taj Mahal and others lacked the immediacy and punch the track normally delivers, although it was always very easy to hear what was going on.

The finding was that the D500 was more impressive as a track finished than it was at the outset.

Why? It provided a cleaner, more open window, and more of a feel of solid, propulsive timing than the opposition could muster, and these are the qualities that make sustained listening rewarding.

CONCLUSION

After some reflection, this model achieves the standard necessary to rate as Best Buy. There are limitations – a little more fire in its belly might be no bad thing – but the D500 came closer to stripping bare what was on disc after disc than any of its competition. Note that Cambridge Audio is available only from Richer Sounds. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £200.00

It may look dull, but this clean, agile and transparent, if cool sounding player is an excellent budget choice.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Richer Sounds, Gallery Court, Hankey Place, London SE1 4BB

☎ (020) 7940 2222

THE LAB REPORT

Rather than pursue the 'numbers game' and opt for a so-called 24-bit DAC, the D500 is equipped with the earlier 20-bit version of Crystal's bitstream DAC series (the CS4327) which, typically, is both easier to implement and ends up sounding smoother and more engaging. Its technical performance is no less impressive.

Sure enough, the high 2.4V output level may confuse non-matched A/B listening demos, but the player has pretty much the lowest distortion – at any frequency and level – of the bunch. At -10dBFs, this falls to a minimum of just 0.0005 per cent and increases to a mere 0.002 per cent at -30dBFs, where much of the musical action



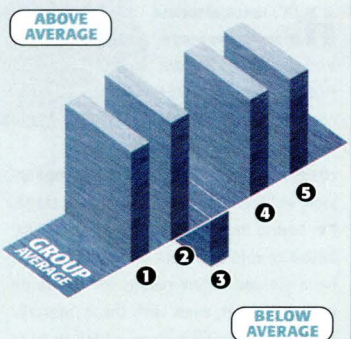
takes place. At higher treble frequencies, distortion harmonics are largely submerged beneath the wash of ultrasonic noise emerging from the DAC's noise-shapers (amounting to 0.009 per cent at 20kHz).

This is adequately suppressed by the simple, two-pole filter which retains a 16-bit+ S/N ratio of 98dB. This is not the best in the test but more than sufficient for CD software. Jitter, meanwhile, is very low indeed at 195psec, while good crystal selection keeps the clock error to just 20ppm. Crosstalk is better than -100dB through the midband while the response remains flat to within +0.0/-0.2dB with both standard and pre-emphasised discs. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

Despite using 'older' 20-bit technology, the D500 bests more modern designs with lower distortion, jitter and excellent low-level linearity.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES 75%
- 2 JITTER 80%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE -30%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL 65%
- 5 LINEARITY 65%



SPECIFICATIONS

PARAMETER	MANUFACTURER'S SPEC.	ACTUAL SPEC.
■ Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBFs	<0.01%	0.0008%
■ Maximum output level	2.3V	2.4V
■ A-wtd S/N ratio	>90dB	98.1dB

HARMAN/KARDON HD720



The Harman/Kardon HD720 is a standard, full-width CD player. It's relatively large, making quite a statement with its black facia and gold-trimmed feet, and while there's as much plastic here as you'd expect at the price, it looks a little better put together than most, and the drawer action is pleasingly smooth and quiet.

Virtually everything can be done from the front panel, including track skip and scan, repeat and random play, track programming, even dimming or switching off the fluorescent display. Headphones can be connected.

The HD720 comes with a remote control that adds a little depth to the roster, notably via an intro-scan button and a random access keypad. Around the back of the player is an autoplay switch which can be used to force play mode when power is applied, for example using a timer, or when turning the player on normally.

A coaxial electrical digital S/PDIF output is available, along with sockets which allow linked operation with a complete H/K system.

"While there's as much plastic here as you'd expect at the price, it looks a little better put together than most."

SOUND QUALITY

"Brisk and punchy," was one panellist's verdict, "but it also sounds a touch frantic" (Alice in Chains). Later, he wrote that the player sounded "rather coarse and uninvolved, like a cheap machine that's trying too hard to gain attention" (Mahler).

Another listener described the performance (rather than the music) as "heavy and boring" (Alice in Chains), "a sibilant noise" (Corrs). "The tragic beginning is tragically presented, and is not at all enjoyable," he said of the Mahler, also noting that the heavy bass content at the start of the piece was largely absent.

And so it continued, with comments punctuated with words like "exuberant", "ragged", "coloured" and, most memorable statement of all: "This is a hooligan player." And so it is. There are times when

the HD720's rough-and-ready charms seem just what is required to bring the music to life, but the rowdiness and sheer lack of discipline are so much a part of this machine that in the final analysis, judged across a wide range of material, it didn't stand a chance.

Although its vitality clearly worked with a number of the test pieces, it was worn rather like a fixed grin, and was simply inappropriate with others. Unsurprisingly it was at its least effective with very simple, acoustic music and complex, densely scored material. The hands-on listening also identified a characteristic rather metallic mid-band coloration that acted as a bit of a turn-off.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps this player just might work in systems which need a touch of spice to bring them to life, but

using one class of failing to counteract another, unless it's a simple response error (and perhaps even if it is), is simply perpetuating a vicious spiral.

It may work well enough with one disc or even musical genre, and indeed a leavening of more or less enthusiastic comments arose after each of the presentations, but invariably soon came to grief.

The HD720 is an attractive enough CD player to look at, but under the skin, to paraphrase one of the panellists, it's a hooligan, pure and simple. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £230.00

It looks the part, but HD720 is ultimately too rough-and-ready to make more than a caricature of good music.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Gamepath, 28 Heathfields, Stacey Buses, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK12 6HR
(01908) 317707

THE LAB REPORT

H/K's unusual spread of resources sees a budget Burr-Brown PCM1710 hybrid DAC combined with a – relatively speaking – rather costly and entirely discrete I-to-V conversion, analogue filtering and output stage. I'm bound to suggest that a superior DAC with a couple of decent IC op-amps might have yielded better results for the same outlay and yet, even with these 'ingredients', H/K has still missed a trick or two. Jitter, for example, is debilitating at some 3,225psec of low-rate and data-induced patterns – just the thing to flatten and coarsen the sound of what might otherwise have been a very acceptable player.

The PCM1710 also produces the highest



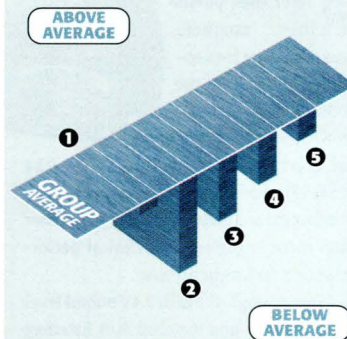
levels of ultrasonic noise of any comparable DAC and this, in turn, can

cause the host player to sound unpredictably harsh or even aggressive with unsympathetic amplifiers. Idle patterns (wandering tones) are also some 20-30dB above the norm at some -100dB below full output (2.1V) and reduce the overall A-wtd S/N ratio to some 97dB. Because these tones or whistles are at a very 'obvious' frequency (around 1kHz), it's not uncommon for listeners to hear them during very, very quiet musical interludes. Low-level linearity is below average, but distortion is moderate and the response flat with all discs. The HD720's potential, nonetheless, remains unrealised. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

A rather untidy result with very high jitter and unwanted idle tones compromising its dynamic range. Some extra care in execution would have yielded better results.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES -5%
- 2 JITTER -60%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE -40%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL -30%
- 5 LINEARITY -15%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBfs	0.006%	0.003%
■ Maximum output level	2.0V	2.1V
■ A-wtd S/N ratio	105dB	96.9dB

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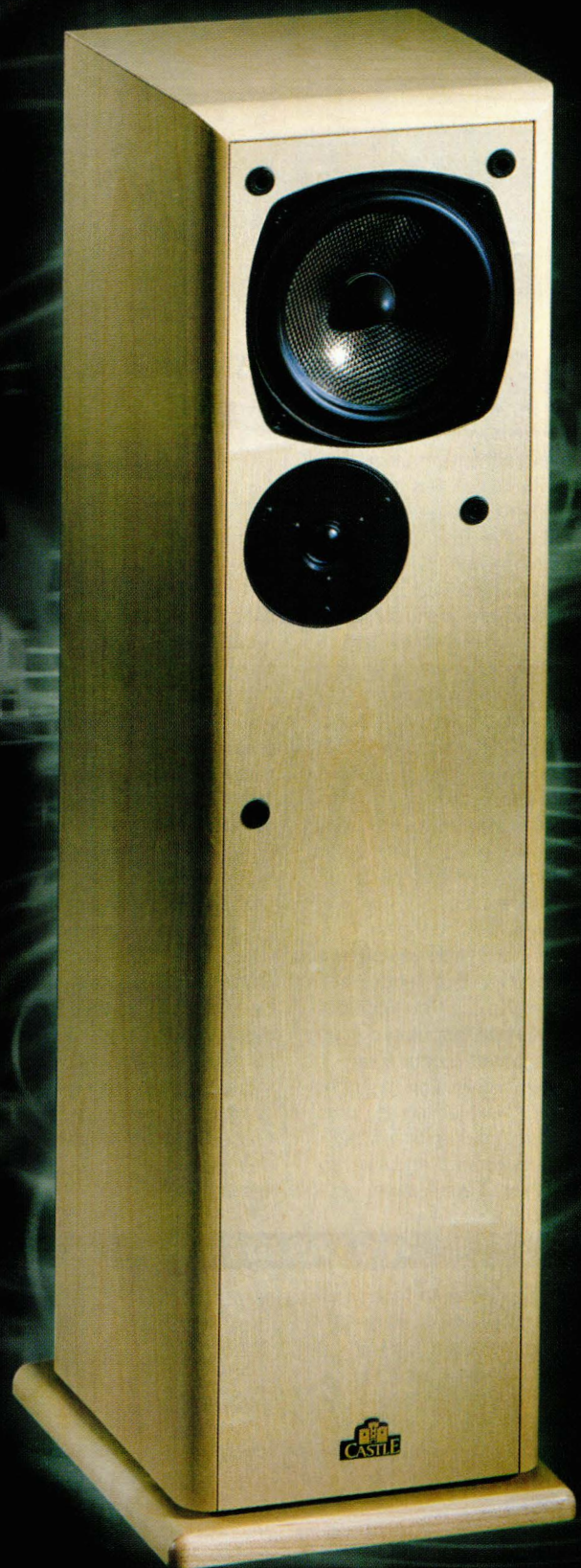


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Email: sales@castleacoustics.co.uk www.castle.uk.com



Classic

MARANTZ CD5000



One of the benefits of buying a player with a name like Marantz on the box is that you're buying from a firm with its finger on the technological pulse. The CD5000 is one of the few players capable of playing CD-R and CD-RW discs, which will please those with CD-R/RW writers on their racks or PCs – CD-RW compatibility seems to remain the exception rather than the rule.

The CD5000 is also CD Text compatible, but you can't download text labels onto MiniDisc recordings, despite the availability of features designed to ease the task. Editing recordings involves selecting from a menu of tape or disc lengths, but 80-minute discs, available in CD-R and MD form, have been omitted.

The well filled front panel ensures there's little you can't do even if the handset's under the sofa or in the dog. The CD5000 includes a headphone socket and volume control, programming, intro scan/highlighting (highlighting is a CD Text-related version of intro scan), random play, fade in/out, peak search and a key to invoke the CD edit feature.

"The well filled front panel ensures there's little you can't do even if the handset's under the sofa or in the dog."

The player employs a Bitstream converter with a continuous calibration filter, and a floating CD mechanism, the VAM-1201. Disc handling is very smooth and track searches are carried out speedily.

Last but not least, the remote control is an attractive, compact unit with controls logically differentiated by shape and colour. It includes a volume feature, which adjusts both the analogue and the digital outputs, but this should be treated with care. Altering the digital output in this way can reduce resolution and sound quality.

SOUND QUALITY

One thing's for certain: this isn't a classic Marantz player, which tend to have recognisable voicing. This model sounds rough-and-ready by comparison, with mixed implications. One panellist wrote: "This is clear... and sounds like a piano in a recognisable space" (Kissin);

"reasonably well balanced" (Corrs), and "got my foot tapping – rough cut and doesn't let you forget it" (Alice in Chains).

Another listener noted the player was "tonally good, but drags and sounds confused" (Kissin); "veiled, with resonance on voice which almost shouts," (Corrs) and "two dimensional" (Mahler). A third felt the CD5000 was "OK... the vocals are clear, and the backing support works nicely" (Corrs), and "bandwidth and detail are OK, but it seems slightly coloured" (Mahler).

The mixed notices fit well with a player that in the hands-on testing sounded energetic and lively, but which with complex material ultimately also sounded rough and untidy, with a lean, dry and very un-Marantz-like bass.

Imagery was well presented, except depth information tended to be rather foreshortened and

there was little of the solid presence that some players seem to project almost as second nature.

CONCLUSION

Not for the first time, I find myself ready to consign a product to the 'also-rans', only to have the arguments undermined by the price. The CD5000 doesn't have star quality, but it has a certain raw vitality, comes with some nice toys like CD-RW replay compatibility – and it's cheap. It's not good enough overall to warrant a formal recommendation, but it is not an unattractive deal in its way. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £150.00

Well equipped CD Text and CD-RW compatible cheapie, but musically it's on the 'rough-and-ready' side of the angels.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Marantz, Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 575-583 Bath Road, Longford, Middlesex UB7 0EH
(01753) 680868

THE LAB REPORT

Visual parallels and a common (VAM1201) transport mechanism aside, the CD5000 is a very different CD player from the upmarket CD6000 (see HFC 196).

The internals of the CD5000 are highly integrated and owe more to Marantz's association with Philips – hence its use of a budget bitstream/continuous calibration DAC. This fairly dominates the overall performance of the player and distinguishes it – both technically and subjectively – from the more esoteric CD6000. For example, although the 325psec of random jitter isn't half bad, the minimal 30dB suppression of digital 'images' is rather poor.

But though the CD5000 lacks a certain technical 'class', it does nothing seriously wrong. Its S/N ratio is a fine 102-103dB, idle

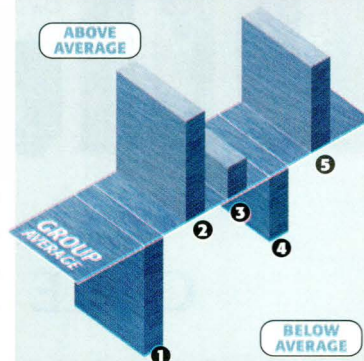


tones stay below -117dB and errors in low-level linearity are just +0.0/-0.7dB over a 100dB range. There's a +0.2dB/-0.7dB wobble in its response with pre-emphasised CDs and distortion decreases slightly from 0.002 to 0.0012 per cent from 0dBFs to -10dBFs, suggesting some peak level 'stress'. At -30dBFs, distortion remains slightly high but consistent at between 0.013-0.015 from 20Hz-20kHz – a good sign. At lower levels, various digitally-derived distortions detract from the smoothness of the spectrum and may contribute to its subjective colour. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

Distortion is consistent enough at mid-levels but starts to look less tidy at low levels where much of the music's subtle detail resides. Jitter and dynamic range are strong points, however.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES -70%
- 2 JITTER 65%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE 20%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL -40%
- 5 LINEARITY 55%



SPECIFICATIONS

PARAMETER	MANUFACTUR'S SPEC.	ACTUAL SPEC.
Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBFs	0.004%	0.002%
Maximum output level	2.0V	1.95V
A-wtd S/N ratio	108dB	102.4dB

NAD C520



Based on the NAD 522, which was not one of our favourite budget players, the C520 is the new entry point to the world of NAD CD players. It maintains the *status quo*, including the characteristic grey paint job, and there's a backlit electroluminescent display, which is more attractive and easier to read than the 'light bulbs' used on its predecessor. There have been other subtle styling improvements that make the new model look a little sharper than its predecessor, although it remains austere functional in the classic NAD manner.

Basic play controls are available on the player itself, and a full set, including repeat and random play modes and a numeric track access keypad, are on the neat and practical palm-sized remote. The feature set has been extended slightly to assist when dubbing from CDs. Rear channel furniture is limited to a pair of analogue outputs and a fully buffered digital electrical S/PDIF socket. This is a welcome addition: the C522 lacked any form of digital output.

Internally, the days of MASH converters are long gone, and the

"Rock music tends to bounce along with impressive energy, but bass is on the heavy-handed side."

C520 features a 20-bit, Burr-Brown Delta-Sigma DAC (don't listen to the '24-bit' hype by the way: some '24-bit' chips measure *and sound* worse than their 20-bit counterparts). Separate analogue and digital power supply regulation helps reduce mutual internal interference, and the output impedance is below 300 Ohms (maker's figure), which is low enough to ensure the player will work with virtually any amplifier.

New measures have been adopted to reduce jitter, including damping of the master clock crystal, and there have been improvements to the mechanism – although it is rather fragile if transported without its lock screw. I know from experience ('nuff said).

SOUND QUALITY

Although clearly more competitive than the model it supersedes, the C520 remains uneven in balance,

but on the whole its limitations are sins of omission rather than glaring faults. The raucous and ragged edge that characterised the 522 is replaced here by a smooth, sometimes slightly dull quality.

Dynamically it's quite forthright, and rock music tends to bounce along with impressive energy, but bass is on the heavy-handed side (drawing words like "plummy" from the panel), while stereo imagery was too large in scale and lacking in central focus, although its forwardness does tend to make the system sound closer and more forthcoming than many. The other consistent criticism was of a loss of very fine detail and definition. This is by no means the most transparent player around.

Nevertheless, the C520 represents several steps in the right direction, and its strong handle on the architectural elements of music reproduction will stand it in

good stead with mainstream material – although lovers of more subtle acoustic and small scale material may be disappointed.

CONCLUSION

An evolutionary advance over the model it replaces, the NAD C520 is quite a decent, if slightly opaque sounding player, and at the price just merits a Recommended. Best suited to modestly priced systems which are currently suffering from coarse, granular sounding CD players, the C520 will add a touch of vitality to proceedings. Higher resolution systems would be better served elsewhere. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£170.00**

Decent budget player whose qualities and limitations mesh well with those of typical budget systems.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Lenbrook UK, Unit 15, Faraday Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 3RY

☎ (01296) 482017

THE LAB REPORT

As if to demonstrate that implementation is just as important as the choice of chips, the NAD C520 is equipped with the same Burr-Brown PCM1710 hybrid DAC as HK's any real impact on the suppression of digital 'images' as this is the preserve of the DAC's integral 8x oversampling filter. Incidentally, the Roksan player in HFC200 used the same converter.

That's not to say the C520 has a clean bill of health. Idle patterns are a potential problem with this DAC (as are excessive levels of ultrasonic noise), reducing the effective S/N ratio to 95-96dB which is right on the 16-bit level. And neither will NAD's proprietary four-pole active filter make

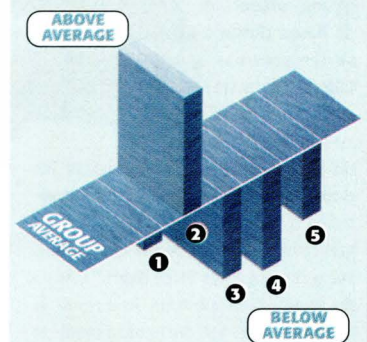
any real impact on the suppression of digital 'images' as this is the preserve of the DAC's integral 8x oversampling filter. Incidentally, the Roksan player in HFC200 used the same converter.

The response is pretty flat, channel balance and separation both excellent but distortion remains a little above average, especially at low signal levels where there are some additional digital 'spikes' to muddy the picture. Low-level linearity is a little wayward too, with errors of up to 3dB over a 100dB range. NAD can, and has, produced better. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

Idle tones and noise reduce the player's dynamic range while high distortion at low signal levels may have a softening effect. Jitter, thankfully, is very well controlled.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES -5%
- 2 JITTER 80%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE -55%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL -65%
- 5 LINEARITY -45%



SPECIFICATIONS

PARAMETER	MANUFACTR'S SPEC.	ACTUAL SPEC.
■ Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBfs	0.007%	0.003%
■ Maximum output level	2.0V	2.1V
■ A-wtd S/N ratio	102dB	95.4dB

SONY CDP-XE330



A little while ago we tested the CDP-XE530, which is closely related to this model. At £130, the 530 cost a little more than the object of our attention here, but the specifications included a number of value added features, including CD Text, an output attenuator that operates on the digital output as well as the analogue one, a headphone socket and more.

The CDP-XE330 is the companion model. Aside from the minor switching they look identical, even sharing their instructions booklets. Differences concern price, and the feature set is shorter and more conventional. Their audio circuits are also related.

The best feature by far is the indented rotary track selector, which enables tracks to be preselected at blinding speed, although track search itself is much tardier. The display is bright and clear, with a calendar-type track readout, but it can't be dimmed or switched off.

An output level control is available, which attenuates the analogue output down to -20dB. A fader function provides automatic

"The best feature by far is the indented rotary track selector, which enables tracks to be preselected at blinding speed."

fades at the beginning or end of tracks, and the output can be adjusted down to -20dB, but the last two operate on the analogue output only. The optical digital output (there is no electrical equivalent) is unaffected.

The remote control is a simplified version of the 'stick' remote that comes with the senior models, and is similar to most recent Sony handsets: it handles well, is a clear design and is a little more ergonomic than some. The player itself is a flyweight, and no better built than you'd expect at the price – but at £100, who's counting?

SOUND QUALITY

The Sony was received surprisingly well for such an inexpensive player. It has a straightforward honesty that meant it easily held its own at the price – flattered, perhaps, by the standard of the group as a whole.

On the Alice in Chains track, the panellists commented: "Good rhythm, pace and speed without harshness"; "cymbals a touch splashy, almost slippery, like silicone on Teflon"; "fairly robust, rounded sound," and "tight bass, but lacks some detail."

The Kissin piano recording was felt to lack "dynamic differentiation" and "warmth in the lower midrange", although a minority felt it sounded "lively and responsive... [with] transparency and speed". The Corrs song was notable for its "excellent separation", but also for being "slightly distorted" and "grainy". The excellent Mahler recording, however, was outside the Sony's compass. It sounded "vivid but sterile" according to one listener and "small scale" according to another.

My listening was in line with the panel view. The Sony does sound rather thin and lightweight, and

although there's plenty of detail, this is partly because the rather grainy and congested mid/top tends to dominate the sound to the detriment of the solidity and structure that better players are able to capture.

CONCLUSION

Not for the first time, an indifferent musical performance is rescued by a low selling price. The difference is that this player is not as indifferent as some, and by any standards the price is very low indeed. Recommended. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£100.00**

The CDP-XE330 brings you a big name player at a no-name price, and while sound quality is a little rough, it is reasonably lively and detailed.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

☒ Sony, The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0XW
☎ (0990) 111999

THE LAB REPORT

This player is based closely on the previous CDP-XE320 with analogue 'tweaks' instigated by Sony's

UK development team. Nevertheless, the global performance of the 'XE330 is dominated by the CXD-2529Q, a compact LSI that combines a total of 64x upsampling, noise-shaping and a 'Pulse Hybrid' DAC on the same silicon substrate. As a result, in many areas the '330 can't hold a candle to the superb technical standing of its costlier brothers. For example, it exhibits a compressive linearity trend at HF (very quiet treble detail appears louder than it should) while the midrange and bass are more accurately resolved at the 15th and 16th bit.



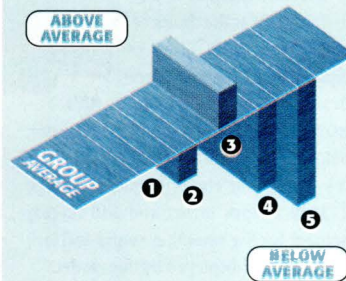
A substantial 1,950psec of, largely, PSU-induced jitter will also muddy bass performance – the "warmth" noted by the panel.

The player's 1.7V output puts it at an immediate -1.4dB disadvantage in A/B comparisons with 2V units like the NAD, while lagging -3dB behind higher-than-average-output players like the Cambridge. Otherwise, the Sony's response is slightly flatter with pre-emphasised CDs and distortion, although low at 0.0025 and 0.0007 per cent (0dBfs and -10dBfs, respectively) does rise quite sharply at low signal levels. Once again, Sony's costlier players are better behaved in this regard. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

The combination of high, supply-related jitter and markedly increased distortion at low (quiet) signal levels probably helps muddy what might otherwise have been a very transparent sound.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES 0%
- 2 JITTER -20%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE 25%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL -55%
- 5 LINEARITY -80%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBfs	<0.0045%	0.0025%
■ Maximum output level	2.0V	1.7V
■ A-wtd S/N ratio	>100dB	102.5dB

TECHNICS SL-PG390



This is Technics' entry-level player, and a thoroughly typical member of the species – a statement with positive and negative connotations. The player uses Technics technology straight out of the bottom drawer, centred on a MASH 1-bit processor and digital servo. On the plus side are its good finish and a smooth (if slow) transport action.

The feature set is limited, but has its highlights. Auto Cue sets the player in pause mode at the start of each track, and Peak Search looks for the highest levels on a disc. The dot matrix display is bold and attractive, but no more informative than usual. The simplicity is echoed around the back, which is home to a pair of analogue outputs and an optical digital S/PDIF, which is the preferred type in some markets.

What we weren't aware of during our early testing was the price. The SL-PG390 sells for about £90, making it one of the least expensive branded players around. The lack of a remote control as standard is part of the explanation (although the player will respond to the remote controls supplied

“Despite the lack of a remote, it is well built and adequately specified in all other respects, and pricing remains impressive.”

with most Technics amps and receivers), and means that when measured up against other players, like is not being compared with like. Nevertheless, it is well built and adequately specified in all other respects, and pricing remains impressive, especially where remote control is unnecessary, for example if the player lives close to the listening 'hot seat'.

SOUND QUALITY

While it sounds "robust", "solid" and even "smooth", the SL-PG390 is also a somewhat relentless sounding player which is at once hard-edged, yet paradoxically also rather dull. Musically the effect is in-yer-face, and oddly lacking in expressiveness and subtlety.

The absence of any real sense of occasion with known, quality recordings was neatly summed up by one panellist who was so thrilled by what he heard that he

felt he "might as well do the washing up instead". Not a very scientific statement, perhaps, but it fairly reflects a cross-section of the panel's opinions, and mine too, based on hands-on testing.

Responding perhaps to its forcefulness and energy, the Alice in Chains track was the most successful in the panel sequence, although even here a rather bloated image scale and a degree of 'splodge' in the bass was identified in several sets of notes, while the Kiss piano excerpt was clearly unsatisfactory, with listeners describing a 'glaze' on the sound and a 'shut-in' quality.

The panel wasn't completely unanimous. The predominantly very hushed Mahler, for example, was generally described as involving and interesting, perhaps in reaction to the standard of the group as a whole, but such positive reactions were thinly spread.

CONCLUSION

This player doesn't achieve a standard of music-making that justifies a formal recommendation. Its characteristically rather disengaged feel and lumpy balance just aren't good enough, so if you can it's worth spending rather more.

Nevertheless, the Technics has its place, and should be seriously considered by those who are strapped for cash and who would otherwise end up buying a no-name player from a second-rank manufacturer. At least the Technics is properly screwed together, and the name is a promise of redress if things go wrong. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆☆

PRICE £90.00

■ The best thing about this player is the assurance that you're buying from a respectable brand.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Technics, Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 8FP
☎ (0990) 357357

THE LAB REPORT

In line with Technics' earlier MASH/PWM players, the SL-PG390A suffers a moderate 740psec of jitter, which is not especially debilitating if it were not almost entirely second-order data-induced in nature. This is known to encourage a grey and generally 'uninteresting' sound (see HFC 147 onwards) which correlates very well with our panel's description of the player lacking "any sense of occasion". Add this to the high 1kOhm output impedance (which makes the player both cable and amplifier-sensitive) and the 'PG390A gets off to a pretty shaky start.

Otherwise, by the standards of the group, we're faced with a very 'average' set of results. Some slight limiting at peak level causes distortion to increase slightly from



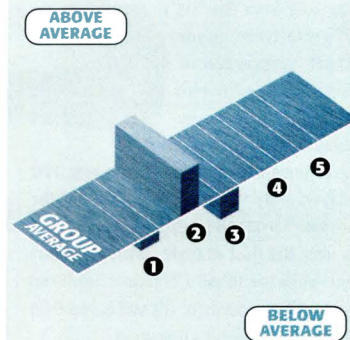
0.0005

to 0.002 per cent (-10dBFs to 0dBFs), while at very low levels this gradually increases to 4.5 per cent (values at -90dBFs typically range from 1.5-12 per cent for the group). In common with earlier MASH/PWM players, the SL-PG390A shows a slight +1dB kink in linearity at 1kHz/-90dBFs and a +0.4dB boost in mid-treble level with pre-emphasised CDs. Otherwise, its response is flat, the S/N ratio good at 100dB and separation only slightly below average at 95dB/75dB (1kHz/20kHz, respectively). Once again, plenty of potential but flawed in execution. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

Manufacturing costs are decimated by using the same CD chassis across several models and integrating much of the player's functions onto a single IC substrate. The sound, however, does not benefit.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES -5%
- 2 JITTER 30%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE -15%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL 0%
- 5 LINEARITY 0%



SPECIFICATIONS

PARAMETER	MANUFACTURER'S SPEC.	ACTUAL SPEC.
■ Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBFs	0.007%	0.002%
■ Maximum output level	2.0V	2.1V
■ A-wtd S/N ratio	100dB	99.5dB

JVC XV-515GD



JVC XV-515GD Visit Our Website: www.hifichoice.co.uk

The falling cost of DVD hardware is illustrated by the increasing number of players from unfamiliar sources, many of which fail to work correctly with CD-ROM extensions used in films such as *The Matrix*, for example – especially in its Region 1 form. Now mainstream manufacturers are beginning to cut their prices, and £300 is an attractive price for a player from a name like JVC.

Naturally, the specifications are fairly simple. The player doesn't have a built-in Dolby Digital decoder, though this is unlikely to upset many videophiles who will almost certainly want to use an separate processor. But there are some more surprising omissions.

The rear panel has a single S-Video socket which can be switched to deliver S-Video or composite, without the now common RGB option. Other sockets include composite (phono) and S-Video (Y/C), and an optical digital output, but an electrical digital out is omitted.

The audio options are set using the standard on-screen menus that have been seen in previous generations of JVC players, and

“There are some nice toys, including a data rate display, a ‘strobe’ feature that shows sequences of nine stills, and zoom.”

like some other brands they look blocky and old fashioned, while the options available, including the ways the player formats data for the digital output, are limited. 24-bit/96kHz recordings can be handled by the internal D/A converter, but the digital output is blocked altogether, rather than being downsampled as usual in a player that won't output data at 96kHz.

But there are some nice toys, including a data rate display (what is it that makes watching the data rate in real time so fascinating?), a ‘strobe’ feature that shows sequences of nine stills, and zoom (a simpler implementation than its Toshiba counterpart).

SOUND QUALITY

One panellist complained that he couldn't “separate the voices” in the Alice in Chains track, and while he found the player sounded “clean”, it was also “muddled”, and

in the Kissin recoding, “lacking in space”. And so it continued. The Corrs was accused of “strident vocals – this isn't easy to listen to”, and the Mahler suffered from “restricted dynamics”. A theme of the panel tests was that the music sounded large scale, but defocused. “There is a slight glaze to the sound,” wrote one in his sum-up comment. “It's powerful but overblown, and in the end there's little sense of occasion.”

No disagreement here. In the hands-on testing, sound quality was disappointingly soft-centred and lacking in definition. Imagery simply didn't really happen, and trying to get to grips with the sound was frustrating: the sound didn't come alive, and the temptation was to turn the volume higher than usual to achieve real impact.

The main problem was a simple lack of resolution. The Kissin piano recording, which has an unusual

clarity and purity, sounded veiled, and lacking in the subtle expressiveness and articulation that makes his playing so special, while the Mahler simply sounded flat and uncommunicative.

CONCLUSION

£300 is much less than you would have paid until very recently for a pukka brand name player, but pricing is a moving target, and will be long forgotten while you become increasingly frustrated by the lazy and rather opaque sound quality. It's not offensive, but it certainly won't excite.

AG

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £300.00

Bland-sounding player with diffuse imagery fails to hit the right buttons: this one is not for the audiophile.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

JVC, JVC Business Park, Priestley Way, London NW2 7BA
 ☎ (020) 8450 3282

THE LAB REPORT

Aside from the '515's relatively poor 37.5dB suppression of digital 'images' (which is a function of the over-sampling filter), its technical performance is up with the best DVD players and particularly reminiscent of the Toshiba SD-3109B (see p36). The response is very flat (just -0.09dB down at 20kHz) and while the 103dB S/N ratio is hardly up to 24-bit standards(!), it's still more than adequate for 16-bit CD sources.

The minimal errors of +0.0dB/-0.5dB in linearity over a full 100dB dynamic range also demonstrate the potential of its digital heart, as does the very low peak level distortion. This remains between 0.0005 to 0.009 per cent from 20Hz to 20kHz and



holds to 0.0005 per cent and 0.005 per cent at -10dBFs and -30dBFs, respectively. A value of 2.7 per cent at -90dBFs is also very good, especially as the spectrum is otherwise free of digital artifice.

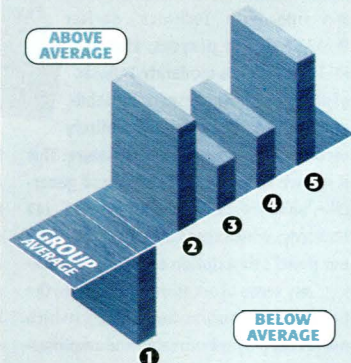
Unusually, there are noise-like sidebands associated with strong HF peaks (>18kHz), rather like a very mild version of the noise-like jitter that plagues the Sharp DVD machine. In this instance, the total correlated (i.e. non noise-like) jitter amounts to just 350psec which is far from crippling.

These slight foibles aside, the XV-515 remains one of the 'cleaner' DVD players available. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

Stopband rejection could be tightened up, but the XV-515 is otherwise firing on all cylinders and currently used as a bedrock for other manufacturer's OEM machines.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES -60%
- 2 JITTER 70%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE 30%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL 35%
- 5 LINEARITY 70%



SPECIFICATIONS

Parameter	Manufacturer's Spec.	Actual Spec.
Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBFs	0.002%	0.0005%
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.1V
A-wtd S/N ratio	>100dB	103.0dB

NAD T-550



The delay in introducing NAD's first DVD player seems to have been caused by the company's unwillingness to take the easy path by sourcing a third-party machine. Although the T-550 uses non-proprietary parts, the design, including much of the critical software, is NAD's own.

This compact and discreet model has a Dolby Digital processor, and can drive the six channel dumb input on suitably equipped home cinema amps. The T-550 will feed a dts datastream to any appropriately equipped amplifier. Despite claims in some of NAD's literature, there is of course no integral Dolby Pro-Logic decoder.

Disc handling is smooth, but s-l-o-w, and preselecting a track is not possible before the Table of Contents track has been read. Spin it 180° and you'll find electrical and optical digital audio outputs, a set of six outputs for 5.1 channel digital material, and a separate pair of mixed (ie stereo) outputs, which makes it feasible to feed one set of outputs to a home cinema system and the other to a dedicated stereo system.

"In its favour, it remains a more consistent and disciplined performer than some of the alternatives, CD or DVD."

Composite and S-Video outputs are also included, along with an RGB equipped Scart socket.

One minor but potentially significant limitation concerns 24-bit/96kHz recordings, which are automatically downsampled to 48kHz at the digital output, although they can be processed onboard at the full clock rate and fed to the outside world as analogue. The video side is gimmick free, and includes a ten-bit DAC.

SOUND QUALITY

NAD's bold claim that its DVD player is designed to match the sound quality of its CD players turns out to be fairly credible in practice. The T-550 does indeed have audio character similar to the C520 (see p27), although this includes some of the less happy qualities of the latter: a dull, muted balance, defocused midband and

a sometimes thuddy bass, with a suggestion of overhang with some material – for example in parts of the Mahler and the Alice in Chains recordings. This is also far from being the most detailed player in this test, but in its favour it remains a more consistent and disciplined performer than some of the alternatives, CD or DVD.

In the hands-on listening, I found the NAD DVD a little duller than the C520 CD player, but on the whole still quite listenable. Piano recordings were dulled, but strong and dynamic, while well-made vocal recordings 'breathed' naturally, which is more than can be said of the performances of some of the other DVD players.

The player was also something of a success on-screen, with clean picture results using the RGB output, and an attractive, easy to use set-up screens.

CONCLUSION

Billed as a 'music first' player, the T-550 seems intent on hiding its light under a bushel, barely betraying that it is a DVD player, except by the row of icons along the fascia flagging the various decoding options, and by a modestly enhanced display compared with the sibling CD player that it otherwise so closely resembles. The resemblance is more than skin deep too, but in the final analysis it is beaten as a CD player by the C520, if only on points, and as a DVD player by other comparably priced machinery in this test. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £500.00

■ NAD's first DVD player turns out to be a worthy if unexciting all-rounder, but crucially lacks precision and focus.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Lenbrook UK, Unit 15, Faraday Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 3RY

☎ (01296) 482017

THE LAB REPORT

Despite featuring separate digital/analogue power supply regulation, the T550 suffers a moderate quantity of

PSU-related jitter – not unlike the Sony CD player in this test, in fact. At 1,260psec, this is sufficiently high to account for the "thuddy" bass quality reported by Alvin's listeners. This result is not typical of the '24-bit' PCM1716 DAC used by the T550 in CD guise nor, while we're on the subject, is the slightly higher-than-average distortion.

A mild peak-level overload causes THD to increase slightly from 0.002 to 0.007 per cent over the top 10dB of its dynamic range. Very low-level THD (4.8 per cent at -90dBFs) is also fractionally higher than



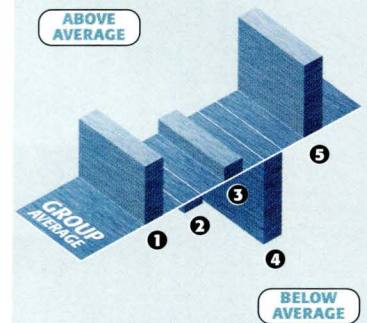
expected for this chip, just as the 102dB S/N ratio is a few dB short of what's possible. Either way, it's a long way short of the 140dB+ that is theoretically feasible from true 24-bit technology (see *Oasis*, HFC 187).

The response is slightly flatter with pre-emphasised CDs (+0.0/-0.08dB compared with +0.0/-0.2dB) but perhaps the T550's most unusual foible is its 0.4dB channel imbalance. At peak output this means the right channel is at 1.9V when the left is at 2.0V, a difference that's potentially audible in a well set-up system with accurately pair-matched loudspeakers. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

Nothing wrong with the choice of digital electronics, but the implementation and associated analogue circuitry may well be hampering its best efforts.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES 40%
- 2 JITTER -5%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE 10%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL -55%
- 5 LINEARITY 50%



SPECIFICATIONS

Parameter	Manufacturer's Spec.	Actual Spec.
Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBFs	0.008%	0.007%
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.0V
A-wtd S/N ratio	>105dB	101.6dB

CAPTURE

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PIONEER DV-525



The DV-525 is the replacement for the DV-515 (see HFC 190), which in turn replaced the DV-505. Each was the entry-level player of its day, and each was a little better equipped than most of the competition, especially in matters related to sound reproduction.

The DV-525 is the only DVD player of the six reviewed here able to read CD-R discs and, as I discovered, CD-RW (re-writeable) discs too. It is also unusual in being able to deliver a 24-bit/96kHz digital signal for outboard processing. This is an esoteric requirement given the paucity of 24/96 software, but there is probably more of it around than Region 2 – and even Region 1 – discs, and no self-respecting DVD player would dream of omitting dts compatibility.

Other changes in this model include a new set-up menu which is more comprehensive and usable than before, for example because it allows MPEG data to be output as PCM while Dolby Digital is delivered as a bitstream. The 24/96 output already referred to

“The Pioneer received high acclaim. Praise indeed – not least because no one knew if they were listening to CD or DVD.”

can be downsampled to 48kHz for those DACs that won't work at the full clock speed.

The Scart socket can now output S-Video (supplementing the S-Video socket) and RGB. The DV-525 has only slipped back from its predecessor in one respect. The new remote control is a super-concentrated mass of little buttons with no display, joysticks or other sexy gimmicks.

SOUND QUALITY

Among the best of the DVD players when assessed with compact discs, the DV-525 was variously praised for its “good dynamics and piano tone” (Kissin), its “very musical quality, with strong imagery, textures and instrumental tone colours” (Mahler), its “solid impact” and for “a level of brilliance not heard in the others”, (the five players heard up to that

point on the day in question). With a single dissenter on just one presentation, the Pioneer received a near universal acclaim, and this is praise indeed – not least because no one knew whether they were listening to CD or DVD.

This is indeed an excellent player. In hands-on testing, when compared directly with the other DVD players it was no contest, with only the Sony model coming close. The Pioneer is detailed and clean sounding, although the bass is a little on the thin side, and perhaps as a result imagery tends to lack depth and space.

If some of the panellists' comments seem a tad over the top, they arise in part because of the lower-than-average performance of the group as a whole, whether CD or DVD. The Pioneer still only ranks alongside a decent budget CD player.

CONCLUSION

This is one of a handful of DVD players which also come close to fulfilling the promise of being worthwhile CD players. It's fast, lucid and detailed, and though the bass is on the lean side, it's refined enough, and rises to the occasion well with some of the more complex material we tried.

It is no less impressive as a video player, with average or slightly above average picture definition and colour, and the ability to deal with 24/96 recordings and CD-R/RWs places it in a class of its own at the price. Best Buy. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £399.00

The DV-525 continues the tradition of ultra-flexible, good sounding DVD players from Pioneer.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Pioneer, Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Slough, Berks SL2 4QP
☎ (01753) 789789

THE LAB REPORT

This is the only DVD player in our survey that successfully handles CD-R discs and suggests that Pioneer has given real thought to optimising CD as

well as DVD replay. Technically, it has a number of interesting features. The A-wtd S/N ratio is just above the 16-bit level at 98dB, but this is limited by an innocuous white noise, free of idle patterns and hum and at the ideal level to disguise any hard-sounding digital spurious.

This said, distortion at very low signal levels is itself very low indeed – figures of just 1.9 per cent at -90dBfs are exceptional, even for a good CD player. Linearity is typically good, but deviates on the right channel only at low levels.



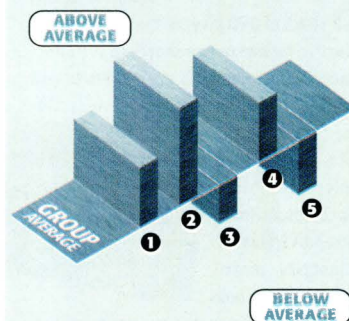
Meanwhile, although distortion is not the lowest possible at 0.002 per cent (re. 0dBfs), this figure is maintained all the way through to -30dBfs where such a performance is more unusual.

This is an example where consistency rather than the numbers themselves will promote a very clean and transparent sound. All of this is aided by a low(-ish) 370psec of jitter which is free of any low-rate effects likely to compromise its stereo imagery. The absence of Pioneer's 'Legato' digital filtering also implies that there would be a more consistent outcome with different amplifiers. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

Although not state-of-the-art in terms of basic figures, its performance has been artfully 'engineered' to deliver the best from the technology while camouflaging any weaker points.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES: 40%
- 2 JITTER: 65%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE: -25%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL: 40%
- 5 LINEARITY: -35%



SPECIFICATIONS

Parameter	Manufacturer's Spec.	Actual Spec.
Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBfs	0.002%	0.002%
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.0V
A-wtd S/N ratio	102dB	98.0dB

SHARP DV-760



"Advanced Digital Super Picture allows you to strike a Faustian bargain between video noise and picture detail."

Compact and simple looking, the Sharp DV-760 is home to some novel picture enhancement gizmos to improve the results from its ten-bit video DAC. These include Digital Gamma correction, which provides manual overrides for brightness and contrast, and Advanced Digital Super Picture, which allows you to strike a Faustian bargain between video noise and picture detail. However, the reality is that picture quality is neither as noise-free nor as crisp as some rivals.

The DV-760 also claims to include a dts decoder to supplement the more usual Dolby Digital and near useless MPEG-2 (5.1 channel) audio decoders. This would make it a 'one-stop shop' for any Region 2 disc, but it turns out that the integral "dts decoder" is nothing more than the ability to output a dts digital datastream, like most players. 96kHz recordings can be decoded internally, but the digital output (and thus any outboard D/A converter) is blocked. A Dolby Pro-Logic decoder is included, however.

The player is equipped with a Scart line output with composite, S-Video and RGB – and, surprisingly, a true component video output, normally a facility limited to some US domestic models, although component and RGB are not available at the same time. In this country it can be used to drive certain video projectors (mainly high-end CRT models), but little else. The handset is coded to control a variety of television receivers.

SOUND QUALITY

"A little on the choppy side... lacks clarity and transparency," wrote one panellist, commenting on the Alice in Chains track. His conclusion was that the Sharp sounded "detailed yet distant", and although there was some spread of opinion in the panel, this seems to have been simply a reflection of its rather uneven performance.

This player has an airy, even wispy quality in the mid and treble combined with a thin bass. This makes the whole effect rather lightweight and lacking in substance, and somewhat synthetic, too. The strong sense of detail was not matched by real soundstage presence or tonal variety, and some of the listening notes describe a degree of coloration and overhang.

The most positive comments come from one listener who described the Sharp as "precise", but even he described stereo imagery as "spatially flat". My listening pointed to a bleaching of tonal colour and a suggestion of overhang compared with a good CD player, but the Sharp at least acted as a restorative after the heavy-handed opacity of rivals.

Picture quality was moderate at best, with fine detail not too well

presented, but the Dolby Digital decoder worked well, with performance on a par with the processor in a Yamaha DSP-A1.

CONCLUSION

Modest picture and sound quality make this player less than fully competitive, and as a surrogate CD player it has a long way to go. Still, its combination of manual picture adjustment options and built-in Dolby decoders may make it viable for some systems. But overall, taking price into account, it received a thumbs-down. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £500.00

A bit of a ruffian, this is a superficially detailed, but ultimately ill-disciplined performer.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Sharp Electronics, Sharp House, Thorp Road, Newton Heath, Manchester M40 5BE
(0800) 262958

THE LAB REPORT

Something of a sore thumb among our clutch of DVD players, the DV-760 is distinctive for one or two shortfalls in performance which, as that's my job, I'm bound to point out. First, the output level is a little below average at 1.77V, although this isn't sufficient to compromise its 102.5dB S/N ratio. Linearity, meanwhile, is just about

the best in the test with errors of just +0.1dB/-0.4dB over a full 100dB range (20Hz-20kHz). So why does the response with both standard and pre-emphasised CDs droop by -1.4dB at 20kHz while its separation folds to just 63dB? This suggests a less-than-optimum PCB layout. Distortion,

too, increases from 0.004 per cent midband to 0.02 per cent at 20Hz and 0.012 per cent at 20kHz.

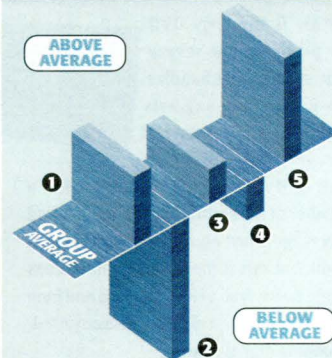
More importantly, and despite enjoying a very accurate clock (with a mere +20ppm error), the jitter spectrum is like something from the *Boy's Own Book of Technical Horrors* (which I have yet to write). Amounting to 4,570psec, the spectrum is riddled with all manner of undesirable peaks, including a vast wave of noise-like jitter that's not even included in the calculated figure. No CD player worth its salt produces a spectrum like this, so why accept it in a DVD player? **PMI**



HOW IT COMPARES

Even if the player were perfect in every other regard, the huge levels of jitter would still compromise subjective detailing and stereo imagery to an unacceptable degree.

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------|
| 1 | SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES | 50% |
| 2 | JITTER | -95% |
| 3 | PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE | 25% |
| 4 | HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL | -25% |
| 5 | LINEARITY | 75% |



SPECIFICATIONS

Parameter	Manufacturer's Spec.	Actual Spec.
Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBfs	<0.005%	0.0035%
Maximum output level	2.0V	1.8V
A-wtd S/N ratio	105dB	102.5dB

SONY DVP-S325



The DVP-S325 is a basic deck with no on-board Dolby digital decoder, but it does recognise dts recordings and delivers a suitably formatted data-stream from its digital outputs. One of its features is a new menu system called Magic Pad GUI (graphic user interface), despite which the active part of the system is text-based.

For once, though, the text is well formed, leaving the horribly pixelated menus of previous players behind, and there are a reasonable range of set-up options, including the ability to set the Dolby Digital, MPEG and dts digital output options individually, and to select a Dolby Surround downmix on the analogue outputs.

Connections possibilities include two Scart sockets, one of which can deliver S-Video, RGB or composite signals, and separate sockets for S-Video and composite video, plus optical and electrical digital outputs and the obligatory analogue outputs. There is no headphone socket, and no facility for streaming 24-bit/96kHz recordings from the digital output.

"The player is remarkably compact and discreet, with a very simple, pared-down set of controls on its fascia."

It wouldn't be a Sony without some neat gadgets, and the player dutifully obliges with a display of the audio and video bit rate, including a bit rate 'history'. There are also some basic variable speed playback features.

The player comes with a busy looking handset with a cursor keypad which can also operate a TV. The player itself has a similar cursor controller, but otherwise is remarkably compact and discreet, with a very simple, pared-down set of controls on its fascia. For once in a budget DVD player, disc handling is smooth and rapid.

SOUND QUALITY

This turned out to be one of the stronger players in the test, but it wasn't all plain sailing. "Very controlled, a little 'shouty', but with a solid, weighty bass," was one reaction to the Alice in Chains track,

but the Kissin was described as having the "the best piano tone so far", and the Corrs came across as "listenable, with strong focus and sense of scale... the voices and instruments separate well".

In a different presentation, the panellist's views had hardened in tone, and he now described the Alice in Chains recording as "blowsy, overblown and loud sounding", which was reiterated with the Corrs track. His concluding comment was: "I didn't enjoy this – it's all a bit too hard work."

The other panel comments fell between these two extremes, and the 'loud' quality identified by some of the panellists was also apparent in hands-on tests. There was no shortage of detail, but musically it tended to sound rather hard and aggressive, with foregrounded perspectives and a lack of air and space. Lending weight

to the observations, the Sony was consistent in its strengths and weaknesses across a wide range of music types, from Mozart to the latest Jeff Beck album.

CONCLUSION

The Sony is not the best in its class, but it remains a fine, simple DVD player with good picture quality which is also capable of holding its own as a decent, slightly over-emphatic, forward sounding compact disc player at a reasonable price. Recommended. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£330.00

The 'loud' quality noted in the listening was a consistent feature, but this remains a detailed, articulate player with decent picture quality and sharp pricing.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

☒ Sony, The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0XW
☎ (0990) 111999

THE LAB REPORT

Although Sony's CXD-8799 processor is likened to a "24-bit/96kHz version" of the hybrid pulse DAC used in the CDP-XE330 CD player, its superior performance suggests that there is little parallel between the two technologies. For example, the exceptionally low 165psec jitter puts this DVD player on a par with Sony's better CD players and that, by inference, puts it in the top five per cent of all players, full stop. At peak output, distortion increases from just 0.002 per cent at midrange frequencies to 0.04 per cent at HF, although the latter is maintained over the top 30dB of its dynamic range. This suggests an analogue rather than digital



limitation, particularly as there's no more than a 0.5dB error in linearity at 20kHz over a full 100dB range.

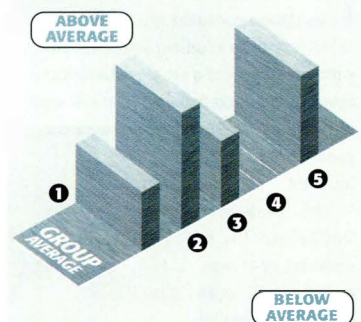
The 104dB A-wtd S/N ratio is also up with the best, with digital 'images' suppressed by 80dB and idle patterns reduced below -120dBfs.

Separation holds above 100dB across the audio range, channel balance is good to 0.1dB while the response of both standard and pre-emphasised CDs is flat to within -0.2dB. All in all, this looks like a solid and reliable design, although the ability to replay CD-R material would have been a welcome gesture for such a high-flying machine. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

Arguably the most technically competent of all budget/mid-priced DVD players with a technical performance to rival the better CD players at about £200.

1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES	40%
2 JITTER	80%
3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE	45%
4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL	0%
5 LINEARITY	60%



SPECIFICATIONS

Parameter	Manufacturer's Spec.	Actual Spec.
Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBfs	>0.0025%	0.0016%
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.1V
A-wtd S/N ratio	>110dB	104.2dB

TOSHIBA SD-3109



TOSHIBA SD-3109 Visit Our Website: www.hifichoice.co.uk

The SD-3109 is a little unusual in a couple of respects. The feature Toshiba chooses to highlight in its promotional material is that it is a twin disc player which, quote, "doubles the pleasure". If anyone can explain how this might happen, they should get some kind of prize – they won't, of course, but they should.

More interesting to most HFC readers will be the inclusion of a Pacific Microsonics HDCD digital filter. The 6dB boost that normally occurs with HDCD can be turned off to prevent the overload that may arise with some partnering equipment.

Finished in a champagne gold colour, the SD3109 has a built-in Dolby Digital decoder, and like most current players it also recognises dts DVDs (all six of them I think, at last count).

There are separate six and two-channel analogue outputs, which may make it easier to set up in systems, allowing selection of a two or six-channel input by changing inputs on the AV amp instead

of relying on automatic switching. The player could also be connected directly to a digital surround TV (Toshiba's own range springs unbidden to mind), while the two-channel feed could be connected to a stereo hi-fi system. A 'Spatializer' option is designed to give 3D-like effects with a two channel system.

Like all good players, the video is handled by a ten-bit video DAC and a so-called Super Anti Aliasing Filter, which is claimed to enhance picture resolution to 540 lines from the usual 500 lines. Sections of the display can be magnified and panned, and a bit rate display is on tap. Outputs include a Scart socket switchable between S-Video, composite and RGB. The backlit remote control is massive, but well laid out, with the minor controls hidden behind a cover.

SOUND QUALITY

There are DVD players that have strong appeal to a wide cross section because they work well as audio players, and there are others

that seem to have been conceived mainly as an add-on for a TV. This is one of the latter. "There's no subtlety in the vocals or the percussion – and what's happened to the soundstage?" was one comment on the Alice in Chains track, a recording that requires strong resolving power if it is not to sound a mess.

Other comments on this piece included: "Warm and full bass, but the vocals are thin and strained – although it's snappier and more rhythmic than the reference." Another put it more succinctly: "Tizz bang" The Toshiba was also tellingly described in the sonorous Mahler recording as "playing the notes, but not playing the music". Quite so.

This was another player that simply didn't engage the senses, not because it did anything terribly wrong, but because it seemed to skate over the surface of the music without getting to grips with what was going on underneath. Tonally it sounded smooth, and even attractive, and the tell-tale

inconsistencies and edginess associated with high levels of distortion were not there, but there was little sense of image location or differentiation by depth.

CONCLUSION

There are few of the overt nasties that plague some players, but there is little here to interest the audiophile. Picture quality was above average in this group, but musically it failed to engage or excite, despite the HDCD filter. It simply left too much unsaid. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
BUILD	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
PRICE	£380.00

■ Good picture quality is partnered to tidy, but lacklustre music making abilities.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE
 Toshiba, Toshiba House, Frimley Rd, Camberley, Surrey GU16 5JJ
 ☎ (01276) 62222

THE LAB REPORT

In stark contrast to the Sharp, but with more than a nod to the JVC, Toshiba's SD-3109B boasts an excellent jitter spectrum, with just 170psec of a simple data-induced jitter and complete freedom from low-rate phenomena which might otherwise compromise its stereo imagery.

The on-board DAC behaves like a multi-bit, or at least a hybrid IC with exceptionally low levels of ultrasonic noise, a wide 104.5dB S/N ratio but a proportionally higher noise modulation. Despite the relatively poor 38dB suppression of digital 'images', the SD-3109 should still offer a consistent performance with different partnering amps.



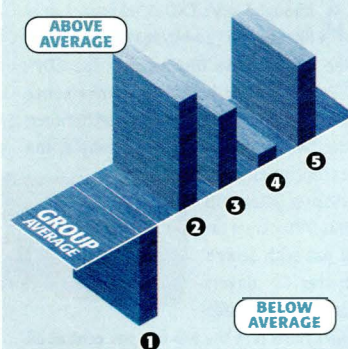
Distortion is low at 0.001, 0.0007 and 0.005 per cent (0dBFs, -10dBFs and -30dBFs, respectively), increasing to a moderate 3.1 per cent at -90dBFs where errors in linearity amount to just +0.0dB/-0.6dB. Even at 20kHz, distortion holds to within 4 per cent at -90dBFs, which is a fabulous result.

The response, meanwhile, with both standard and pre-emphasised CDs, drops by just -0.3dB at 20kHz while the channel balance is within 0.05dB. Any spurious idle patterns are better than 123dB down from the 2.09V peak output, further reinforcing the 'clean' overall appearance of the SD-3109's audio spectrum. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

Perhaps not as artfully balanced as the Pioneer, the SD-3109 still ranks as a very well executed DVD design that sacrifices little in the way of CD performance.

- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES -60%
- 2 JITTER 75%
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE 50%
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS LEVEL 10%
- 5 LINEARITY 55%



SPECIFICATIONS

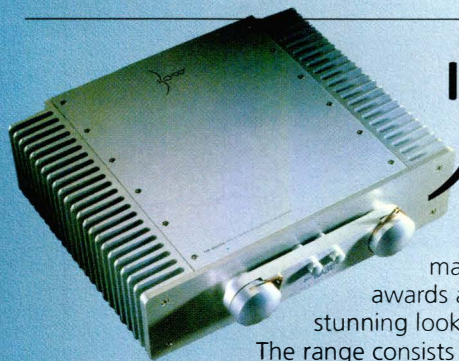
Parameter	Manufacturer's Spec.	Actual Spec.
Distortion @ 1kHz/0dBFs	<0.001%	<0.001%
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.1V
A-wtd S/N ratio	>112dB	104.5dB

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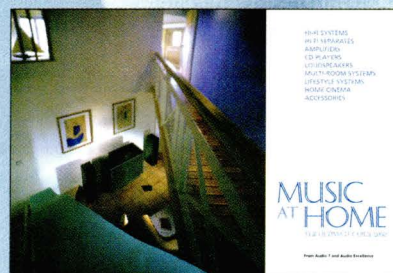
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CD PLAYERS

CONCLUSIONS

THE BEST IN THE TEST

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO

D500 CD player – £200
Ultra simple, even rather dour exterior is a sign that resources have been concentrated where they will do most good – inside. Musically it's a grower. At first it sounds well controlled and clean, if a shade clinical, but it allows the music to speak for itself which makes it rewarding in the long term.



PIONEER

DV-525 DVD player – £399
A star among inexpensive DVD players, the DV-525 has a clarity and focus that sets it apart, and although the balance is lean, this is one of the few DVD players that passes muster as a CD player. And the peripheral benefits – CD-R/RW compatibility and a 24-bit/96kHz digital output – make it even more attractive.



NAD C520 CD player – £170

This smooth sounding player from the NAD stable will add light and colour to stale sounding systems, but with a quintessential NAD house sound: slightly rolled off and lacking in fine detail, but smooth and with a strong sense of detail and presence. This is also a CD player that is well judged to work with comparably priced ancillaries.

SONY

CDP-XE330 CD player – £100
On the raw, thin side of neutral, the CDP-XE330 nevertheless has an engaging personality when combined with well behaved budget systems, although it tends to show its dark side with those that are brash or bright sounding. For a mere £100 it's impressive value.



SONY DVP-S325

DVD player – £330
A very well priced DVD player, the DVP-S325 also holds its own as a CD player – outperforming the CDP-XE330. It does tend to sound rather 'loud' and aggressive though, and needs careful system matching. Excellent value.



CD PLAYER COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	CAMBRIDGE AUDIO	HARMAN/KARDON	MARANTZ	NAD	SONY	TECHNICS
MODEL	D500	HD720	CD5000	C520	CDP-XE330	SL-PG390A
PRICE	£200.00	£230.00	£150.00	£170.00	£100.00	£90.00
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
DISTORTION @ 1kHz/0dBfs	0.0008%	0.003%	0.002%	0.003%	<0.0025%	0.002%
MAXIMUM OUTPUT LEVEL	2.4V	2.1V	1.95V	2.1V	1.7V	2.1V
A-WTD S/N RATIO	98.1dB	96.9dB	102.4dB	95.4dB	102.5dB	99.5dB

Alvin Gold sorts the winners from the losers in the great CD vs DVD player showdown.

During this test, an acquaintance was talking about MP3, saying that he had been told it sounded as good as compact disc, and was incredulous at the suggestion that this might not be the case. "It's digital, isn't it?" he responded, as though this said everything that needed to be said.

Well, this month we have twelve digital players, each of which has a specification that should have matched or bettered the listening abilities of any human listener – the operative words here being "should have". Of course, had this been the case, they would have all sounded the same, but clearly they didn't. The differences, as usual, were identified with more than satisfactory levels of consistency.

What was not predicted, because it has not always been the case in the past even with groups of budget players, is that the overall standard of sound quality was disappointingly low. With a few honourable exceptions, most of the group sounded – well, synthetic. They were well extended in the frequency domain, precise and detailed, but didn't always manage to pass the real litmus test by making music.

There were exceptions, of which the Cambridge Audio

D500 (a CD player) was easily the best overall. You might think that swings it for compact disc, but it wasn't quite that simple: the only other Best Buy was the Pioneer DV-525, a DVD player.

Of the three Recommended models, two were CD players and one a DVD, so if the advantage lies with compact disc players, it can hardly be described as a rout. Remember they were compared on a strictly like-for-like basis, and the players were mixed together for many of the tests. The only way in which the DVD players were treated differently was on the value for money scale, which necessarily takes account of the extra functionality of the DVD players, although even here the results were strongly weighted towards Red Book standard, 16-bit/44.1kHz PCM sound quality.

Of the three CD players not recommended, the Technics has the best alibi as it costs just £90. It isn't exactly transparent sounding, and wasn't felt to be very involving, but there are worse players at this price point, and it is always a good idea to buy from an established manufacturer.

The Marantz CD5000 costs rather more, but at £150 it costs less than most of its siblings, and doesn't really sound like a typical Marantz, most of which are somewhat smoother and sweeter. It is an energetic player though, and a well equipped one, with CD Text and CD-R/RW replay capability. The Harman/Kardon HD720 tips the scales at £230, and although neatly turned-out and immediate and punchy sounding, it was disappointingly aggressive and ill-disciplined, earning the epithet "hooligan" from the panel.

Of the DVD players, the JVC XV-515GD was the most affordable at £300. The price accounts for some significant omissions,

including an electrical digital output and an inability to feed a 24-bit/96kHz digital output, but the main problem was a muddled, cluttered feel, and a certain stridency and lack of immediacy. The £380 Toshiba SD-3109 is an altogether more elaborate player which includes a Dolby Digital decoder and a twin disc facility. For the audio fraternity, an HDCD decoder is on the menu, but sound quality was lacklustre.

The final two remaining DVD players cost £500. The Sharp DV-760 is a user-friendly player with

its own Dolby Digital decoder and some powerful picture enhancements abilities, and also component video socketry, which suggests that its true market may be those with video projectors, of which Sharp is a major manufacturer. Musically, however, it failed to shine. The NAD T-550 was designed from the ground up to appeal to the 'sound quality-first' buyer, and it has much to commend it. The problems are a rather dull balance and the pricing, which is simply too high for the performance on offer.

BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDATIONS



BEST BUYS: Our famous Best Buy swagtag is awarded to hi-fi equipment which offers an excellent standard of performance at an attractive price. Best Buy winners are superb all-round components.

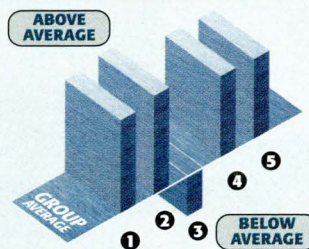


RECOMMENDED: Recommended products are first-class audiophile propositions, losing out to Best Buy status only because of a higher price or less competitive overall sound quality.

UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR GRAPH MEASUREMENTS

Behind Hi-Fi Choice's unique bar graphs are some of the most advanced measurements made anywhere on the planet. They are provided by our Technical Editor, Paul Miller, using both GPIB-controlled measurement hardware and his own, award-winning, PC-based Virtual Instrument software. Each bar graph value is derived from a weighted statistic of several key measurements and is displayed relative to a notional zero per cent which represents the group average for that particular category.

THE BAR GRAPHS



- 1 SUPPRESSION OF DIGITAL IMAGES:** This indicates the effectiveness of the player's digital filter in removing 'aliasing' or 'stopband' distortions immediately outside of the audio band.
- 2 JITTER:** Any uncertainty in the timing of the digital code produces digital jitter which manifests as an insidious form of distortion during digital-to-analogue conversion. The lower the figure the better.
- 3 PRACTICAL DYNAMIC RANGE:** This is determined by the player's Signal-to-Noise ratio and to what degree it is compromised by any Noise Modulation occurring under real signal conditions.
- 4 HARMONIC DISTORTION VS. LEVEL:** This bar chart value is derived from the variation in distortion both with frequency and signal level. The consistency and nature of the distortion also forms part of the equation.
- 5 LINEARITY:** Linearity is a measure of the player's low-level resolution. If a signal coded at -80dB emerges from the player at -80.5dB then this represents a deviation in its linearity of 0.5dB.

TEST INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR

Our Technical Editor, Paul Miller, has been awarded Test Innovator of the Year by *Test* magazine, the leading European journal of the test and measurement industry. This gong came in recognition of Paul's Jitter Measurement Suite, as used to test CD players for *Hi-Fi Choice*.



DVD PLAYER COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	JVC	NAD	PIONEER	SHARP	SONY	TOSHIBA
MODEL	XV-515GD	T-550	DV-525	DV-760	DVP-S325	SD-3109
PRICE	£300.00	£500.00	£399.00	£500.00	£330.00	£380.00
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
DISTORTION @ 1kHz/0dBfs	0.0005%	0.007%	0.002%	0.0035%	0.0016%	0.001%
MAXIMUM OUTPUT LEVEL	2.1V	2V	2V	1.8V	2.1V	2.1V
A-WTD S/N RATIO	103dB	101.6dB	98dB	102.5dB	104.2dB	104.5dB



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ACCINGTON Cryers 01254 391440	BRACKNELL B&B Hi-Fi 01344 424556	CHICHESTER Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01242 241171	HORNCHURCH Rhythms Hi-Fi 01708 455646	LONDON A&M Electronics 020 7580 1577	HARBOROUGH The Auditorium 01858 461460	OXFORD Oxford Audio 01865 790879	SEVENOAKS Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01732 459555	TEWKESBURY Sight & Sound 01682 298109	THORNTON HEATH AWE 020 8653 3657
AYLESBURY Northwood Audio 01296 428790	BRADFORD Erricks 01274 309266	CHESTER Audio Excellence 01244 345576	HOUNSLOW Musical Imagos 020 8569 5802	HUDDERSFIELD Huddersfield Hi-Fi 01494 544668	MANSFIELD Techniques 01623 26315	PERTH Richer Sounds 01738 64274	SEVENOAKS Richer Sounds 0114 255 5861	TRURO E.T.S. 01872 79809	TUNBRIDGE WELLS Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01491 839305
BANBURY Blinkhorns 01295 259859	BRENTWOOD Audio T 01277 264730	CHICHESTER Peter's Hi-Fi 01244 319392	ENFIELD Audio T 020 8367 3132	HULL The Audio Room 01482 896166	MARGATE LMD Audio 01843 220092	PETERBOROUGH Link Electronics 01733 553333	SEVENOAKS Fraser's Hi-Fi 01733 520244	WALLINGFORD Astley Audio 01491 839305	WARRINGTON Doug Brady Hi-Fi 01925 828009
BANGOR I & H Griffiths 01248 370655	BRIGHTON Hill's Sound & Vision 01273 418006	CHICHESTER Now That's... Hi-Fi 01243 537788	EPING Chew & Osborne 01992 574242	ILFORD PRC Hi-Fi & Video 020 8514 7449	MIDDLEBROUGH Gilson Audio 01642 248793	PLYMOUTH Richer Sounds 01752 222256	SEVENOAKS Movement Audio 01202 730865	WARRINGTON Practical Hi-Fi 01925 632179	WATFORD Hi-Fi City 01923 226169
BARNSTAPLE J & A Video Centre 01271 324384	BRISTOL Audio Excellence 0117 926 4975	CHORLEY Monitor Sound 01257 271935	EPSOM Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01372 745883	INVERNESS The Music Station 01463 225523	MILTON KEYNES Technosound 01908 604949	PORTSMOUTH Now That's Hi-Fi 023 9281 1230	SEVENOAKS Practical Hi-Fi 0161 480 1700	WELLS Cosmic 01932 854522	WILMSLOW Swift Hi-Fi 01625 526213
BATH Moss of Bath 01225 465085	BRISTOL Audio Excellence 0117 926 4975	CONGLETON Hi-Fi Showrooms 01260 280017	EXETER Audio Excellence 01392 491194	KIDDERMINSTER MAX 020 7497 1346	NEWCASTLE Global Hi-Fi 0191 230 3600	PRESTON Audio Excellence 01772 253057	SEVENOAKS Practical Hi-Fi 01772 883958	WIMBORNE Superfi 01625 285010	WIMBORNE Superfi 01625 285010
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One of Life's affordable luxuries . . .



Hi-Fi Choice

(December '96)

Cable Talk Studio 2
Sound *****

THE VERDICT

▲ Tonally, dynamically and rhythmically a truly first-class cable

▼ Very little to criticise.

Price: £65 (1m pair)

Home Entertainment

(August '98)

Cable Talk Studio 2
Verdict *****



▲ . . . handles music & video sound with equal aplomb . . .

▼ . . . the cable is excellent & can be used almost anywhere.

Cable Talk

Interconnects & Speakers Cables

For further information please write, telephone, fax or e-mail to
Cable Talk, Unit J, Albany Park, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2PL

Tel (UK only): FREEPHONE 0800 100 6868 or Tel : (+44) (0)1276 686717 Fax : (+44) (0)1276 686353

E-mail: info@cabletalk.co.uk Website: www.cabletalk.co.uk

Quoting HFC CT 05/00 HiFi Choice Magazine

I'm looking for an amp priced between £300 and £500 to drive Mission 751 speakers. I like a warm tone and mainly listen to jazz and blues.

Bence Kulcsár, via e-mail

It's a choice between the Audio Analogue Puccini (£475) and Primare A-10. Listen and decide.

Cards on the table: no one knows all there is to know about hi-fi. So ask Tim Bown to find the answer to your kitular worries.



Arcam Challenge



I read with interest your well written reviews of the Arcam Alpha 8R, 9 and 10, one of which I am considering purchasing. It seems that the reviewer's favourite was the 8R, though it appears the scrutiny of the more expensive units was turned up a notch. I couldn't tell, price being no object, which you would rather own. I was also searching your reviews for comparable units, which seemed to include the NAD and Rotel, but it was difficult to tell. Could you level the price playing field for me and say if you feel the Arcam 10, for example, is worth the extra money?

Grant Ferguson, USA

The products we review are always compared with their price-point peers, so standards are raised when cost increases. The Alpha 8R may have been the most favourably received of the products you mention in relation to its test group, but that doesn't mean it's the best sounding if cost is no object.

Haut-parleurs R Us



I have just bought a Cambridge Audio A500 Amp and Cambridge D300 CD Player. In HFC 197 you suggest this amp is "optimised for nominally 8 Ohm speakers" and in the same issue the Mission 701, Eltax Symphony 4 and Tannoy M1 are given as possible candidates. However, I was looking to get some more substantial floorstanding speakers for playing the same sort of music as given in your '1999 Editorial Choice' (page 3 in the same issue) and I need sufficient bass for the dancier stuff.

I'm currently studying in France, and can get the B&W DM602 S2 for £175 or the JMLab Tantal 515 for £200. Would these work well, or can you suggest alternatives?

James Michie, via e-mail

The JMLab looks like a bargain. It's a touch bright-sounding but we still gave it a Best Buy, even at its full UK price of £495, and it's lively enough to cope with dance music. Your Cambridge amp should have sufficient power even considering the relatively tough load presented by the Tantals.

The B&W DM602 S2 isn't a floorstander but delivers a substantial, dynamic sound, though it also takes some grunt to drive. You may find the entertaining Heybrook Optima (£259) a better bet, or perhaps Tannoy's cleverly balanced mX3 (£230).



JMLab Tantal 515.

The best sounding Arcam integrated to date is the FMJ A22 at £1,000, reviewed last month and essentially an Alpha 10 with a smart metal case and a number of internal improvements. The Alpha 10 itself is a good sounding, superbly flexible option, particularly if you think its add-on modules may come in useful. For those with tighter budgets the Alpha 9 is probably better value, and the Alpha 8R delivers the best value-for-money of all, hence its Best Buy. However, if money is really no object go for the FMJ, and also listen to the Musical Fidelity X-A100R (£999) and Primare A-20 MkII (£799).



I want to buy a CD player to replace my Trichord Genesis. My amp is an ATC SCA2 and my speakers ATC Active 20. I also use a Michell Orbe turntable with an SME V tonearm, Lyra Clavis cartridge and Iso Lithos phono stage. Thing is, I can't find a machine with vinyl attributes. I've tried the Densen CD player, but the timbre of instruments and space isn't really there. What about the Eikos or a Wadia?

Jonathan, via e-mail


The Acoustic Precision Eikos (£1,850) has been ensconced in our Editor's own system for ages, and he still harps on about its exceptional resolving powers and musicality. In these respects he reckons it's the best he's heard under five grand.

Meanwhile, Wadia makes exceedingly good CD sounds – in our experience no one makes players offering such dynamic grip. Check out the new 831, replacement for the £3,000 830; we'll be looking at it very soon. Alternatively, see if you can find the open and subtle Advantage CD1S (£3,995). But don't ever expect CD to sound just like vinyl – a turntable like yours will probably always sound more engaging.



Rotel RCD-991.

Playing the field

 I own a Kenwood DP-7090 CD player, chosen three years ago on *HFC* recommendation. I've since upgraded the rest of my system, which consists of a STAX SRA14S preamp, two LFD Power stage 2 power amps and TDL Studio 4 speakers. I'd now like to change the CD player to bring it up to scratch.

I'm looking to spend somewhere between £800 and £1,700, with the Rotel RCD-991 a top target – I had a very convincing demonstration confirming your review. However, I've seen similarly favourable reviews for the Sony SCD-777ES, Musical Fidelity A3 CD and Arcam Alpha 9, among others. Which should I go for? Jazz and classical are my favourite types of music.


M. Le Douarin, Paris

CD users have never had it so good – there is an exceptionally high number of excellent players around. You could add several more to your list – Arcam's FMJ CD23 for example – but ultimately it's down to you and your ears.

You're going about it the right way. Arrange auditions, as you did with the Rotel, and have a good listen with your own choice of music, preferably in tandem with your own amp and speakers (or at least a close match). The Arcam and Musical Fidelity players would make good comparisons, although the Rotel probably has the edge in terms of all-round definition. If you like what you've heard we believe you should buy with confidence.

The Sony player is a somewhat different proposition. First, it's more than double the price of the others you're considering. Second, it plays SACD discs in addition to CDs. Only time will tell how relevant that may become, but for now the SCD-777ES ranks as a top-notch CD player in its own right. By all means seek one out for audition, but you may feel the Rotel remains the better value option for the present.

Qubic equations

 I recently purchased a pair of QLN Qubic 166 speakers from my girlfriend's brother before he left to travel the world. I haven't had a separates system before and was wondering what amp or pre/power amp to buy to match these speakers. I've heard the speakers with an Arcam Alpha 8 power amp driving them and the results sounded good. However, the previous owner said I should get a more powerful amp as he didn't feel that set-up was adequate.

The speaker documentation gives the following specifications for the speakers: impedance: 4 Ohms, amp requirements: 20 to 250 Watts, sensitivity: 91dB.

I listen to all kinds of music from dance to West End shows (*Chess* is a favourite). My budget is up to £800, and any suggestions would be appreciated.

Chris Plane, via e-mail


QLN speakers vary massively in temperament according to the model. Some are very fussy in terms of both amps and music, while others are much more accommodating. The Qubic range tends to veer more towards the latter, and though we never got round to testing the 166, we reviewed the 222 (HFC 160) and found it reasonably amiable. In fact, our measurements showed it to be marginally easier to drive than the manufacturer's specifications suggested.

Your speaker's quoted impedance of four Ohms means that the relatively high 91dB sensitivity is closer to 88dB in reality. The Arcam Alpha 8P (if you are sure that's what you have – it sounds like you may actually have an Alpha 8 integrated) delivers 50 Watts per channel, which should be enough to drive them without too much difficulty under normal circumstances. However, a little more juice is likely to give you greater dynamic grip, and given your budget we suggest you listen to Arcam's Alpha 9C/9P pre/power combo (£800) and, if you can stretch to it, Creek's P43R/A52SE partnership (£949). On the integrated side of things, consider Primare's A-20 MkII (£799).



Creek P43R/A52SE.

I want it all

 I have about £2,000 to spend on a system consisting of CD, amp, speakers and all relevant cabling. I'd like the amp to be upgradable with additional power amps and the like, with a modest MM phono stage, if the amp doesn't include one, for occasional vinyl use. The speakers should be bi-wireable & preferably floorstanding.

My current system consists of a Marantz CD52II SE CD player, Arcam Alpha 3 amp and Mission 760i speakers. I mostly listen to rock, pop and techno, and I'm looking for a more detailed and punchy sound with more powerful bass. *Malcolm Smith, London*

Mission 774.

We'll suggest a few combinations for you to listen to – then it's up to you to arrange auditions and make your final decision. It would seem sensible to look at CD and speaker components in the £500 bracket, leaving a further £500 to spend on cables and support. CD front-runners are the Arcam Alpha 9 (£520) and Rotel RCD-971 (£450). Listen to them in tandem with amps like the Arcam Alpha 9 and Cyrus 5, both of which cost £500, and Musical Fidelity's £479 X-A1. All offer upgrades or power amps to add-on later. Rotel's new RA-972 (£450) may also be worth considering (see p14/15). For speakers, check out B&W's DM603 S2 (£550), Mission's 774 (£500) and Triangle's Zephyr II (£599).

You may also like to consider one-make systems from the likes of Musical Fidelity and Rega. Check our back-of-the-mag Directory (starting on p102) for recommendations on cables and supports.

HELP

Q How can I get my Pioneer A-300R Precision amp modified by Tom Evans and what will the advantages be?

MJ Matuszak, via e-mail

A Greater resolution and improved stereo imaging are among the benefits – that and the transmutation from a very respectable budget amp into a giant-killer. You can contact Tom on (01443) 833570.

HELP

I'm searching for the best CD player to partner the NAD 319 integrated amp.

Rosco P. Coltrane,
via e-mail

Try the Arcam Alpha 7SE (£350), Marantz CD6000 OSE (£300), Rotel RCD-971 (£450) and Sony GDP-XB930E (£300). If you need something cheaper check out Kenwood's DP-4090 (£250). Give our regards to Bo and Luke. And especially to Daisy.



Royd Minstrel.

Platters that matter



My current system consists of a Technics SLPS840 CD player, SU-A900 amplifier, RS-AZ7 tape deck and SLDL1 turntable, all sitting on a Target B5 rack and hooked together with Supra EFF-ISL interconnects. The speakers are Mission 751s perched on Alphason Akros II stands with Cable Talk Talk 3.1 trailing off like dog leads to the amp.

Some of the gear is getting on a bit, but it still sounds great to me. It gets my foot tapping and gives an almost impossible desire to get up and boogie, but recently when I've put on a slab of vinyl the sound has been rather compressed and boxed-in. Which turntables, complete with arm/cartridge, should I be listening to with a budget of about £1,000?

Nick C, via e-mail

A little careful auditioning is called for here. Consider the Michell Gyro 'SE' (£775) with a Rega RB250 arm (£109) and a cartridge like the Ortofon 520 (£70) or Rega Elys (£85). Alternative decks include the Wilson benesch The Circle (£795), Nottingham Analogue's Spacedeck (£750) and Rega's new Planar 25 (reviewed next month). It would also be worth your while budgeting for an off-board phono stage like Musical Fidelity's X-LPS (£130).



Michell Gyro 'SE'.

Hmmm, me Royds



I'm currently running a pair of Royd Minstrel speakers with a Rotel RA-935BX amplifier – the Royds have an eight Ohm rating while the Rotel's is four. How does this affect the performance of my system? I am fairly happy with the sound but if I was to change the amp would it make a difference?

I'm very fond of the Royd speakers, although their sensitivity is low. I take it there is no way round this problem?

Rob Millar, via e-mail

It would seem that specs can be as confusing as they can be useful. As a rule, the four Ohm figure on your amp is likely to relate to the power output into that load at a certain frequency. A different figure will be obtained into an eight Ohm load and so on. An amplifier cannot be rated at 'four Ohms' per se. In respect to speakers, higher impedances are easier for an amp to drive, but mean very little on their own, especially when, as in this case, they are nominal.

Ultimately, you're worrying about nothing. Unless your system sounds distorted at higher levels the system is as balanced as it needs to be spec-wise. You could certainly improve things by changing amps, but only because you are moving to a better-sounding model, not because of any obvious electrical mismatch.

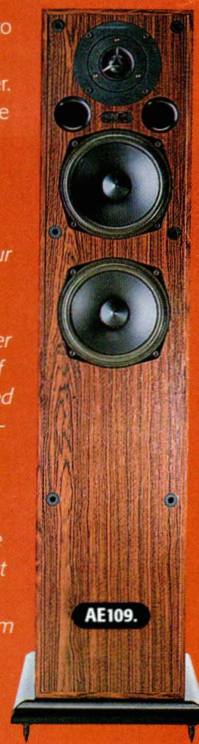
Mouldy old DOH!



I live and work in Asia, and about six months ago I bought a pair of Acoustic Energy AE109SE speakers. Just recently, I took the grills off for clean up and I was shocked to find specks of fungus growing on the speakers' paper cones. I know this is from the high humidity here in Asia but this is just totally unexpected! I've tried my best to dust off the fungus but it grows back a few days later. Now I am just smearing the little green specks around the cones. Please help! Desperate Jeff, via e-mail

Ooer – with fungus on your diaphragm, no wonder you're desperate!

Assuming a dehumidifier or air conditioning is out of the question, have you tried a hardware store for a fungus remover? Of course, it would need to be OK for use on paper-based substances, but you should be able to find something that helps. Short of that, if you feel the fungus is a problem you're really looking at a new pair of speakers – preferably ones with plastic or metal cones!



AE109.



A recipe for stuffing



I have a Cambridge Audio CD4SE CD player and A100 amp, hooked together with Cambridge Pacific interconnects and QED Original (formally Qudos) Silver connected to Mission 702e speakers. I'm a student on a tight budget and have a few queries about my set-up.

You don't like the Pacific cables yet the CD4SE is wired with them inside. Should I use them or would I be better off buying QED Qunex 2? Regarding the main components, is the amp the weak link and would an A500 be better? Finally, the 702e has a front port which I have blocked as bass can get boomy. Are there any disadvantages to filling ports? What materials should I use – I'm stuck with toilet tissue for now!

Steven Holt, Blackburn

The Cambridge Pacific interconnect didn't do too well when group-tested in HFC 176. It was a strong group, and though the cable's performance was reasonable, it

ultimately lacked some refinement and authority in the bass. We prefer the alternative you suggest from QED, but question whether the improvement would warrant the outlay. Wait until you can afford something in a notably higher league before upgrading – like QED's Qunex Silver Spiral, for example.

The CD4SE was our favourite £200 CD player when launched, and it's still good enough to live with more costly partnering gear. It's debatable whether the amp or the speaker is the weaker link – given that you find the Mission too bassy in your room, you might like to try a speaker with a tighter low end. Options include the Acoustic Energy Aegis Two (£250) and Heybrook Optima (£280). On the amp side the Cambridge A500 would certainly make an improvement, but you should also consider the likes of Rotel's RA-971 MkII (£250).

Regarding your port-stuffing situation, socks are a bit of a classic, though a foam bung is a rather more aesthetically acceptable solution. Blocking the port reduces bass output in terms of depth and level, it also slightly reduces sensitivity.

Avon calling



I'm looking for a new loudspeaker, and one of my favourites is made in England by Castle. Someone told me that English speakers have more warmth than German ones and I'm interested in the Avon, having seen it and been impressed with the way it's built. But how does it sound? I want a smooth-sounding speaker without any harshness in the treble. My amp is a Marantz PM8000 and my CD player is a CD6000 OSE.

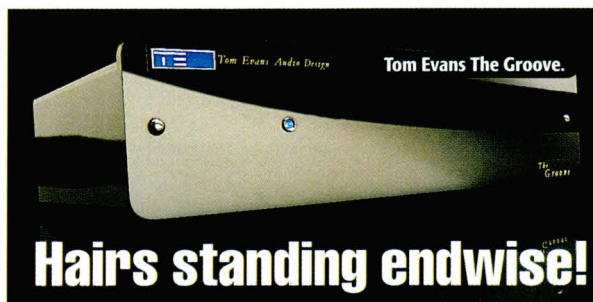
T Becker, Germany

It's a gross generalisation, but traditional British speakers do have a reputation for being rather more warm-sounding than their more clinical German counterparts. Castle no longer makes the Avon, but if you've found one in Germany and you like the way it looks, give it a listen – you may be just as keen on the sound.

We reviewed the £730 Avon in HFC 164 and found its mid-band to be unusually open and airy, giving rise to superb performance with vocals. However, its rather laid-back balance and lack of richness promoted a rather thin overall tone which may not be ideal given your sonic priorities. For alternatives, seek out Castle's Severn 2SE, Inversion 50 and Harlech SE, or try the new Prelude R from Ruark.



Castle Avon.



We recently auditioned a Michell Gyrodek turntable against a Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck. We went for the Spacedeck, but then the dealer suggested we listen to the more expensive HyperSpacedeck. "Wow!" said my wife. "That's scary, the hairs on my neck are standing up, and it seems to interfere with my heartbeat". I too could feel the soul and emotion of the music, and we simply had to have one!

We now intend to buy the HyperSpacedeck with an SME arm and Sumiko cartridge. We'll be running it with an Audiolab 8000Q/8000P pre/power amp, Musical Fidelity X-LPS phono stage, B&W P6 speakers and Audioquest cables. Will you be reviewing any turntables of this calibre, and how could we improve this system once the turntable is installed on its wall-mounted granite shelf?

Paul and Shaz, via e-mail

Aren't dealers cunning! Once you heard the HyperSpacedeck, how could you refuse? We've never looked at that particular turntable and the chances of doing so now are slim – Nottingham Analogue is a little shy of reviews. However, we do feature high-end turntables from time to time, and models from Clearaudio, Avid and Well Tempered are earmarked for future review. If you'd like something else to audition, go for the Michell Orbe 'SE' (£1,725). In terms of your system, consider a change of phono stage. Tom Evans' The Groove will take performance into the next league. Then audition some amps.

Which Rotel amplifier should I pick to go with the Acoustic Energy Aegis One loudspeaker?

Henk Lenssen, Holland

It depends on your budget. The RA-931 MkII (£150) would be a good starting point, the RA-971 MkII (£250) would be better still, or you could even try the new RA-972 (£450). An alternative is the Arcam Alpha One, a great match at £230.

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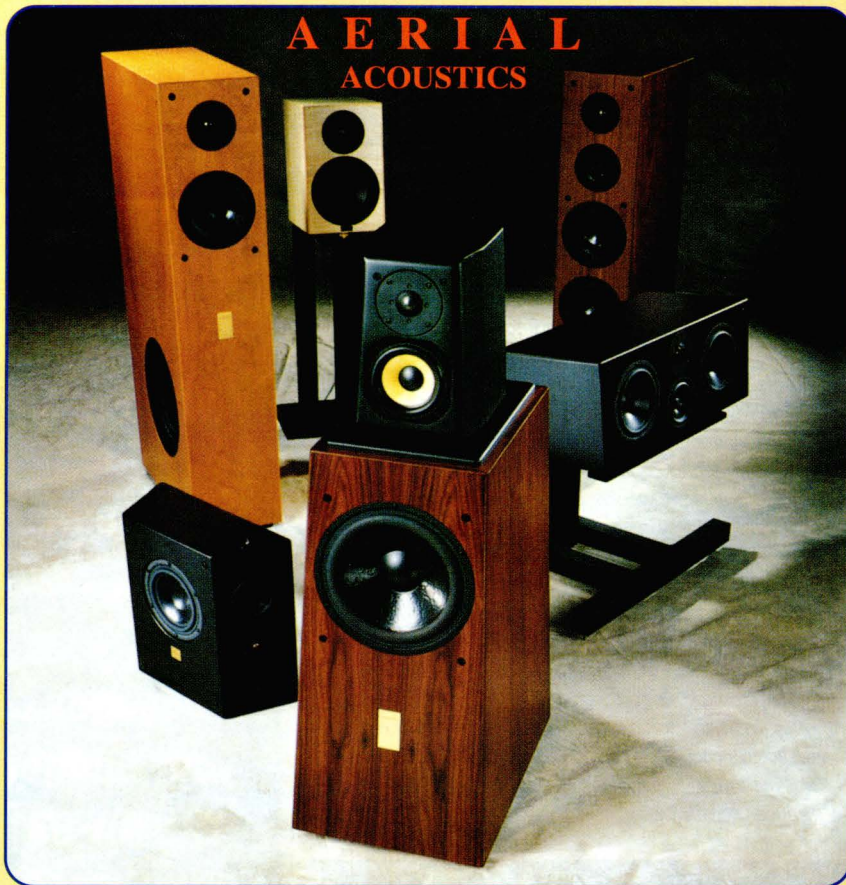
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BUYING GUIDE TO RECORDERS

PART ONE - THE ANALOGUE YEARS



There has never been so much choice for those who like to indulge in a spot of home recording. Choosing a format can be bewildering, with two major digital options slugging it out, several new technologies waiting in the wings and good ol' cassette tape still doing great service in many people's systems. Allow us to simplify matters with a summary of each format's pros and cons. This month we focus on cassette technology, then next month we enter the world of digital.

The rise and fall of compact cassette

Since its introduction in 1963, the cassette has played a hugely important role in bringing music to the masses. Here was a cheap, convenient and eminently portable format in which people could purchase music and, crucially, make their own recordings. And, with the invention of the Sony Walkman in the late '70s, you could listen to them anywhere. Cassette changed things for good.

Tape is still popular, but these days it tends to be more a concern for mini system buyers than those searching for hi-fi separates. Why put up with such antiquated technology in these fast, silent digital times?

It's true that digital formats have brought new levels of quality and convenience to home users, but tape is still the biggest format for personal and in-car use. It's also the cheapest in terms of both hardware and software, and if you've got loads of shop-bought and/or home made tapes it's worth having a decent deck.

New cassette deck separates are few and far between, superseded by digital recorders as the chief area for new development. Tape legend Nakamichi re-made two classic high-end models last year to muted acclaim, pleasing if only from a nostalgic point of view.

Twin Tape

We still receive letters asking us which twin cassette decks we recommend – it seems people remain keen on the idea of dubbing from tape-to-tape, despite the appalling quality that inevitably results.

In hi-fi terms they've never been much cop, even if you're recording from a decent source – the transports are often poor quality, and if they've got auto reverse things are compromised further. How about hooking two budget single-tape decks together instead?

Noise Reduction

Noise reduction has always been a sticky issue with tape decks. It may reduce the hiss, but it can also deaden the sound to varying degrees according to which system you're using. Dolby B is the most common; it's pretty ancient, but still a reasonable compromise. Dolby C is less successful, reducing hiss further but pulverising music in the process. And if you play a

tape recorded with Dolby C on a non-C equipped deck it sounds awful. The more recent Dolby S is much better, with more powerful hiss reduction and less detriment to the sound. But if you're using a good quality tape you may find it best not to bother with NR at all.

As a postscript, two or three years ago Pioneer developed a clever digital-based noise reduction system for two new analogue decks (see panel, right). It proved a highly effective option.

Tape type

If performance is important you should choose a chrome or metal tape (most decks adjust automatically to type). For most users it's probably not necessary to stretch to expensive metals, unless your deck is of very high quality and you're making archive copies or master recordings. Metals offer the best dynamic range and bandwidth, but if you re-use your tapes a lot good quality chrome tape like TDK SA is better value. For a cheaper ferric option, TDK's AR comes close.

Other facilities to look out for

The expensive models on the market tend to provide three heads, including a separate head for recording and another for playback. That means you can listen to what's being recorded as it's laid down on tape – a useful quality control for keen home recordists.

Some decks allow you to adjust bias for the type of tape you're using, so you can fine-tune the automatic type recognition system. It's a bit like using manual focus on an auto-focus camera – it gives you control to make sure things are exactly right.

If you listen through headphones, a front-mounted headphone socket would be useful. But you may have difficulty finding a domestic deck with a microphone socket – they seem to be extinct.

Have you considered video cassette?

Don't scoff. VHS tape can be an effective format for audio recording. There's the lengthy recording time, the built-in timer and the relatively heavy-duty transport, which means a good-quality stereo VCR can make pretty good-sounding recordings. Panasonic is a good brand to look for – its VCRs tend to sound good.

Treat your cassette deck right

Placing your cassette deck on a good quality hi-fi support will benefit its performance. The heads should be cleaned regularly with a solution/applicator type of cleaner. The Allsop range is pretty effective, or for a cheaper option try cotton buds and dilute alcohol. Keep your tapes in their cases and avoid over-use – re-recording too many times can cause drop-out and tape stretch. Also, take care with record level, aim for maximum signal to noise and experiment with maximum levels using the monitor option if available.

FIVE OF THE BEST

DENON DRM-550 £160

An affordable deck of real quality, though facilities are basic.



NAKAMICHI DR-10 £800

A re-take on an older Nakamichi and one of the last great cassette decks. High-end tape users should also consider Sony's TC-KA6ES (£600), or look out for second-hand Nakamichis like the Dragon.



PIONEER CT-W806DR £300

If you must buy a twin deck this is probably the one to go for, complete with Pioneer's digital-based noise reduction. Also check out the similarly equipped single-tape CT-W606DR (£200).

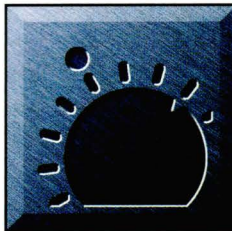


TECHNICS RS-AZ7 £270

Proprietary thin-film head technology gives this deck an edge in the bass and midrange departments.

YAMAHA KX-580SE £250

A well built deck with good facilities and a subtle, engaging sound.



PAUL MILLER'S OASIS OF SANITY

Paul wants to explain what the pretty pictures that go alongside his lab reports are all about.

For several years now, we've replaced traditional lab report test tables with at-a-glance bar chart ratings in our main group test reviews. Five key performance indicators are provided for each model in the test, including 'perceived loudness', 'audible distortion' and 'bass extension' for loudspeakers and 'power output' and 'load tolerance' for amplifiers.

Each indicator in the bar graph is a composite of one or more numerical measurements that would otherwise be listed in a test table. But where digging and interpreting numbers from a table requires more than a little headscratching, presenting a distillation of those figures in the form of a graph is at once more immediate and easier to understand.

It's important to appreciate that the values aren't assigned arbitrarily. Instead, the percentage figures are derived from the deviation of any UUT (Unit Under Test) from the statistical mean of the group. Using this month's CD and DVD player group as an example, let's look at how the per cent values for 'Practical Dynamic Range' are derived.

THE PLOT THICKENS

This simple plot shows the variation in S/N (signal to noise) ratio between the 12 CD and

DVD players, with the poorest at 94.6dB (UUT 4) from the NAD C520 and the widest at 104.3dB (UUT 7), courtesy of Toshiba's SD-3209B DVD player.

Incidentally, the figures plotted here show the *worst* S/N of either left or right channels while the figure given in each review's test table is the *average* of both left and right channels. Meanwhile, the average worst-case S/N ratio across the group as a whole is indicated by the horizontal blue line at 100.5dB on Figure 1.

The following table lists the CD/DVD players in the order they were tested and, therefore, the UUT order indicated on the bottom axis of the graph(s).

ORDER IN WHICH THE PLAYERS WERE TESTED (UUTs 1-12)

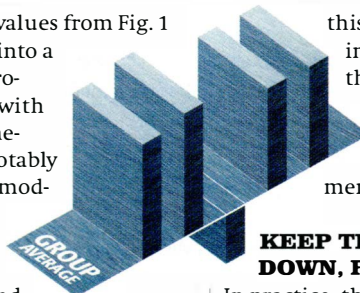
UUT Number	Model
1	Marantz CD5000
2	Sony CDP-XE330
3	Harman/Kardon HD720
4	NAD C520
5	NAD T550
6	JVC XV-515
7	Toshiba SD-3109B
8	Cambridge D500
9	Technics SL-PG390
10	Sony DVP-S325
11	Pioneer DV-525
12	Sharp DV-760

For our assessment of each player's 'Practical Dynamic

Range', the values from Fig. 1 are entered into a computer program along with other parameters, most notably the player's modulation noise. The factors are combined and weighted to yield the bar graph values of -55 per cent and +50 per cent for the NAD C520 and Toshiba SD-3109, respectively.

You'll see that UUTs 5 and 9 (the NAD T550 and Technics SL-

this one parameter is intended to reveal the subjective impact of more than 20 separate measurements on the units.



KEEP THE NOISE DOWN, PLEASE

In practice, the distortion from each player is measured at 20Hz (low bass), 1kHz (midrange) and 20kHz (high treble) frequencies right across its dynamic range from full output at 0dBfs to -100dBfs, which

"Each indicator in our graph is a composite of one or more numerical measurements that would otherwise be listed in a table."

PG390, respectively) are closest to the blue line on Fig. 1 and have bar graph values closest to the 'average' result of 0 per cent at +10 per cent and -15 per cent, respectively.

In this way, an indicator of performance that might otherwise involve numerous factors is condensed into a straightforward graphic that reveals every player's potential relative to its competitors.

Arguably the most complex bar graph value to calculate is that entitled 'Harmonic Distortion vs. Level', because

is just beyond the theoretical 16-bit limit. This provides a 'spectral map' of the player's noise and distortion and gives us a good idea of how coloured it's likely to sound to the panel in the listening tests.

Figure 2 (below) shows how the 12 players compare at mid-level, midrange frequencies. In this instance, it's quite clear that UUT 1 (the Marantz CD5000) is far worse than average (the horizontal blue line) than, say, UUT 2 (the Sony CDP-XE330), UUT 3 (the Harman HD720) or UUT 8 (the

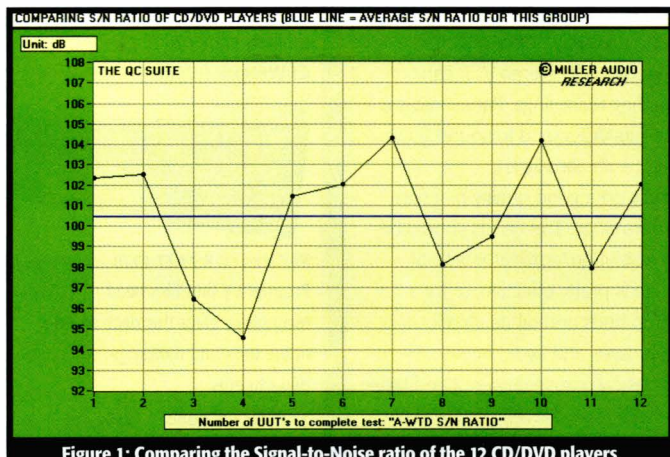


Figure 1: Comparing the Signal-to-Noise ratio of the 12 CD/DVD players.

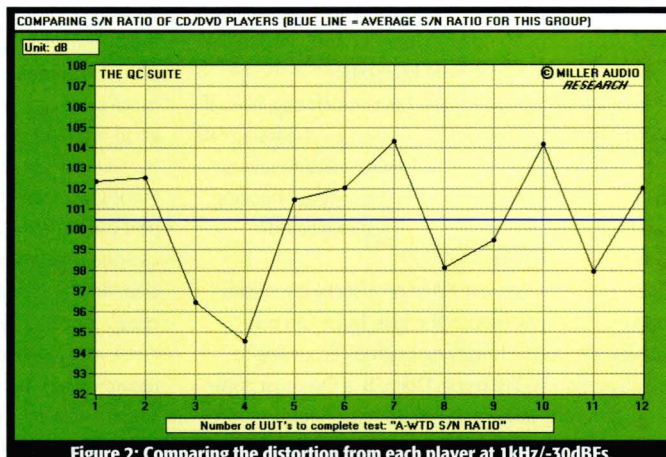


Figure 2: Comparing the distortion from each player at 1kHz/-30dBfs.

Cambridge D500) which, conversely, all suffer less distortion than average. Nevertheless, a single-point distortion test like this could prove misleading without information about the player's behaviour at other musical frequencies and levels.

THE DIRTY DOZEN?

The centre plot from Figure 3 (below) shows the distortion and noise from the same twelve players, in the same UUT order, but at very low levels. This is indicative of the subtlest musical detail likely to be encoded

the distortion figures themselves, is an important indicator of good sound quality as is the nature or content of the distortion spectrum.

The upper and lower plots on Figure 3 demonstrate what constitutes the 7.7 per cent distortion of the Sony CDP-XE330 (UUT 2) versus the 2.6 per cent of the Cambridge D500 (UUT 8). The 1kHz signals are labelled 'Fund', which stands for fundamental, while the second, third and fourth harmonic distortions are picked out with blue markers.

"There's plenty more to Hi-Fi Choice lab tests than the elegant simplicity of the bar graphs might suggest."

onto a CD, and shows that UUT 1 is now better than average while UUT 2 is far worse.

The Cambridge D500, meanwhile, as UUT 8, still enjoys consistently low levels of noise and distortion. This consistency, rather than the magnitude of

The plot from the Cambridge D500 (bottom) is patently cleaner-looking than the CDP-XE330 (top), which is awash with 'spikes' (of PSU noise and digital spurious) to the left and right of the 1kHz tone in addition to its higher harmonics.

TROUBLE WITH TREBLE

Returning to mid-levels (-30dBFs) but looking, instead, out to far higher treble frequencies (20kHz) reveals another trend altogether. This comparison between the players is depicted on the centre plot of Figure 4, where the low distortion enjoyed by UUTs 2 and 8 (Sony CDP-XE330 and Cambridge D500) is consistent with the result at 1kHz/-30dBFs, shown on Figure 2. UUT 3, the HD720 from Harman/Kardon, has now jumped from the 0.0025 per cent at 1kHz shown on Figure 2 to some 0.12 per cent here, at 20kHz.

The cause of this increase is evident from the distortion spectrum itself (upper plot, Figure 4) where the second, third and fourth harmonics are shown superimposed on a wave of requantisation noise that's ejected from the PCM1710 DAC.

The total power of this noise can be substantial and often has an influence on the subjective performance of partnering amps. By inference, this would include the discrete circuitry

GLOSSARY

BAR CHART OR BAR GRAPH: The condensed representation of five important performance parameters, illustrated against the Statistical Mean for the test group.

DISTORTION (HARMONIC): Unwanted signals that appear at multiples of the wanted signal; that is, the harmonic distortion of 3kHz will appear at 6kHz, 9kHz, 12kHz etc.

SIGNAL-TO-NOISE: A ratio expressed in dB (decibels) between the maximum output level of the CD player (in this instance) and the residual level of its noise floor. About 100dB is typical.

STATISTICAL MEAN: In this case, is the average of any one measured parameter across the entire group – in a group of four CD players whose outputs are 1.9V, 2.1V, 1.8V and 2.0V respectively, the average = 2.0V.

UUT (UNIT UNDER TEST): A generic name given to any product being tested.

used by H/K as part of the player's output filter network...

Other 'features' of the spectrum include a stopband pattern (2) released by the DAC's 8x oversampling filter and a pair of sidebands (3) that are reflected in the HD720's very high >3,200psec of jitter. The lower plot on Figure 4, from UUT 2 (Sony's CDP-XE330), shows that it's possible to decode a 20kHz tone without excess ultrasonic noise, digital spurious or harmonic distortion, even if the same player can't reproduce the same 'trick' at 1kHz/-90dBfs (Figure 3).

All of which goes to show that just because a player has low distortion and noise in one 'corner' of its musical spectrum, we can't presume this happy state of affairs persists at all frequencies and levels. And it's this compromise in performance that the 'Harmonic Distortion..' bar graph seeks to illustrate, with the sheer consistency of UUT 8 earning it a full +65 per cent, while the low-level 'grunge' of UUT 2 and HF noise of UUT 3 knocks them back to -55 per cent and -30 per cent respectively.

So, next time you see an HFC group test, you'll know there's plenty more to the Lab Tests than the elegant simplicity of a bar chart might suggest...

Do you have a subject for the Oasis? Please contact Paul Miller via e-mail at MILLER_AUDIO_RESEARCH @compuserve.com

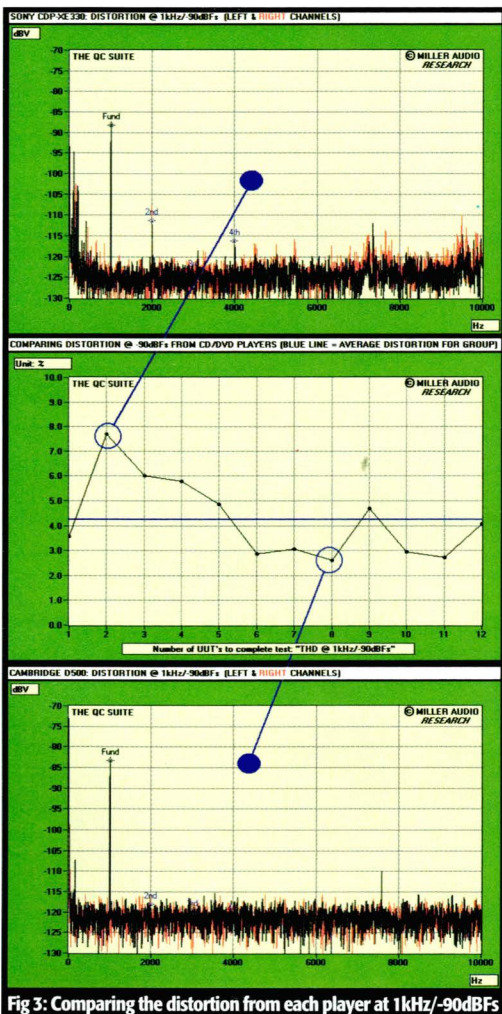


Fig 3: Comparing the distortion from each player at 1kHz/-90dBfs

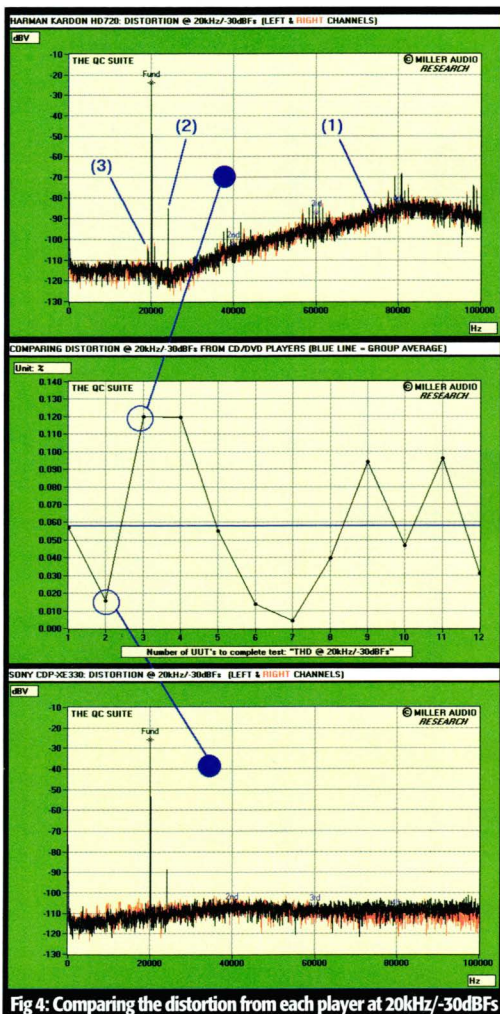


Fig 4: Comparing the distortion from each player at 20kHz/-30dBfs

Sounds of Music

No Compromise

Having said that, buying hi-fi is always a compromise - the only way to the total truth is to have the performing artists in your own living room. Not too easy in most cases. **At Sounds Of Music however, it is our continual aim to compromise as little as possible** as our extensive ranges will confirm. What you hear in the showroom does not always offer the same performance at home and that is where **our superb one months home trial system** and extensive range really comes into its own.

As you can see, this month we have featured a varied selection of loudspeakers from all over the world and at all price ranges. We believe that many of these are capable of producing **'believable'** sounds but this still needs confirming by you in your own particular environment and on your own particular hi-fi set up.

We carry one of the largest ranges of specialist products in the UK, as well as the loudspeakers featured this month, all being available on our special trial exchange system and in the comfort of your own listening environment. Our one month-trial exchange system is just fantastic, **where else can you try a range as extensive and have the assurance that the results will be, as you want them to be.**

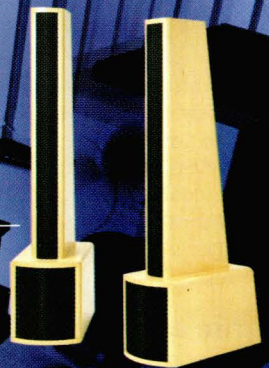
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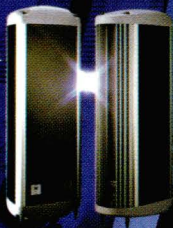
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COMPETITION

WIN NEW HEYBROOK SPEAKERS

Answer two simple questions and you could win one of five pairs of Heybrook speakers.

This month's competition prizes come from those marvellously generous guys at Heybrook. And what have we secured for your delectation? No less than five pairs of loudspeakers from the company's new 2000 Series line-up. This is your chance to get your hands on a pair before we do!

FIRST PRIZE – a pair of HB4s worth £499.95. The 'big brother' of the range, the HB4 stands 90cm tall, employs a 25mm soft-dome tweeter and uses Kevlar cones in both its 165mm bass and 130mm mid driver units.

SECOND PRIZE – a pair of HB3s worth £349.95. A competitively priced floorstander, the HB3 is also 90cm tall and employs a 25mm soft-dome tweeter and a 165mm Kevlar cone mid/bass driver. HB3s and HB4s can both be mass loaded for additional stability and improved bass control.

THIRD PRIZE – two lucky readers will each receive a pair of HB2s. A bookshelf model worth £229.95, the HB2 employs a 25mm soft-dome tweeter with a 165mm Kevlar cone mid/bass driver.

FOURTH PRIZE – a pair of HB1s worth £179.95. The 'entry-level' model of the range, this compact bookshelf speaker employs a 25mm soft-dome tweeter with a 130mm Kevlar cone mid/bass driver.

All models come in black ash and beech veneer finishes.

So, if you fancy hearing any of these models in your living room, don't delay – get your entry form in the post to us today.



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- 1) The Closing Date for the Heybrook Competition is First Post, Thursday 25 May 2000.
- 2) Winners of the Heybrook Competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, and drawn at random after the Closing Date given in 1) above.
- 3) All winners will be notified by post.
- 4) The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
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Power Chord

Paul Miller discovers that it's not only the Yanks who can make behemoth power amps.

Stunning architecture and advanced, switch-mode power supplies have lain at the heart of Chord amps since the company's inception. The SPM-4000 shows nothing has changed in either regard, but it *does* highlight a trend towards more ambitious designs. The price is pretty ambitious too – £8,500 with four pillar-style legs or a heady £9,040 with six. Ouch.

Nevertheless, Chord does know how to, well, strike a chord aesthetically. The SPM-4000 features interlocking alloy heatsinks, a brace of cylindrical supports and a vast slab of fascia that's populated with blue and red LEDs to denote the onset of clipping. Chord suggests an output of 480W/8 Ohms, whereas a two-channel rating of 410W is more accurate, increasing to a heady 610W into lower, 4 Ohm loads. Over a 1-350W range, distortion varies between just 0.007-0.013 per cent – a consistent performance that bodes well for sound quality.

Both single-ended (phono) and balanced (XLR) inputs are provided with double sets of 4mm speaker sockets to aid bi-wiring. Meanwhile, under the perforated bonnet beats an advanced switch-mode power supply (see Box) with an estimated 4kW peak capacity. This uses two transformers, arranged for the positive and negative rails rather than left and right channels. As such, peak demands on one rail are supported by the other, reducing distortion. Power is distributed via a bank of 180V reservoir caps using a back plane rather than cabling, while the final output stage employs eight complementary pairs of MOSFETs per channel, all made to Chord's specification by Semilab.

The SPM-4000 is one of the rare amps designed to provide a very low output impedance, making it less sensitive to variations in cable and speaker load. This aids the amp's exceptional bass control, despite the fact that its low bass output is 'limited' by electronic protection to just

325W. Hah! Every amp should be so restricted. Listen to Leftfield's *Phat Planet* and your speakers will be stretched to the limit by the SPM-4000. Such was the depth and quality of bass ripping from my Audio Note EILs that I was able to disengage my REL Stentor subwoofer with no practical loss in extension or compromise in low frequency ambience.

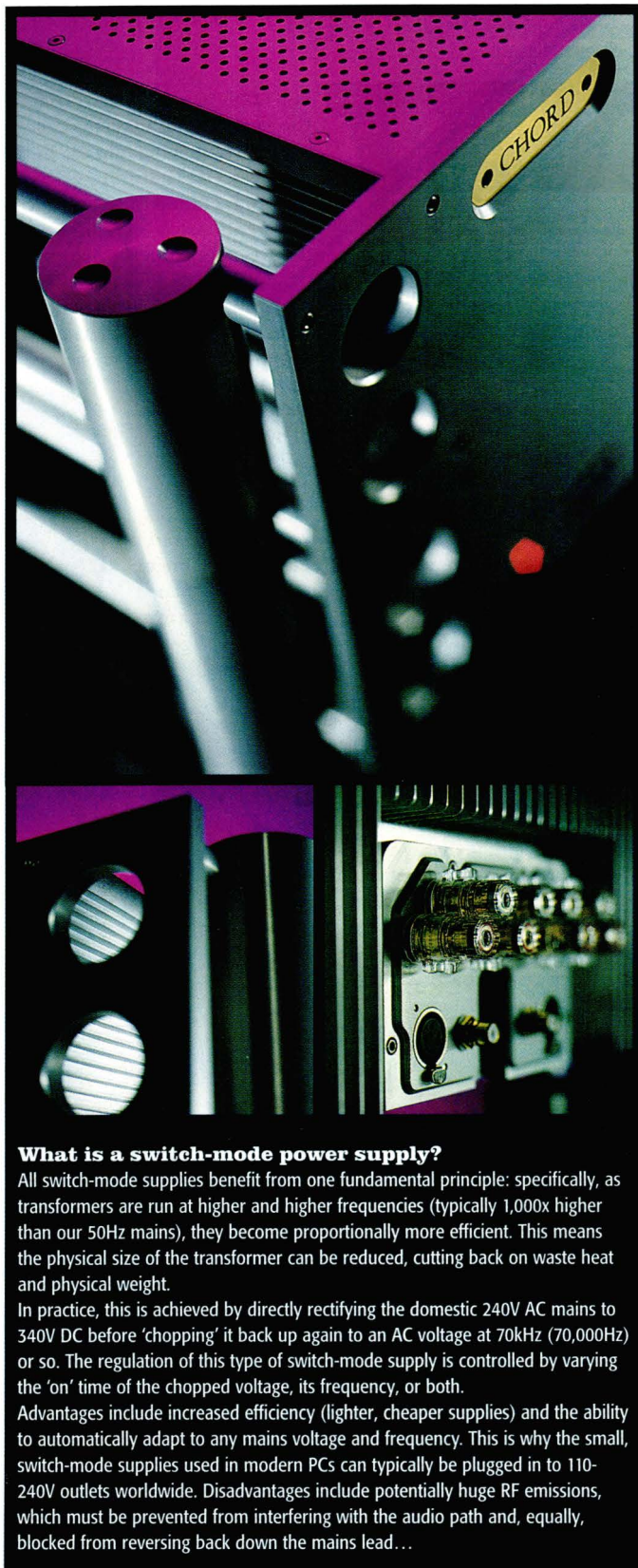
Like the very best high power amplifiers, the SPM-4000 laughs in the face of complex and demanding musical overtures, sounding open and effortless where most amps would begin to reveal some strain. It just goes to show that even with reasonably sensitive speakers, vast reserves of headroom still earn a practical advantage.

Even with a relatively simple recording like Mary Black's *Trespass Shoes*, the crack of percussion and thrum of guitar took on a more vibrant air, developing a thrilling acoustic. It's not that other amps can't adequately resolve the threads of this track, just that the Chord does it with a combination of finesse and a brooding sense of power that builds a palpable, realistic tension into the listening experience.

Its sound is as stylish as its appearance is bold, but ascribing a value to a product costing a touch under £10k is a moot point in my view. Sure enough, the SPM-4000 is one of the very best amplifiers you are likely to hear and one of the very best that money can buy. But if you need to ask "...how much?", it's probably best *not* to arrange a demo.

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

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What is a switch-mode power supply?

All switch-mode supplies benefit from one fundamental principle: specifically, as transformers are run at higher and higher frequencies (typically 1,000x higher than our 50Hz mains), they become proportionally more efficient. This means the physical size of the transformer can be reduced, cutting back on waste heat and physical weight.

In practice, this is achieved by directly rectifying the domestic 240V AC mains to 340V DC before 'chopping' it back up again to an AC voltage at 70kHz (70,000Hz) or so. The regulation of this type of switch-mode supply is controlled by varying the 'on' time of the chopped voltage, its frequency, or both.

Advantages include increased efficiency (lighter, cheaper supplies) and the ability to automatically adapt to any mains voltage and frequency. This is why the small, switch-mode supplies used in modern PCs can typically be plugged in to 110-240V outlets worldwide. Disadvantages include potentially huge RF emissions, which must be prevented from interfering with the audio path and, equally, blocked from reversing back down the mains lead...

Driven To Distraction

TAG McLaren's new F1 speakers are a bit much for the likes of young Jensen Button to be let loose with just yet. No, it's going to take an older, wiser pair of ears. Like Paul Messenger's.

When I first heard the news that the world's leading racing car maker was moving into the hi-fi business, I was naturally excited. I've always found racing car technology almost as intriguing as loudspeakers, and the prospect of applying the advanced composites used in racing cars to a state-of-the-art loudspeaker really got my imagination going and my auditory 'tastebuds' watering.

It has taken more than two years, but now the wait is over and the F1 speaker is a reality. A number have already been sold in Germany, but this review marks its debut in the English-speaking world. The photography will tell you much more about the strikingly different styling than mere words, but as a hi-tech *objet d'art*, I found myself growing very fond of it indeed.

Its super-shiny, extravagantly curvy, deep blue carapace sat very oddly in my essentially Edwardian lounge, and has much more in common with the Elizabethan automobile parked on the drive, but by the end of a fortnight I'd quite fallen for these curious "dancing figures" dreamed up by industrial designer Peter Stevens. For such a large loudspeaker, the F1 manages to look surprisingly compact, the clever tapering towards the top and back creating a delicacy denied traditional, rectangular boxes.

You can make your own minds up about the aesthetics, but there's no denying this is an exceptionally stylish loudspeaker and, moreover, that the style is no mere embellishment. Form strictly follows function here, and there are numerous very good reasons why the enclosures follow their less than conventional shapes.

But before getting sucked into the subtleties of a very thoroughly thought-through project, let's set out some of the basics. Intended as a 'no compromise' solution, this is a large and very heavy loudspeaker, weighing some 65kg. It's also unquestionably very expensive at £15,000 a pair – a price tag which presumably reflects the high cost of tooling the large and elaborate enclosure moulds, as well as the quite exceptional standards of engineering finish throughout.

While the ingredients are exotic, the basic configuration is relatively conventional. There are four drive units, but the system actually operates as a 'three-and-a-half-way'.

Investigating the nooks and crannies

The enclosure is fabricated in two large segments, front and back, but when these are fixed together, three separate cavities are created: 53 litres for the bass, 22 litres for the upper bass, and a generous 29 litres for the midrange. Both the bass and upper bass sections are separately loaded by gas-flowed ports integral with the mouldings, the former tuned to 25Hz, the latter to 43Hz.

Such an arrangement, properly implemented, ought to achieve a relatively even bass alignment, while an added refinement is the ability to choose between three different weights which fix to the boss at the centre of the bass driver cone. Changing this weight will subtly alter the tuning, to better suit different system, room and placement conditions.

One unique strength of using composites throughout for the enclosure is that there's no longer any need for flat panels and sharp edges. By adopting an almost organic form, with deliberately contrived asymmetry, the F1 avoids many of the standing wave and reflection problems normally created inside a conventionally shaped enclosure by the (unwanted) soundwaves generated off the back of driver cones, as well as the sharp edges which generate dispersion discontinuities in the wanted soundwaves generated outside the enclosure. The softened edges, tapering front, and the gentle backward and inward-leaning curve of the front surface all play their part.

The enclosure itself consists of three skins, two of 4mm epoxy composite, sandwiching a 10mm flexible PVC core. Additional PVC-cored ribs 15mm thick and 35mm deep are laminated with reinforced epoxy resin to add extra stiffness across internal areas. The internal chambers are created by two solid, 25mm thick bulkheads dividing the cabinet in such a way as to provide the required chamber volumes, brace the cabinet walls and avoid parallel reflective surfaces.

Each chamber is then damped by a critical selection of acoustic polymer foam augmented by polyester fibre pads. The epoxy resin is loaded with powdered slate, increasing the mass and contributing to structural inertness. Combinations of short filament fibre and woven glass are also embedded in the resin for reinforcement and stiffness. A high performance structural adhesive then bonds the two mouldings together.

The low-bass cavity's reflex port is located in the bottom surface of the enclosure, and is held on four hefty alloy spacing collars above a separate plinth, as the gap between plinth and





MEASUREMENTS

The manufacturer claims a relatively modest 87.5dB/W sensitivity, and this was more or less confirmed under our far-field, in-room conditions. However, because of the restrained nature of the balance through the midband and presence regions (where the specific output is closer to 86dB), the perceived sensitivity will actually be a little below specification. Powerful amplification is clearly indicated – although, happily, the impedance load doesn't look too difficult or over-demanding.

The balance is exceptionally smooth and even throughout the bass and midrange. The bass itself is commendably dry and free of peaks, with very good ultimate extension (-4dB at 20Hz in-room). Under our room conditions, the main effect of changing the bass driver weights was found around 30-45Hz, the lightest weight giving about 5dB more output than the heaviest one, and actually delivering the best room match. The balance is certainly very even, but it is also subtly tailored, downtilting very gently by a couple of dB above 600Hz. The midband driver looks ruler-flat right up to a high 3.5kHz, which is very impressive indeed, but there's also a quite obvious 3-4dB deep 'notch' centred on the 4.2kHz tweeter crossover point. The treble, too, is smooth, if a touch restrained.

"There's no denying this is an exceptionally stylish loudspeaker and, moreover, that style is no mere embellishment."

COMPOSITE CABINETS

TAG McLaren pioneered use of composite technology for automotive design almost 20 years ago, and has also made the largest single composite structure (bar aircraft) in the bodywork of the F1 road car. The requirements for a speaker are obviously very different, but the techniques are similar. A composite is a combination of high-strength fibres, filler material and a binder. With the appropriate fillers, resin binder chemistry and control over fibre type and alignment, composites can provide unique combinations of mechanical and acoustic properties. Density, tensile strength, torsional rigidity, bending stiffness and many more parameters can be adjusted.

Fibre choice may include Kevlar, high tensile carbon fibre and selected glass, while filler components can be ground metals or metal compounds, minerals, and modifier polymers and elastic materials. Resins are usually catalytic epoxy-based, and thermally cured. While the ingredients of a composite structure are usually inexpensive, manufacturing costs are high due to expensive tooling and highly skilled labour.

According to TAG McLaren Audio, the enclosure can account for more than 70 per cent of a speaker's manufacturing costs, and even a top grade wood-based cabinet may be more than 300 per cent cheaper than a composite structure. But composite technology is really the only way to create very stiff, low diffraction, low coloration enclosures of almost any shape.

enclosure and the shaping of the plinth top surface all form part of the port itself. The plinth has a quite modest spike footprint, but the great weight and low centre of gravity ensure excellent stability. Standard 8mm spikes are used, which seems a trifle parsimonious in view of the lavish engineering elsewhere. I'd also like to see a small spirit level built into the plinth, to help get the two speakers tilting at the same angle – something which is surprisingly difficult to achieve in a loudspeaker with few (if any) true horizontals and verticals.

The plinth is also used to house the crossover externally, away from the vibrations generated within the enclosure proper, and providing easy access should TAG McLaren wish to introduce an active drive option in the future. There's just a single pair of terminals fitted to the plinth. The company researched the alternatives of using single or multi-way terminals, and found that the former gave superior results because of simpler contact interfaces and the benefits of star grounding. Proprietary OFHC binding posts are machined in TAG McLaren's F1 facility, and gold-plated to resist corrosion but with no nickel plating interface, as this was found to affect the sound quality adversely.

Each drive unit is secured by seven substantial hex bolts, the open-frame units, all with cast alloy frames, are held under cosmetically matching mounting rings machined from aircraft-grade aluminium. All are made to TAG's design by Scan-Speak of Denmark. The low-bass driver has a 250mm chassis and 200mm paper cone, the upper bass unit a 180mm frame and 130mm paper cone, while the midrange has a 150mm frame with a rather special 100mm diaphragm. This starts out as a paper cone, but is then radially slit on a slight angle, and a damping compound is applied to create an air-tight seal. The resulting mechanical impedance discontinuity deflects and breaks up patterns in vibration energy travelling up and down the cone profile. The tweeter is a variant on Scan's classic 20mm doped fabric dome, the motor system and moving assembly secured in a specially milled alloy housing.

Sound quality

If the F1 is flashy to look at, the sound it delivers is the embodiment of restraint and neutrality. The first impression is likely to be underwhelming. Don't expect this speaker to reach out and grab you with melodrama and hype. Just sit back, relax, and give the sublime subtlety of this device time to work its magic.

It's the little things that sneak up on you, like the smoothness and accuracy of the tonality, the spaciousness and exquisite focus of the image, and the simple (but very rare) observation that bass only happens when the music demands it. Then the penny drops. There's an extraordinary freedom from conventional box effects here, not just through the midband, but right down through the bass too. The speakers seem to disappear as the perceived sources of sound, leaving just the soundstage itself behind.

Not that they sound 'disembodied'; the bottom end has real power, weight and solidity, right down into the bottom octave. But unlike most conventional speakers that attempt to go deep, it doesn't come with a load of additional garbage, thickening and grunge. The bottom end is simply there, driving the music along with real purpose and enthusiasm when called upon so to do.

Upmarket speakers tend to fall into certain broad types – you could almost refer to them as 'schools of thought' – when it comes to choosing

the compromises inherent in all designs. The F1 majors on neutrality at the expense of sensitivity, and one can draw parallels with 'classics' like the Spendor BC1 and Quad Electrostatic. Among its contemporaries, I'm reminded most of the original B&W Nautilus, which comes closest in driver line-up and construction techniques.

This is an exceptionally easy speaker to live with. It retains fine intelligibility at the very lowest levels, yet could be driven seriously loud without signs of distress by the 500W monoblock Bryston 7Bs I borrowed for that express purpose. Most notably, the speaker's character remained remarkably consistent across a very wide power range.

Yes, it does have a measure of 'character', mainly due to the overall balance, which is just a little retiring through the broad midband and rather more so in the treble, so the net effect is just a shade 'shut in' and might be over-restrained for some tastes. Maybe the measured 'notch' around the treble crossover plays a part, or maybe it's down to the modest sensitivity; I'm not sure, but the F1 seems a little lacking in snap, dynamic attack and tension.

During my time living with the F1s, I spent about half a day with a Lowther-driven horn speaker. Such speakers could not be any further apart in design terms, and while the horn lacked bass and had obvious box coloration, I missed its vividness, dynamic literacy and sumptuous textures when I went back to the F1.

Although the F1 has character, I'm still not sure whether it has any specific coloration. When I thought I'd pinned down a specific effect, I changed the amp and it went away. I tried several high quality amps and sources over the course of my listening, and the F1s simply told it how it was.

In truth I did find the sound just a little over-damped with my regular Naim NAP135 amps, an observation I put to project leader Graham Landick. To my surprise he didn't disagree, but

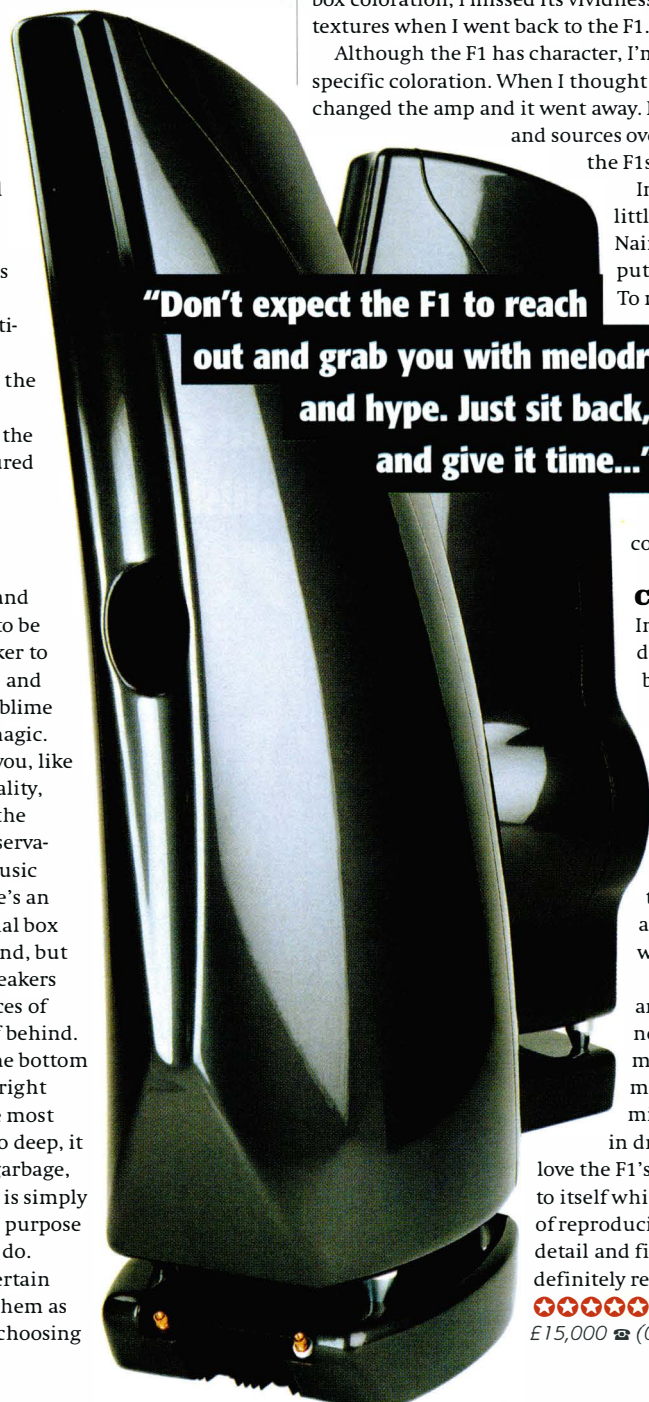
made the very valid point that the damping had to represent a compromise across a wide range of 'high end' amplification alternatives, which is entirely consistent with my earlier findings.

Conclusions

In two short weeks what looked decidedly oddball at first sight have become aesthetically desirable in their own right, with the bonus that they're also exceptionally high quality loudspeakers, with a freedom from boxiness unparalleled in my experience, and wonderful stereo imaging. I find myself more and more seduced by their delicacy and transparency, and contemplating their departure with an increasingly heavy heart.

Accurate, unflappable, controlled and consistent, their studied sonic neutrality and restrained character make quite a contrast to the dramatic visual presentation. Some might find the result a little lacking in drama and excitement; others will love the F1's ability to avoid drawing attention to itself while going about the serious business of reproducing the music with exceptional detail and fidelity. Powerful amplification is definitely recommended.

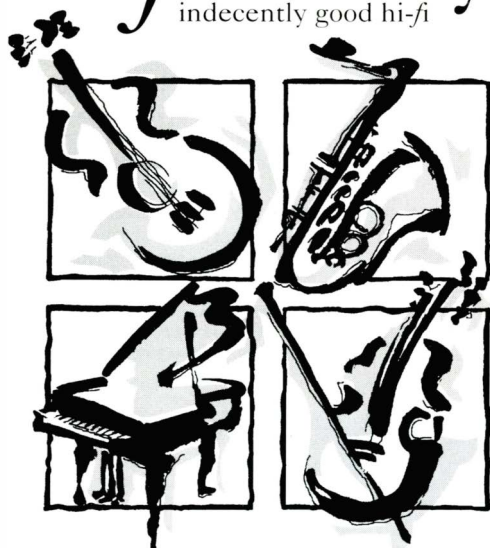
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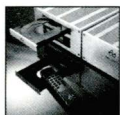
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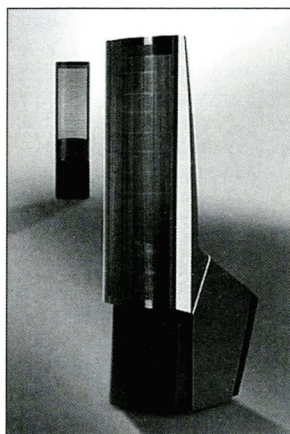
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REAL VINYL — LP record lovers will be delighted at the arrival of the **Reference Phono** all-valve phono stage.

The Reference Phono features two sets of inputs one for low-output mc pickups and one for high-output mc and mm designs. Used with the Reference 2 or similar preamp there is enough gain for any cartridge. Flexible loading is offered.

REAL PARTNERS — **Audio Research** introduced the **LS8** in 1997 as an affordable reference-calibre valve preamp. The new MkII version is a pure Class A design with improved component quality, improved isolation feet and chassis damping. The LS8/II is a single-ended design. Perfect partner for the LS8 is the **100.2** solid-state power amp which we believe sets a new standard. Liquid and grain-free, it possesses a fine midrange transparency.

REAL PRIORITY — **Audio Research** has also announced the **125.5** Audiophile Standard Multichannel solid-state power amplifier for home theatre installations. Though coming late to the home theatre market, Audio Research believes priority had to be given to audiophile quality sound and delayed introducing a home theatre product until fully happy with the sound quality.

REAL TRADITION — the **PH3 phono preamplifier** is eagerly sought out by those enjoying the renaissance of interest in vinyl. A total of 109 part changes now see the PH3 in Special Edition guise as the **PH3SE**. An upgrade will be available for existing owners.

REALITY CHECK — the all-valve **LS25** brings down the cost of true **Audio Research** high-end performance. This line stage preamplifier can be perceived as a slightly small Reference 1. It is a pure Class A design with

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REALISM

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smooth detailed sound, clean focus and plenty of bass impact. It has the flexibility to integrate with high quality audio and video components. **REAL PERFORMANCE** — the

LS16 preamplifier is for those looking to make a transition into real high-end yet wish to retain the convenience of full remote control of all front panel functions. It offers both singled ended and balanced inputs with microprocessor controlled relays for gain control and switching. Enthusiasts looking for the traditional qualities of an all-valve line preamplifier will find them carried over into the **LS8** which replaces the popular LS7 and LS9.

REAL POWER — The 100 watt per channel **VT100 power amplifier** is a hard-driving amplifier with true bass slam matched by a liquid mid and top. Its speed and control have to be heard.

Robert J Reina (Stereophile March 1999) concluded his VT100 review: "This extraordinary amplifier is beginning to make me wonder if current tube technology may once again be edging ahead of solid-state in the race for ultimate sonic realism".

The VT100 MkII build features doubled power supply energy storage, cooling fan and valve damping rings. MkII enhancements are available as a factory upgrade for existing owners.

The mid-power VT100 comes between the classic **VT50**, at around £3300, and the mighty **VT200**. Jonathan Valin writing in *Fi* magazine (October 1998) went so far as to rate the VT200 as: "The best high powered stereo amplifier I've heard — a genuine hi-fi masterwork".

REAL PARTNERSHIP — The **LS16/VT200** pre/power partnership puts excitement

back into your music with its detail resolution and dynamic slam. **REAL INTEGRATION** — enthusiasts waited a long time for the **CA50** all-valve, remote control integrated amplifier. Conservatively rated at 50 watt per channel the CA50 is designed to be stunningly musical, handsome in appearance — its styling cues coming from the awesome Reference series — and completely convenient. Audition this important

Audio Research first and find out why Ken Kessler (Hi-Fi News February 1997) said, "So much for the superiority of separates...". **REAL QUALITY** — An entirely new full 20-bit **CD player**, the **CD2**, is styled to match the CA50. As a complete player **Audio Research** is convinced the CD2 can compete with any single or two-box player in the market with its astounding resolution of detail and dynamics.

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Valve Amplifiers

Richard Black investigates what's on offer to newcomers to the steamy world of valve amplification.

In many ways, it's quite extraordinary for a hi-fi magazine still to be reviewing new valve amplifiers, some forty years after the valve was all but supplanted by the transistor. What's the point? Can the transistor really still not be capable of providing decent audio quality after all the many thousands of man-years that have gone into its refinement?

Of course it is capable, and the existence of many fine transistor amps proves it beyond doubt. But the simple fact remains that the valve has many useful characteristics that the transistor doesn't necessarily duplicate. If one takes into account linearity, gain and speed (frequency response), the valve is a more efficient device than the transistor, especially in power circuits: that is, simply, you need less of 'em to meet given performance targets. Now, with transistors costing only pennies each, there's no problem with using a few more, except that often introduces as many problems as it solves – there's a lot of merit in the KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid) argument.

So yes, there is a point to the continued existence of valve audio amplifiers. That said, there are still many problems associated with valves, particularly the need (in all but a very few, very esoteric amps) for an output transformer to drive loudspeakers. That transformer is a difficult component to design and an expensive one to manufacture.

Then there is the need for extra power supply voltages to power the valve 'heaters', not to mention the consequent extra-large mains transformer: all those transformers make the amp quite large and heavy, so it needs a bigger case...

Hence the complete absence of valves from the truly budget end of the market, and their relative scarcity even up to the thousand-pound mark. But let's assume you can afford the entry price. What are the advantages and unique characteristics of the breed?

That's a tricky one to answer, since valve amps vary at least as much as transistor ones and perhaps more. However, the common perception – based fairly enough on the majority of valve amps over the years – is that valves bring sweet treble, natural tonal balance and unforced detail, with perhaps slightly soft bass and limited output power. One could find exceptions to all of those, but it's not such a bad approximation. Indeed, many valve amp designers get into the whole thing in the first place driven by the desire to produce amplifiers with just those characteristics.

Don't, however, get carried away by any amount of talk about valve virtues and vices. Have a good listen for yourself. I use valves myself most of the time and have done, on and off, for years, but I would counsel against getting romantic about them: a bad valve amp (or just one that's not to your taste) will be as frustrating as a bad transistor amp.

Your friendly, smiling dealer will be happy to help – indeed, many of the nicest and most helpful dealers I've met are keen valve buffs.



How the tests were done

For most of the listening I used original Quad Electrostatic loudspeakers – having been designed to partner a 15W valve amp (the Quad II) and being to this day the speaker of choice for many a valve buff, it made sense. It's also a fairly easy load to drive, so to give some variety I also used ATC SCM20s (inefficient, but I don't often listen very loud) and JBL LX20s. Sources were a Rotel RCD-971 CD player and a Pink Triangle turntable plus Moth phono stage.

Because valve amps don't like being turned on and off rapidly and typically take a few minutes to warm up, I left all five switched on for the

duration of an evening's quick-fire comparisons, subsequently giving each one the benefit of a longer period of solo testing in order to get the full sonic picture.

What music did we use?

Philadelphia Orch./Sawallisch: *Nature's Realm* (Water Lily WLA-WS-66-CD)
 Donald Byrd: *A New Perspective* (Blue Note 7243 4 99006 2 2)
 José Antonio Guzmán: *Ambrosio* (Sonora SACD101)
 Ibrahim Ferrer: *Buena Vista Social Club presents Ibrahim Ferrer* (World Circuit WCD055)

THE CAST LIST

Affordable Valve Company EL34	£650.00
Canary Audio CA-608	£1,495.00
Graaf Venticinque	£1,790.00
Pathos Classic One	£995.00
Tube Technology Unisis Sig	£2,400.00



HINTS & TIPS

Valve amps generate lots of heat and should be given plenty of ventilation. Don't forget that there are often ventilation slots *under* the amp which will be blocked if it is placed directly on a carpet, for instance.

Valves are slightly microphonic and most amps will benefit from being placed on some kind of isolation support, or at least a reasonably solid shelf.

There's no particular reason why a valve amp should be any less reliable than a transistor one, but the valves themselves do have a finite life, which varies somewhat depending on the valve and the amp. Power valves should last at least 1,000 hours, often a good deal longer: have them checked by your dealer or the manufacturer if you think the sound is losing its edge. Small signal valves frequently last more than 20,000 hours.

GLOSSARY

CLASS A: an amplification stage in which all the active devices (valves or transistors) pass current at all times is said to work in 'Class A'. This has the advantage that the devices never have to switch hard off, something which often leads to unpleasant 'crossover distortion' (typically worse with transistors than valves). In 'Class AB', the devices work in Class A most of the time, with one or the other turning off momentarily at high power outputs.

ULTRALINEAR: a way of connecting a tetrode or pentode valve so that, in effect, some signal is fed back to the screen grid, giving better linearity but lower gain than when the screen grid is held at a constant voltage.

TRIODE, TETRODE, PENTODE: valve types with three, four and five electrodes respectively. Purists hold that the triode is best, the extra electrodes in other types being basically tweaks to increase gain.

PUSH-PULL: in valve amps, using valves in pairs so that as one turns on harder, the other starts to turn off, causing a 'see-saw' of voltage across the output transformer winding. Gives better linearity and efficiency than single-ended operation, though many folks swear by the sonic purity of single-ended.

AFFORDABLE VALVE COMPANY EL34

Affordable is right – this is certainly one of the cheapest valve amps around at present, and possibly the very cheapest. But there isn't any very obvious lack in basic specifications, with output power quoted as 40 Watts per channel. How does AVC do it? Simple: the amp is made in China where labour costs are embarrassingly low and many of the parts are made anyway (notably valves, of which China is one of the main sources these days).

There are areas where the cost-cutting shows, principally in fit and finish, which is functional but hardly class-leading, and also internal component quality and assembly. Like most other valve amps around, this one uses an Alps volume control, but here it's the version made for mass-market stuff, not the rather lovely big pots more often favoured. Likewise, the selector switch, cabling and capacitors are all pretty cheap and cheerful, but there are some good chunky resistors in evidence and the power supply even uses a choke for better ripple filtering.

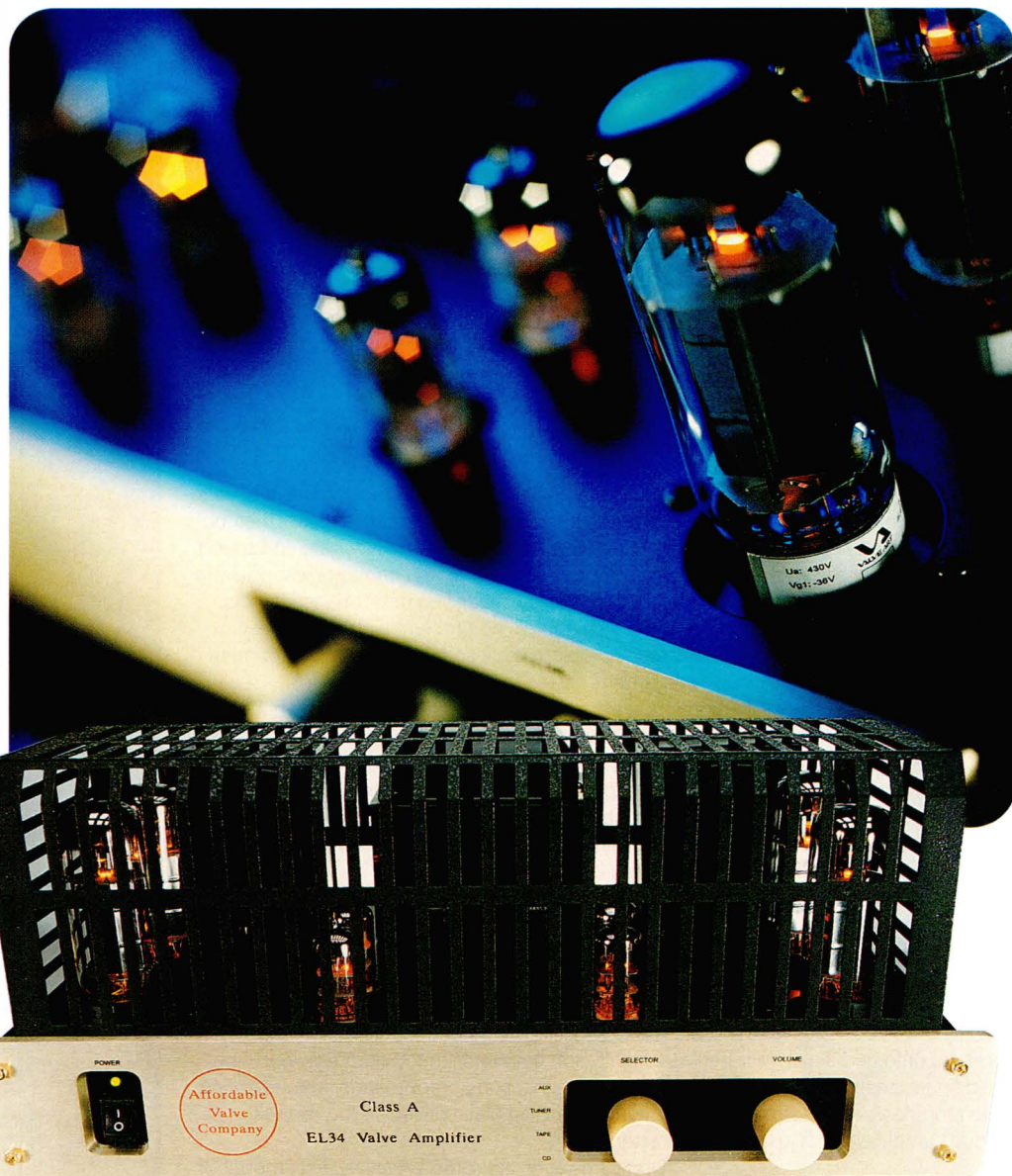
The circuit uses a pair of EL34 valves per channel, in Ultralinear mode, with a pair of twin triodes (6N3, a type I've never seen before) giving a fully balanced circuit. Fixed bias is used with a relatively low bias current, which is good for valve life but means that the circuit is decidedly Class AB rather than the Class A proudly proclaimed on the front of the unit – which makes rather a mockery of the claims in the manual for the virtues of Class A valve treble.

Although a small handful of dealers nationwide currently stock this product, AVC deals mainly direct and the price includes delivery and a one-month home trial. It also includes a mains lead with a ferrite ring interference suppressor built in, a pair of short interconnects to maximise treble and a couple of CDs (full length albums, too) with notes on what to listen for – a novel touch.

SOUND QUALITY

There seems to be no attempt to disguise this amp's aim: it's a 'classic valve sound' animal and no mistake. That's to say it's warm and cuddly, and therefore perhaps not the tool of choice for resolution freaks.

With smooth, laid-back, sparse jazz it's completely at home, and something smoochy with a subtle double-bass foundation suits it to perfection. On such a recording, vocals are generally lifelike and involving. The sax or trumpet, when



it comes in, won't startle you or make your teeth hurt and the piano sounds believable, if not perfectly true tonally. So far so good.

The other side of the coin is shown with big orchestral stuff or heavy rock – something with lots going on. In fact, I wonder if this amp wasn't designed by someone who plays a wind instrument, because the way it deals with strings is far from complimentary.

Orchestral violins playing high up tend to sound quite harsh and processed, almost like the strange travesty that passes for 'violins' on many synthesisers, while at the bottom of the score a handful of double basses can sound much too blended (in the Moulinex sense) for my tastes. Meanwhile, it is really quite hard to pick out details anywhere within the orchestra or band. Perversely, however, imaging is on the whole quite good, at least up to

very high levels at which point the sound becomes rather strained and images collapse inwards.

Impact is not bad, and up-tempo jazz numbers, solo piano and other fairly simple sounds are quite involving. It's not the most foot-tapping sound ever, though, principally because of a degree of fatness in the balance which does no great favours to the precision of a really good drummer.

As with many valve amplifiers, that bass sound is going to vary quite significantly between loudspeakers due to the very high output impedance which makes for unpredictable frequency response when driving a real speaker.

Apart from that, results are fair for the breed: distortion's a little on the high side and full rated output is only achievable at very high distortion (six per cent or more) at the frequency extremes. For the usual two

per cent distortion limit, bass output is more like 18W and high treble (20kHz) a mere 5W.

CONCLUSION

It's a very inexpensive example of its kind, but it's a flawed gem. Perhaps a little too reminiscent of the good old, bad old days for a recommendation. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£650.00

A real bargain on the face of it, but the sound is oh so soft, warm and old-valve. Too much of a good thing.

■ **ONE YEAR GUARANTEE (VALVES INC)**

✉ Affordable Valve Company, 11 Magdalen Close, Hempstead, Kent ME7 3TA
☎ (01634) 373410

CANARY AUDIO CA608

Like the Affordable amp, this unit appears to offer more physical value for money than one can reasonably expect, and in this case it's got little to do with cheap labour since the CA-608 is 'handcrafted in California'.

In fact, in many ways it matches the AVC spec for spec: four inputs and no tape loop, 40 Watt nominal rating (although in practice it fails to meet that by a significant margin), output from a pair of EL34s in push-pull Ultralinear configuration and choke-filtered power supply. Where it differs from the Affordable is in its use of cathode bias, which eliminates an adjustment but somewhat compromises available power: on the other hand, it makes operation pretty much pure Class A.

There's a whopping case on this beast, and that's largely because it's been laid out all on one plane rather than with the transformers somehow stacked above the rest of the circuit, as is more often done in valve amps. This way is certainly easier to design, and probably easier to build too, and puts the valves out of harm's way right inside the case. But it's nicely rather than cheaply done, and the front panel is a very substantial piece of 10mm thick aluminium.

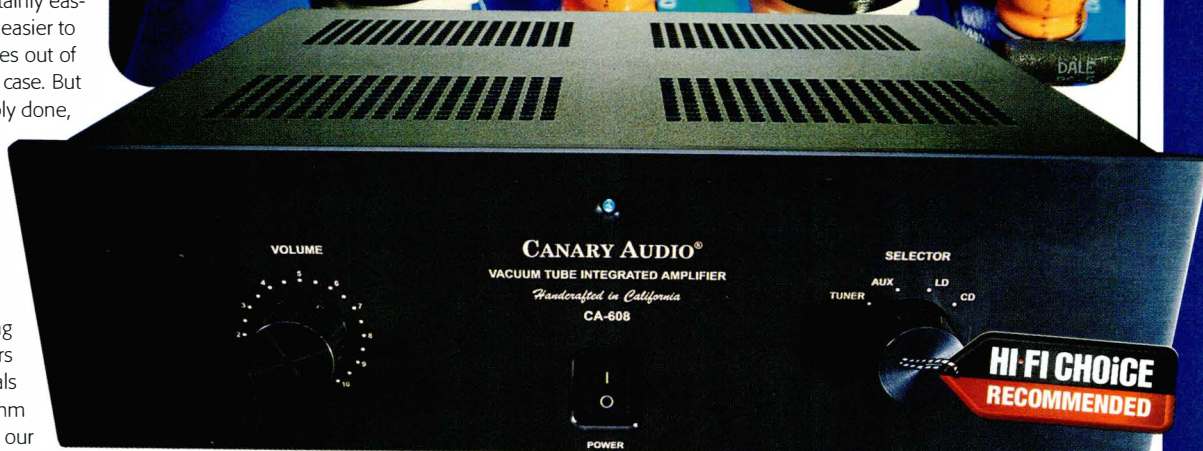
Other quality features include the Alps 'Black Beauty' volume control, Teflon-insulated internal wiring, brand-name coupling capacitors and large resistors throughout. Output terminals are provided for 8 and 4 Ohm loudspeakers (channels on our review sample were reversed between input and output, which doesn't say a great deal for Canary's quality control).

Driving the output valves are a couple of 6SN7 double triodes, a rare valve these days but one found in a couple of early Leak amps. An ECC83 acts as input stage, and the circuit is very neatly laid out on a double-thickness circuit board.

SOUND QUALITY

This amp will probably appeal strongly to some folks and far less so to others. It's got true valve character – and I say that in full knowledge of the baggage such a comment carries, both good and bad according to taste. In fact, in some ways it resembles the AVC sonically, although Canary will doubtless be relieved to hear that (at twice the price) it manages most things rather better.

Best of all is the Big Picture, the grand sweep of a piece of music, the



general overall feel of the thing. With suitable recordings – basically those which tread a similar path rather than focusing in on tiny details – this amplifier can carry one along quite convincingly.

It manages a pretty good balance over most of the audio spectrum and is particularly good in the important midrange, giving a lifelike quality to solo voices and key instruments like sax and guitar, so there's little to distract one from that sense of well-being that comes from a good bit of sonic indulgence, be it in Bruckner, Stan Getz or Pink Floyd.

The trouble is, as often happens with hi-fi components possessing a high 'wallow factor', when one wants to listen more intently there's a veil in the way, which prevents one from hearing with full precision.

This shows in different ways on different instruments, but on solo trumpet, for instance, the sound is

just a little dry and harsh, while multi-part mixed choir sounds too distant, the individual parts hard to discern. Once again, orchestral strings have a slight unnatural sheen, and bass is a little shy at large-scale climaxes, although at other times it's quite full and tuneful.

Canary seems to have been rather optimistic in rating this amplifier at 40W: in practice, it's good for about 24W before clip in the mid-band, and less than 10W before the onset of serious distortion (five per cent or more) in the bass. It's hard not to think that distortion levels this high must be related to the amp's lack of detail. Distortion climbs pretty rapidly with level in the treble too, and although frequency response is flat at full volume, it falls in the treble at middling volume settings – and in any case, the very high output impedance will make it vary a few dB into most loudspeakers.

CONCLUSION

For many people's tastes, I suspect this amplifier is a lot of what valves are all about: luxurious timbre, engrossing musical flow and plenty of life and it's worth a try just to see whether it suits you. Add the competitive price and the Canary warrants Recommendation. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,495.00

If you value the grand scheme of things but aren't too bothered about fine detail, this may be the amp for you.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE (VALVES INC)

Audio Connoisseurs, 79 The Village, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside CH63 7PL
(0151) 645 0007

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J. F. Sebastian



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

GRAAF Venticinque

Graaf is probably best known for its large and fearsome output transformerless (OTL) valve amps, but this modest black box is an altogether less threatening proposition. Behind that rather nifty bit of smoked glass (just transparent enough to show a saucy little glow from the valve heaters) lurks a pair (per channel) of 5881 valves driving the loudspeaker through a conventional transformer.

The circuit is actually extremely simple, with one 6922 (ECC88) valve per channel providing voltage gain and phase splitting to drive the output stage, and a single 6922 acting as the preamp stage for both channels – a 'preamp' output is available on the back panel for driving a second power amp in a bi-amped set-up. The output stage employs pentode connection with cathode bias and there is very low negative feedback.

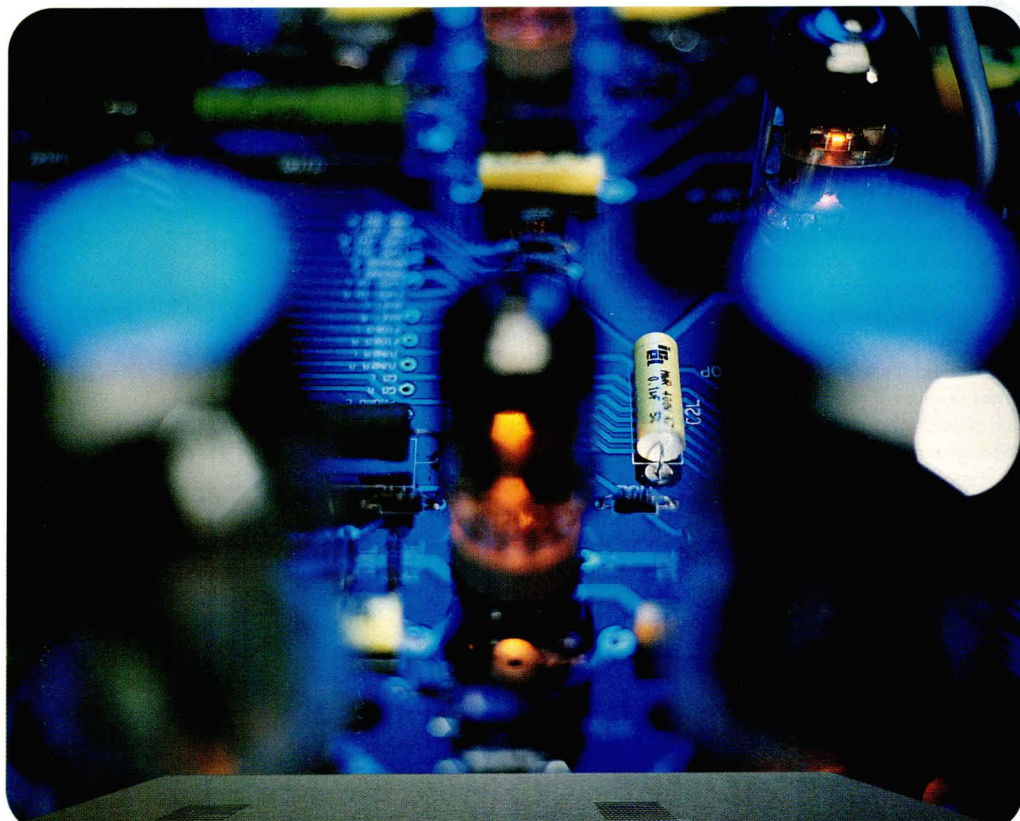
Rather unusually for a valve amp, the Venticinque uses a toroidal mains transformer which allows for a lighter and more compact package than a frame transformer. Because of the large amount of heat generated by two Class A output stages plus the valve heaters (all told, more than 150W), Graaf has also chosen to incorporate a pair of fans to assist with cooling.

These run at low speed under idle conditions but pick up when the amp is called to output more than about one Watt, the idea being that at that level the music will easily drown the noise of the fans. (A bit odd, though, because in a Class A amplifier heat dissipation varies very little with output power.) However, they may still be slightly distracting in use and also have the ability to fill the case with dust very quickly – just look inside any computer!

Construction is simple but neat and secure, with a good quality, double-sided circuit board and generally good quality components. There's only one set of output terminals here, but Graaf has set the transformer parameters to match speakers with impedance below 8 Ohms reasonably well. Including the tape loop, there are six inputs, one of which can optionally be converted to phono operation.

SOUND QUALITY

Yet another amp with a mixture of good and less good, but in slightly different ways from the others. Especially in comparison with the Canary amp (the nearest in price



and, arguably, also in philosophy), the Graaf perhaps performs better in its weakest areas, but doesn't quite equal the Canary's overall appeal.

One of the Graaf's strongest suits is imaging, and with pretty much any kind of musical grouping it's impressive how solid and real the images seem. That's something a little unusual in an amp which, like this one, eschews the 'analytical' approach in favour of a rather broader sweep – imaging all too easily gets swept right away.

As far as balance is concerned, there's little amiss, although bass is sometimes just a little on the heavy side. This is most noticeable in music with sustained bass notes (bowed double bass and so on) rather than percussive sounds.

Sometimes a degree of harshness creeps in on high midrange sounds, which in one musical excerpt made a male vocal sound slightly thin and dry, while on another occasion solo

violin seemed to lack some of its former sweetness.

Dynamics are quite good and there's excitement when it's required: resist the urge to turn up the volume, however, because when this amp runs out of steam it does so disconcertingly suddenly, which can make climaxes distinctly 'anti'. Detail, overall, is pretty good – better in the treble than the bass, which needs some concentration to hear 'through'. Incidentally, siting the amplifier behind an acoustic screen so that the fans were less audible certainly seemed to help matters.

Results are no better than fair: although the rated output of 25W is achieved above about 60Hz, at very low frequencies distortion rises like anything and, despite Graaf's claims of a power bandwidth extending down to 11Hz, there's only about 10W available at 20Hz and less than 3W at 11Hz before the waveform gets severely bent.

A fairly mild valve mismatch on one channel caused a trebling of low-frequency distortion, and two inputs were shorted together on the review sample.

CONCLUSION

This should be quite an attractive proposition, but it doesn't pull off any unique tricks and its overall performance doesn't seem to make it stand out at the price. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£1,790.00**

Smart and practical, but it just never seems to shine sonically.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

UKD, 23 Richings Way, Iver, Bucks SL0 9DA
(01753) 654531

PATHOS Classic One

Clearly the odd one out in terms of styling (love it or hate it?), this amp is also the oddity electronically since it relies mostly on solid-state rather than vacuum tube devices for amplification.

Each channel has just one double triode valve (ECC86) which acts as a balanced pre-stage: the rest of the circuit uses a JFET-input op-amp, some bipolar transistors and a pair of MOSFETs for the output – just about a group set of amplifying devices! And since MOSFETs, like all power semiconductors, need some kind of heatsink, that's what you'll find cunningly concealed beneath the chromed cover that looks like a valve cage. Operation is in Class AB.

Facilities are basic, with five inputs (one of which is balanced) and a tape output. Sensibly, the input selector switch is at the back, right next to the sockets, with a long rod connecting it to the knob. The volume is controllable via the world's simplest remote – two buttons, volume up and volume down. Internal construction is neat and quite ingenious, although the circuit is not over-complicated and there's plenty of room for everything.

In case the Classic One's 50 Watts should prove woefully inadequate for your needs, it's possible to turn the amp into a bridged monoblock capable of driving 135W into 8 Ohms. Since there's no preamp output available, however, you'd need a separate pre-amp to drive two units – either that or have to adjust two completely separate volume controls. Incidentally, I reckon the output channels were reversed on the review sample, but since they're not labelled it's hard to be dogmatic. A bit illogical, anyway, to have the left output on the right side and vice versa.

SOUND QUALITY

The word that kept coming up in my listening notes for this amplifier was 'dry'. I started off with a bit of heavy orchestral Mahler, which certainly seemed to offer some good detail but lacked resonance and fullness. Some much smaller scale orchestral music suffered similarly, with a

rather two-dimensional image and little sense of the recording venue's acoustic. Even rock'n'roll seemed to have a lot of the body squeezed out of it, and major climaxes lacked bass and impact.

That's not to say there are no areas to praise: side-to-side imaging can be precise (just occasionally rather too 'ping-pong') and voices,

solo or choral, are detailed, comprehensible and convincing. Recordings which are already quite dry and detailed (typically those that have been close-miked) can be exciting and although the balance at times sounds a bit thin, vigorous party music 'kicks ass' convincingly.

On the whole, though, there's a lack of sweetness which is to the

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £995.00

Unusual looks and even more unusual electronic design, with distortion of every kind badly compromising musical achievement.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

UKD, 23 Richings Way, Iwer, Bucks SLO 9DA
(01753) 654531

detriment of many musical styles. What's more, although the sound often seems very detailed it's actually surprisingly hard to hear into the middle of a mix: there's too much upfront and not enough back-up.

If you've ever stood too close to the stage at a big band gig you'll know the feeling of being able to hear every last lip-twitch from the trumpets but very little of the percussion, whereas further back the balance improves. The Classic One is a bit like that.

With little doubt, this is largely due to its unusual technical performance. The power amp stage shows classic crossover distortion and quite a lot of it too, which almost invariably leads to dryness.

Meanwhile, the preamp stage, which sits upstream of the volume control and therefore always sees full level, is so designed that it overloads at only 2V input – actually less than the output of many CD players – and at lower levels still has quite high distortion. This seems utterly bizarre, but the designer assures us this is what's intended. (I tried attenuating my CD player's output by 2dB to 1.8V, but the character did not change

markedly.) Other measurements are mostly OK, although channel balance is poor.

CONCLUSION

Contrary to what one might hope, this unit seems unable to combine the best features of valve and solid state amplifiers – a difficult job at the best of times. It has its good points, the price being one, but performance is not up with the best. **RB**



TUBE TECHNOLOGY Unisis Signature

Tube Technology has been around for a while and so has this model: I wrote about it some years ago and not much has changed since then, although a few tweaks have earned it a 'Signature'. It follows the classic Leak (and others) layout and does it very smartly too, with a high standard of finish typical of the brand's products. It makes efficient use of space, too, since not only are there ten valves on show, but four more lie concealed within.

The output uses two parallel push-pull pairs of EL84 pentodes connected in Ultralinear mode and with fixed bias allowing Class AB operation, of which the first few Watts are in Class A. Bias is adjustable from the top of the unit, but there's no indication of when it's correct unless you buy the optional extra digital bias meter, which I would recommend – correct bias is a Good Thing, substantially reducing low-frequency distortion.

The bias current-sensing circuit is ingenious, relying on the voltage drop across the fuses which also protect the output transformers against faulty valves.

Tube Technology has even managed to squeeze an all-valve phono stage (MM only) inside the Unisis – a brave move, given the potential for hum pick-up from the relatively high power mains transformer. The only slightly naff feature of this design is the extra mains transformer mounted on the rear, a small toroidal which looks incongruous but is at least normally out of sight. A valve cage is normally supplied on units sold in the UK.

With an output power rating of 30 Watts and a static dissipation in each EL84 of about 12W (design maximum for this valve), TT is caning the valves pretty hard, but the EL84 is reasonably abuse-proof and is cheap to replace. The company should be congratulated, by the way, on the superb user's manual, which is a fine example of how these things should be done.

SOUND QUALITY

This seemed overall to be the most rounded and polished performer of this group. It has the odd minor weakness, but there's nothing seriously debilitating in its make-up and it does a lot of things well. As I suggested in the Canary review, one of the virtues many people look for in valve amps as a breed is the ability to sweep the listener along on the crest of a musical wave, and the



Unisis seems happy enough to oblige in that department. It does so, though, without losing sight of the little details that make up said wave, which gives it a distinct edge over many of its competitors.

In fact, if one is to be really picky, even the Unisis isn't the last word in detail recovery, and on my usual test tracks for this kind of thing it slightly underplayed the differentiation between cellos and double basses, for instance, in an orchestra and started to get a bit bewildered in large climaxes. But it certainly manages quite well enough to avoid the frustrating and ultimately annoying haze that covers the sound with some amps.

Tonal balance is good, too, with nicely rounded bass at all times: never overstated but reassuringly present when it's needed, it makes this far and away the best amp here for sounds liked plucked double bass and quiet bass drums and timpani. Voices sound clear and

unforced and imaging is good in both sideways and front-to-back directions.

Just occasionally a hint of harshness creeps in, particularly with very 'busy' sounds like cymbal – not so noticeable on the cymbal itself, of course, but reflecting on other instruments playing at the same time. It's slight, though, and a common enough failing too. At the other extreme, delicate sounds like triangle and quiet piano are clear and crystalline, with good ambience.

The phono stage sounds decent, with just about audible hum but a pleasingly open tone. Certainly more than adequate for occasional use.

Full rated power is available (for once!) right down to 20Hz and distortion kept under control at all frequencies and levels (typically about 0.2 per cent at modest outputs and below one per cent at half power).

Frequency response is wide and flat and output impedance is just about low enough to keep any

aberrations into real loudspeakers below a couple of dB.

CONCLUSION

This is a nicely judged amplifier which, if it doesn't blow all its competitors into the weeds, certainly shows many of them a thing or two. It combines many virtues in a very practical package and deserves Recommendation.

RB

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£2,400.00

A very attractive product which combines many classic valve attributes to good effect.

TEN YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Tube Technology, Technology House, Station Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2PH
☎ (01932) 821111



CONCLUSIONS

VALVE AMPLIFIERS

Five integrated amps is not that large a cross-section of what's available, so it's not too alarming to report that this was, in a way, a slightly lacklustre group. No one product stood out as outstanding value, uniquely capable, or a novel concept.

If one is to be brutally honest, there's something of a lack of originality about all too many modern valve amp designs: circuits and even component values are often copied wholesale from application notes published by valve manufacturers in the 1950s. I'll refrain from pointing the finger, but more than one of the amps in this group falls into that category.

Incidentally, all come with published specs which aren't met in

some that are perhaps in some ways 'less good' can still achieve astounding and gratifying results. Opinions vary widely and I can predict confidently that within days of this review appearing, every one of the units I have failed to recommend will have been well liked by someone, somewhere, in a demonstration.

One very important point that must be mentioned concerns amp/speaker matching. Valve amps are, on the whole, considerably more fussy about the speakers they drive than their transistor rivals, not least because of the typically low power available.

That indicates sensitive speakers, for a start, and preferably speakers with a relatively high and

"Sometimes one finds a magical combo of amp and speakers that appears to be much more than the sum of its parts."

practice to some degree; I wish manufacturers would leave off doing that—they're not obliged to publish any specification, and this doesn't help anybody.

It's a reasonable defence that if an amplifier design worked well then it should still work well now, but despite the improvements that have been made since the '50s in passive components (resistors and capacitors particularly), many modern valve amps seem to lag behind their ancestors in certain important respects, due not least to deficiencies in output transformer design.

That's absolutely not meant to be a warning away from the breed in general, because the best of them are superb and

unvarying impedance. That can be a complication: the flip side is that sometimes one finds a magical combination of amp and speakers that appears to be very much more than the sum of its parts — yet another area where a dealer's advice can be invaluable.

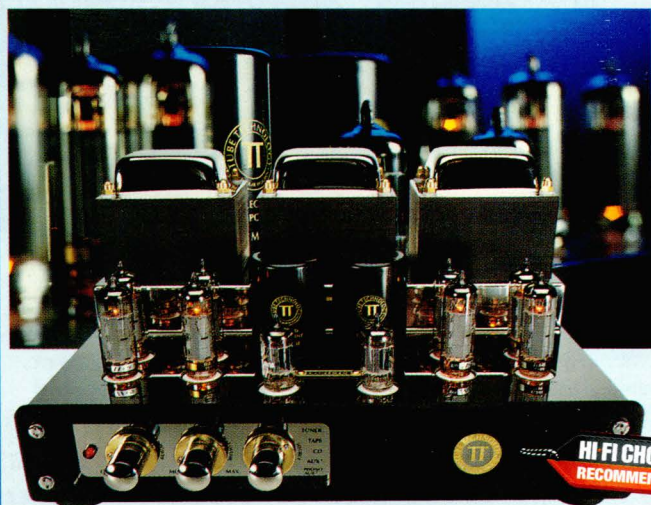
Having got all those riders and caveats off my chest, I feel slightly less mean about the Affordable and Graaf units, at least — the Pathos just seems a bit bizarre with its wilful distortion cocktail. It's probably fairest to say that these three are niche products which will find their place in some hearts, but to be formally recommended they would need to be either more widely applicable or more breathtakingly different.

RECOMMENDED



CANARY AUDIO CA-608 – £1,495

This is a pretty fair example of what 'classic valve sound' is all about. OK, so it's not the last word in fine detail, but it has that knack of sweeping you up in the music, a trick that will make many overlook its minor foibles.



TUBE TECHNOLOGY Unisis Signature – £2,400

Less specifically 'valve' than the Canary, this amp combines the pleasing tonality and long-term listenability of the breed with greater precision and insight than the other amps here. It's also relatively speaker-tolerant, and adds value with a very fair phono stage.

VALVE AMPS COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE MODEL	AFFORDABLE VALVE CO. EL34	CANARY AUDIO CA-608	GRAAF VENTICINQUE	PATHOS CLASSIC ONE	TUBE TECHNOLOGY UNISIS SIGNATURE
PRICE	£650.00	£1,495.00	£1,790.00	£995.00	£2,400.00
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
OUTPUT POWER, MIDBAND	41W	24W	25W	55W	32W
NUMBER OF INPUTS	4	4	6 inc. tape monitor	5 inc. one balanced	5 inc. phono
OUTPUTS	4 Ohm, 8 Ohm	4 Ohm, 8 Ohm	8 Ohm, tape, pre out	4-8 Ohm, tape	8 Ohm, tape, pre out



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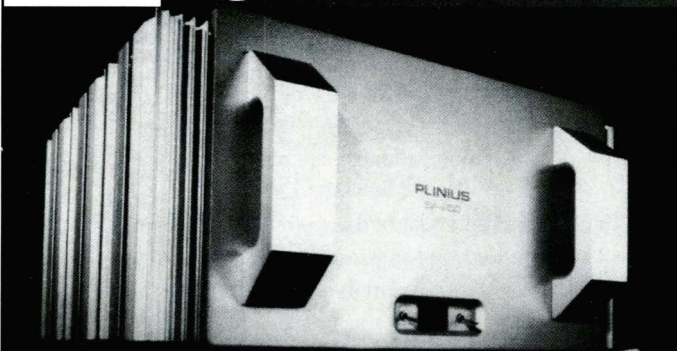
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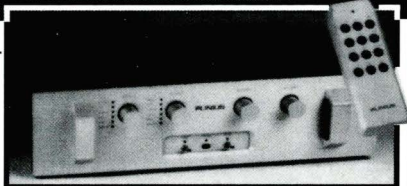
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Dynamic Duo



Equipment pictured
Plinius SA-250 Class A Power Amplifier
and Plinius M16 Pre-amplifier



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Clearaudio - Crimson - DCS
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Five Stars

Paul Messenger explains why you should visit an independent

Why use a specialist hi-fi dealer? The short answer is because he knows one hell of a lot more about hi-fi than you do. And if you've gone to the trouble of picking up a specialist magazine on the subject, you're obviously interested in something rather more than a mini system from the nearest electrical superstore.

You've probably bought this magazine for one of two reasons. You're looking for advice (presumably unbiased and good) on choosing and using your hi-fi system, and/or you're checking out the ads to decide where to go and buy it.

The independent specialist dealer doesn't know everything, and he doesn't know much about you, but if music's an important part of your life, he's the only guy around who's able (and hopefully willing) to help you choose the equipment which will give you the best long term satisfaction.

Power of the Press

Dealers sometimes moan to me about the power of the press, and the disproportionate influence of its 'Best Buy' and multi-star ratings. Well, I've been in the press for twentysomething years, and still feel more ignorant than powerful.

The more I mess around with hi-fi gear, the more I become aware of our lack of real understanding of the subtleties involved, and the more I appreciate the importance of the dealer's skills and experience, in bringing together components so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

We hacks get paid to write words, often about components in isolation, because individual product reviews are still the staple diet of the press. They can sometimes provide a useful guide to the way a product performs, but only under the particular circumstances in which the review was conducted.

The hi-fi reviewer attempts, with varying degrees of success, to evaluate a particular component, and find something interesting (and

hopefully positive) to say about it. That's about the end of it, and it's on to the next product.

The magazine prints the review, and that very process magically confers a measure of authority. Experienced hi-fi enthusiasts, who read reviews over a period of years and try out various products themselves, soon start to realise the limitations of that approach. Some reviews are better than others, but none can get to grips with the real heart of the problem - whether a given product will improve your musical satisfaction, in your system and your room.

The Role of the Dealer

The dealer's role is very different, and potentially much more valuable. He has the chance to talk one-on-one. If he's good at his job, he'll use that opportunity to find out what you as an individual are looking (or listening) for.

His motivation is very different too. Sure he wants to make a sale. That's the lifeblood of any shop. But he also knows that if something he sells really does deliver long term satisfaction, there's a very good chance you'll come back again to see if he can repeat the trick some time in the future.

If you go into a shop and demand a particular CD player, on the basis that it got seven stars (out of five) in last month's magazines, the shop will probably simply take the line of least resistance and sell it to you. (Or switch-sell you to a similar price alternative, if he's fresh out of stock of that particular flavour-of-the-month.)

If you go in and say you're looking for a CD player, and want his advice on what to choose, things are liable to become more interesting. The

for Value

specialist dealer if you are searching for real hi-fi satisfaction

onus is now on the dealer to show what he can do. His first task is to ask the right questions to try and get some idea of what you might be after.

Asking the questions is the easy bit. The real skill comes in using the information to come up with a shortlist of likely contenders, and then conducting a demonstration so that you have a real chance to play a central role in the decision making process.

Putting together a successful hi-fi system might not be as difficult as it was twenty or thirty years ago, but it's just as easy to make a mess of things. Put the 'wrong' combination of components together and it'll still sound a lot better than any cute little mini system package. It might even

"If music is an essential ingredient in your daily diet, you owe it to yourself to become a member of the discriminating minority."

rate a five star review. But it won't match the potential of a carefully balanced and properly installed system, and it certainly won't cater for your own particular preferences and personality.

We British are notoriously indiscriminating consumers, at a mass market level at least. The majority of the population don't even bother to drive a car they're thinking of buying, never mind take the trouble to listen to hi-fi equipment.

The majority will therefore end up with hyperstore mediocrity, and hi-fi that's about as tasty as supermarket bread. But if music is an essential ingredient in your daily diet, you owe it to yourself to become a member of the discriminating minority.

You know full well that your music collection is as individual as your wardrobe, and just as precious too, so it's worth taking the time and trouble to search out the dealer and equipment

that will make that collection come alive, and give you a new buzz every time you play your favourite discs.

The independent specialist may not beat the chain store on price, but he continues to thrive in a hostile environment because real hi-fi is so much more than a matter of price. The people who work in these shops are themselves enthusiasts, often with many years of experience in meeting customer's needs, and the very necessary expertise to ensure that the whole thing is properly set up to deliver the best results.

The better the hi-fi, the more important it is to get the fine details right at the installation end of things, but even the least expensive equipment can be made to sound a whole lot better if good care is taken over the fine details - the support furniture, the cabling, the positioning of speakers and so on.

Without expert assistance even high class hi-fi can give mediocre results. With it you'll stand a very good chance of ending up with something rather more than a consumer durable - something which will be a source of considerable pleasure and genuine emotional satisfaction for decades to come.

I agreed to write this signed piece, irrespective of the specific sponsors, because I believe the independent specialist dealer plays a vital role in giving customers long term hi-fi satisfaction. The views and opinions expressed here are my own and not necessarily those of Hi-fi Choice.

Paul Messenger

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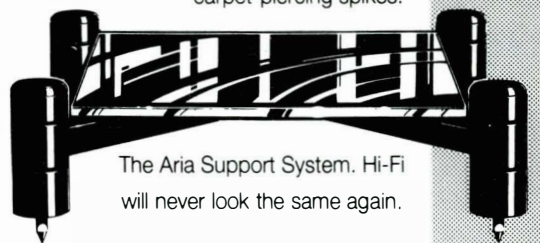


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Speaker Stands

Richard Stevenson's just back from B&Q with his spirit level and sandbags. It can mean only one thing...

Like most things in life, a hi-fi system is only as good as the weakest link in its chain. No matter how much money is spent on a CD player, amplifier or speakers, unless the ancillary equipment is up to the job, it is just not going to 'sing'. So placing loudspeakers on anything but dedicated stands is as much use as an Formula One car with remoulded road tyres – and not half as much fun to watch.

Speaker stands have developed at a pace over the past decade, and today's designs are versatile performers, each having its own distinct sonic style. This has made the choice of support almost as important as the speaker itself, the goal being a completely transparent stand that offers a neutral presentation irrespective of the speaker placed upon it.

If sceptical friends are still worrying about your sanity, you can always explain that the ultimate sound quality of a stand hinges on how well it manages to perform three important tasks. It must place the speaker at the right height, act as a sink/conduit for cabinet energy and hold it rigidly. Different designs crack these audio nuts in different ways and thus offer a multitude of solutions and sounds.

The 'sound' of a stand is directly affected by its construction, and in the past it has been noted that heavy stands had a more controlled sound than lightweight ones, which tend to sound 'quicker' and there has subsequently been a move away from the latter. Similarly, the size and shape of a stand affects its sound, proximity to the floor makes a difference to bass and the frontal area of the stand affects imaging.

Mass loading with sand or dedicated aggregate filler both damps vibrations within the stand and helps it gain a firm footing. All of the regular stands in this test are either supplied with filler as standard or can be loaded when they are put together. Dry sand is the lowest-cost option, but some specialist materials such as Atacama's Atabites – basically triangular steel chippings – offer an even better performance for a small outlay. Either way, it's well worth the effort.

The visual appeal of a stand is also worth taking into consideration. There's little point paying for the beautiful rosewood finish on a speaker such as the Heybrook Duet only to place it on a heap of ironmongery that looks like scrap yard salvage. Thankfully, aesthetics are now part of the design brief for most stand manufacturers and many models are available in a choice of colours.

Like the F1 car and its tyres, good stands are absolutely essential to get a decent performance from loudspeakers. They start from as little as £30, but spending between £60 and £100 assures, at the very least, a capable performance from any bookshelf design. With more upmarket models, putting between 20 and 30 per cent of your speaker budget towards decent stands is worthwhile and set you racing towards audio Nirvana.

How the tests were done

The stands were assembled in a furnished 4m x 8m room and levelled on the carpeted, concrete floor, firing lengthways down the room. Those stands supplied with filling material were suitably loaded pre-testing, and those that simply recommended it were auditioned both with and without a healthy bucketful of dry silver sand.

The test system comprised a Teac VRDS10 CD player, Denon DAP-2500 pre and POA-6600 power amps and a number of speakers including B&W's 601S2, Tannoy's Mercury M2 and

Heybrook's Duet, Acoustic Energy Aegis Threes and Tannoy Saturn S8s were used for the two floor stands.

The music we used

We listened to a wide range of music from dance to light classical, including:

UNDERWORLD: *Beaucoup Fish* (V2)

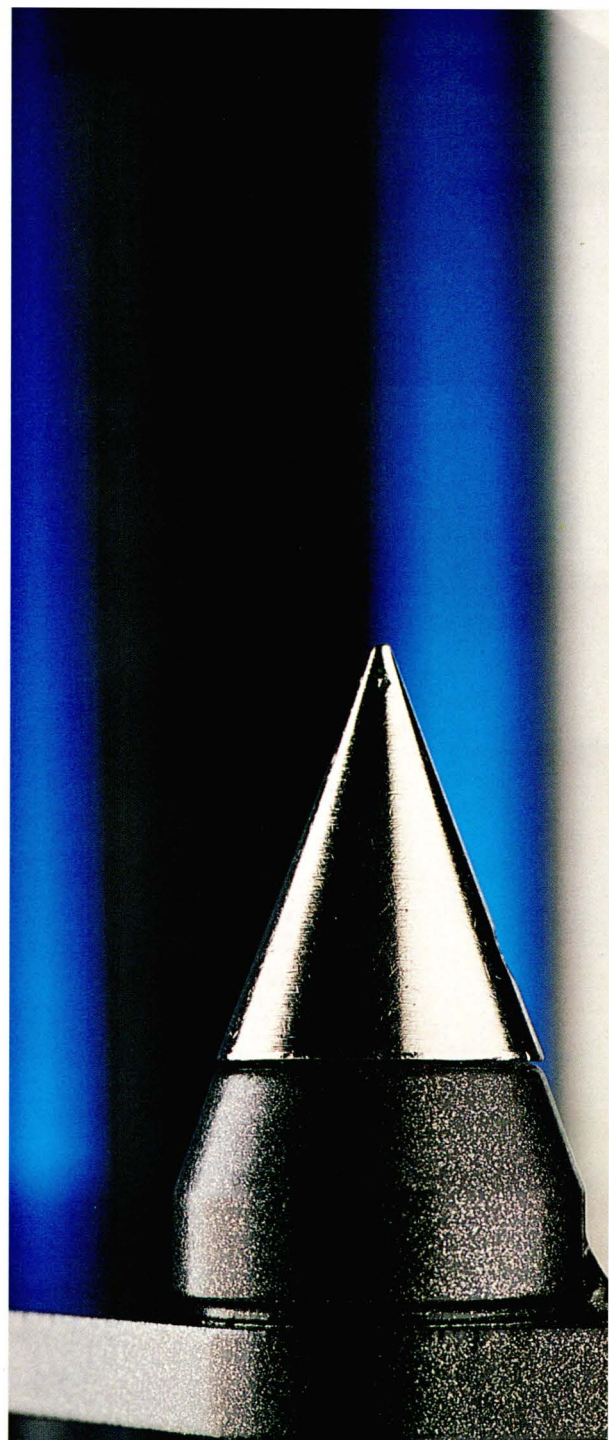
SARA K: *Play on words* (Chesky Records)

MCCOY TYNER: *New York Reunion* (Chesky Records)

BETH ORTON: *Central Reservation* (Heavenly)

THE CAST LIST

Alphason Akros II	£65.00	p72
Apollo A4/6	£82.00	p72
Atacama Nexus 6	£49.99	p73
Custom Design R/S300 Mk II	£99.99	p73
Mana Sound Base	£175.00	p75
Mission Stance	£99.90	p75
Partington Dreadnought		
Ultima	£300.00	p77
Sonus Systems Excel	£110.00	p77
Sound Organisation Z522	£89.00	p78
Sound Style Select X122	£95.00	p78
Target HM60	£106.00	p79
Townshend Seismic Sink	£499.00	p79



HINTS & TIPS

Spikes are a critical component of stand design, firmly coupling speaker to stand and stand to floor, and keeping the whole system as rigid as possible. As simple as they are, spikes require careful adjustment and locking in place to perform their best.

Floor spikes particularly benefit from some time and effort in setting up, and a small spirit level can be invaluable. Top spikes have a more subtle effect on the sound quality but it is of interest to substitute a few small blobs of Blu Tack. This offers a different sound balance, reduced cabinet damage and greater security. Polished wooden or decorative hard floors pose the greatest challenge to siting a stand firmly without damaging the surface. Protective PVC cups are available from Alphason but alternatively a coin can be Blu Tacked to the floor under each spike. Another alternative is the Sound Care spike which has a built in floor protector (see p130 for details).

ALPHASON Akros II

“Akros II is a bit of a party animal. It offers a lively and larger than life performance with a rich and buxom bass.”

Following hot on the spikes of the original Akros speaker stand, the Akros II adds a second upright column for greater strength. Like many of Alphason’s speaker and equipment supports, this design uses a full-length threaded rod through each column to pull the whole thing together under tension.

Adding to this nifty design, the uprights are divided into two compartments – one to fill with the supplied mineral aggregate and the other large enough to route even fairly chunky speaker cables. This does limit the amount of filler you can load the stand with, but having two columns allows for concealed bi-wiring.

The top plate has adjustable spikes and, bizarrely, sports the only Alphason logo – which is immediately covered when you position the speaker. Even when filled this stand is quite light, but sits solidly after some fiddling with the adjustable floor spikes. And if you’re worried about your parquet floor, each spike comes supplied with a cute little PVC cover.

SOUND QUALITY

From the outset, it was obvious that the Akros II is a bit of a party animal. It offers a lively and larger than life performance with a rich and buxom bass that will certainly appeal to rock and dance fans. The driving rhythms throughout Underworld’s *Beaucoup Fish* charged from the speakers, getting feet tapping and heads bobbing.

Switching to Sara K immediately revealed the trade-off, however. Upper frequencies are reasonably well focused, but come across as too relaxed in comparison with the enthusiastic bass. Aggressive edges or natural sibilance to vocals are effectively mellowed and remain firmly shut within the speaker.

This presentation makes for an easy-going listen, but one that’s far from accurate in terms of detail. The effect is less pronounced with budget speakers, which is perhaps what is most likely to grace these stands, but robs the already lively Heybrooks of any subtlety.

CONCLUSIONS

This is an honest design, functional, far from a cosmetic carbuncle and the least expensive fully filled stand on test. However, its

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£65.00
<p>■ A good entry-level stand with some nice design features but the sonic subtlety of a house party.</p> <p>■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE</p> <p>☒ Alphason Designs, Unit E2, 2 Moss Ind Est, St Helens Rd, Leigh, Lancs WN7 3PT</p> <p>☎ (01942) 678000</p>	
SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Height:	60cm; 45cm
■ Top plate:	16.5x16.5cm
■ Base plate front to back:	24cm

exclusively funky style excludes it from formal Recommendation. **RS**



APOLLO A4/6

“Deep bass is lean but tight and, with more upmarket speakers, does not lack anything in the way of separation or character.”

Apollo is clearly adopting a “more is more” philosophy with its A-series stands. It starts at the single column A1 and increases the number of tubes up to this four-leg A4.

These stands came supplied with enough dried silver sand to three-quarter fill each of the eight uprights, adding £7.95 to the price. By mistake, some were overfilled and others got short measures. However, this was actually found preferable to an equal fill when it came to the listening tests.

Capping these tubes top and bottom are hefty steel plates drilled to accept spikes. Only floor spikes are supplied as standard, and for the top plate there are four rather tacky little foam pads. The floor spikes go right through the plinth and are locked in place with gold caps. This is a nice touch cosmetically, but reduces the scope for adjustment if your floor is less than billiard-table level.

The A4 is a pretty looking stand (in a dark and steely way) and the powder-coated finish is one of the best, standing up well to being clattered about with all the other ironmongery in this test.

SOUND QUALITY

Following a false start using the foam pads, the A4 really began to sing once the speakers were sitting on blobs of Blu-Tack. Deep bass is lean but tight and, with more upmarket speakers, does not lack anything in the way of instrument separation or character.

There is a hint of mush in the upper bass that draws unwelcome attention to itself, but this can be tuned out to an extent by careful positioning in the room.

This dry bass presentation allows upper frequencies a little more than their fair share of the soundstage, which makes these stands rather speaker-critical. With the B&Ws especially, the sound was a little veiled towards the top end and Sara K’s mellifluous tones failed to get out into the room and tickle the ears with the best of them.



CONCLUSIONS

The Apollo’s performance is good, but just slips against the strength of the competition at the same price. If it only came with top spikes... **RS**

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£82.00
<p>■ A well-balanced and well-finished budget model that just fails to stand out from the crowd.</p> <p>■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE</p> <p>☒ Apollo Hi-Fi Furniture, Castle Works, High Street, Tipton, West Midlands DY4 8HJ</p> <p>☎ (0121) 520 5070</p>	
SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Height:	51cm; 40.5cm
■ Top plate:	18x18cm
■ Base plate back to front:	25cm



ATACAMA Nexus 6

“Vocals breathe into life with a natural and unforced character and the soundstage gets blissfully clear of the speakers.”

If there was ever a range of speaker stands that belied its price tag, Atacama's Nexus series is it. For less than £50 you get a well-engineered and pretty stand, plus a choice of two heights (50cm, 60cm) and four finishes, including metallic silver, plum red, gloss black and matt textured black, at no extra cost.

The Nexus 6 tested was supplied with a carton of Atacama's Atabites filler. This is a coarse mix of triangular shaped steel chippings which, despite adding £20 to the price, is a worthy investment to get the best out of the stand. Once the main column is filled, the Nexus 6 becomes a very stable support sitting on

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£49.99
<p>■ A fine all-round performer that looks good and sounds even better. A genuine hi-fi bargain (price excludes £20 of filler).</p>	
<p>■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE</p>	
<p>✉ Atacama Audio Supports, Winston Avenue, Croft, Leicester LE9 3GQ</p>	
<p>☎ (01455) 283251</p>	
SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Height:	60cm; 50cm
■ Top plate:	14.5x18cm
■ Base plate back to front:	30cm

concealed 6mm floor spikes. The top plate is a solid 4mm steel plate but is a little bijou for large speakers such as the Heybrooks. However, as spikes are not offered Blu-Tack will hold most speakers steady.

SOUND QUALITY

The Nexus 6 is no less impressive value for money in sonic terms. Female vocals breathe into life with a natural and unforced character and the soundstage gets blissfully clear of the speakers. Beth Orton's distinctive voice sounded rich and managed to retain its slight edge on higher notes that can so easily get brush or glossed over completely.

Bass response is neutral and well detailed with good differentiation of instruments, if not the last word in depth or weight. This presentation somewhat suppressed the infectious bass beat of the Underworld CD, but by the same token did not allow it to swamp the rest of the mix.

With the smaller speakers, the sound was expressive and open. The B&Ws' occasionally splashy treble was well controlled and the bass, although struggling to get out of the small enclosure, had good attack.

CONCLUSIONS

The Nexus 6 hits a winning combination of looks and a neutral sound. It affords a lean but otherwise well-balanced presentation that will make it an ideal platform for a wide range of bookshelf-type speakers. At the price, it's a bit of a hi-fi bargain. **RS**

CUSTOM DESIGN R/S 300 Mk II

“The original R/S 300 was praised for its gutsy and weighty performance and the Mk II is no less of a rock star.”

Custom Design's original R/S 300 made something of a name for itself a year ago by scooping Best Buy status in HFC 189. The company is back this year with the Mark II version sporting twin upright columns and a slightly heftier price tag.

The design is otherwise unchanged with the 4mm steel top and bottom plates bolting to the columns with countersunk screws and spiked both ends. The 61cm tall R/S 300 Mk II was supplied filled with an inert material that adds £35 to the price and about 8kg to the weight of each stand.

The entire stand is made from thick steel plate that once bolted together gives a confidence-inspiring weighty feel and a slightly industrial look. Still, it is available in black, champagne, gloss black and gun-metal grey finishes to blend in with the décor if you want to disguise it. For the terminally style conscious, at £199.99 you can even have it in polished chrome.

SOUND QUALITY

The original R/S 300 was praised for its gutsy and weighty performance and the Mk II is no less of a rock star. The bass is prominent but well defined, and even the diminutive B&Ws boogie along happily on these stands. The punchy bass on Underworld's *Kittens* really got the room going, and although this effect was subtler on the larger speakers tested, it always translated into an enjoyable and up-tempo listening experience.

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£99.00
<p>■ A solid stand offering a colourful but lively and eminently enjoyable presentation.</p>	
<p>■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE</p>	
<p>✉ Custom Design, Unit 11, Bath Street Ind Est, Walker, Newcastle, NE6 3PH</p>	
<p>☎ (0191) 262 4646</p>	
SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Height:	61cm; 56cm; 51cm
■ Top plate:	16.5x18cm
■ Base plate back to front:	26cm

At the other end of the spectrum things are no less "in-ya-face". The treble is lively and well detailed and, while not exactly neutral, infuses the music with a bit of extra spice. There is some mild confusion in the upper midrange that conspires to make female vocals a little huskier than normal but, once you're lost in the music itself, it's easy to forget.

The extra column on the Mk II offers a greater level of detail over the original without sacrificing the powerful presentation that secured it a Best Buy. The coloration and the midrange let the design down in terms of ultimate resolution, but if you listen to the music and not the hi-fi it's well worth an audition. **RS**



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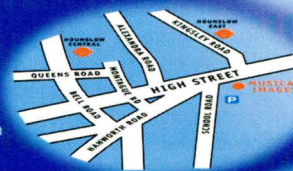
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MANA Sound Base

"Spending half an hour on your hands and knees setting these little gadgets up proves well worth while."

Master of the black art of tweaking, Mana has made a name for itself by producing a successful range of equipment supports working on the premise of isolating equipment with spikes and composite wood platforms. Enter, then, a product designed to go under floor-standing or standmounted speakers to improve the sound.

The Sound Base is essentially a welded frame of painted angle iron with threads top and bottom for spikes. The upper spikes support a vinyl-covered MDF shelf upon which the loudspeaker sits, and the bottom spikes pierce the carpet to rest the Base firmly on the floor.

Getting everything balanced, level and just so includes tuning the stand by listening to knuckle raps in each corner of the board, and this takes a while. Mana also recommends that the spikes of the speakers or stands used be left on to pierce the vinyl cover of the board and further increase stability.

Once positioned the Sound Base lifts the speaker about three inches higher than normal, which may be a problem if you have a low listening position, but does offer a very solid platform.

SOUND QUALITY

Spending half an hour on your hands and knees setting these little gadgets up proves well worth while. Acoustic Energy's Aegis Three is a slim floorstander known for its deep bass and smooth presentation. Placed on the Sound Base, its silky

treble immediately gained greater definition and unveiled levels of depth to recordings. The bass was similarly improved, retaining its warm nature but with better transient response that gave snare drums a real kick.

The Sound Base was also tested beneath the other stands in this test with a uniformly positive effect. The Mission Stance in particular was transformed into a star performer as the bass tightened, the top end opened and the music broke free of the loudspeakers supported by the combination.

CONCLUSIONS

The effect of the Sound Base ranges from subtle improvement to a complete makeover, depending on what is placed upon it. On the downside, it's not exactly pretty and demands a not insubstantial outlay. But once you try it, there's simply no living without the Sound Base. Thoroughly Recommended. **RS**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £175.00

■ A solid base for floorstanders or standmounted speakers that improved everything we tried on it.

■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE

✉ Mana Acoustics, 59 Jubilee Close, Pinner, Middlesex, HA5 3TB

☎ (01753) 655744

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Height:	8cm
■ Top plate:	29x32cm
■ Base plate back to front:	32cm

MISSION Stance

"Top and bottom spikes are stainless steel cones that look a million dollars and have a fine thread for accurate adjustment."

Mission knows a thing or two about building a solid speaker stand, and the Stance is no exception. The first thing you notice about its design is the quality of the engineering and the ease with which it goes together.

The heavy base plate has welded spike mounts and is well finished with a thick metallic grey or silver powder coating. The uprights are no less solid, the rear pillars being crafted from 2mm thick steel. Top and bottom spikes are stainless steel cones that look a million dollars and have a fine thread for accurate adjustment with the little tool supplied.

Due to the shallow point of the floor cones, however, they tend to sit on rather than penetrate carpet. This not only leaves the stand unstable, but also hides this otherwise sexy design in the shag-pile. Plastic domes are provided for the top plate, but these are best avoided in favour of Blu-Tack if the spikes are not used.

SOUND QUALITY

Without the added mass of the sand filling it was nearly impossible to get these stands stable on the carpeted test room floor, and the wobble translated directly into blooming bass. So up came the carpet.

Once levelled on the bare concrete, the Stance suddenly sprang to

life. The sound was open and transparent, giving vocals some real air and breathing space. The solo sax on *Ask Me Now* from McCoy Tyner's *New York Reunion* CD had a tangible, three-dimensional soundstage full of presence and minute detail. Part filling with sand added some otherwise absent bass weight, but it was never going to turn the Stance into a rock'n'roll animal. Trying this stand on top of the Mana Sound Base had a marvellous effect, adding punchy bass to the lucid top end for a near perfect delivery.

CONCLUSIONS

This rather trendy looking stand will sit more comfortably, visually and sonically, in an open listening room with a solid and preferably wooden floor. Here it will shine with or without the sand filling.

However, poor stability and performance on carpet precludes commendation here. **RS**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £99.90

■ An open and detailed performer needing a really firm foundation to give of its best.

■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE

✉ Mission, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 6ED

☎ (01480) 451777

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Height:	60cm
■ Top plate:	19x15cm
■ Base plate back to front:	28cm

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PARTINGTON Dreadnought Ultima

“With the cones in place, it’s ruthlessly transparent and leaves you listening to nothing but the full range of the speaker.”

Scary name – but not half as intimidating as the stand itself. For behind that neat black façade of textured powder-coat, Partington has created a 20kg monster. The Dreadnought Ultima is built using a shell of neatly bonded steel reinforced with a several generous layers of fibreglass. Even the top plate and plinth are inverted trays filled with GRP resin.

In addition – no, really – the central pillar is part-filled with silicon-iron alloy chippings that further damp any internal vibrations and add another couple of kilos. The result of this gratuitous over-engineering is a stand that is not simply damped, it’s flatlining. A gentle tap on most models reveals all sorts of minor resonances, even in sand-filled columns, but the Ultima just gives a satisfying dull thud.

Supplied fully built, all that remains out of the box is fitting the bottom spikes, which are a necessarily substantial 8mm design. The large top plinth has no holes for fixed spikes, but instead offers three loose metal cones on which to place the speaker. Once levelled this stand feels solid enough to support just about anything from the petite B&W 601s to a three-storey house extension.

SOUND QUALITY

It took a long and hard audition to determine the sound quality of the Dreadnought Ultima – because it



hasn't got one. With the cones in place, it's ruthlessly transparent and leaves you listening to nothing but the full range of the speaker itself.

This, of course, can be something of a double-edged sword. With less capable speakers the limitations of their designs are made painfully obvious and not disguised by any character in the stand itself. On the other hand, a suitably impressive quality speaker such as the Heybrook will sing to the very best of its ability and create music that bypasses your ears and goes straight to your soul.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the Ultima will shoot-down just about any budget loud-speaker, at £300 it is likely to partner some top-flight kit. In this respect it can only be recommended for its quite stunning ability to do nothing but support the speaker.

RS

SONUS SYSTEMS Excel

“In a comeback that would put even The Who to shame, once three-quarters filled with sand the Excel actually excels.”

Sonus Systems is a relatively new name in hi-fi furniture, but has already assembled an impressive portfolio of stylish equipment racks available in no less than six colours. The Excel speaker stand joins the line-up in two heights, 65cm (as tested here) and 45cm, and the full plethora of finishes – gold, silver, black, blue, red and green.

The single central column is elliptical in cross section and has an integral tube running through the middle designed to conceal cables. However, as the top spikes are very low and not adjustable, only the very thinnest of cables will squeeze through the 6mm gap between the speaker and top plate.

The large base plate is fitted with chunky conical spikes, which, like the top spikes, are painted to match the stand. These are

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£99.00
<p>■ A strong performer when filled with sand but ultimately let down by minor design flaws.</p> <p>■ THREE YEAR GUARANTEE</p> <p>✉ Sonus Systems, Unit 3a, Cossall Ind Est, Coronation Road, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 5UA</p> <p>☎ (0800) 092 5046</p>	
SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Height:	65cm; 45cm
■ Top plate:	20x 22.5cm
■ Base plate back to front:	34cm

adjustable but are too shallow to effectively pierce carpet and cannot be locked in place.

Once assembled the stand is pretty light for its size, although the cavity in the upright will accommodate anything up to 10kg of sand.

SOUND QUALITY

As supplied, first impressions were not particularly good. The columns rang like bells and got excited in the upper midband, adding some coloration to vocals and giving Sara K a nasal honk bordering on a full-blown head cold. With lightweight speakers the whole caboodle wobbled dangerously and made the bass woollier than a field full of sheep.

However, in a spectacular comeback that would put even The Who to shame, once three-quarters filled with sand the Excel actually excels. The much-increased mass pushes the cones through the carpet stabilising the system and the column ringing is completely removed leaving a capable performance.

CONCLUSIONS

Bass is solid and particularly well focused. This could be in no small part due to the elliptical profile of the stand, which does not present much in the way of a barrier to low frequency energy.

Similarly, the top end offers an open and uncluttered approach that manages to unearth a fair bit of detail. Sand loaded, the Excel has potential, but some fundamental engineering oversights rob it of greatness.

RS



VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£299.99
<p>■ A heavyweight and sonically transparent stand that presents music exactly how the speaker produces it – warts and all.</p> <p>■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE</p> <p>✉ Partington & Co, Orchard Farm, Fawkham Rd, Longfield, Kent DA3 7QP</p> <p>☎ (01474) 709299</p>	
SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Height:	63cm
■ Top plate:	20.5x23.5cm
■ Base plate back to front:	30cm

SOUND ORGANISATION Z522

“There are no less than sixteen bolts plus spikes for each stand – enough to reawaken the Meccano fan in anyone.”



little prone to scuffs and knocks.

SOUND QUALITY

Out of the box, the Z522 is one of the few stands to produce decent plug-and-play results without filling. Its most impressive asset is a clean midband backed by solid and rhythmic bass lines. Listening critically, the very lower frequencies tend to blur into a single note, but when your foot's tapping it's not a bad compromise.

The upper frequencies are polite, with a relaxed air that also makes for easy-going entertainment. Again, critical listening could argue that this presentation is not the most revealing or detailed, but it does allow the music to appeal in its own right.

Three-quarter filling with sand offers more of the same, albeit with greater refinement and a little more bite. The midrange is equally smooth while the bass gains greater definition and more punch.

Female vocals in particular reap benefit from the extra damping the filler endows, becoming altogether more focused.

CONCLUSIONS

The easy-going and enjoyable nature of the Z522 was clearly neutral, suggesting this could be a good all round choice – which at less than £90 rates as a Best Buy. **RS**

No speaker stand round-up would be complete without at least one offering from that stalwart of hi-fi support furniture, Sound Organisation. In this case we have the Z522, sporting four tightly packed rectangular uprights.

It's a complex affair to put together, with no less than sixteen bolts plus spikes for each stand – enough to reawaken the Meccano fan in anyone. However, this does afford a very rigid structure that is not too lively in its own right. The base plate has extra angle bracing on the underside, allowing vigorous tightening to the uprights. The floor spikes are tapped into a spar of sheet steel and some caution must be exercised when tightening these to avoid stripping the thread.

The top plate is a solid piece of 3mm steel with threaded holes for the top spikes supplied. The whole stand is coated with deep lustre paint which, while looking good, is a

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£89.00
<p>■ An easy-going performer straight out of the box, and equally at home with any speaker.</p> <p>■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE</p> <p>✉ Goldring, 8 Greyfriars Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 7DX</p> <p>☎ (01284) 701101</p>	
SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Height:	59cm
■ Top plate:	16x17cm
■ Base plate back to front:	30cm

SOUND STYLE Select X122

“Finished in bright zinc plate, the spikes are particularly sharp – and I have the blood-stained bandages to prove it.”



It's immediately obvious when you unbox the X122 that it has emerged from the same stable as the Sound Organisation model. They share a similar basic construction of a pressed sheet-steel base with angle bracing, four uprights and a solid top-plate speaker plinth drilled for spikes.

stand together. These are finished in bright zinc plate and the spikes are particularly sharp – and I have the blood-stained bandages to prove it.

SOUND QUALITY

Considering the similar construction and dimensions of the X122 to the Z522 it would be easy to anticipate similar sonic results, but not so.

The rich bass and smooth top end are still present, but what grasps the attention with the Sound Org is the clarity of the midband – which the Sound Style simply has not got. The lower octaves of vocals sound ragged and ill-defined and make you acutely aware of the speakers physically producing the music.

Several kilos of sand later and the sound improves considerably. Veils are removed from the midrange, revealing a little more life and a clean, if simplified, presentation. The sound stage is still somewhat two-dimensional and demonstrates little of the depth of Joe Henderson's tenor sax on the McCoy Tyner CD.

CONCLUSIONS

The rounded bass and mellifluous treble remain a house style, but where the Sound Organisation matches these with clarity between the frequency extremes, this X122 gets a bit confused and restricted. This is just enough to tip the X122's presentation into water muddy enough to stifle the foot-tapping quality that made its sibling such a winner. **RS**

On the difference side, the X122 offers four tubular rather than rectangular columns, each fastened by a single bolt top and bottom. The silver finish is somewhat more stylish than the Sound Org's rather sinister-looking black approach, although black is also an option for the X122.

The Sound Style is positioned slightly upmarket of the Sound Organisation Z522, but the only marked differentiation is the spikes and machine screws that bolt the

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£95.00
<p>■ A good looking stand but sonically troubled by its cheaper brother, the Sound Organisation Z522.</p> <p>■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE</p> <p>✉ Goldring, 8 Greyfriars Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 7DX</p> <p>☎ (01284) 701101</p>	
SPECIFICATIONS	
■ Height:	59cm
■ Top plate:	16x17cm
■ Base plate back to front:	30cm

TARGET HM60

"Mass-loaded at the factory with dried silver sand, it has a reassuringly dead sound when clumped with a spanner."

Another name present in the stands and equipment support market for many years, Target has produced some of the best selling budget examples of the breed for decades. The HM60 sits a little way up the company's comprehensive range of speaker supports at a little over £100, and is available in four heights and a dozen colours.

The top section is a substantial 4mm steel plate bonded seamlessly to the central column. This is mass-loaded at the factory with dried silver sand and has a reassuringly dead sound when clumped with a spanner. The column is again cleanly bonded onto the large base, which is pressed out of 3mm steel and fitted with adjustable floor spikes.

The test sample was finished in the standard black textured coating and, while no visual stunner, has a very smooth and sophisticated appearance. It is also simplicity itself to set up, requiring only fitting of the spikes and levelling before use. A well thought out and solid stand.

SOUND QUALITY

The HM60 offers a fairly neutral platform for all



of the speakers tested here, neither accentuating nor particularly dulling either frequency extremes. The midrange is well balanced and uncluttered but slightly recessed in the mix. This has the effect of making vocals sound a bit thin and weedy, despite being tonally accurate.

The bass has a fair depth and a rather warm character. However, drum transients are slightly smeared, reducing the attack and presenting a rather subdued sound that has trouble getting much beyond the boundaries of the speaker. This robs Underworld's racy *Push Upstairs* track of its otherwise addictive rhythm and

before long loses the listener's attention completely.

Ironically, the HM60 is one of the best-engineered products in this test and as solid a support as £100 is likely to buy – which makes its lifeless demeanour all the more frustrating. There are no major flaws with its presentation, but a number of otherwise insignificant ones conspire to dull the overall musical performance.

Partnering a lively or forward speaker can reap rewards in terms of taming the sound, but otherwise the Target HM60 is just too reserved for its own good. **RS**

TOWNSHEND Seismic Sink

"The Seismic Sink has absolutely no right to sound as good as it does when the circumstances are right."

In absolute contradiction to every other stand design in this test, Townshend's Seismic Sink aims to isolate speaker-born vibration from reaching the floor, and vice-versa, by decoupling the two. Which is why the same basic design started out as an equipment isolation platform.

The Sink is made from two overlapping steel trays separated by an inflatable air bladder. Set up is simply a case of placing the Sink on the floor, with either the feet or adjustable spikes supplied, and placing the speaker or speaker/stand combination centrally on top. The device is then pumped up until the speaker is floating on an air cushion.

One problem with this approach is that heavy cables can cause problems in terms of pulling the speaker

backwards, and the Audioquest Midnight 2 used for this test had to be swapped for Cable Talk Talk 3. Once positioned, the speaker sways about all over the place if knocked – and you can only hope nobody spots you on your hands and knees with the bicycle pump.

SOUND QUALITY

On a concrete floor the effect of the Seismic Sink is subtle – which is strange, considering how radical the design is. The Aegis Three's slightly boxy sound was rendered less shut-in and the usually warm and weighty bass became quite dry and lean. With standmounted speakers there were minor differences most noticeable as a gentle tightening at the bottom end.

As these findings did not equate with previous reviews in *Hi-Fi Choice*, the entire test kit was moved to an older-style house with suspended wooden floors and a deep sub-floor cavity. Presto. When placed on the Sinks, the resonant and boomy bass of the Aegis Three in this excitable room was drawn into tight focus. This seemed to open the door for a spring clean across the entire frequency spectrum and produced the sort of natural and open sound more akin to concrete floors.

CONCLUSIONS

Townshend's Seismic Sink goes against the grain of traditional thinking and has absolutely no right to sound as good as it does when the circumstances are right.

But sometimes it's best to give up trying to work out how the trick is done and simply enjoy the show. **RS**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£106.00**

■ A well built stand but sonically short on life and energy.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

Target Audio, Suite 6a, Britannia House, Leagrave Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 1RJ
(01582) 401244

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Height: 60cm; 40cm; 50cm; 70cm
■ Top plate: 16.5x19cm
■ Base plate back to front: 30.5cm

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£499.00**

■ A unique inflatable stand, amazing in some installations but less so in others.

Worth a try before you buy.

THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

Townshend Audio, 7 Bridge Rd, Hampton Court, Surrey KT8 9EU
(020) 8979 2155

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Height: 4cm
■ Top plate: 38x48cm
■ Base plate back to front: 48cm



CONCLUSIONS

SPEAKER STANDS

It is testimony to the advances in stand design that there were no truly awful performers in this test. Granted, not all models were immediately impressive straight out of the packaging, but there was not one that would not produce an acceptable sound after some minor tweaking. This very fact highlights the importance of dedicating time and effort to getting stands set up correctly. Spend an hour with the sand, spanners and spirit level, and the rewards can be great.

This Super Test unearthed some star turns in value for money terms, including the

budget designs from Atacama and Sound Organisation. The R/S300 MkII from Custom Design made a rocking good return – even if it does look like scaffolding, as one visitor commented – and Partington’s Dreadnought Ultima and Partington’s Dreadnought Ultima lets the truth shine through. The question is, can you handle the truth?

Alphason’s well thought-out Akros II is a bit too gung-ho for its own good, but can be improved with heavier, metal filler. Similarly, the pretty Apollo A4/6 is only a set of top spikes away from formal Recommendation, and the Sound Style Select would have had its own swing tag had not the near-identical Sound Organisation

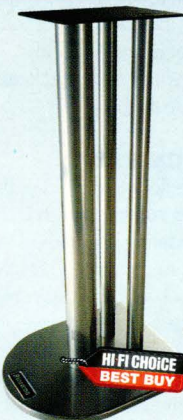
model taken it away. The Mission Stance is also an excellent looking and sounding design – as long as you don’t have carpeted floors.

The Sonus Systems Excel has got great potential but requires a rethink on parts of its engineering, and the Target is so laid-back it’s almost comatose – although this could be the rescue remedy for an over-bright system.


Finally, the Mana and the Townshend supports are two very different crackers gunning for the same nut. Both can offer spectacular improvements in sound quality, and both have dramatically different effects. Take your pick.

“The Custom Design R/S300 MkII made a rocking good return – even if it does look like scaffolding, as one visitor commented.”


BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDED




ATACAMA Nexus 6 £49.99
A clean and well-balanced performer at the price, even when you add on the £20 for special filler. Sonically and visually it will suit a wide range of bookshelf speakers.




CUSTOM DESIGN R/S300 MkII £99.99
Returns with a detailed, weighty, lively showing.




PARTINGTON Dreadnought U. £499.00
Ruthlessly transparent, it lays the sound bare.



SOUND ORGANISATION Z522 £89.00
A winner straight out of the box, but even more refined when filled with sand. Not the most detailed stand, but it gets your feet tapping and head bobbing.



MANA Sound Base £175.00
Improves the sound of just about any component.



TOWNSHEND Seismic Sink £499.00
Can achieve phenomenal results with great speakers.

SPEAKER STANDS COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE MODEL	ALPHASON AKROS II	APOLLO A4/6	ATACAMA NEXUS 6	CUSTOM DESIGN R/S 330 MKII	MANA SOUND BASE	MISSION STANCE
Price	£65.00	£82.00	£49.99	£99.99	£175.00	£99.90
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	lifetime	lifetime	lifetime	lifetime	lifetime	lifetime
HEIGHT(S)	60cm; 45cm	51 cm; 40.5cm	60cm; 50cm	61cm; 56cm; 51cm	8cm	60cm
TOP PLATE	16.5x16.5cm	18x18cm	14.5x18cm	16.5x18cm	29x32cm	19x15cm
BASE PLATE (F-B)	24cm	25cm	30cm	26cm	32cm	28cm

SPEAKER STANDS COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE MODEL	PARTINGTON DREADNOUGHT ULTIMA	SONUS SYSTEMS EXCEL	SOUND ORGANISATION Z522	SOUND STYLE SELECT X122	TARGET HM60	TOWNSHEND SEISMIC SINK
PRICE	£299.99	£110.00	£89.00	£95.00	£106.00	£499.00
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	lifetime	3yrs	2yrs	2yrs	lifetime	3yrs
HEIGHT(S)	63cm	65cm; 45cm	59cm	59cm	60cm; 40cm; 50cm; 70cm	4cm
TOP PLATE	20.5x23.5cm	20x22.5cm	16x17cm	16x17cm	16.5x19cm	38x48cm
BASE PLATE (F-B)	30cm	34cm	30cm	30cm	30.5cm	48cm

- AAVIK RACKS
- ACOUSTIC ENERGY
- ACOUSTIC PRECISION
- AIWA
- AKAI
- ALCHEMIST
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- APOLLO
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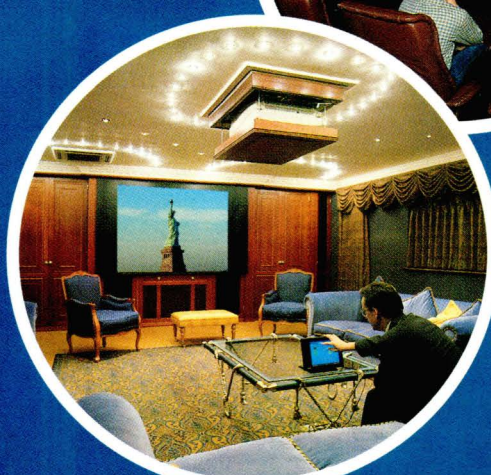
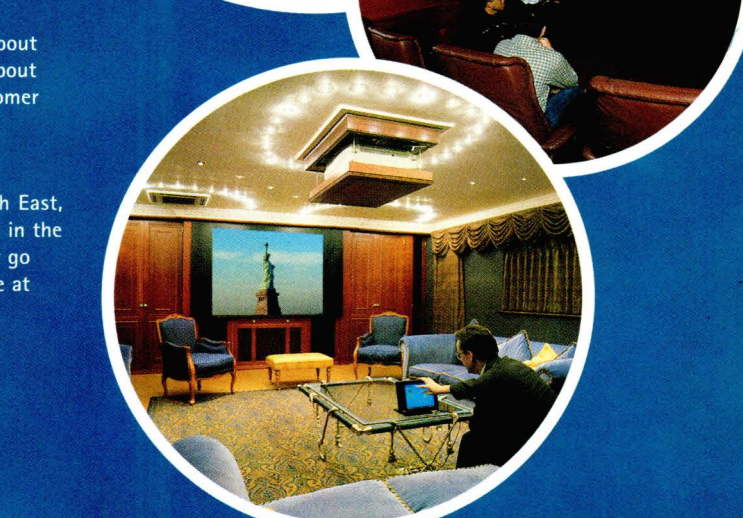
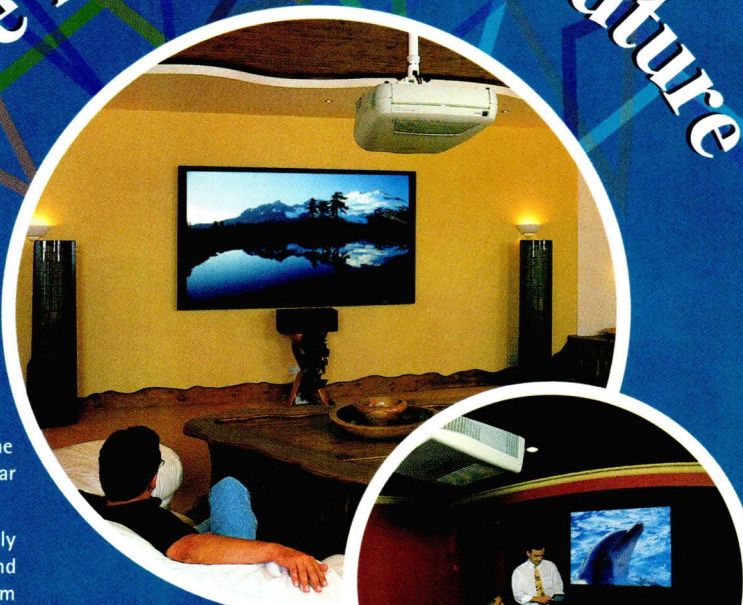
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BIG Heads

And with reason. Sennheiser's remarkably good at making top notch 'phones.

If someone asks you who makes the best cars in the world, what do you say? Ferrari most likely, or perhaps Rolls Royce. Now then, what if you're asked who makes the world's best headphones? Chances are that only one name crosses your mind – Sennheiser.

This German brand has become synonymous with high quality cans, its products used in homes and studios throughout the world. As a reader of *Hi-Fi Choice* this much you know already, yet there is far more to this company than reaches the average ear. Let us explain.

It all began more than 50 years ago when Dr Fritz Sennheiser founded a company operating in the field of electro-acoustics. The firm gradually grew and notched up a number of world firsts in the process, pioneering the wireless microphone and developing the first open-backed dynamic headphone in 1968.

Sennheiser's UK customers now include theatres, broadcasters, commercial airlines, the MoD, tourist attractions, heritage sites, the hard of hearing and recording studios up and down the country. It supplies the BBC with headphones and mics, while British Airways uses its headsets for both pilots and passengers.

The company even won an Oscar in 1987 for a particular microphone lauded by the movie industry, and an Emmy followed in 1996 for its contribution to wireless transmission technology. In short, Sennheiser is a brand with a fine heritage both in the home and beyond.



CANNED HEAT

All very impressive, but *you* are probably interested in Sennheiser because it makes great headphones. Just for a moment, allow me to add my account to the list. Like many, my first hi-fi headphones were Sennheisers, bought as a teenager soon after building my first separates system.

They were HD520s, I think, and cost about £60. I thought they were fabulous: they gave me many hours of late-night listening pleasure, saved my parents from many splitting headaches and even put in sterling service on the end of a four-track while mixing my band's recordings. They eventually gave up the ghost, but when it came to finding a replacement I went straight for another pair of Sennheisers. Why not? I knew the brand could deliver.

Now, of course, I've experienced many pleasurable headphones from a variety of different sources, and realise there are other names to consider alongside Sennheiser. But it's still the brand



Above: HD 590 Prestige, above left the RS40 FM cordless.

that's trusted more than any other, and it's also the one that brought me my most profound headphone experience to date in the shape of the awesome Orpheus.

Consisting of a beautiful valve-based headphone amp and a sumptuous set of electrostatic headphones, this £9,652 combo is so stunning it's hard to return to conventional speakers once you've heard them. It's the best reason yet to wear cans for pleasure rather than mere necessity – it seems to plug you directly into the music, creating a spacious and detailed sonic universe right inside your head. A wonder indeed.

HEADLINE NEWS

Never a company to rest on its laurels, Sennheiser's headphone line-up is constantly evolving. It

recently launched a new flagship for its 500 Series, the HD 590 Prestige at £159.95. A combination of 'Duofol' transducer, lightweight 18mm aluminium voice coils and Neodym-Iron combine to produce a spacious, 'out of the head' sound. Here's an excerpt from our review two issues ago:

"Bass is particularly well extended and controlled, conveying classical pieces with a sense of depth and heart-felt passion. Fast, rhythmic tracks also fair favourably, giving pumping tunes all the power and energy of the dance floor with plenty of head-nodding, foot-tapping rhythm."

Which brings us neatly up to date. Sennheiser's very latest products for the home are of the cordless variety, using FM transmission to bring total freedom to the headphone experience. We previewed three models in our news section last month: first is the RS40 at £79.95, then comes the £119.95 RS60 which adds 'velvet' earpads, surround-effect processing and an increased maximum sound pressure level. The RS80 tops the range at £159.95, featuring 'HiDyn Plus' professional noise reduction, improved aesthetics, a wider frequency response and yet greater maximum SPL. Could these be the first FM cordless 'phones to deliver thoroughbred hi-fi sound? We'll see...



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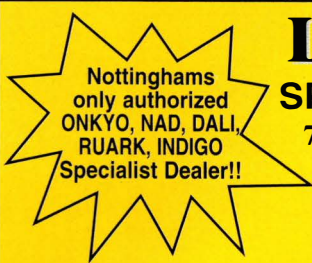
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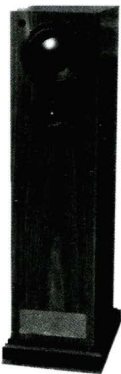
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Best Buys, Recommendations & Editor's Choices

- B BEST BUYS:** Awarded to group-tested products which display an unbeatable blend of performance and value for money.
- R RECOMMENDED:** Top performers in group tests: perhaps not the cheapest but possibly more sophisticated than Best Buys.
- E EDITOR'S CHOICE:** Components which have outstanding sound quality but do not qualify for BB or R because of non group testing.

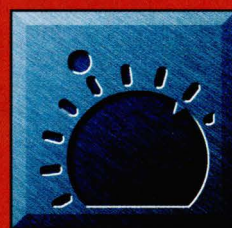
Our Three Step Guide to Buying Hi-Fi

The *Hi-Fi Choice Price Guide and Directory* are extremely simple to use, but contain all the information you need to select and buy the perfect hi-fi system. Here's how it works.

- STEP 1 DISCOVER** which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide, which starts on this page. The product listing is updated using manufacturers' data every other month, and aims to include every hi-fi component currently available in the UK. (But please fax us on (020) 7317 2686 with any omissions!) It is an alphabetical listing divided into different types of hi-fi component, and also into price bands.
- STEP 2 PRODUCTS** whose names are printed in **RED** are those we have reviewed, which you can read about in the Directory (starts after the Price Guide). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy, Recommended or Editor's Choice awards, denoting 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 (at the end of the Directory) to book a demonstration of the hi-fi equipment you want to hear. Remember to take your own software!

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AMPLIFIERS INTEGRATED

KEY

Ⓢ - Number of line-level inputs.
 '20W' - Rated RMS output power per channel into a nominal 8 Ohm load.

UP TO £250

Arcam Alpha One	Ⓢ	35W	230
Ariston AX910	Ⓢ	30W	60
Cambridge A1 Mk III	Ⓢ	30W	100
Cambridge A1 Mk3 SE	Ⓢ	30W	120
Cambridge A100	Ⓢ	40W	140
Cambridge A300	Ⓢ	40W	150
Cambridge A5i	Ⓢ	60W	200
Cambridge A500RC	Ⓢ	50W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	Ⓢ	30W	140
Denon PMA-350SE	Ⓢ	50W	180
Denon PMA-355R	Ⓢ	50W	230
Denon PMA-100M	Ⓢ	80W	240
Goodmans Delta 900A	Ⓢ	100W	130
H/K HK630	Ⓢ	40W	200
H/K HK5270	Ⓢ	65W	250
JVC AX-A372BK	Ⓢ	40W	200
JVC AX-R5BK	Ⓢ	45W	200
Kenwood KA-1080	Ⓢ	60W	140
Kenwood KA-3080R	Ⓢ	70W	170
Kenwood KAF-3010R	Ⓢ	70W	180
Marantz PM-48	Ⓢ	50W	150
Marantz PM-57	Ⓢ	50W	200
Marantz SR-47	Ⓢ	40W	200
Marantz PM6010 OSE	Ⓢ	50W	230
Marantz PM-66SE	Ⓢ	50W	230
Musical Fidelity E1	Ⓢ	30W	199
NAD 310	Ⓢ	20W	100
NAD C300	Ⓢ	25W	146
NAD C320	Ⓢ	40W	200
NAD 312	Ⓢ	25W	200
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Pioneer A-204R	Ⓢ	25W	160
Pioneer A-300R	Ⓢ	50W	200
Pioneer A-305R	Ⓢ	50W	200
Pioneer A-407R	Ⓢ	45W	230
Pioneer A-405R	Ⓢ	45W	250
Rotel RA921	Ⓢ	20W	100
Rotel RA931	Ⓢ	35W	150
Rotel RA971 Mk II	Ⓢ	60W	225
Sansui AUX-410R	Ⓢ	50W	150
Sansui AUX-510R	Ⓢ	70W	230
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Sherwood AX-7030R	Ⓢ	95W	230
Sony TA-FE230	Ⓢ	40W	100
Sony TA-FE330R	Ⓢ	60W	130
Sony TA-FB730R	Ⓢ	40W	200
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Teac A-R600	Ⓢ	90W	200
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Technics SU-V620	Ⓢ	70W	230
Technics SU-A707	Ⓢ	70W	250
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	Ⓢ	45W	250
Yamaha AX-392	Ⓢ	60W	170

£251 TO £500

Arcam Alpha 7R	Ⓢ	45W	300
Arcam Alpha 8R	Ⓢ	50W	380
Arcam Alpha 9	Ⓢ	70W	500
Audio Analogue Puccini	Ⓢ	40W	475
Audiogram MB1	Ⓢ	40W	493
Creek 4330	Ⓢ	40W	279
Creek 4330R	Ⓢ	40W	355
Creek 5250	Ⓢ	50W	450
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H/K HK650	Ⓢ	60W	330
Kenwood KA-5090R	Ⓢ	65W	300
Magnum IA120	Ⓢ	65W	265
Magnum IA170	Ⓢ	96W	330
Magnum IA170SE	Ⓢ	90W	430
Marantz PM-68	Ⓢ	90W	300
Marantz PM-66 Kl Sig.	Ⓢ	50W	400
Marantz SR5000	Ⓢ	105W	500
Monrio Asty	Ⓢ	55W	400
Musical Fidelity E11	Ⓢ	60W	300
Musical Fidelity X-A1	Ⓢ	50W	480

Musical Fidelity A2	Ⓢ	25W	500
Myryad T-40	Ⓢ	50W	400
NAD 314	Ⓢ	35W	260
NAD C340	Ⓢ	50W	270
NAD 317	Ⓢ	80W	400
Onkyo A9210	Ⓢ	40W	260
Onkyo A921	Ⓢ	50W	350
Onkyo A922	Ⓢ	70W	400
Pioneer A-607R	Ⓢ	60W	300
Pioneer A-400X	Ⓢ	50W	300
Pioneer A-605R	Ⓢ	80W	400
Pioneer A-300R Precision	Ⓢ	35W	400
Primare A10	Ⓢ	50W	500
Rega Big Brio	Ⓢ	35W	298
Rega Luna	Ⓢ	40W	375
Rega Mira	Ⓢ	60W	450
Roksan Kandy	Ⓢ	475	
Shearpe 2.5	Ⓢ	35W	499
Sony TA-FB920R	Ⓢ	65W	300
Sony TA-FA30ES	Ⓢ	70W	400
Sony TA-F300ES	Ⓢ	40W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	Ⓢ	50W	500
Teac AH-500	Ⓢ	50W	280
Technics SU-A808	Ⓢ	55W	300
Technics SU-A909	Ⓢ	100W	400
Thule Spirit IA60	Ⓢ	60W	449
Token K50	Ⓢ	55W	350
Yamaha AX-592	Ⓢ	100W	280

£501 TO £700

Alchemist Kraken APD6A	Ⓢ	55W	600
Alchemist Nemesis	Ⓢ	80W	700
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	Ⓢ	40W	635
Audio Note Kanji Line SE	Ⓢ	9W	699
Audio Note First integrated	Ⓢ	40W	699
Audio Refinement Complete	Ⓢ	50W	699
Audiogram MB2	Ⓢ	60W	599
AVC EL34	Ⓢ	30W	600
CR Dev CR324se	Ⓢ	150W	569
CR Dev Kalypso	Ⓢ	15W	599
CR Dev CR325	Ⓢ	175W	699
Creek 5250SE	Ⓢ	60W	665
Cyrus IIII	Ⓢ	50W	598
Cyrus 7	Ⓢ	100W	700
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	Ⓢ	60W	650
Gamma Gemini	Ⓢ	12W	699
H/K HK690	Ⓢ	60W	530
Hi Q Sound MCI	Ⓢ	30W	565
LFD Integrated 0	Ⓢ	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	Ⓢ	33W	650
Lynwood Opal	Ⓢ	80W	685
Magnum IA200	Ⓢ	100W	599
Magnum Class A	Ⓢ	85W	690
Musical Fidelity A220	Ⓢ	50W	700
Myryad MI 120	Ⓢ	60W	700
Naim Nait 3	Ⓢ	30W	590
Primare A20 Mk II	Ⓢ	70W	600
Rose Scion	Ⓢ	65W	615
Shearpe Phase 2	Ⓢ	50W	689
Sugden Audition T	Ⓢ	65W	549
Talk Electronics Cyclone 1	Ⓢ	60W	550
Talk Electronics Storm 2	Ⓢ	50W	650
Teac AB-X7R	Ⓢ	50W	700
Thule Spirit IA100	Ⓢ	100W	600
Thule Spirit IA60B	Ⓢ	60W	699
YBA Complete Integre	Ⓢ	50W	699

£701 TO £1,000

Alchemist Nexus	Ⓢ	799	
Alchemist Forseti Integrated	Ⓢ	100W	1,000
Arcam Alpha 10	Ⓢ	100W	800
Arcam FMJ A22	Ⓢ	100W	1,000
Aria S2	Ⓢ	12W	1,000
Audio Note Oto Line PP	Ⓢ	12W	950
AM S2000MI	Ⓢ	100W	999
Copland CSA8	Ⓢ	60W	899
Credo IMP702	Ⓢ	70W	850
Credo IMP703	Ⓢ	70W	1,000
Denon AVR-3300	Ⓢ	75W	800
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	Ⓢ	50W	995
Electrocompaniet ECI-3	Ⓢ	75W	1,000
Exposure XX Super	Ⓢ	60W	800
Exposure XV Super	Ⓢ	60W	900
Exposure RCOV	Ⓢ	60W	1,000
LFD 0 LE Integrated	Ⓢ	60W	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	Ⓢ	33W	800
Magnum Class A SE	Ⓢ	80W	795
Marantz PM-17	Ⓢ	60W	900
Mendian 551	Ⓢ	55W	795
Musical Fidelity A3	Ⓢ	85W	849
Musical Fidelity X-A100R	Ⓢ	75W	999
MVL A2	Ⓢ	100W	970
NAD T770	Ⓢ	90W	1,000
Naim Nait 3 R	Ⓢ	30W	780
Nakamichi AV-10	Ⓢ	140W	1,000
Opera Aida	Ⓢ	60W	795
Pioneer A-07	Ⓢ	80W	999
Pioneer VSX-908RDS	Ⓢ	80W	1,000
Plinius 2100i	Ⓢ	995	
Roksan Caspian	Ⓢ	70W	795
Shearpe Phase 2 Reference	Ⓢ	50W	999
Sonneteer Alabaster	Ⓢ	50W	900
Sugden A21a Int	Ⓢ	25W	799
Sugden Audition C	Ⓢ	60W	799
TAG McLaren 60i	Ⓢ	60W	800

TAG McLaren 60RV
Thule Spirit IA150B

£1,001 TO £2,000

Aria Simply Four P	24W	1,595
Aria Simply Four T	11W	1,650
ATC SIA2-150	150W	1,984
Audio Note Soro Line PP	20W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Line SE	12W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Phono SE	12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE	18W	1,699
Audio Valve Assistant-S 20	20W	1,250
BB Audio BB 30-60	30W	1,495
Beam-Echo SA-50	50W	1,950
Bow Technologies Wazoo	50W	1,795
Bryston B-60	60W	1,281
Copland CSA14	60W	1,199
Copland CSA28	60W	1,249
Copland CTA402	35W	1,698
CR Dev Romulus V3	35W	1,198
CR Dev Athena	38W	1,499
CR Dev Remus V3	60W	1,989
Credo LIM 702		1,191
Credo LIM 703		1,249
Densen DM-10	75W	1,375
EAR 859	13W	1,999
EAR 834	40W	1,999
Golden Tube Audio SI-50 MkII	50W	1,100
Graaf Venticinque	20W	1,790
Jadis Orchestra		1,345
LFD Integrated 1	65W	1,099
Lundahl Mag Amp	23W	1,735
Marantz PM-17K1 Sig	60W	1,300
Meracur Intrare	60W	1,095
NAD S300	100W	1,900
Papworth MIH-200	200W	1,200
Papworth MVH-200	200W	1,200
Plinius 8150		1,895
Pracisa Sonoro	100W	1,800
Primare A30.1	100W	1,500
Restek Fantasy 2	100W	1,499
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	25W	1,299
T+A R1200R	90W	1,750
Thule Space IA250B	250W	1,799
Woodside ISA230 Line	30W	1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	30W	1,249
YBA a Integre Line	50W	1,095
YBA a Integre DT Line	50W	1,395

OVER £2,000

Adyton Opera	50W	2,595
AMP Flux System 2	50W	3,000
Arcam Alpha 10 DAVE	110W	2,500
Aria Simply 845	24W	3,195
Art Audio Integra	25W	2,400
Audio Note Meishu Line	9W	2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	26W	5,000
Audio Research CA50		3,399
Belcanto SET40	40W	4,450
Belcanto Orfeo 30S1	35W	5,450
Cary CAD-300SEI	15W	3,395
Conrad-Johnson CAV-50	50W	2,495
EAR V20	24W	2,495
Electrocompaniet ECI-1	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm	18W	2,499
Gamma Rhythm Ref	20W	3,499
Gamma Moment	40W	19,999
Jadis DA30	30W	2,690
Jadis DA60	60W	4,483
Krell KAV300i	150W	2,495
Krell KAV300r		3,333
Krell KAV500i	250W	5,000
McIntosh MA6400E	100W	3,999
McIntosh MA6800E	150W	5,999
Meracur Onesta	75W	2,595
Musical Fidelity A1001	200W	2,500
Pioneer A-09	45W	4,000
Roksan Caspian DSP	150W	2,790
Rotel RSP-985/RPB-985	130W	2,225
Rowland Concentra	100W	5,500
Sonus Faber Musica		2,295
Sony TA-E9000ES	110W	2,300
T+A R1500R	135W	2,015
Tube Tech Unisis Sig. Int.	30W	2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	150W	6,900
Wavac MDB11	15W	2,995
Wavac MD300B-ST	10W	5,575
Wavac MD300B WE	10W	6,750

AMPLIFIERS PREAMPS

KEY
Ⓢ (etc) – Number of line-level inputs.
Ph – Phono input fitted as standard (may be an option on some other models).

UP TO £500

Arcam Alpha 9C	400
Aria Simply Phono	Ph 500
Audio Analogue Bellini	Ph 495
Audio Note M Zero	2,999
AVC Pre 3	500
Beam-Echo PP-21	Ph 499

Bryston BP1	438
CR Dev Themis	349
Creek OBH-9	160
Creek P43/R	350
Creek P52	499
Crimson CS610C	Ph 450
Cyrus aEQ7	Ph 498
Densen DP-Dnve/DP-02	375
DPA Enlightenment phono	250
EAR 834P	349
EAR 834L	349
EAR 834P/MC	Ph 499
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	Ph 495
Henley HMC50	150
Henley HMC100	350
Hi Q Sound LCP2	149
LFD Mistral Linstage	449
LFD LSO Linstage	499
Lumley PP70	345
Lumley PPI	345
Magnum MP120	330
Magnum MP660	500
Magnum MP330	500
Monnio ADN-N	Ph 295
Monnio Asty L	500
Moth 30 Passive	149
Moth 30 Phono	Ph 249
Moth 30 Line stage	349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	120
Musical Fidelity X-HP	Ph 130
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	200
Musical Fidelity E20	Ph 400
NAD PP-1	Ph 40
NAD 114	Ph 270
NAD 116	Ph 430
Naim Prefix	360
Naim NAC92	485
Parasound P/HP-100	Ph 400
Parasound P/HP-850	Ph 450
Plinius Jarrah	Ph 35
QED Discsaver DS-1	Ph 398
Rega EOS	350
Rega Cursa	Ph 395
Roksan Artaxerxes 10	Ph 450
Rose RV-23	Ph 130
Rotel RQ970BX	150
Rotel RC971	225
Rotel RC972	Ph 430
Sunfire Phono	500
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	Ph 500
Technics SU-C1010	Ph 400
Thule Spirit PR100	375
Trilogy 905	375
Trilogy 904	375
Trilogy 900	Ph 499

£501 TO £2,000

Adyton Chorus	1,995
Alchemist Kraken Pre	549
Alchemist Forseti Pre	999
Alchemist Signature Pre	1,499
Aria Feather One	795
Aria Mystery Two	1,750
Aria Mystery One	1,750
Art Audio Vinyl One MM	916
Art Audio VPS Line	963
Art Audio Vinyl One MM/MC	1,307
Art Audio VPS Phono	1,460
Art Audio Conductor Phono MC	Ph 2,000
Audio Note M1 Line	550
Audio Note M1 RIAA	550
Audio Note M2 Line	999
Audio Note Discovery	999
Audio Note M2/RIAA	1,099
Audio Prism Mantissa	1,995
Audio Research LS8	1,449
Audio Research PH3	Ph 1,490
Audio Research LS9	1,949
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	595
Audio Synthesis Passion	695
Audio Synthesis Passion 8S	1,295
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	1,695
Audio Valve Eclipse	1,650
AVI S2000MP	949
AVI S2000MP+P	Ph 1,199
Beam-Echo SP-21	Ph 1,116
Bryston BP20	1,126
Bryston BP-25	1,326
Bryston BP-25P	Ph 1,592
Canary Audio CA-606	1,295
Canary Audio CA-601	1,595
Cary SLP-50 Mk II	1,115
Cary PH-301	Ph 1,695
Chord Phono	1,898
Chord CPA 1800	1,905
Concordant Exhilarant	900
Concordant Exquisite	1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL	995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	Ph 1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL	1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	Ph 1,990
Copland CSA303	Ph 1,099
Copland CTA301 MkII	Ph 1,249
CR Dev Carmenta	659
CR Dev Argento	Ph 699

Credo CMP004	1,246
Credo CMP005	1,876
Cyrus aCA7	798
Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	Ph 826
Densen Beat-B200	Ph 1,000
Densen DM-20	1,200
DNM 3 Start	1,000
DNM 3A Start	Ph 1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre	795
Dynavector L200	995
Dynavector P100	1,495
Dynavector L100	1,995
ECA Vista 5	760
ECA Vista HD	880
ECA Prisma	Ph 880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5	1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6	1,750
Exposure XII	800
Exposure XIX	800
Exposure XVII	Ph 850
Exposure RC XXI	1,000
Gate PR101P	1,195
Golden Tube Audio SEP-2	990
Golden Tube Audio SEP-3	1,995
Graaf WFB Two	1,350
Graaf WFB One	1,750
Henley HMC200	600
Hi Q Sound MCB2	Ph 545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	645
Jadis DPL2	1,590
Krell KAV250p	1,999
LFD MC1 Phono stage	Ph 949
LFD L51 Linstage	999
LFD MC2 Phono stage	Ph 1,499
LFD L52 Linstage	1,599
LFD L5B Linstage	1,999
Linn Wakonda	750
Linn Linto	850
Linn Kairn	1,400
Lumley LV1.5	895
Lumley LV1	1,150
Lumley PV1.5	1,700
Lumley PV1	1,700
Matisse Atom	1,000
McIntosh C712	1,999
Meracur Ingredi	925
Meridian 501	695
Meridian 562	765
Meridian 562V	995
Meridian 502	1,295
Micell Delphini	Ph 895
Micell Orca	1,650
Muse Model 3	1,990
Musical Fidelity X-P100	Ph 800
Musical Fidelity F25	Ph 1,500
Myriad MP100	600
NAD S100	600
NAD 118	1,000
Naim NAC92R	650
Naim NAC72	745
Naim NAC102	1,000
Quad 99 Pre	Ph 800
Rega Hal	Ph 998
Roksan Artaxerxes X/DS1.5	1,150
Roksan ROK-L2.5	1,250
Rose RV-23S	525
Rotel RC995	Ph 525
Shearman Phase 6 Pre	999
Shearman Phase 1 Pre Ref	1,499
Siemel MC20	Ph 650
Siemel MM20	Ph 650
Siemel TU10	1,599
Siemel TR20	1,599
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre P1	Ph 899
Sonic Frontiers Phono 1	1,999
Sonographe SC26	995
Sugden Audition Pre	549
Sugden Masterclass Pre	1,995
Sumo Athena II Line	767
Sumo Athena IIb/II LS	987
Sumo Athena III	987
Sumo Artemis uP	1,595
Sunfire The Classic	1,630
T+A P1200R	965
TAG McLaren PA10	Ph 849
TAG McLaren PA20	1,499
TAG McLaren PA20R	1,499
TAG McLaren DPA3R	1,695
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2	650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4	1,550
Talk Electronics Hurricane 5	1,900
Thorens TTP-2000F	Ph 699
Thule Spirit PR150B	699
Trilogy 901	750
Trilogy 906	995
Trilogy 902	1,595
Tron Retro	1,500
Tube Tech Seer Line	935
Tube Tech Mac Phono	Ph 1,150
Tube Tech Prophet	1,970
van den Hul Pre-amp	1,800
Wilson Benesch Stage One	995
Woodside SC27 Line	949
Woodside SC26 Line	1,557
XTC PRE-1	1,350
YBA 3a Line	Ph 995

YBA 2a Line

OVER £2,000

Adyton Temper	2,495
Adyton Modus	2,695
Art Audio VPS Dual Mono Line	2,350
ATC SCA2	2,599
Atma-Sphere MP-3	Ph 3,795
Atma-Sphere MP-1	Ph 7,600
Audio Note M3Line	2,650
Audio Prism Avanti	7,995
Audio Research LS15	3,399
Audio Research LS25	4,999
Audio Research REF 1	8,495
Audio Valve Fanfare	4,995
Adiolabour 511	6,775
Balanced VK-50	3,995
Boulder L3AE	2,100
Boulder L5AE	3,400
Boulder L5M	3,800
Boulder 2010	22,000
Canary Audio CA-801	3,750
Cary SLP-98L	2,395
Chord CPA 2200	2,530
Chord CPA 3200	3,785
Chord CPA 4000	6,675
Conrad-Johnson PF-R	2,490
Conrad-Johnson PV-12A	Ph 2,590
Conrad-Johnson Premier 15	Ph 3,995
Conrad-Johnson Premier 14	4,495
Conrad-Johnson Premier 16LS	7,995
Conrad-Johnson Art	14,995
CAT SL1 Ultimate	Ph 5,750
CR Dev Kaster	2,995
Credo LPR 001	2,815
DNM 3C Primus	Ph 2,550
DNM 3C Twin	Ph 3,800
DNM 3C Six	Ph 5,050
EAR 802MC	Ph 2,999
EAR G88	9,999
EAR P52	15,999
Gamma Era Ref	7,999
Graaf GM13.5B	3,750
Jadis DPL	2,900
Jadis DPMC	Ph 2,900
Jadis JPL	4,200
Jadis JPP200	4,290
Jadis JPP30MC	Ph 5,290
Jadis JPS2	6,690
Jadis JPS2C	Ph 10,166
Jadis JP80MC	15,900
Jadis JP200MC	Ph 2,650
Klyne 6LE	2,850
Klyne 6PE	Ph 3,750
Klyne 7XL SE	4,450
Klyne 7PX	Ph 2,998
Krell KRCS	6,949
Krell KR-CHR	4,499
LFD Disc Preampl	2,950
Levinson 280	Ph 3,995
Levinson 350S	6,495
Levinson 380S	14,495
Levinson 32	2,500
Matisse Fantasy	3,500
Matisse Reference	Ph 2,999
McIntosh C22	4,999
McIntosh C2	Ph 4,999
McIntosh C39	Ph 5,999
McIntosh C40	Ph 2,195
Meracur Pretare	2,250
Micell Delphini Mono	2,250
Naim NAC82	3,450
Naim NAC52	2,595
Plinius M14	2,995
Plinius M16L	2,250
Roksan ROK-L1.5	4,999
Rowland Synergy	14,999
Rowland Coherence	2,499
Sonic Frontiers Line 1	3,299
Sonic Frontiers Line 2	4,999
Sonic Frontiers Line 3	3,000
Sony TA-E1	2,640
T+A Pre DA3000	2,997
Technics SU-C3000	Ph 2,775
Trilogy 918	3,500
Tron Nucleus Phono	Ph 3,500
Tron Nucleus Line	4,000
Tron Retro SE	5,000
Tron Orbit	5,000
Wavac ATT Q	5,075
Wavac PR X1	5,750
Wavac ATT S	2,233
Woodside SC26 Line & Phono	Ph 3,095
YBA 1a Line	5,870
YBA Sig. Dual Mono 2	10,000
YBA Sig. Dual Mono 4	Ph

AMPLIFIERS POWER AMPS

KEY
"200W" – Rated RMS output power per channel into a nominal 8 Ohm load.

UP TO £500

Arcam Alpha 8P	50W	260
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Arcam Alpha 9P	70W	400
Creek A43	50W	399
Creek A52	70W	499
Crimson CS620C	50W	450
Cyrus XPA	50W	350
Cyrus Power	50W	500
Earmax Headphone	0.1W	375
Earmax Headphone Pro	0.1W	425
LFD Mistral Power	60W	449
LFD PAO Powerstage	50W	499
Magnum MF120	85W	365
Marantz MA-500	125W	250
Marantz MA-700	200W	400
Moth 30 Stereo	30W	249
Moth Phones-01	0.1W	299
Moth 30 Mono/40	40W	469
Musical Fidelity X-CANS	0.1W	130
Musical Fidelity E30	100W	500
Musical Fidelity X-A50	50W	500
Myriad T-60	50W	300
Myriad MA 120	60W	500
NAD 912	30W	200
NAD 214	80 W	370
NAD 216THX	125W	470
Naim NAP90/3	30W	460
Parasound HCA-750A	75W	450
Quad 99 Stereo Power	85W	500
Rega Maia	85W	450
Rotel RB971	70W	200
Rotel RB981	130W	300
Shearpe 3.5	35W	489
Talk Electronics Tornado 1	50W	450
Technic SE-A1010	100W	350

£501 TO £2,000

Alchemist Kraken Pwr	55W	549
Alchemist Forseti Pwr	150W	1,399
Alchemist Signature Power	100W	1,999
Arcam Alpha 10P	100W	600
Aria Power 35	35W	1,500
Art Audio Quartet	15W	1,753
Art Audio Concerto	25W	1,960
Audio Analogue Donizetti	60W	595
Audio Note The P	40W	550
Audio Note P Zero	8W	599
Audio Note P1	12W	750
Audio Note P1SE	12W	999
Audio Note P2	20W	1,000
Audio Note P2SE	18W	1,499
Audio Note Conqueror	8W	1,599
Audio Prism Antares	35W	1,695
Audio Research D130	130W	1,890
Audio Research VT60	35W	1,999
Audio Valve RKV	0.1W	595
Audio Valve PPP25	25W	1,095
Audio Valve PPP45	45W	1,395
AVC PSE 300B	18W	1,200
AVI S2000MM	150W	1,399
Beaumont Obligato	7W	1,175
Bryston 2B-LP	75W	750
Bryston 3B-ST PRO	150W	1,160
Bryston 3B-ST	150W	1,160
Bryston THX3B	150W	1,262
Bryston 4B-ST PRO	300W	1,756
Bryston 7B-ST	500W	1,815
Bryston 7B-ST PRO	500W	1,815
Bryston THX4B	300W	1,850
Bryston THX7B	500W	1,886
Canary Audio CA-706	40W	1,695
Canary Audio CA-708	50W	1,950
Chord SPM 400	100W	1,425
Chord SPM 600	130W	1,850
Conrad-Johnson MV-55	50W	1,995
Copland CSA515	150W	1,299
Copland CTA505	67W	1,899
CR Dev Amphion	12W	1,949
Credo PMP 804	1,876	
Creek AS25E	100W	599
Crimson CS630C	100W	800
Cyrus aPA7	150W	1,900
Densen B-300	100W	800
Densen DM-30	100W	1,200
DNM PA Start	45W	1,000
DNM PA1 Start	45W	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pwr	100W	995
Dynavector HX75	75W	1,995
ECA Lectern S	50W	880
ECA Lectern HD	1,480	
Electrocompaniet AW60FTT	60W	1,095
Exposure XVIII Super	75W	900
Exposure XVIII Mono	60W	1,800
Golden Tube Audio SE-40	40W	1,100
Golden Tube Audio SE-300B MkII	8W	1,790
Graaf Venticinque P	25W	1,425
Hi Q Sound MCM	70W	715
Jadis DA5	40W	1,749
Krell KAV150a	150W	1,990
Lexicon 212	120W	1,850
LFD PA1 Powerstage	60W	999
LFD PA2 Powerstage	75W	1,599
LFD PA2M Powerstage	90W	1,999
Linn LK100	50W	650
Linn LK240	120W	750
Linn AV5105	100W	1,200
Lynwood Ruby	120W	985
Magnum MF330	150W	685

Magnum MF660	125W	825
Magnum A500SE	200W	1,485
Magnum A50SE	200W	1,595
McIntosh MC7100	100W	1,999
Meracrus Ciere	60W	1,095
Mendian 555	60W	750
Meridian 556	100W	895
Meridian 557	200W	1,400
Meridian 505	160W	1,590
Michell Alecto Stereo	50W	1,150
Michell Alecto Mono	100W	1,950
Monrio Asty P	100W	950
Moth Stereo 60	60W	599
Moth 30 Mono/100	100W	879
Muse Model 100	100W	1,490
Musical Fidelity X-A200	200W	1,000
Myriad MA240	120W	1,000
NAD 218THX	200W	850
NAD S200	200W	1,400
Naim NAP140	45W	770
Naim NAP180	60W	1,112
Naim NAP135	75W	1,705
Naim NAP250	70W	1,705
Papworth TVA50	50W	1,425
Parasound HCA-1000A	125W	600
Parasound HCA-1500A	205W	1,000
Quad 909	140W	900
Quad 99 Monoblock	150W	1,300
Rega Exon	125W	796
Roksan Caspian Power	70W	595
Roksan ROK-S1.5	100W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	75W	550
Rotel RB991	200W	600
Shearpe Phase 3	50W	639
Shearpe Phase 3 Reference	50W	749
Shearpe Phase 5 Mono	100W	1,598
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Amp 1	40W	1,299
Sonographe SA250	125W	1,195
Sonographe SA400	220W	1,695
Sugden Audition Power	549	
Sugden A21a Power	25W	649
Sumo Polaris III	164W	950
Sumo Model Five	1,975	
Sumo Andromeda III	240W	1,975
T+A A1210	90W	875
T+A PA1220R	100W	1,445
T+A A1500	140W	1,535
T+A PA1500R	135W	1,665
TAG McLaren 60P	60W	849
TAG McLaren 100P	100W	1,099
Talk Electronics Tornado 2	65W	600
Talk Electronics Tornado 3	100W	750
Talk Electronics Tornado 4	110W	1,100
Thorens TTA-2000	30W	599
Thule Spirit PA100	100W	600
Thule Spirit PA150B	150W	699
Thule Space PA250B	250W	1,699
Trilogy 948	50W	1,895
Trilogy 948T	50W	1,895
Tube Tech Stryx	45W	1,150
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Pwr	30W	1,900
Woodside SA240	40W	1,199
Woodside MA100	100W	1,735
Woodside STA50	50W	1,880
XTC POW-2	150W	1,600
YBA 3a DT Stereo	45W	1,455

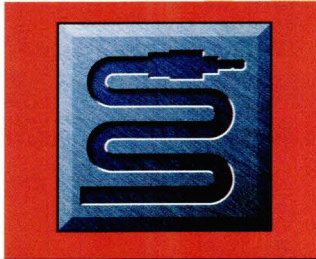
OVER £2,000

Adyton Cordis 1.6	120W	3,495
Adyton Cordis 3B	280W	12,995
Ania Smart 845	24W	3,500
Ania Smart 300B	24W	4,250
Art Audio Symphony	7W	2,500
Art Audio Tempo	30W	2,714
Art Audio Maestro	60W	3,884
Art Audio Diavolo	13W	4,000
Art Audio Jota	18W	6,000
Art Audio Ellesse	100W	8,500
Art Audio Chiara	200W	10,000
ATC SPA2-200PRO	200W	2,056
ATC SPA2-150	200W	2,699
Atma-Sphere S-30 Mk II	30W	2,450
Atma-Sphere M-60 Mk II	60W	4,195
Atma-Sphere MA-1 Mk II	150W	7,995
Audio Note P3	9W	2,150
Audio Note Quest	9W	2,750
Audio Note Yubi	18W	3,850
Audio Note Conquest	18W	4,450
Audio Note Tomei	30W	8,500
Audio Note Neiro	7W	11,360
Audio Note Ankoru	60W	14,500
Audio Prism Debut Mk II	35W	2,495
Audio Prism Mana	100W	12,995
Audio Research VT50	50W	2,950
Audio Research 100.2	100W	3,395
Audio Research VT100 MkII	100W	4,950
Audio Research VT200	200W	8,790
Audio Research VT200	200W	2,495
Audio Synthesis Desire Decade	200W	2,195
Audio Valve Avalon	60W	2,195
Audio Valve Challenger 115	115W	2,995
Audio Valve Challenger 140	140W	3,495
Audio Valve Challenger 300	300W	7,995
Audio Valve Baldur 200 Plus	149W	8,995
Audiolabor 500	230W	5,998
Beam-Echo DL7-35	30W	3,525
Belcanto SET40	40W	3,450

Belcanto Orfeo 30S	35W	4,750
Belcanto SET80	80W	6,750
Border Patrol 300B SE	9W	3,995
Border Patrol 300B SE (WE)	10W	4,495
Boulder 102AE	100W	2,800
Boulder 102M	100W	3,100
Boulder 500AE	150W	4,995
Boulder 500M	150W	5,500
Boulder 2060	600W	25,000
Boulder 2050	999W	43,500
Bryston THX8B	150W	2,385
Canary Audio CA-304	20W	2,695
Canary Audio CA-301	42W	2,995
Canary Audio CA-303	24W	5,495
Cary CAD-572SE	20W	2,250
Cary CAD-2A3 SE	5W	3,150
Cary CAD-300SE	12W	4,495
Cary CAD-805C	50W	7,995
Chord SPM 1000B	200W	2,920
Chord SPM 1200B	250W	3,790
Chord SPM 1200C	350W	4,210
Chord SPM 1400B mono	350W	8,420
Chord SPM 5000	415W	14,570
Conrad-Johnson MF2250	130W	2,295
Conrad-Johnson MF-2500	250W	3,495
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	70W	3,500
Conrad-Johnson Premier 12	140W	6,900
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8XS	150W	17,000
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8A	275W	17,000
CAT J1.1	100W	17,550
CR Dev Artemis	35W	4,995
Credo LPO 804	2,456	
Credo PMP 155	2,676	
Credo LPO 455	4,975	
Credo LPO 155	6,983	
DNM PA3	50W	2,500
DNM PA35	23W	3,750
Dynavector HX1.2	130W	3,995
EAR 861	32W	3,599
EAR 509 Mk II	100W	3,999
EAR 519	100W	4,699
EAR 549	200W	6,499
Electrocompaniet AW120DMB	120W	2,695
Electrocompaniet AW250R	250W	3,995
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	180W	4,595
Exposure IV	90W	2,199
Exposure XVI	125W	4,000
Gamma Aeon	20W	4,999
Gamma Space Ref	18W	7,999
Gamma Aeon Ref	70W	49,999
Gate TR201A	22W	3,335
Golden Tube Audio SE-100	100W	2,495
Graaf 5050	50W	2,100
Graaf GM20	60W	2,850
Graaf GM100	100W	4,250
Graaf GM200	200W	7,500
Jadis DA8	80W	2,990
Jadis DA7	100W	4,790
Jadis JA30	30W	5,180
Jadis SE300B	10W	9,980
Jadis JA80	60W	7,980
Jadis JA100	100W	10,298
Jadis JA200	160W	13,980
Jadis JA500	400W	19,990
Krell KAV250a	250W	3,145
Krell KAV500/2	100W	3,195
Krell FPB200	200W	5,998
Krell FPB250m	200W	8,994
Krell FPB300	300W	9,500
Krell FPB600	600W	12,900
Krell FPB350m	350W	15,994
Krell FPB650m	650W	23,800
Lexicon 225	250W	2,500
Lexicon 501	500W	5,000
Linn Klout	80W	2,400
Linn Klimax 500	500W	11,200
Lumley M125	120W	3,750
Lumley M250	250W	7,500
Magnum Class A mono	180W	2,450
Magnum A200SE	275W	3,750
Mana Stealth	300W	4,800
Levinson 334	125W	5,495
Levinson 335	250W	7,495
Levinson 336	350W	8,995
Levinson 33H	150W	19,395
Matisse Ref Monoblocks	180W	8,000
McIntosh MC150	150W	3,499
McIntosh MC300	300W	3,999
McIntosh MC500	500W	8,999
McIntosh MC1000	999W	14,999
Meracrus Tentare	75W	2,245
Meracrus Cantare	4W	8,995
Muse Model 160 Ser. II	160W	2,290
Muse Model 150	125W	2,690
Muse Model 175 Ser. II	175W	3,490
Muse Model 300 Ser. II	300W	3,990
Musical Fidelity F16	200W	2,500
Musical Fidelity NuVista 300	350W	3,500
Musical Fidelity F19	300W	4,000
Papworth M100	100W	2,645
Papworth M200	200W	3,825
Plinius SA50/3	160W	2,750
Plinius SA100/3	3,450	
Plinius SA250/3	5,850	
Roksan ROK-M1.5	2,250	
Rowland Model 2	75W	4,999
Rowland Model 6	150W	10,999

Rowland Model 8T	250W	12,499
Rowland Model 9T	350W	27,999
Sharp SM-SX1000	165W	10,000
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,399
Siemal TA20	50W	2,350
Sonic Frontiers Power 1	55W	2,499
Sonic Frontiers Power 2	110W	4,999
Sonic Frontiers Power 3	220W	8,599
Sony TA-N1	200W	4,500
Sugden Masterclass Power	75W	2,995
Sumo Model Ten/M	140W	4,200
Sunfire Load Invariant	300W	2,280
Sunfire Signature	600W	2,600
T+A A3000	190W	2,850
TACT Millennium II	150W	7,000
TAG McLaren 125M	145W	2,399
Talk Electronics Tornado 5	200W	2,100
Trilogy 958T	45W	3,395
Trilogy 958	100W	3,395
Tron Type PX25	5W	6,150
Tron Type KR300B	18W	6,500
Tron Type WE300B	8W	6,550
Tron Type PX25 Mono	5W	9,500
Tron Type WE300B Mono	8W	9,700
Tron Type KR 300B Mono	18W	9,700
Tube Tech Genesis Sig.	100W	4,700
Tube Tech Synergy DMA	150W	6,400
van den Hul Power amp	65W	2,500
Wavac MD572	50W	6,250
Wavac EC300B	10W	16,500
Wavac EC838	35W	21,750
Wavac HE 4304	15W	24,750
Wavac HE 833	100W	27,500
Wavac HE 805	45W	27,500
XTC POW-1	200	

Cambridge Pacific	30.00	Monster Interlink 200	23.00	Transparent Cable The Link	92.00	ChordCo Prodac	50.00
Cambridge Studio Reference	40.00	Monster Interlink 300 MkII	40.00	Transparent Cable Music Link	119.00	DNM-Reson DIG100	26.00
Cambridge Silver Spirit 40	70.00	Monster Interlink 400 MkII	50.00	Trichord Pulsewire 75	169.00	DPA Opti-link	20.00
Cambridge Silver Spirit 60	100.00	Moth Leyline Black	100.00	Vampire Wire CC	24.00	DPA Digi-link	27.50
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin	115.00	Moth Leyline Grey	200.00	Vampire Wire CCC/II	58.00	Ecosse Ref MD2	71.50
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five	200.00	Nordost Magic	35.00	Vampire Wire SC/II	98.00	Harmonix HS-101DIG	240.00
Cardas Audio Cardas Cross	360.00	Nordost Black Knight	60.00	Vampire Wire SC/IV	144.00	Insert Audio Dataline 500	24.95
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five C	530.00	Nordost Solar Wind	84.95	Vampire Wire AL/2	259.00	Insert Audio Optic 2.1	29.95
Cardas Audio Hexlink Golden-5 C	600.00	Nordost Blue Angel	98.00	Vampire Wire SL	412.00	Insert Audio Dataline 700	39.95
Cardas Audio Golden Cross	700.00	Nordost Blue Heaven I/C	150.00	van den Hul Storm II	29.99	Insert Audio Image 5.1	44.95
ChordCo Chrysalis	40.00	Nordost Red Dawn	300.00	van den Hul PB5 HB	65.00	lxos 105	25.00
ChordCo Cobra 2	55.00	Nordost SPM	825.00	van den Hul D102 III	79.95	lxos 106	30.00
ChordCo Siren	69.00	Nordost Quattrofil	1,250.00	van den Hul D102 III	79.95	Kimber Opti-link	50.00
ChordCo Chameleon 2	90.00	Ortofon 7N interconnect	250.00	van den Hul Thunderline HB	145.00	Kimber Illuminati DV-50	70.00
ChordCo Chorus	199.00	Precious Metals S550	50.00	van den Hul First Classic	240.00	Kimber Illuminati D-60	325.00
Clearaudio Trident	85.00	Precious Metals S535	50.00	van den Hul Second	275.00	Kimber Illuminati DX-50	350.00
Clearaudio Phorus	215.00	Precious Metals S552	70.00	van den Hul First Ultimate	320.00	Kimber Illuminati Orchid	750.00
Clearaudio Silverline	265.00	Precious Metals S553	90.00	van den Hul MC Gold	550.00	LAT International DI-20-D	79.00
Clearaudio Quint	320.00	Precious Metals S5100	100.00	van den Hul MC Silver IT	1,400.00	Monster Datalink 100	4700
Clearaudio Sixstream	365.00	Precious Metals S5102	130.00	van den Hul MC Silver IT Bal	1,750.00	Monster Lightspeed 100	4700
Connections UK Ultra	28.00	Precious Metals S5103	160.00	Wireworld Orbit	30.00	Moth Leyline Datalink	140.00
Connections UK Midas	39.00	Precious Metals S5104	190.00	Wireworld Solstice II	40.00	Nordost Moonglo	155.00
Connections UK HD	46.00	Precious Metals S5200	220.00	XLO Type ER-6	30.00	Nordost Silver Shadow	335.00
DBF Acoustics Black Velvet	30.00	Precious Metals S5203	290.00	XLO Type ER-2	30.00	Precious Metals SD35	20.00
DBF Acoustics Black Velvet SE	40.00	Precious Metals S5205	360.00	XLO Pro 125	40.00	Precious Metals SD100	50.00
DBF Acoustics Azure SE	75.00	Precious Metals S5204	430.00	XLO Type ER-1	40.00	Precious Metals SD200	110.00
DNM-Reson TCC75	40.00	Prowire Silver	60.00	XLO Type ER-5	50.00	Precious Metals SD202	145.00
DPA Slink	41.00	PAD Elementa	145.00	XLO Pro 150	70.00	QED Qunex OT	30.00
DPA White Slink	75.00	QED Qunex 2	30.00	XLO Type ER-4	99.00	Roksan ROK-Intercon	45.00
DPA Black Slink	220.00	QED Qunex 45	60.00	XLO Pro 100	119.00	Shinpy Digital	265.00
Ecosse Ref CA1	65.00	QED Qunex Sil'r Spiral	90.00	XLO Pro 102	129.00	Siltech Hi-F6	145.00
Ecosse Ref CS1	75.00	Roksan ROK-Intercon	75.00	XLO Ultra 1	169.00	SonicLink Green	60.00
Ecosse Ref MA2	155.00	Shinpy Red Devil	80.00	XLO Ultra 2	199.00	Supra ZAC	44.95
Ecosse Ref MS2	165.00	Shinpy Red Star 2	120.00	XLO Ref 2	330.00	Supra EFF-ID	45.00
Ecosse Ref US1	550.00	Shinpy Black Star 2	240.00	XLO Signature 1.1	625.00	Supra DAC-XLR	45.00
Expressive Tech IC-1	700.00	Shinpy Pulsar 2	495.00	XLO Sig 2.1	675.00	Tara Prism D-1	59.99
Gamma Wow Balance	799.00	Shinpy Quasar 2	850.00	XLO Sig 3.1	750.00	Tara Prism D-2	119.99
Goertz M1 Interconnect	145.00	Siltech MC2-12	308.00	XLO Limited Ed'n	2,200.00	Tara RSC Air Dig. 75	345.00
GT Audio Intercon	130.00	Siltech MC4-24S	400.00			Tara RSC Air Dig. 110	450.00
Harmonix HS-102	195.00	Siltech FTM-3S	730.00			Tara ISM The One Dig.	995.00
Harmonix HS-101	265.00	Silver Sounds S52	99.00			Theta AT&T	550.00
Henley HSP10	20.00	Silver Sounds S51	199.00			Transparent Cable PDL	199.00
Henley HSP50	35.00	Silver Tone Ex-Static	35.00			Trichord Pulsewire 75D	75.00
Henley HSP100	65.00	Silver Tone Sci-Fi	95.00			Vampire Wire DJ/1	150.00
Henley HSP200	95.00	SME S2LB-4	46.18			van den Hul Source HB	35.00
Henley HSP250	150.00	SME S3LB-4	52.06			van den Hul Videolink	70.00
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Insert Audio Focus 1.2	21.50	SME 5900A	102.57			van den Hul First	140.00
Insert Audio IC100 Mk II	46.95	SonicLink Red	25.00			van den Hul Second	150.00
Insert Audio Image 5.1	84.95	SonicLink Silver pink	35.00			van den Hul First Ultimate	180.00
Insert Audio Status 3.4	160.00	SonicLink Black	50.00			XLO Pro 104	60.00
lxos 104	20.00	SonicLink Lilac	65.00			XLO Ultra 4	89.00
lxos 1003	30.00	SonicLink Violet	85.00			XLO Ref 2	180.00
lxos Gamma 1002	39.95	SonicLink Maroon	125.00			XLO Sig 4.1	325.00
lxos 103	45.00	SonicLink Blue Nickel	150.00			XLO Limited Ed'n	1,100.00
lxos 102	60.00	SonicLink Vermilion	195.00				
lxos 1000	89.95	SonicLink Red earth	300.00				
lxos 101	100.00	SonicLink Black earth	450.00				
lxos 100.XO3	150.00	SonicLink Blue earth	695.00				
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Kimber KC1	96.00	Straight Wire Chorus	40.00				
Kimber Hero	110.00	Straight Wire Sonata	80.00				
Kimber Silver Streak	180.00	Straight Wire Encore II	99.95				
Kimber KCAG	390.00	Supra DAC-X	60.00				
Kimber KCTG	720.00	Supra EFF-ISL	80.00				
LAT International IC-50	37.00	Supra EFF-XLR	90.00	Apertura Model B	139.00		
LAT International IC-80 MkII	58.00	Tara Prism 5	21.95	Apertura Model A	255.00		
LAT International IC-100 MkII	95.00	Tara RSC Axiom	137.00	Art Yam Church 5000	275.00		
LAT International IC-200 Mk II	151.00	Tara RSC-Prime Gen/2	170.00	Audioquest Digital/video 1	30.00		
Lieder Chanson	340.00	Tara Prism 5Si	195.00	Audioquest Digital/video 2	60.00		
Lieder Lek	420.00	Tara RSC-Ref Gen. 2	224.50	Audioquest Optlink X	90.00		
Lieder Het Lied	420.00	Tara RSC Air 3	336.00	Audioquest Digital PRO	100.00		
Lieder Song	580.00	Tara RSC Air 2	560.00	Audioquest Optlink Pro	150.00		
Lieder Maas	620.00	Tara RSC Air 1	790.00	Audioquest Optlink Z	180.00		
Lieder Rijn	1,000.00	Tara ISM The Three	894.00	Audiosource Petros Blue Plus S	35.00		
Lieder Waal	1,400.00	Tara ISM The 2	1,144.00	Audiosource Stratos Ser. 2	59.00		
Lumley Silver 12/2	115.00	Tara ISM The One	2,175.00	Cable Talk Digital 2	78.00		
Lumley Silver 14/4	175.00	TCL Viper	54.99	Cardas Audio Lightning	190.00		
Monster Interlink 100	11.00	Transparent Cable Musichord	48.00	ChordCo Codac	38.00		
				ChordCo Optichord	40.00		



CABLES
Digital Interconnects

KEY
 ☉ - Stranded construction.
 ● - Solid-core construction.
 Prices of interconnects are for a one metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B	139.00
Apertura Model A	255.00
Art Yam Church 5000	275.00
Audioquest Digital/video 1	30.00
Audioquest Digital/video 2	60.00
Audioquest Optlink X	90.00
Audioquest Digital PRO	100.00
Audioquest Optlink Pro	150.00
Audioquest Optlink Z	180.00
Audiosource Petros Blue Plus S	35.00
Audiosource Stratos Ser. 2	59.00
Cable Talk Digital 2	78.00
Cardas Audio Lightning	190.00
ChordCo Codac	38.00
ChordCo Optichord	40.00



SPEAKER CABLES

KEY
 ☉ - Stranded construction.
 ● - Solid-core construction.
 Price per mono metre, unterminated.

Acoustic Energy AESC-C3	11.95
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ALR/Jordan QMM	⊛	5.00
Apertura Silver	⊛	82.50
Argento Copper	⊛	35.00
Argento Copper Ref	⊛	65.00
Argento Silver	⊛	125.00
Argento Silver Ref	⊛	380.00
Art Yam Church M2000	⊛	470.00
Art Yam Church 5000	⊛	795.00
Audio Note AN-D	⊛	4.50
Audio Note AN-B	⊛	16.50
Audio Note AN-L	⊛	29.50
Audio Note AN-SP	⊛	150.00
Audio Note AN-SPx	⊛	450.00
Audioquest Type 2	⊛	3.50
Audioquest F-18	⊛	3.60
Audioquest Type 6+	⊛	9.00
Audioquest Indigo +	⊛	15.00
Audioquest Crystal +	⊛	25.00
Audioquest Forest +	⊛	75.00
Audioquest Argent +	⊛	125.00
Audioquest Clear 3	⊛	200.00
Cable Talk Theatre 2	⊛	1.75
Cable Talk Flat 1	⊛	2.00
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	⊛	2.50
Cable Talk Flat 1 Biwire	⊛	4.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1	⊛	4.50
Cable Talk Talk 3.1 Biwire	⊛	5.00
Cable Talk Flat 2	⊛	5.00
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	⊛	8.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1 Biwire	⊛	9.00
Cable Talk Flat 2 Biwire	⊛	10.00
Cable Talk Symphony 3	⊛	14.00
Cable Talk Concert 2.1 Biwire	⊛	16.00
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin SC	⊛	35.00
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five SC	⊛	59.00
Cardas Audio Cross SC	⊛	99.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five SC	⊛	109.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink GoldenS 5C	⊛	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	⊛	789.00
ChordCo Carnival	⊛	3.00
ChordCo Myth	⊛	6.00
ChordCo Legend	⊛	15.00
ChordCo Odyssey	⊛	17.00
DNM Reson LSC	⊛	6.95
DNM Reson LSCB	⊛	13.95
Ecosse Ref FS2.16	⊛	1.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.2	⊛	2.50
Ecosse Ref CS2.3	⊛	3.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.15	⊛	5.75
Ecosse Ref MS2.2	⊛	15.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.3	⊛	20.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.15	⊛	30.00
Ecosse Ref US2	⊛	450.00
Gale XL105	⊛	1.00
Gale XL189	⊛	1.00
Gale XL3.15	⊛	2.00
Gale XL160-2	⊛	2.50
Gale XL3.15-2	⊛	3.99
Gamma Wonder Line	⊛	99.00
Goertz M1	⊛	16.00
Goertz M2	⊛	32.00
Goertz Big Boy	⊛	64.00
GT Audio Speaker	⊛	50.00
Harmonix Harmonic-Strings	⊛	30.00
Harmonix HS-101T-1	⊛	56.00
Harmonix HS-101SC	⊛	88.00
Ixos 607	⊛	2.00
Ixos 604	⊛	3.00
Ixos 6003	⊛	3.00
Ixos 605	⊛	3.00
Ixos Gamma 6006	⊛	5.00
Kimber 4PR	⊛	5.00
Kimber 4VS	⊛	9.00
Kimber 4TC	⊛	19.60
Kimber 8TC	⊛	32.70
Kimber 4AG	⊛	394.00
Kimber 8AG	⊛	656.00
LAT International SS 800	⊛	16.00
LAT International BIWIRE	⊛	23.00
LAT International SS 1000	⊛	36.00
Lieder Pad	⊛	133.00
Lieder Bel Canto	⊛	188.00
Lieder Spoor	⊛	253.00
Lieder Straat	⊛	463.00
Lieder Weg	⊛	663.00
Linn K20	⊛	4.00
Linn K400	⊛	10.00
Linn K600	⊛	15.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	⊛	35.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	⊛	40.00
Monster XP Clear	⊛	2.20
Monster XP Navajo	⊛	2.40
Monster Superflat Mini	⊛	2.75
Monster XP HP	⊛	3.70
Monster Original	⊛	4.40
Monster New Monster	⊛	5.50
Naim NAC A5	⊛	5.70
Nordost Octava	⊛	3.00
Nordost 4-Flat	⊛	9.95
Nordost Solar Wind Bi-wire	⊛	27.95
Nordost Blue Heaven Spkr	⊛	58.95
Nordost Red Dawn	⊛	110.00
Nordost SPM	⊛	325.00
Ortofon SPK100	⊛	3.00
Ortofon SPK200	⊛	5.00
Ortofon SPK300	⊛	8.00
Precious Metals SL32	⊛	7.50

Precious Metals SL102	⊛	10.00
Precious Metals SL34	⊛	15.00
Precious Metals SL104	⊛	20.00
Precious Metals SL106	⊛	30.00
Precious Metals SL108	⊛	40.00
Puresonic OFC 7892	⊛	1.20
Puresonic OFC 7844	⊛	1.65
Puresonic OFC 7845	⊛	1.95
Puresonic OFC 7891	⊛	2.85
Puresonic OFC 7816	⊛	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7832	⊛	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7812	⊛	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7825	⊛	6.95
Puresonic PSOCC 7801	⊛	9.50
Puresonic PSOCC 7802	⊛	18.00
Puresonic PSOCC 7803	⊛	27.00
QED QED Micro	⊛	1.50
QED QED Micro Bi-wire	⊛	3.00
QED QED Mk II Bi-wire	⊛	4.85
QED QED Silver Anniv	⊛	5.00
QED Profile 4x4	⊛	9.00
QED Profile Silver 12	⊛	15.00
QED Genesis S'r Spiral	⊛	30.00
QED G's S'r Spiral B/W	⊛	60.00
Rega Speaker	⊛	1.58
Rega SC42	⊛	19.98
Roksan ROK-Speaker	⊛	6.00
Shinpy Red Devil	⊛	30.00
Shinpy Red Star 2	⊛	39.00
Shinpy Black Star 2	⊛	62.00
Shinpy Pulsar 2	⊛	104.00
Shinpy Quasar 2	⊛	208.00
Siltech LS2-45	⊛	109.00
Siltech FT-12 Mk1	⊛	240.00
Siltech LS4-120	⊛	549.00
Silver Sounds 12 Gauge	⊛	15.00
Silver Sounds 10 Gauge	⊛	35.00
Silver Sounds 8 Gauge	⊛	75.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic	⊛	10.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic HC	⊛	15.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice	⊛	55.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice Ultra	⊛	85.00
SonicLink AST50	⊛	1.95
SonicLink AST60	⊛	2.50
SonicLink AST75	⊛	2.95
SonicLink AST200	⊛	5.95
SonicLink AST200x2	⊛	9.95
SonicLink S300	⊛	18.00
SonicLink S130x2	⊛	20.00
SonicLink S300x2	⊛	40.00
SonicLink S900	⊛	60.00
SonicLink S600x2	⊛	80.00
SonicLink Black Rhodium 4	⊛	1,000.00
Straight Wire Rhythm	⊛	6.00
Straight Wire Quartet	⊛	8.00
Supra Classic 2.5	⊛	2.49
Supra Linc 2.5 Flex	⊛	3.49
Supra Classic 4.0	⊛	3.95
Supra Classic 6	⊛	4.95
Supra Ply 2.0	⊛	4.95
Supra Linc 4.0 Flex	⊛	4.95
Supra Ply 3.4	⊛	6.95
Supra Quattro 4x4	⊛	8.95
Tara Klara	⊛	2.95
Tara Prism 2+2	⊛	7.95
Tara Prism Nexa	⊛	9.95
Tara Prism Bi-Wire	⊛	18.00
Tara RSC Prime 500	⊛	43.00
Tara RSC Prime 1000	⊛	73.00
Tara RSC Ref Gen/2	⊛	118.00
Tara RSC Prime 1800	⊛	150.00
Tara RSC Digital 75	⊛	230.00
Tara RSC Air 2	⊛	291.00
Tara RSC Air 1	⊛	466.00
Tara ISM The Two	⊛	708.00
Tara ISM The One	⊛	941.00
Tech + Link SPC 79	⊛	1.20
Transparent Cable Musichord	⊛	11.00
Transparent Cable The Wave	⊛	23.00
Transparent Cable Music Wave	⊛	25.00
Vampire Wire SC-384	⊛	11.00
Vampire Wire SC-554	⊛	15.00
Vampire Wire ST-I	⊛	30.00
Vampire Wire SC-1108	⊛	30.00
Vampire Wire ST-II	⊛	48.00
Vampire Wire ST-III	⊛	73.00
van den Hul Skyline HB	⊛	3.99
van den Hul Snowline	⊛	5.49
van den Hul Skytrack HB	⊛	5.99
van den Hul Clearwater	⊛	7.99
van den Hul Snowtrack	⊛	10.99
van den Hul Royal Jade	⊛	10.99
van den Hul CS122 HB	⊛	13.49
van den Hul Cleartrack	⊛	14.99
van den Hul D352 HB	⊛	21.00
van den Hul Teatrack HB	⊛	23.99
van den Hul SCS12	⊛	36.00
van den Hul Magnum HB	⊛	40.00
van den Hul The Wind HB	⊛	44.00
van den Hul Revolution HB	⊛	80.00
van den Hul Revelation HB	⊛	120.00
van den Hul The Third	⊛	1,000.00
XLO CDA 16/2	⊛	4.45
XLO CDA ER-14 THX	⊛	5.81
XLO CDA 16/4	⊛	8.60
XLO CDA ER-11 THX	⊛	11.62
XLO Pro 600	⊛	16.60

CARTRIDGES

KEY

MM - Moving-magnet type.

MC - Moving-coil type.

UP TO £100

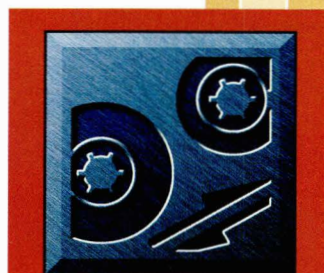
Audio Note IO1	MM	99
Audio Technica AT-91	MM	15
Audio Technica AT-95E	MM	20
Audio Technica AT-110E	MM	28
Audio Technica AT450E	MM	70
Audio Technica AT440ML	MM	90
Benz-Micro MC20EII	MC	70
Denon DL110	MC	70
Denon DL160	MC	90
Denon DL103	MC	100
Goldring Elan	MM	19
Goldring Elektra	MM	29
Goldring 1006	MM	59
Goldring 1012GX	MM	79
Goldring 1022GX	MM	99
Grado ZTE+1	MM	27
Grado ZCE+1	MM	37
Grado ZFE+1	MM	48
Grado Prestige Black	MM	49
Grado Prestige Green	MM	59
Grado Prestige Blue	MM	69
Grado ZF1+	MM	83
Grado Prestige Red	MM	99
N'h'am Tracer I	MM	98
Ortofon OM 3E	MM	16
Ortofon OM 5E	MM	20
Ortofon OM 10	MM	30
Ortofon 510	MM	40
Ortofon OM DJ	MM	50
Ortofon OM 20	MM	70
Ortofon 520	MM	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	MC	75
Ortofon Concorde DJ	MM	80
Ortofon OM 30	MM	90
Ortofon 530	MM	100
Pickering TE-15	MM	20
Pickering VE-15	MM	25
Pickering T-E	MM	25
Pickering V15-DJ	MM	28
Pickering TL-E	MM	35
Pickering TL-2E	MM	45
Pickering XV15-625E	MM	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	MM	50
Pickering TL-2-S	MM	55
Pickering XV15-7575	MM	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	MM	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	MM	70
Pickering TL3S	MM	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	MM	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	MM	100
Pickering TL-4-5	MM	100
Rega Bias	MM	39
Rega RB78	MM	39
Rega Super Bias	MM	59
Rega Elys	MM	85
Shure M70BX	MM	21
Shure M92E	MM	22
Shure SC35C	MM	29
Shure M447X	MM	35
Shure M44GX	MM	35
Stanton 500AL II	MM	35
Stanton 500EL	MM	44
Stanton 680AL/X	MM	59
Stanton 680EL/X	MM	74
Sumiko Oyster	MM	50
Sumiko Black Pearl	MM	50
Sumiko Pearl	MM	70
Sumiko Blue Point	MC	100

OVER £100

Allaerts MC1 Eco	MC	850
Allaerts MC1 B	MC	1,250
Allaerts MC1 B MkII	MC	2,200
Allaerts MC2 Finish	MC	2,995

Audio Note IO2	MM	139
Audio Note Soara	MC	795
Audio Note IO1V	MC	1,095
Audio Note IO1UD	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9ML	MC	530
Audio Technica AT-35PTG	MC	489
Benz-Micro The Glider	MC	600
Benz-Micro Reference	MC	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	MC	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	MC	1,600
Clearaudio Alk Mk 2	MM	135
Clearaudio Beta Mk 2	MM	190
Clearaudio Beta-S Mk 2	MM	250
Clearaudio Virtuoso	MM	295
Clearaudio Sigma	MC	590
Clearaudio Gamma-S	MC	810
Clearaudio Victory	MC	960
Clearaudio Signature	MC	1,540
Clearaudio Accurate	MC	2,515
Clearaudio Insider	MC	5,165
Clearaudio Insider Ref.	MC	6,810
Denon DL304	MC	200
Dynavector 10X4II	MC	189
Dynavector DV20XH	MC	299
Dynavector DV-20XL	MC	299
Dynavector DV20XL	MC	299
Dynavector 17D2	MC	450
Dynavector XX-1L	MC	998
Dynavector XX-1	MC	998
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	MC	1,698
Goldring Eroica LX	MC	110
Goldring Eroica	MC	110
Goldring 1042	MM	120
Goldring Elite	MC	220
Goldring Excel VX	MC	525
Grado Prestige Silver	MM	119
Grado Prestige Gold	MM	149
Grado Signature Junior	MM	150
Grado Signature 8M2	MM	250
Grado Signature MCZ	MM	375
Grado Signature TLZ	MM	650
Grado Signature XTZ	MM	975
Grado Reference	MM	995
Koetsu Red T	MC	1,359
Koetsu Red K Sig	MC	1,899
Koetsu Urushi	MC	1,999
Koetsu Signature	MC	2,999
Koetsu Gold PR	MC	5,498
Linn K9	MM	125
Linn Klyde	MC	500
Linn Arkiv	MC	1,000
London Decca Maroon	MM	299
London Decca Gold	MM	359
London Decca Maroon Dp	MM	379
London Decca S Gold	MM	439
London Decca Gold Dp	MM	439
London Decca S Gold Dp	MM	519
London Decca Jubilee	MM	999
Lyra Lydian Beta	MC	599
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	MC	995
Lyra Parnassus DcT	MC	1,895
N'h'am Tracer II	MM	310
N'h'am Tracer III	MM	410
N'h'am Tracer IV	MM	660
Ortofon MC15 Super II	MC	140
Ortofon 540	MM	140
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	MC	150
Ortofon MC25E	MC	200
Ortofon MC25F	MC	250
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	MC	300
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	MC	450
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	MC	550
Ortofon MC200II	MC	800
Ortofon MC Rohmann	MC	1,000
Ortofon MC3000 II	MC	1,200
Ortofon MC Jubilee	MC	1,250
Ortofon MC7500	MC	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	MM	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	MM	175
Pickering TL-4004	MM	150
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Rega Super Elys	MM	150
Rega Exact	MM	248
Reson Mica	MM	185

van den Hul White Beauty S-X	MC	2,500
van den Hul White Beauty HO	MC	2,500
van den Hul Grasshopper III GLN	MC	2,800
van den Hul Grasshopper III GLA	MC	2,800
van den Hul Grasshopper III CMN	MC	2,800
van den Hul Grasshopper III CHN	MC	2,900
van den Hul Grasshopper IV GLA	MC	3,000
van den Hul Black Beauty	MC	3,000
Wilson benesch Matrix	MC	786
Wilson benesch Analog	MC	1,572
Wilson benesch Carbon	MC	1,573



CASSETTE DECKS

KEY
 ↔ - Autoreverse - no need to remove and turn around the tape.
3-H - 3 heads, i.e. separate record and replay heads.

UP TO £200

Ariston WX-510		70
Denon DRM-550		160
Denon DRW-585	↔	200
Goodmans Delta 801	↔	130
H/K DC520	↔	200
JVC TD-X372BK	↔	170
JVC TD-R472BK	↔	200
Kenwood KX-W4080	↔	160
Kenwood KX-3080	↔	160
Kenwood KX-W6080	↔	200
Kenwood KX-5080S	↔	200
Marantz SD-455	↔	170
Marantz SD-57	↔	199
Onkyo K 185	↔	200
Pioneer CT-S250	↔	150
Pioneer CT-W205R	↔	160
Pioneer CT-W505R	↔	180
Pioneer CT-S450S	↔	200
Pioneer CT-W606DR	↔	200
Sony TC-WE435	↔	130
Sony TC-KE230	↔	130
Sony TC-WE635	↔	150
Sony TC-KB820S	↔	180
Sony TC-WE835	↔	200
Teac W-416	↔	100
Teac V-615	↔	130
Teac RH-300	↔	160
Teac W-790R	↔	170
Teac V-1050	↔	180
Teac RH-500	↔	200
Technics RS-BX501	↔	170
Technics RS-TR373	↔	180
Technics RS-TR474	↔	200
Technics RS-AZ6	↔	200
Yamaha KX-393	↔	130
Yamaha KX-W321	↔	170
Yamaha KX-493	↔	180

OVER £200

Denon DRM-650S		250
Denon DRM-740	↔	270
Denon DRS-810	↔	310
H/K TD420	↔	250
JVC TD-V662BK	↔	270
JVC TD-W718BK	↔	300
NAD 613	↔	250
NAD 614	↔	270
NAD 616	↔	300
Nakamichi DR-10	↔	800
Onkyo TA 6210	↔	230
Onkyo TARW 211	↔	270
Onkyo TARW 311	↔	320
Onkyo TA 6310	↔	330
Onkyo KR 609	↔	350
Onkyo KW 606	↔	370
Onkyo TARW 411	↔	370
Onkyo K 611	↔	460
Pioneer CT-S550S	↔	250
Pioneer CT-W806DR	↔	300
Pioneer CT-S550S Precision	↔	340
Pioneer CT-S830S	↔	500
Pioneer CT-95	↔	1,000
Rotel RC960BX	↔	250
Sony TC-KA6ES	↔	600
T+A CC1200R	↔	1,180
Teac W-860R	↔	250

Teac W-6000R	↔	450
Teac V-6030S	↔	550
Teac V-8030S	↔	650
Technics RS-AZ7	↔	270
Technics RS-TR575	↔	280
Yamaha KX-580SE	↔	250



CD PLAYERS

KEY
 ↔ - Multiplayer: can be loaded with more than one disc.
 Ⓜ - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

UP TO £250

Ariston CDX700		50
Ariston CDX710		70
Ariston CDX720		80
Cambridge CD5		100
Cambridge D100	↔	120
Cambridge CD4	↔	150
Cambridge CD4SE	↔	200
Denon DCD-435	↔	130
Denon DCD-655	↔	180
Denon DCD-735	↔	230
Eclipse CD101a	↔	40
H/K HD720	↔	200
H/K FL8350	↔	200
JVC XL-V120BK	↔	110
JVC XL-V130BK	↔	120
JVC XL-V230BK	↔	140
JVC XL-F116BK	↔	180
JVC XL-F216BK	↔	200
JVC XL-Z574BK	↔	250
Kenwood DP-1080	↔	110
Kenwood DP-2080	↔	130
Kenwood DP-R3090	↔	140
Kenwood DP-R4090	↔	160
Kenwood DP-3080	↔	170
Kenwood DPF-3010	↔	180
Kenwood DP-R6090	↔	200
Kenwood DP-4090	↔	250
Marantz CD-38	↔	130
Marantz CC-38	↔	200
Marantz CD-48	↔	200
Marantz CD-57	↔	230
Marantz CD-67II	↔	250
NAD 522	↔	170
NAD 510	↔	200
NAD 524	↔	250
NAD 523	↔	250
NAD 512	↔	250
Onkyo DX-7222	↔	170
Pioneer PD-106	↔	130
Pioneer PD-206	↔	150
Pioneer PD-S507	↔	190
Pioneer PD-F606	↔	200
Pioneer PD-M603	↔	200
Pioneer PD-F706	↔	250
Rotel RCD-930AX	↔	180
Sansui CD220	↔	180
Sherwood CD-4030R	↔	180
Sherwood CDC680	↔	180
Sherwood CDC6050R	↔	180
Sony CDP-XE220	↔	90
Sony CDP-XE330	↔	100
Sony CDP-M305	↔	120
Sony CDP-XE530	↔	130
Sony CDP-CE335	↔	160
Sony CDP-XB720E	↔	200
Sony CDP-CX57	↔	250
Synergy CDJ11210	↔	120
Teac CDP-1120	↔	100
Teac CD-P1820	↔	130
Teac CD-P1440	↔	200
Teac CD-P3450SE	↔	200
Teac PD-D2400	↔	200
Teac PD-H500i	↔	240
Technics SL-PG390A	↔	90
Technics SL-PG490A	↔	100
Technics SL-PG590A	↔	120
Technics SL-PD6	↔	140
Technics SL-PD8	↔	160
Technics SL-P5670D	↔	200
Technics SL-P5770D	↔	250
Yamaha CDX-393 II	↔	130

Yamaha CDC-575	↔	180
Yamaha CDX-493	↔	180
Yamaha CDC-675	↔	230

£251 TO £500

Arcam Alpha MCD	↔	330
Arcam Alpha 7 SE	↔	350
Arcam Alpha 8	↔	450
Arcam Alpha 8SE	↔	500
Cambridge CD6	↔	300
Cyrus dAD1.5	↔	399
Denon DCD-835	↔	280
Denon DCM-260	↔	300
Denon DCD-1550AR	↔	350
H/K HD740	↔	300
H/K FL8550	↔	300
H/K HD760	↔	500
JVC XL-Z674BK	↔	300
Kenwood DP-R7080	↔	300
Kenwood DP-9090	↔	300
Kenwood DP-5090	↔	300
Kenwood DP-7090	↔	400
Marantz CD-675E MkII	↔	300
Marantz CD6000 OSE	↔	300
Marantz CC-870	↔	400
Marantz CD-63IIK1	↔	400
Musical Fidelity E60	↔	300
Musical Fidelity A2 CD	↔	500
Musical Fidelity E624	↔	500
Myryad T-10	↔	400
NAD 513	↔	290
NAD C540	↔	329
NAD 515	↔	350
NAD 514	↔	370
NAD 517	↔	400
Nakamichi MB10	↔	399
Onkyo DX 7210	↔	260
Onkyo C721	↔	290
Onkyo DXC 320	↔	380
Onkyo DX 7510	↔	400
Onkyo CM 716	↔	450
Parasound C/DP-1000	↔	499
Pioneer PD-S707	↔	300
Pioneer PD-F805	↔	300
Pioneer PD-S705	↔	300
Pioneer PD-F906	↔	350
Pioneer PD-S904	↔	400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	↔	460
Roksan Kandy	↔	475
Rotel RCD-951	↔	300
Rotel RCD-971	↔	350
Sony CDP-XB930E	↔	300
Sony CDP-CX350	↔	350
Sony CDP-XA20ES	↔	450
Sony CDP-X3000ES	↔	500
Sony CDP-CX260	↔	500
Synergy CDJ2010	↔	300
Technics SL-MC7	↔	300
Yamaha CDX-993	↔	400

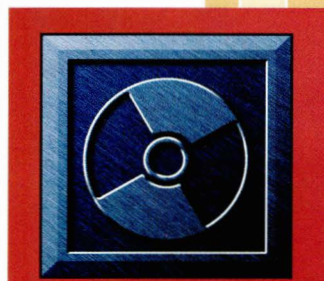
£501 TO £1,000

Acurus ACD11	↔	899
Alchemist Nexus	↔	600
Arcam Alpha 9	↔	800
Audio Analogue Paganini	↔	750
Audio Note CD1	↔	599
Audio Note AN-CD2	↔	999
Audiomeca Obsession	↔	999
AWI S2000MC 24 Ref	↔	999
Creek CD43	↔	598
Cyrus dAD3	↔	900
Cyrus dAD3 Q24	↔	900
Denon DCD-1650AR	↔	700
DPA Renaissance int. CD	↔	950
Helios Model 3	↔	700
Helios Model 2	↔	950
Linn Mimik	↔	875
Linn Genki	↔	995
Magnum CD2020	↔	595
Marantz CD-17	↔	800
Monno Asty PL	↔	695
Monrio Privilege	↔	995
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	↔	799
Musical Fidelity A3 CD	↔	800
Myryad T-20	↔	600
Myryad MC100	↔	800
Pioneer PDS-06	↔	550
Primare D20	↔	700
Quad 99	↔	600
Roksan Caspian	↔	895
Rotel RCD-991	↔	750
Sony CDP-XA555ES	↔	1,000
Sugden Audition	↔	649
Talk Electronics Thunder 1	↔	550
Talk Electronics Thunder 2	↔	700
Talk Electronics Thunder 3	↔	1,000
Teac VRDS-8	↔	600
Teac VRDS-9	↔	700
Teac VRDS-25X	↔	1,000
Thule Spirit CD100	↔	600
Thule Spirit CD150B	↔	699
Trichord Genesis	↔	569
Trichord Digital Jukebox 25	↔	619
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50	↔	669
Trichord Digital J'box 100	↔	719

Trichord Revelation	↔	819
YBA Complete	↔	649
YBA Special	↔	695

OVER £1,000

Acoustic Precision Eikos	↔	1,850
Advantage CD15	↔	3,995
Alchemist Kraken CD	↔	1,249
Alchemist Forseti Int.	↔	1,249
Alchemist Forseti	↔	1,995
Arcam FMJ CD23	↔	1,100
Audio Research CD2	↔	3,399
Audiolabor 531	↔	7,550
Audiomeca Keops	↔	1,500
Audiomeca Talisman	↔	2,150
Audiomeca Talisman SE	↔	2,300
Balanced VK-D5	↔	3,995
Cary CD-301	↔	2,350
Classe CDP-3	↔	1,395
Conrad-Johnson DF-2	↔	1,695
Conrad-Johnson DV-2b	↔	2,495
Copland CDA-266	↔	1,199
Copland CDA277	↔	1,649
Copland CDA289	↔	1,899
Copland CDA288	↔	1,999
Cymbal CDP12	↔	1,299
Exposure CD Player	↔	1,050
Helios Model 1	↔	1,250
Helios Stargate	↔	2,250
Jadis Orchestra	↔	1,345
Krell KAV250cd	↔	2,490
Krell KAV300cd	↔	3,599
Krell KP5255	↔	19,995
Linn Ikemi	↔	1,950
Linn Sondek CD12	↔	12,000
Marantz CD-17KIS	↔	1,100
Marantz CD-7	↔	3,500
Levinson 39	↔	4,995
McIntosh MCD7009	↔	3,699
Meracus Tanto	↔	1,395
Meracus Imago Player	↔	4,495
Meridian 506	↔	1,100
Meridian 508	↔	1,995
Myryad MCD500	↔	1,300
NAD S500	↔	1,100
Naim CDS.5	↔	1,050
Naim CDX	↔	2,200
Naim NACDSII/XPS	↔	5,625
Oracle CD Player	↔	9,499
Pink Triangle Numeral	↔	1,049
Pink Triangle Litaural	↔	2,200
Primare D302	↔	1,500
Proceed CDP	↔	3,395
Resolution CD50	↔	2,995
Roksan Attessa-DP3P	↔	1,495
Shearpe Phase 7	↔	1,499
Sherwood CD1	↔	1,100
Sonic Frontiers Anthem CD1	↔	1,699
Sonic Frontiers SFC-D1	↔	3,799
Sony SCD-1	↔	2,700
T+A CD1210R	↔	1,185
T+A CD1220R	↔	1,540
TAG McLaren CD20R	↔	1,250
Theta Miles SE	↔	2,390
Tube Tech Fuson	↔	1,100
Tube Tech Fulcrum	↔	2,800
Wadia 860x	↔	7,495
XTC CDP-1	↔	1,350
YBA Integre a	↔	1,095
YBA CD3a	↔	1,850
YBA CD2a	↔	2,950
YBA CD1a	↔	3,895



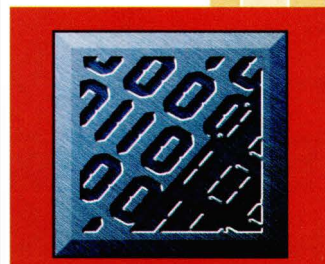
CD TRANSPORTS

KEY
 Ⓜ - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Alchemist Forseti Drive	↔	1,100
Atlas CDT III	↔	4,995
Audio Note CDT Zero	↔	399
Audio Synthesis Transcend Decade	↔	3,295
Audiomeca Damnation	↔	999
Audiomeca Damnation SE	↔	1,100
Audiomeca Talisman	↔	1,850
Audiomeca Talisman SE	↔	1,999

Audiomeca Talisman DOB	£1,250
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	£1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	£775
Jadis JDS	£1,999
Jadis JD1	£9,190
Linn Karik	£1,850
Levinson 37	£3,995
Levinson 31.5	£9,295
Meracrus Imago	£3,995
Monrio Bitmatch	£950
Muse Model 5	£1,800
Muse Model 8	£3,500
Oracle CD Drive	£7,399
Pink Triangle Cardinal II	£909
Resolution VT960	£3,500
Roksan Attesa-DP3	£1,295
Sonic Frontiers Transport 3	£5,999
T+A CM1200R	£875
TAG McLaren CDT20R	£1,499
Teac VRDS-T1	£550
Teac P-30	£2,500
Theta Pearl	£1,349
Theta Jade	£2,650
Thorens TCD-2000	£999
Trichord Digital Turntable	£719
Wadia 8	£3,195
Wadia 20	£4,370

Theta Pro Basic IIIa	£2,990
Theta Casablanca LS	£6,158
Thorens TDA-2000	£700
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	£1,395
Wadia 12	£1,530
Wadia 15	£3,790
Wadia 64.4	£4,750
Wadia 16	£7,395
Wadia 7	£9,995
Wadia 9	£12,790
Woodside DVAC-18	£1,499



DIGITAL RECORDERS

KEY
MD - MiniDisc
DAT - Digital Audio Tape
 - Portable

Denon DMD-1000	MD	£300
Kenwood DMF-9020	MD	£499
Kenwood DM-7090	MD	£500
Kenwood DM-9090	MD	£550
Marantz CM635	MD	£500
Marantz DR700	MD	£600
Onkyo MD-121	MD	£450
Onkyo MD 122	MD	£700
Philips CDR770		£1
Philips CDR775		£1
Philips CDR570		£1
Philips CDR951		£1
Pioneer MJ-D707	MD	£199
Pioneer PDR-509		£300
Pioneer PDR-555RW		£480
Pioneer PDR-04		£700
Pioneer D-05	DAT	£900
Pioneer PDR-05	DAT	£1,000
Pioneer D-C88	DAT	£2,000
Sharp MD-R1 MkII	MD	£180
Sharp MD-R3H	MD	£300
Sharp MD-R2	MD	£300
Sharp MD-MS200H	MD	£350
Sharp MDXV300H	MD	£1,000
Sony MZ-R55	MD	£1
Sony MDS-540	MD	£1
Sony MZ-R37	MD	£1
Sony MZ-R5ST	MD	£1
Sony MDS-JE530	MD	£200
Sony MDS-JB930	MD	£300
Sony MDS-JA20ES	MD	£500
Sony MDS-JA55ES	MD	£650
Teac MDH300	MD	£300
Teac MD-H500i	MD	£350
Teac MD-8	MD	£600
Teac MD-5	MD	£600
Teac MD-10	MD	£900
Traxdata Traxaudio 900	MD	£399
Yamaha MDX-595	MD	£230
Yamaha CDR-S1000	MD	£400



DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)

KEY
 - Number of digital inputs.

Alchemist TS-D-1		£300
Alchemist Forseti DAC	③	£1,100
Altis Reference	③	£4,995
Audio Note DAC Zero		£369
Audio Note DAC1		£675
Audio Note DAC2		£1,099
Audio Note DAC3		£1,750
Audio Research DAC5	③	£2,335
Audio Research DAC3 MkII	④	£3,999
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade	④	£2,795
Audiomeca Elixir	①	£799
Audiomeca Ambrosia		£1,850
Boulder 2020	⑥	£21,000
Chord D5C900		£1,850
Chord D5C1 100	①	£2,765
Chord D5C1 500	⑤	£4,800
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	①	£1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b		£1,990
dCS Elgar	③	£8,500
DPA Little Bit 3	③	£325
DPA Renaissance DAC		£595
DPA Enlightenment DAC		£850
DPA SX128		£2,000
DPA SX256		£4,000
DPA SX512		£8,000
Harmonix Reimyo DAP-77		£2,790
Jadis JS2	③	£2,499
Jadis JS1		£6,990
LFD DAC2		£1,950
LFD DAC5		£3,000
Linn Numenk		£1,500
Levinson 360	⑥	£4,395
Levinson 360S	⑥	£6,895
Levinson 30.6		£16,495
Meracrus Auriga		£1,295
Meracrus Flagrare		£2,495
Meridian 566		£1,095
Monrio 18B2	③	£795
Muse Model 2		£2,190
Muse Model 2 Plus	③	£2,500
Muse Model 2/96	③	£3,000
Musical Fidelity X-ACT		£200
Musical Fidelity X-24K		£300
Musical Fidelity X-DAC		£300
Onkyo DX 7310		£330
Resolution D92	⑦	£1,500
Roksan Attesa-DA2	⑦	£595
Sonic Frontiers Processor 3	⑤	£5,999
Sumo Theorem II		£945
Sumo Theorem IIB		£1,155
TAG McLaren DAC20	⑦	£1,249
Teac D-T1	④	£500
Theta Chroma 396 Std		£799
Theta Pro Geny		£1,099
Theta Pro Prime Ila		£1,699

Denon DMD-1000	MD	£300
Kenwood DMF-9020	MD	£499
Kenwood DM-7090	MD	£500
Kenwood DM-9090	MD	£550
Marantz CM635	MD	£500
Marantz DR700	MD	£600
Onkyo MD-121	MD	£450
Onkyo MD 122	MD	£700
Philips CDR770		£1
Philips CDR775		£1
Philips CDR570		£1
Philips CDR951		£1
Pioneer MJ-D707	MD	£199
Pioneer PDR-509		£300
Pioneer PDR-555RW		£480
Pioneer PDR-04		£700
Pioneer D-05	DAT	£900
Pioneer PDR-05	DAT	£1,000
Pioneer D-C88	DAT	£2,000
Sharp MD-R1 MkII	MD	£180
Sharp MD-R3H	MD	£300
Sharp MD-R2	MD	£300
Sharp MD-MS200H	MD	£350
Sharp MDXV300H	MD	£1,000
Sony MZ-R55	MD	£1
Sony MDS-540	MD	£1
Sony MZ-R37	MD	£1
Sony MZ-R5ST	MD	£1
Sony MDS-JE530	MD	£200
Sony MDS-JB930	MD	£300
Sony MDS-JA20ES	MD	£500
Sony MDS-JA55ES	MD	£650
Teac MDH300	MD	£300
Teac MD-H500i	MD	£350
Teac MD-8	MD	£600
Teac MD-5	MD	£600
Teac MD-10	MD	£900
Traxdata Traxaudio 900	MD	£399
Yamaha MDX-595	MD	£230
Yamaha CDR-S1000	MD	£400



HEADPHONES

KEY
'D' - Dynamic type, compatible with virtually all normal headphone outputs.
'E' - Electrostatic type; generally includes a separate power supply.
 - Open-back construction.
 - Closed-back construction.

AKG Rox	D	£30
Aural Envelope DX200	D	£20

Aural Envelope DX220	D	£30
Beyer DT111	D	£15
Beyer DT211	D	£31
Beyer DT211TV	D	£35
Hama SL273	D	£20
Hama SL275	D	£25
JVC HA-CD88	D	£18
JVC HA-D525	D	£20
JVC HA-F65	D	£20
JVC HA-D626	D	£25
Kenwood KPM-310	D	£18
Kenwood KPM-410	D	£25
Maxell HP-2000	D	£20
Pioneer SE-A40	D	£20
Pioneer SE-A20V	D	£23
Pioneer SE-M250	D	£25
Pioneer SE-M350	D	£30
Sennheiser HD56	D	£18
Sennheiser HD433	D	£20
Sennheiser HD400	D	£25
Sennheiser HD470	D	£35
Sennheiser HD60TV	D	£40
Sony MDR-250V	D	£18
Sony MDR-A34L	D	£18
Sennheiser HD228LP	D	£18
Sony MDR-G52LP	D	£20
Sony MDR-E848LP/MP	D	£20
Sony MDR-ED238ML	D	£22
Sony MDR-G56V	D	£25
Sony MDR-G62LP	D	£25
Sony MDR-G59G	D	£30
Sony MDR-G72LP	D	£30
Sony MDR-V300	D	£30
Sony MDR-IF130K	D	£30
Sony MDR-EX70LP	D	£35
Sony MDR-ED268LP	D	£35
Stanton ST Pro	D	£25
Technics RP-HT355	D	£20
Technics RP-F200	D	£25
Technics RP-F400	D	£30
Technics RP-HT550	D	£35
Technics RP-F500	D	£40
Vivanco SR200	D	£20
Vivanco SR150	D	£20
Vivanco SR250	D	£20
Vivanco IR5700	D	£30
Vivanco IR5800	D	£40

OVER £41

AKG K301	D	£70
AKG K240DF	D	£100
AKG K222R	D	£100
AKG K401	D	£120
AKG K501	D	£150
AKG K333R	D	£150
AKG K444R	D	£180
AKG K2905	D	£250
AKG K1000	D	£700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	D	£80
Audio Technica ATHD40FS	D	£100
Audio Technica ATH-M40	D	£120
Audio Technica ATH911	D	£120
Beyer DT311	D	£50
Beyer DT411	D	£63
Beyer DT331	D	£65
Beyer DT431	D	£81
Beyer DT511	D	£106
Beyer DT801	D	£125
Beyer DT831	D	£140
Beyer DT811	D	£145
Beyer DT100	D	£160
Beyer DT901	D	£160
Beyer DT911	D	£170
Denon AH-D210	D	£45
Denon AH-D350	D	£65
Denon AH-D550	D	£80
Denon AH-D650	D	£95
Denon AH-D750	D	£130
Denon AH-D950	D	£150
Grado SR40	D	£45
Grado SR60	D	£79
Grado SR80	D	£100
Grado SR125	D	£150
Grado SR225	D	£200
Grado SR325	D	£300
Grado RS2	D	£495
Grado RS1	D	£695
Hama SL276	D	£50
Hama IR Cordless	D	£60
Jecklin Float Model 1	D	£79
Jecklin Float Model 2	D	£99
Jecklin Float ELS	E	£399
JVC HA-D727	D	£43
JVC HA-D50	D	£45
JVC HA-W60	D	£49
JVC HA-D910	D	£65
JVC HA-W200RF	D	£75
JVC HA-DX1	D	£200
JVC HA-DX3	D	£250
JVC HA-D1000	D	£250
JVC HA-F25	D	£699
Koss TD/80	D	£50
Koss R/100	D	£100
Philips SBC 3396	D	£70
Pioneer SE-M550	D	£50
Pioneer SE-M750	D	£60

Precide Ergo Model 1	D	£120
Precide Ergo Model 2	D	£140
Sennheiser HD200	D	£50
Sennheiser IS 380	D	£50
Sennheiser HD490	D	£50
Sennheiser HD495	D	£60
Sennheiser HD500	D	£70
Sennheiser RS400	D	£80
Sennheiser HD270	D	£80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	D	£90
Sennheiser HD570 Symphony	D	£90
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	D	£100
Sennheiser IS450	D	£110
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	D	£125
Sennheiser HDC 451-1	D	£130
Sennheiser HD250II	D	£150
Sennheiser HD590	D	£150
Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	D	£150
Sennheiser HD25-13	D	£160
Sennheiser HD25	D	£160
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	D	£200
Sennheiser HD600	D	£250
Sennheiser IS850	D	£859
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	E	£998
Sennheiser Orpheus	E	£9,652
Sony MDR-V500DJ	D	£50
Sony MDR-RF830RK	D	£60
Sony MDR-V700DJ	D	£100
Sony MDR-D77	D	£130
Sony MDR-F1	D	£200
Sony MDR-CD1700	D	£200
Sony MDR-DS5000	D	£400
Stanton DJ Pro 101/1HB	D	£65
Stanton DJ Pro 1000	D	£95
Stanton DJ Pro 1001	D	£150
Stax SR-0001	E	£280
Stax SR-Lambda Nova C	E	£370
Stax SR-Lambda Nova Basic	E	£449
Stax SR-Lambda Nova S	E	£450
Stax Omega	E	£1,896
Technics RP-F800	D	£50
Technics RP-HC100	D	£55
Technics RP-DJ1200	D	£130
Vivanco SR650	D	£45
Vivanco FMH 3000	D	£50
Vivanco SR750	D	£50
Vivanco SR850	D	£50
Vivanco FM7980	D	£60
Vivanco SR950	D	£80
Vivanco FM8180	D	£99
Vivanco SR2000IFL	D	£100



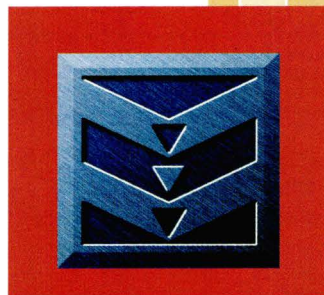
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Hi-Fi Tables

KEY
 - Number of shelves.

Avik Furniture A4	4	£350
Alphason SM17	1	£49
Alphason VSM17	1	£85
Alphason CSM17	1	£85
Alphason GMV1P	1	£110
Alphason R17/17	3	£120
Alphason GMH1P	1	£150
Alphason VR17/17	3	£190
Alphason GR17/17-AS	4	£275
Apollo Soprano	4	£275
Arcigi Air Head 1	1	£275
Arcigi Air Head TNT	1	£725
Arcigi Suspense 5	5	£1,895
Atacama Europa	4	£240
Audiophile Base 01	1	£79
Audiophile S4T120	4	£280
Audiophile S4T120P	4	£560
Audiophile Furniture Base	4	£615
Avid Isoshelf	5	£1,100
BCD Model 1006/8	1	£795
BCD Model 1000	3	£1,250
Custom Design Aspect 650	4	£250
Custom Design Aspect 850	5	£280
Custom Design e'lite E5	5	£280
Custom Design Aspect 500AV	3	£290
Custom Design e'lite XE5	5	£300
Custom Design e'lite AVE	8	£350
Deadrock 701	1	£60
Deadrock 802	2	£90
Deadrock 703	2	£130
Deadrock 705	5	£230
Deadrock 704	4	£250
Elemental Isotube X1	1	£169

Elemental Isotube BS	1	199
Elemental Isotube T5	1	209
Elemental Isotube IS	1	209
Elemental Reference B1	1	329
Elemental Isotube X2	2	379
Elemental Isotube X3	3	489
Elemental Reference BS	1	499
Elemental Reference X1	1	499
Elemental Reference TS	1	549
Elemental Reference IS	1	549
Elemental Reference X2	2	799
Elemental Isotube X4	4	849
Elemental Isotube X4/Ref	4	1,199
Elemental Reference X3	3	1,199
Elemental Isotube X4Rse	4	1,349
Elemental Reference X4	4	1,599
Fi-Rax R4	6	399
Finite Elemente A03 pagode	4	479
Finite Elemente E03 pagode	4	649
Finite Elemente HD03	4	1,995
Frameworks H175	1	139
Frameworks FS1	1	150
Frameworks H500	3	265
Frameworks FT2	2	285
Frameworks FT3	3	350
Frameworks H700	3	355
Frameworks H900	3	389
Impulse Iso-plate	1	190
JPW 3 Tier	3	80
JPW 5 Tier	5	100
Linn K3000		85
Mana Sound Frame		125
Mana Mini Table		150
Mana Power supply table		150
Mana Reference flat top		150
Mana Sound Shelf		175
Mana Sound Stage		200
Mana Sound Table		235
Mana Ref Shelf		325
Mana Reference Table		350
Mana 2 Tier Stand		375
Mana 3 Tier Stand		450
Mana 4 Tier Stand		500
Mana 5 Tier Stand		600
Mana 6 Tier Stand		700
Mana 7 Tier Stand	7	800
Mana 8 Tier Stand	8	900
Mission Stand		100
Optimum G4/Pedestal	5	130
Optimum OPT 3406	3	149
Optimum G5/Pedestal	6	150
Optimum OPT 4906	4	199
Optimum OPT 3000	3	200
Optimum OPT 6606	5	249
Optimum OPT 340	3	249
Optimum OPT 5000	5	280
Optimum OPT 490	4	299
Optimum OPT 440	4	299
Optimum OPT 10206	6	299
Optimum AV 300	3	329
Optimum OPT 700	5	349
Optimum OPT 610	5	349
Optimum OPT 660	4	349
Optimum OPT 1020	6	399
Optimum OPT 8000	8	400
Optimum OPT 1190	7	450
Projekt A3	3	145
Projekt A4	4	215
Projekt A5	5	235
Projekt B3	5	255
Projekt A6	6	280
Projekt B3i	6	300
Projekt B4	8	340
Projekt B Multi	8	345
Projekt B3ii	7	345
Projekt C3	9	375
Projekt D3	12	420
Projekt C3i	8	420
Projekt B5	10	425
Projekt C3iii	11	465
Projekt C3ii	10	465
Projekt D3i	12	500
Projekt C4	12	500
Projekt C3iv	10	510
Projekt D3ii	14	545
Projekt C Multi	9	555
Projekt D4	16	560
Quadraspire Q4S mini shelf	1	65
Quadraspire Q4S shelf	1	65
Quadraspire QKS Cabinet shelf	1	80
Quadraspire QAV shelf	1	130
Quadraspire Q4M mini table	4	250
Quadraspire Q4 table	4	250
Quadraspire Q4SP Table	4	320
Quadraspire QAV table	3	350
Quadraspire QAVSP Table	3	400
Quadraspire QK Cabinet	4	450
Reson DOMOPS	1	195
Reson DOMOWS	1	195
Solid Steel Model B	1	141
Solid Steel Model A	1	152
Solid Steel Series 3	4	220
Solid Steel Series 5	4	310
Solid Steel H3	5	372
Solid Steel H5	5	517
Sound Org Z022	1	65
Sound Org Z021	2	78

Sound Org Z030	3	100
Sound Org Z060	4	120
Sound Org Z038	5	135
Sound Org Z540	4	140
Sound Org Z560	5	160
Sound Org Z545	4	160
Sound Org Z530	3	170
Soundstyle X300	3	180
Soundstyle X305	3	210
Soundstyle X053	4	210
Soundstyle X050	4	210
Soundstyle X6300	3	215
Soundstyle X100	4	230
Soundstyle X6110	4	230
Soundstyle X058	5	240
Soundstyle X310	3	250
Soundstyle X105	5	250
Soundstyle X6053	4	255
Soundstyle X6100	4	265
Soundstyle X6310	3	275
Soundstyle Radius SR100	4	280
Soundstyle X6058	5	290
Soundstyle X6105	5	300
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	5	320
Standesign Design 4	4	190
Stands Unique Isolation Platform	1	55
Stands Unique Sound Support	4	260
Stands Unique Sound Tower	5	299
Stands Unique Compact Sound Supp4	3	329
Stands Unique Sound Support 10	4	329
Stands Unique Sound Trw Cabinet	5	389
Stands Unique Ref Wall Support	1	560
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	10	720
Stands Unique Ref Floor Support	6	840
Target B5	5	175
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-CD		110
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-3D		400
Townshend S/Sink Stand 1-4	4	999
Townshend Seismic Sink Stand	4	1,245
Vibraplane Passive	1	1,895
Vibraplane Active	1	3,600
Wilson benches Standard Shelf	1	130
Wilson benches Mono Block	1	265
Wilson benches Kevlar Shelf	1	270
Wilson benches Asside Basic	4	590
Wilson benches Asside	4	720
Wilson benches Triptych	1	990



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Speaker Stands

KEY
60 - Height of stand in cm.

Acoustic Solutions Platform Eight		180
Aliante Base		425
Aliante Vela		750
Alphason NCI	60	47
Alphason Akros 1	60	49
Alphason RS1	120	49
Alphason NCIi	60	84
Alphason HDS	60	85
Alphason Titan S	60	125
Apollo Olympus	60	75
Apollo AZ6	66	80
Atacama BD21	56	55
Atacama BD17		55
Atacama BD25		60
Atacama SE16		65
Atacama SE12		65
Atacama SX500		67
Atacama F2		70
Atacama F1		70
Atacama SX600		70
Atacama SL200		70
Atacama SE24	61	70
Atacama SE20		70
Atacama SX700		73
Atacama SL300		73
Atacama TP600		75
Atacama TP500		75
Atacama SE15		75
Atacama SE15		75
Atacama SE415		75
Atacama SL400		76
Atacama SE1000S		80
Atacama R724	60	150
AVF Tower P6144BP	60	35
BCD Model 1010	60	595
Black Box Speaker Stand	100	797

Credo STD 001		284
Custom Design R/S 300	60	75
Custom Design M Range	56	85
Custom Design Ref. stands	60	200
Deadrock 903	60	60
Deadrock 902	47	60
Deadrock 901	39	60
Elemental Reference SB1	8	399
Elemental Isotube SZ	49	499
Elemental Isotube SZse	61	599
Elemental Isotube SCZ	49	699
Elemental Isotube SCZse	49	799
Elemental Reference SZ	52	999
Elemental Reference SCZ	52	1,499
Harbeth HL-Stands	21	249
Heybrook Stand-S6	63	69
JPW MS2	45	45
JPW MS3	41	55
JPW MS1	46	80
JPW HS1	120	120
JPW HS2	45	120
Mana Sound Base		175
Opera WS1/E	60	235
Opera S1	60	295
Opera S2	60	345
Partington A-4	60	119
Pioneer CP-7		50
Pioneer CP-8		80
Projekt Signature	55	80
Royd Royd	55	99
Russ Andrews Torlyte	61	599
Silverado Silverado 1 Stand	60	350
Solid Steel SL	63	186
Solid Steel SS	63	333
Solid Steel SS801	25	366
Sonus Faber Ironwood		475
Sonus Faber Stonewood		497
Sound Org Z037		55
Sound Org Z027		55
Sound Org Z026		55
Sound Org Z518	45	65
Sound Org Z524	61	69
Soundstyle X6118	42	100
Stands Unique Speaker support	59	165
Stands Unique Tuned Spkr Support	59	230
Stands Unique Tuned Carbon Fibre	59	299
Stands Unique Vivas CF Spkr Supp	60	349
Target TR60	60	68
Target R1	53	280



LOUDSPEAKERS

KEY
 ㊦ - Floorstander; larger models requiring no separate stand.
 ㊦ - Stand mount; smaller models designed to be raised above the floor.
 ㊦ - Wall mount; designed to be sited on or near the wall.
 ㊦ - Box type, including infinite baffle, reflex and transmission line types.
 ㊦ - Horn type; mostly large and very efficient.
 ㊦ - Panel type, including electrostatic and planar magnetic types.

Allison Micro Monitors	95	95
Allison Mini References	120	120
AR Status S10	130	130
Ariston MSX 03	30	30
Ariston MSX 05	50	50
Celestion 12i	119	119
Denon SC-M2	80	80
Denon SC-E3135E	130	130
Gale Mini Monitors	70	70
Gale Gold Monitors	90	90
Gale 2i	130	130
Genexxa GX300	80	80
Genexxa GX350	80	80
GLL Arena	90	90
GLL Imagio IC208	100	100
Goodmans Active 75	65	65
Heybrook Prma 2	129	129
Interaudio XL1000	130	130
Jamo Studio-80	70	70

Jamo D-110		100
Jamo SAT-170		110
Jamo Studio-110		110
Jamo Artina		120
Jamo D-115		120
Jamo 28		125
Jamo Cornet 145		130
JBL CM40		90
JBL MX300		90
JBL Control 1X		130
JBL CM42		130
JPW ML110i		90
JPW ML210i		90
JPW ML310i		120
JPW ML410i		130
JVC SX-SC1VBK		60
JVC SP-V50		80
JVC SP-X220TBK		100
JVC SP-X550BK		130
KEF Coda 7		129
Kenwood LS-90UK		130
Mission 700		130
NAD 801		100
Paradigm Micro v2		100
Paradigm Atom v2		120
Pioneer CS-3030		120
Polk AB410		100
Realistic Minimus 26		56
Realistic Minimus Pro-77		100
Sony SS-86E		100
Tangent Monitor 3		60
Tangent Monitor 5		80
Tannoy Mercury M1		120
TDL Nucleus 1		75
TDL Nucleus 2		130
Teac LS-X8 Mk II		80
Technics SB-CS65		100
W'dale Valduis 100		80
W'dale Diamond 7.1		100
W'dale Valduis 200		110
W'dale Modus Micro		110

£131 TO £200

Acoustic Energy Aegis Centre		140
Acoustic Energy Aegs One		150
Acoustic Energy AE100i		200
Allison Model 4A		170
B&W DM302 Ser II		150
B&W DM601 Ser II		199
Bose 201 IV		200
Boston CR6		149
Boston 325		149
Boston Micro 80 Sat		169
Boston Runabout		169
Boston 335		179
Boston 351		189
Boston CR7		199
Boston Runabout II		200
Celestion 15i		199
Cerwin-Vega CT-165		200
Etax Liberty 3+		149
Genexxa GX650		140
Genexxa Pro		160
GLL Imagio IC218		140
GLL Imagio IC318		200
Heybrook HB1/2000		150
Heybrook Heylette B		199
Heybrook HB2/2000		200
Interaudio XL2000		200
Jamo Cornet 165		150
Jamo 38		150
Jamo 525		150
Jamo 560		150
Jamo 660		170
Jamo Studio 180		180
Jamo D165		200
Jamo 68		200
Jamo 892		200
JBL CM52		150
JBL MX1000		170
JBL LX20		200
JBL MX1500		200
JM Lab Tantal 505		199
JPW ML510i		150
JPW ML610i		180
KEF Cresta 2		149
KEF Coda 8		189
KEF Model 605		199
KEF Q15		200
Kenwood LS-200G		200
Magnat Vector 22		179
Mission 701		160
Mission 77C		199
Mission 77DS		199
Mission 771e		200
Mission 702e		200
M-A Monitor 1		200
Mordaunt-Short MS206		200
Paradigm Mini Monitor		200
Pioneer CS-5030		170
Polk M2		180
Polk RT3		200
Polk AB610		200
Royd A7X		155
Sequence 200		199
Sony SS-126EB		150

Sony SS-176E	200
Tangent Monitor 9	150
Tangent Monitor 11	180
Tannoy Mercury M2	140
Tannoy Saturn 56C	200
Tannoy Revolution R1	200
TDL Nucleus 3	200
Technics SB-CS95	150
Technics SB-M20	200
TLC Maestro 70S	150
W'dale Valdus 300	150
W'dale Diamond 7.3	150
W'dale Modus Music Two	200
W'dale Diamond 7.2 Ann'y	200
W'dale Valdus 400	200
Yamaha NS-45E	200
Yamaha NS-100	200

E201 TO E300

Acoustic Energy Aegs Two	249
ALR/Jordan Entry 2	249
AR 15	275
Arcaydis Baby 1	299
Audio Gem Opal	230
B&W DM602 Ser II	300
B&W 602 S2	300
Blueround Minipod	250
Bose 151	220
Bose 301 IV	300
Boston 361	219
Boston CR8	239
Boston 381	259
Boston CR9	279
Boston Voyager	299
Castle Richmond	249
Castle Keep	250
Celestion C1	299
Celestion 25i	299
Cerwin-Vega VS-8	250
Cerwin-Vega CT-330	300
Chario Syntar 100	249
Chario Ref 100	299
Chario Hiper 1000	300
Dali 102B	260
Dali 150	300
Eltax Linear Response	249
Eltax Chroma Front	299
GLL Imagio IC238TL	250
Heybrook Optima	259
Heybrook Heylios	269
Heybrook HB3/2000	300
Interaudio XL3000	230
Interaudio XL4000	260
Jamo Cornet 175	230
Jamo Classic 4	250
Jamo Art	300
Jamo D265	300
JBL CM62	250
JM Lab Tantal 507	299
JPW ML710i	250
JPW ML810i	300
JVC SW-SW10	300
KEF Coda 9	299
KEF Model 70S	299
Linn Kan	295
Mission 750	248
Mission 772	250
Mission 780	299
Mission 703	300
M-A Monitor 2	250
M-A Silver 3	300
NAD 802	280
Paradigm Monitor 5	250
Paradigm Monitor 7	300
Pioneer CS-7030	230
Pioneer CS-9030	280
Pioneer S-LC1	300
Polk AB505	220
Polk MS II	220
Polk RT5	250
Polk RT7	300
Polk M5	300
Promenade SP1	299
Rega Ana	250
Royd The Envoy	249
Royd Minstrel	275
Ruark Epilogue	239
Sequence 300	249
Sony SS-176EB	250
Tannoy mX3	229
Tannoy Mercury M3	230
TDL Nucleus 4	300
TLC Maestro 130S	289
TLC Voyager 350	289
W'dale Modus Music Four	230
W'dale Valdus 500	300
Yamaha NS-200	300
ZYP A1	229
ZYP A2S	299

E301 TO E500

Acoustic Energy AE105SE	350
Acoustic Energy AE109	350
Acoustic Energy Aegs Three	350
Acoustic Energy AE120SE	500

Allison Model 2A	420
Arcaydis Baby 2	399
Arcaydis ASC	399
Arcaydis AK1	449
Audiovector C1	399
AVI Neutron	499
AVI NuNeutron	500
B&O Beovox CX50	325
B&O Beovox CX100	425
B&W LCR6	349
B&W DLM305	350
B&W CDM2SE	400
Bandor Pictures	352
Boston Micro 90 Sat	369
Boston Micro 80 Sys	369
Boston VR20	380
Castle Inversion 15	425
Celestion 25i	399
Celestion 30i	449
Celestion 35i	499
Cerwin-Vega VS-10	350
Chario Syntar 100T	399
Chario Ref 1000	499
Dali 104B	370
Dali Royal Menuet MkII	400
Dali 606	400
Dali Royal	500
Def Tech Celsius	395
Dynaudio Audience 40	399
Dynaudio LR/C120	439
Energy e:XL25	399
Epos ES12	499
GLL Imagio IC248TL	350
GLL Imagio IC258TL	450
GLL Imagio IC348TL	500
Heybrook Heylo	359
Heybrook Ultima	399
Heybrook HBA/2000	500
Indigo One	330
Indigo Two	400
Indigo Three	500
Jamo Classic 6	330
Jamo Cornet 195	350
Jamo BX-100A	350
Jamo 98	350
Jamo D365	400
Jamo Classic 8	400
Jamo Graphic	400
Jamo 128	450
Jamo BX-150A	450
Jamo Atmosphere	500
JBL LX60	350
JBL Ti 200	400
JM Lab Tantal 515	499
Jordan Watts JHFLG	380
Jordan Watts JH200	420
JPW ML910i	350
JPW ML1010i	450
KEF Q35	349
KEF Q55	499
KEF RDM One	499
Linn Sekrit	395
Magnat Vector 55	349
Magnat Vintage 320	350
Magnat Vector 77	449
Mission 751f	348
Mission 733	399
Mission 773e	400
Mission 704	450
Mission 774	500
Mission 705	500
M-A Monitor 3	350
M-A Silver 5	400
M-A Studio 25E	500
M-A Monitor 4	500
M-A 700 PMC	500
Mordaunt-Short MS207	400
Mordaunt-Short MS208	500
Mordaunt-Short MS817	500
Mus Tec Kestrel Evolution	315
Mus Tec Harrier	400
Mus Tec PM15	475
NAD 804	400
Neat Critique	445
Opera Duetto	395
Opera Prima	495
Origin Live OL-1AS	399
Origin Live Monarch	399
Paradigm Studio/20	350
Paradigm Monitor 9	400
Pioneer S-LC2	450
Polk AB705	330
Polk RT8	400
Polk RT10	500
Polk AB805	500
Prof Monitor Co TB15	470
Promenade SP2	399
Promenade SP3	499
Rega Alya	350
Rega Jura	450
Rega ELA	498
Royd The Squire	350
Royd Minstrel SE	399
Royd Doublet	485
Ruark Icon	399
Sequence 400	329
Sony SS-X7	400

S Coast Odette	325
Spendor S3/5	499
System 1130	500
Tannoy Revolution R2	350
Tannoy Saturn S6LCR	400
Tannoy Saturn S6	500
TDL G20	380
TDL Chiltern CF100	450
TDL G30	500
Technics SB-M300	350
Technics SB-M500	450
TLC Altus 300	366
Triangle Cometes	359
W'dale Modus Music Six	330
W'dale Modus Music Eight	430
W'dale Modus Music 1/6	500
Yamaha NS-300	400

E501 TO E800

Acoustic Energy AE505	700
Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1	800
Aliante Stile	580
Aliante Voce	600
Allison Model 3A	525
Arcaydis AK3	599
Arcaydis AS2	699
Arcaydis AK4	699
Audio Gem Emerald	540
Audio Note AN-K/D	620
Audio Note AN-J/D	799
Audiovector M1	759
Audiovector C2	799
AVI Biggatron	599
B&O Beolab 2500	750
B&W 603 S2	550
B&W CDM1 SE	600
Bose 501	600
Bose A'mass AM3	650
Boston VR30	600
Castle Severn 25E	699
Celestion A Compact	599
Celestion 45i	599
Celestion C2	699
Cerwin-Vega VS-12	550
Cerwin-Vega VS-15	700
Chario Constellation Lynx	549
Chario Ref 100T	599
Chario Hiper 1000T	699
Cura CA-10	699
Dali 107	600
Dali 350	600
Dali 450	700
Dali 109	800
Def Tech BP2X	595
Def Tech CLR2002	595
Def Tech BP6B	750
Diapason Micra II	750
Dynaudio Audience 50	577
Dynaudio Audience 60	729
ELAC CL102 MkII	599
ELAC CL310i JET	800
Energy e:XL26	600
Epos ES14	675
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799
Heybrook Duet	799
Indigo Four	750
Infinity Kappa 60	595
Infinity Kappa 70	795
Jamo BX-200A	530
Jamo Classic 10	600
JBL LX80	550
JBL Ti 400	550
JBL SVA1500	650
JBL Ti 600	650
JM Lab Cobalt 807	599
JM Lab Tantal 520	599
JM Lab Cobalt 810	799
Jordan Watts JH400	515
KEF LS3/5a	649
KEF RDM Two	699
KEF Q65	799
Kelly KT2	700
Linn Tukan Passive	550
Linn Keiligh Passive	750
Magnat Vintage 710	799
Meridian A500	750
M&K S-85	700
Mission 752f	578
Mission 782	699
Mission 753f	798
M-A Silver 7	600
M-A 702PMC	600
M-A 703PMC	800
Mus Tec Falcon	680
Nam Intro	680
Neat Mystique 2	575
Neat Petite II	745
NHT Super Two	550
Opera Seconda	595
Opera Platea	795
Origin Live Resolution	732
Paradigm Studio/60	650
Paradigm Studio/80	750
Polk RT12	600
Polk RT16	799

Polk LS50	800
ProAc Tablette 2000	649
ProAc Studio 100	749
Prof Monitor Co TB15M	517
Prof Monitor Co TB1	529
Prof Monitor Co TB1M	576
Prof Monitor Co XB1	640
Promenade SP4	650
Roksan ROKone 1	595
Roksan Qjan 3	795
Royd The Sorcerer	595
Ruak Abbot	695
Ruak Templar II	559
Ruak Sceptre	599
Ruak Tallisman II	799
Ruak Prologue One	799
Shippy Polaris	595
Silverado Raider	695
Snell K5	795
Soliloquy 5.0	795
Sonus Faber Concertino	599
S Coast Hades	695
Spendor S1	549
System 1150	750
T+A TB 100	700
Tannoy Revolution R3	550
Tannoy Definition D100	689
TDL Cotswold CF200	650
Titan Orbital	598
Titan Logic T/2B	600
Titan Logic T/2	699
TLC Classic 2	535
TLC Classic 1	800
Totem Mite	599
Totem Rokk	765
Triangle Zephyr II	599

E801 TO E1,500

Acoustic Energy AE509	850
Acoustic Energy AE520	1,000
Acoustic Energy AE2-II	1,245
Acoustic Solutions Eight	1,375
Aliante Moda	1,200
Apertura Prima	1,095
Apertura Nova	1,395
Arcaydis AC1	1,099
Arcaydis AK5	1,399
ATC SCM10i	1,000
Audio Note AN-J/D	930
Audio Note AN-K/SPx	1,060
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299
Audio Note AN-J/SPx	1,415
Audio Physic Step	1,299
Audiovector M1 Super	999
Audiovector M2	1,399
Audiovector M1 Sig	1,449
AVI Positron	899
B&O Beolab 4000	1,100
B&W DM604 Ser II	849
B&W CDM7SE	1,000
B&W Nautilus 805	1,500
Bandor Trident	846
BKS Audio Hybrid 107	1,500
Bose A'mass AM5	900
Bose 701	1,000
Boston VR40	1,000
Carlsson QA-52.2	1,500
Castle Inversion 50	875
Castle Hartech	899
Celestion A1	899
Celestion C3	999
Celestion A2	1,499
Cerwin-Vega AL-1000	1,100
Cerwin-Vega 1515	1,300
Chario Ref 1000T	999
Chario Academy 1	1,299
Cura CA-20	1,199
Dali 850	1,100
Def Tech BP8B	1,000
Def Tech BP10B	1,500
Diapason Prelude II	875
Diapason Karis	1,275
Dynaudio Contour 1.1	879
Dynaudio Audience 70	1,100
Dynaudio Contour 1.3	1,198
Dynaudio Audience 80	1,460
Electrocompaniet EC-M1	995
Electrocompaniet EC-Qube	1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-Qube SE	1,495
Epos ES15	890
Epos ES22	1,185
Harbeth HL-K6	1,049
Harbeth HL-Compact 7	1,499
Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,499
Impulse Kora	1,250
Infinity Overture 1	900
Infinity Kappa 80	995
Infinity Kappa 90	1,295
Infinity Overture 2	1,500
Jadis Orchestra	999
Jamo Concert 8	1,365
JBL SVA 1600	850
JBL 4312 MkII-WX	1,000
JBL SVA 1800	1,000
JBL SVA 2100	1,250
JM Lab Cobalt 815	999

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JM Lab Electra 905	1,199
JM Lab Cobalt 820	1,199
Jordan Watts JH1+1	1,150
KEF Q75	999
KEF Ref. Model One	1,199
KEF RDM Three	1,500
Kelly KT3	1,200
Linn Tukan Aktiv	1,050
Linn Keliidh Aktiv	1,250
L Voice Auditorium	1,500
Lowther Accolade 2	1,199
Lumley L/M3.5	1,050
Magnat Vintage 720	1,199
Magneplanar SMG-C SE	990
Magneplanar MG-0.6 SE	1,370
Meridian Argent 1	995
M&K S-125	1,150
Mission 705a	900
Mission 754f	1,298
M-A Studio 6	900
M-A Silver 9	1,000
M-A 705PMC	1,150
Mus Tec Condor	1,000
Mus Tec Hawk	1,250
Mus Tec Eagle	1,500
Naim Credo	1,090
Neat Elite	1,195
Opera Terza	995
Opera Callas Gold	1,095
Opera Divina II	1,495
Orelle Swing	1,200
Origin Live Sovereign	1,130
Paradigm Studio/100	950
Polk CS1000	999
Polk LS70	1,200
Polk RTE1000	1,500
Polk RT20p	899
ProAc Tablette 2000 Sig	999
ProAc Studio 125	999
ProAc Response 1 SC	1,199
Prof Monitor Co LB1	999
Rega XEL	1,040
RMS Revelation S 1	1,299
Roksan Ojan 3X	995
Royd The Albion	985
Ruark Solus	1,200
Shahinian Super Elf	875
Shahinian Starter	1,195
Shahinian Compass	1,495
Shinpy Micraphonica	1,099
Silverado Ryder	1,395
Soliloquy SM 2A3	1,095
Sonus Faber Concerto	945
Sonus Faber Concerto CP	999
Sonus Faber Signum	1,200
S Coast Merlin Monitor	849
S Coast Lancelot	895
S Coast Classic	1,495
Spendor SP3/1P	825
Spendor FL6	1,099
Spendor SP2/3	1,187
Spendor FL8	1,355
T+A TAS 1200E	1,050
T+A TB 120	1,060
Tannoy Definition D300	999
TDL Cheviot CF300	850
Technics SB-M1000	1,500
Titan Enigma T/3	825
Titan Sovereign T/4	1,175
Totem The Arro	959
Totem The Staaf	1,249
Totem Model One	1,249
Veritas 7	1,000
Veritas 15	1,300
Veritas 20	1,400
Vienna Acoustics Mozart	1,500
Zingali Colosseum	975

£1,501 TO £3,000

Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,995
Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,995
Aliante Zeta	1,850
Aliante Linea	2,060
Aliante One	2,700
Alon I Mk II	1,795
Alon II Mk II	2,495
ALR/Jordan Note 7	2,500
Apertura Agora Signature	2,295
Apertura Tanagra	2,395
Apertura Tanagra Sig.	2,795
ATC SCM20SL	1,750
ATC SCM20 Tower SL	2,400
Audio Note AN-E/D	1,520
Audio Note AN-E/SPx	2,250
Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999
Audio Wk'p Cyclone 34	2,000
Audiostatic DCI	2,495
Audiovector M3	1,899
Audiovector M3 Sig	2,499
B&O Beolab 6000	1,550
B&O Beolab 8000	2,100
B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,650
B&W Nautilus 804	2,500
Bandor Bandora/Mora	2,350
Bandor Siren	2,800

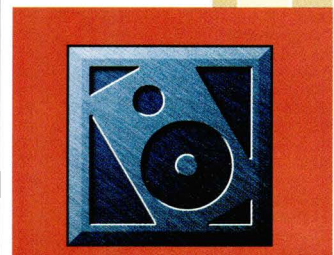
BKS Audio Hybrid 128	2,549
Bose 901 VI	1,650
Boston Lynfield 300L	2,000
Castle Inversion 100	1,975
Celestion A3	2,399
Celestion Kingston	2,500
Chano Academy 2	1,649
Chano Academy Mill'm 2	2,100
Credo SPB 003	1,820
Credo SPB 009	2,453
Curra CA-30	1,799
Dali Grand Coupe	2,500
Def Tech BP2004	1,700
Def Tech BP2002	2,400
Diapason Adamantes III	1,995
Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,894
Dynaudio Craftt	2,598
Dynaudio Contour 3.0	2,930
ECA Servo A2	2,450
ELS Res'ch Vision	2,800
Epos ES50	2,385
Eurostatic Model 1	2,250
Gamma Epoch Ref Five	2,999
Harbeth HL-58	1,999
Helius Syrius II	2,395
Helius Syrius I	2,850
Heybrook Octet	1,799
Hi Q Sound SM108	2,000
Impulse Lali	1,850
Infinity Overture 3	1,750
Infinity Kappa 100	1,895
Inner Sound Isis	2,375
Jamo Concert 11	2,250
JM Lab Electra 915	1,899
JM Lab Electra 920	2,399
Jordan Watts JH2K	2,400
Jordan Watts JH5K	3,000
KEF Ref. Model Two	1,599
KEF Ref. Model Three	1,999
Linn Kober Passive	2,000
Linn Kober Aktiv	2,640
L Voice Aud'm Avatar	2,100
Lowther Fidelio	1,999
Lowther Academy	2,399
Lowther Bel Canto	2,699
Lumley L/M2 Mk3	2,995
Magnat Vintage 760	1,999
Magneplanar MG-10 SE	1,650
Magneplanar MG-1.5 SE	1,780
Magneplanar MG-2.7 SE	2,650
Martin-Logan Aerius i	2,199
Meridian M60	2,150
M-A Studio 20SE	2,500
Naim SBL Active	1,885
Naim SBL Passive	2,030
Neolith NEO 1	2,999
Opera Caruso II	2,495
Origin Live Conqueror	1,750
Polk LS90	1,700
Posselt Albatross	2,500
ProAc Response 1.5	1,790
ProAc Response 2.5	2,700
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,758
Prof Monitor Co IB1S	2,697
Rehdeko RK115	1,700
Ruark Crusader II	1,649
Ruark Equinox	2,000
Shahinian Arc	1,995
Shahinian Obelisk	2,850
Shinpy Euritmica	1,995
Shinpy Altair	2,895
Silverado Silverado 1	1,995
Soliloquy 5.3	1,750
Sonus Faber Electa Amator 2	2,849
Sound-Lab Quantum	2,150
S Coast Excalibur	2,750
Spendor SP1/2	1,674
Spendor SP100	2,234
T+A TB 140	1,760
Tannoy Definition D500	1,999
Tannoy Stirling TW	2,200
Tannoy Definition D700	2,500
TDL Studio Monitor-m	2,750
Totem Tabu	2,299
Totem The Forest	2,675
Veritas 25	1,750
Veritas H1	2,995
Wilson benesch Orator	2,900
Zingali Overture 2S	1,875

OVER £3,000

Acoustic Energy AE5	7,995
Alon Lotus SE	3,500
Alon V Mk II	5,995
Alon Adriana	8,500
Alon Circe	12,000
Alon Phalanx	19,000
Apertura Athena	6,995
Apertura Atlante	8,995
ATC SCM20A PRO	3,049
ATC SCM20TASL	3,995
ATC SCM50PSL	4,250
ATC SCM100PSL	4,950
ATC SCM50ASL	5,775
ATC SCM100ASL	6,475
ATC SCM70PSL	8,000

ATC SCM70ASL	10,000
ATC SCM200ASL	15,995
ATC SCM300ASL	17,731
Audio Note AN-JSE Silver	7,900
Audio Note AN-ESE Silver	9,600
Audio Physic Virgo 2	3,399
Audio Physic Avanti 2	6,699
Audio Physic Caldera	10,599
Audio Physic Medea	24,999
Audiostatic DCI Plus	3,750
Audiovector 5X	3,999
Audiovector 6X	5,699
Avalon Avatar	5,995
Avalon Arcus	6,995
Avalon Eclipse Classic	8,995
Avalon Radian HC	13,995
Avalon Eidolon	20,495
Avalon Sentinel	79,995
Avantgarde Uno	5,300
Avantgarde Duo	7,500
Avantgarde Trio Compact	16,500
Avantgarde Trio Classic	19,708
AVI Grawitron	4,250
B&W Nautilus 803	4,000
B&W Silver Signature	5,500
B&W Nautilus 802	6,000
B&W Nautilus 801	8,500
B&W Nautilus	35,000
Bandor Bandoline	3,290
Beaumont Virtuoso Bronze	3,325
Beaumont Virtuoso Gold	3,395
Beaumont Virtuoso Reference	3,799
Beaumont Accelerando	6,600
BKS Audio Hybrid 175	3,995
Boston Lynfield 500L	4,449
Carfrae Little Big Horn	6,795
Carfrae Carfraehorn	18,000
Chario Academy 3j	5,999
Credo SPB 012	3,147
Credo SDL 001	5,677
Dali Grand	4,000
Def Tech BP2000	3,600
Diapason Adamantes Ltd	3,995
Dynaudio Contour 3.3	4,815
Dynaudio Confidence 3	4,846
Dynaudio Confidence 5	5,924
Dynaudio Consequence	14,566
Dynaudio Evidence	50,909
Eggleston Rosa	8,500
Electrofluidics Sonolith 2.2xi	5,999
ELS Res'ch Vista	3,900
ELS Res'ch Illusion MKII	9,000
Eurostatic Model 2	3,650
Impulse Ta'us	3,100
Inner Sound Eros	3,995
Jadis 2	5,900
Jadis 1	18,900
Jamo Oriol	9,000
JM Lab Mini Utopia	4,500
JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	7,300
JM Lab Utopia	18,300
JM Lab Grande Utopia	35,000
Jordan Watts JH10K	7,570
KEF Ref. Model Four	3,299
Kochel K-300S	10,000
Linn Keltik Aktiv	6,000
L Voice Avatar OBX	4,000
L Voice Air Scout	19,500
L Voice Air Partner S	37,200
Lowther Delphic	3,099
Lowther Opus One	4,999
Lumley L/M 2 Sig. Mk3	4,500
Magnat Vintage 770	3,500
Magneplanar MG-3.5SE	3,800
Magneplanar MG-20 SE P	10,300
Magneplanar MG-20 SE A	11,000
Martin-Logan SL3	3,399
Martin-Logan CLS IIz	4,555
Martin-Logan Re-Quest Z	5,875
Meridian DSP5000	3,295
Meridian DSP5000	5,950
Meridian DSP6000	9,400
M-A Studio 50	3,300
M-A Studio 60	5,000
Naim NBL	6,648
Naim DBL Active	8,050
Neolith NEO 2	3,499
Neolith NEO 3	4,999
ProAc Response 3.8	3,990
ProAc Future 1	5,875
ProAc Response 5	9,000
ProAc Future 2	10,575
ProAc Response 4	12,000
Prof Monitor Co MB1P	5,135
Prof Monitor Co BB5-P	8,841
Prof Monitor Co MB1-A	14,805
Prof Monitor Co BB5 A	19,799
Prof Monitor Co MB1/XBD-A	22,266
Prof Monitor Co BB5/XBD-A	32,606
Rehdeko RK125	3,200
Rehdeko RK145	4,800
Rehdeko RK175	8,800
Revel Gem	5,295
Rockport Merak	13,995
Rockport Syzygy	15,000
Rockport Procyon	32,500
Ruark Solstice	4,000

Ruark Excalibur	7,000
Shahinian Hawk	5,495
Shahinian Diapason	9,495
Shinpy Enigma	3,995
Shinpy Euphonia	5,995
Shinpy Magnifica Suprema	14,500
Shun Mook Bella Voce	6,000
Snell XA-75ps	4,500
Sonus Faber Guarnieri Homage	5,795
Sound-Lab Amati Homage	11,450
Sony SS-M9ED	10,000
Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790
Sound-Lab Aura	6,490
Sound-Lab Pristine III+	7,990
Sound-Lab A-3	11,990
Sound-Lab Ultimate II	13,950
Sound-Lab A-1	13,990
Sound-Lab Ultimate III	18,950
Sound-Lab Ultimate I	23,950
S Coast King Arthur	3,095
S Coast Excalibur Ref.	12,400
Spendor FL10	3,475
T+A A4D	3,850
T+A A3D	4,550
T+A A2D	8,400
Tannoy Edinburgh TW	3,250
Tannoy Definition D900	3,999
Tannoy GRF Memory TW	4,000
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,400
Tannoy Canterbury 15 TW	7,720
Tannoy Westminster Royal	14,920
TDL Ref Standard-m	6,000
Titan Goliath T/4	4,112
Totem Mani-2	3,100
Totem Shaman	9,999
Veritas 45	3,750
Veritas H2	4,495
Veritas H3	5,995
Wilson Audio Cub	5,495
Wilson Audio WATT 5	8,390
Wilson Audio WITT II	10,995
Wilson Audio Maxx	34,995
Wilson benesch Act	3,900
Wilson benesch ACT1	6,900
Wilson benesch Act 2	8,900
Wilson benesch The Bishop	20,000



SUBWOOFERS

KEY

Ⓐ - Active; includes a dedicated power amplifier.

THX - THX-approved by LucasFilm for use in Home THX installations.

Acoustic Energy AE108S	300
Allison Mini Ref Sub	210
Alon Poseidon	12,000
ATC SCM 0.1/15	3,810
Audio Physic Terra	3,499
B&W ASW1000	500
B&W ASW2000	800
B&W ASW3000	1,000
Boston CR400	300
Boston VR500	450
Boston VR2000	800
Celestion CS135	139
Celestion CSW MkII	329
Celestion S11	349
Celestion A6s	800
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D	200
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D	250
Chario Syntar Bass	299
Chario Hiper Bass	499
Credo SDC 001	3,054
GLL Le Bass	350
Jamo SW303E	200
Jamo SW400E	250
Jamo SW410e	300
Jamo SW505E	300
Jamo Sub One	400
JBL Control Sub 6	200
JBL Control Sub 10	300
JM Lab Tantal SW20	349
JM Lab Cobalt SW27A	599
JM Lab Electra SW35A	899
JM Lab Sub Utopia	2,200
JPW Subwoofer	130
JPW SW40	240
JPW SW60	350
JPW SW-120	500



HI-FI HELP

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KEF Model 20B	349
KEF Model 30B	499
KEF Model AV1	2,499
Kenwood SW500	250
Kenwood SW501	349
Linn AV5150	2,850
L Voice RW24	11,500
Magnat Vector Sub 30P	149
Magnat Vector Sub 30A	299
Magnat Omega 300	429
Mendian M2500	1,595
M&K VX-7MKII	450
M&K V-75 MKII	650
M&K VX-100	750
M&K V-125	800
M&K V-125 (THX)	800
M&K MX-70	900
M&K MX-150 (THX)	1,500
M&K MX-700	1,595
M&K MX-200	1,800
M&K MX-350THX	1,800
M&K MX-5000 (THX)	2,900
Mission 75as	548
M-A ASW110	500
M-A ASW210	700
Mus Tec PMS 45	500
Mus Tec Terce	700
Muse Model 22	1,890
Muse Model 18	3,790
Neat Gravitas	1,095
Paradigm PDR10	250
Paradigm Servo 15A	800
Polk PSW50	350
Polk PSW150	500
Polk PSW300	750
REL Q50	375
REL Q-100E	495
REL Strata III	600
REL Q201E	700
REL Storm III	800
REL Stadium III	995
REL Stadium II	1,500
REL Stentor II	1,800
REL Studio II	4,000
Revel Sub-15	2,195
Roksan Ojan 3S	795
Ruark Log-Rhythm	750
Sequence FW120	249
Soliloquy S10	1,050
Sony SA-W305	130
Sunfire Sub Junior	1,099
Sunfire True Sub	1,499
Sunfire Trus Sub Sig.	1,699
Tannoy mSUB 10	250
TDL Nucleus SBR	200
Tsunami TS300	300
Tsunami TS200	300
Tsunami TS210	399
Wdale Modus Sub Bass	180
Wilson Audio Puppy 5.1	8,450
Wilson Audio Whow III	10,999
Wilson Audio XS	17,000
Yamaha YST-SW45	140
Yamaha YST-SW90	180
Yamaha YST-SW160	280
Yamaha YST-SW300	350

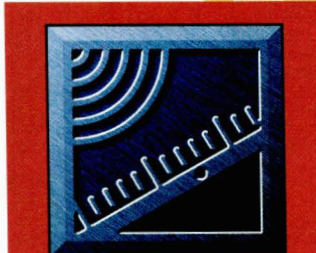
Audio Note AN-ARM 1	169
Audio Note AN-Os	795
Audio Note AN-1s	995
Audiomeca SL5	2,500
Clearaudio Souther TQ-1	1,670
Clearaudio Master TQ-1	3,620
Dynavector 507	1,995
Graham Mk 2.0 Basic	1,810
Graham Mk 2.0 Deluxe	2,650
Helius Orion 4 Copper	549
Helius Cyalene 2	1,495
Kuzma Stogi S	399
Kuzma Stogi	750
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,250
Linn Akito	500
Linn Ekos	1,500
Moth Mk I	109
Moth MKIII Stainless	146
Moth Mk III Tungsten	174
Moth Moth 900	598
Naim ARO	1,070
N'ham Interspace Arm	370
N'ham Space	450
N'ham Mentor	800
N'ham Foot	1,100
N'ham Anna Log Arm	1,500
Pro-Ject 9	350
Rega RB250	109
Rega RB300	174
Rega RB900	598
Rockport Series 7000	6,000
Roksan Tabriz	350
Roksan Tabriz Zi	450
Roksan Artemis	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	309
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	338
SME Series II 3009-R	514
SME Series II 3010-R	526
SME Series II 3012-R	565
SME 309	689
SME 310	705
SME 312	802
SME Series IV	983
SME Series V	1,461
Triplanar V1A	3,500
Triplanar V1B	3,750
Wilson benches Act 0.5	795
Wilson benches ACT2	1,350
Zeta AS	469
Zeta VDH	549

Meridian 504	695
Musical Fidelity E50	300
Myryad T-30	400
Myryad MT100	600
NAD 412	190
NAD C440	200
NAD 414RDS	250
NAD 710	270
NAD 712	330
Naim NATO3	615
Naim NATO2	1,130
Naim NATO1	1,780
Onkyo T 421ORDS	180
Onkyo T 409	230
Onkyo T 411RDS	260
Pioneer F-204RDS	140
Pioneer F-504RDS	250
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	300
Quad 99	700
Quad 77FM	700
Rega Radio	298
Roksan Kandy	375
Roksan Caspian	695
Rotel RT-935AX	160
Rotel RT940AX	200
Sony ST-SE200	100
Sony ST-SE300	110
Sony ST-SE500	140
Sony ST-5B920	180
Sony ST-SA3ES	250
Sony ST-53000	250
T+A T1200R	790
TAG McLaren T20	1,099
Teac T-R400	100
Teac T-R460	120
Teac T-H500	170
Technics ST-GT350L	130
Technics ST-GT550L	180
Technics ST-GT650L	230
Technics ST-GT1000	500
Thorens TRT-2000	499
Thule Spirit TU100	499
Yamaha TX-480L	100
Yamaha TX-492RDS	130
Yamaha TX-59 2RDS	180
Yamaha RX-396RDS	250
YBA Complete	14



Avid Acutus. OVER £500

Audio Note AN-TT 2	995
Audio Note AN-TT 3	1,995
Audiomeca Romance	1,895
Audiomeca J1	3,500
Avid Volvere	1,399
Avid Acutus	3,995
Basis 2000	1,995
Basis 2001	2,995
Basis Ovation II	5,400
Basis 2500	5,495
Basis 2800	7,495
Basis Debut Gold Std III	8,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	10,300
Chantry QT Level 2	705
Clearaudio Solution	925
Clearaudio Evolution	1,095
Clearaudio Revolution	2,500
Clearaudio Reference	3,835
Clearaudio Master Ref.	8,510
DNM-Reson Rota 1	3,900
DNM-Reson Rota 2	5,600
Garrard 501	5,278
Impulse Moskito	695
Kuzma Stabi S	695
Kuzma Stabi	1,950
Kuzma Stabi Reference	3,750
Linn LP12 Basic	1,100
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750
Michell Gyro Spider Ed'n	775
Michell Gyrodek	875
Michell Orbe SE	1,725
Michell Orbe	1,995
N'ham Spacedeck	750
N'ham HyperSpacedeck	1,500
N'ham Mentor	2,600
N'ham Anna Log	5,500
Oracle Delphi	3,370
Oracle Delphi 15th Anniv	3,800
Pink Triangle Tarantella II	850
Pro-Ject Perspective	750
Rega P25	598
Rega Planar 9	1,598
Reson RS1M	695
Reson Rota 1	3,900
Rockport Capella II	7,500
Rockport Sirius III	90,000
Roksan Xerxes 10	1,295
Roksan TMS	2,750
SME Model 10A	3,333
SME Model 20/2	3,403
SME Model 20/2A	4,863
SME Model 30/2	10,675
SME Model 30/2A	12,135
SOTA Comet	995
SOTA Millenia	5,795
Stratosphere ST1	6,500
Technics SL-1200LTD	700
Thorens TD-146 VI TP50	550
Thorens TD-2001 TP90	700
Thorens TD-520 SME	1,050
Verdier Nouvelle Platine	2,250
Verdier Platine Verdier	4,350
Well Tempered Record Player	1,995
Well Tempered Classic V	3,500
Well Tempered Reference	5,500
Wilson benches Circle	795
Wilson benches WB Turntable	1,775
Wilson benches Full Circle	1,995



TUNERS

KEY
'P20' (etc.) - Number of presets.
RDS - Radio Data System;
receives text information on station,
programme type etc.

Arcam Alpha 7	P24	230
Arcam Alpha 8	P24	280
Arcam Alpha 10 DRT	P07	800
Ariston TX-510	P20	50
AVI S2000MT	P16	599
AVI S2000MT2	P99	899
Cambridge T500	P64	180
Creek T43	P64	399
Cymbol C-DAB1	P08	999
Cyrus FM7.5	P29	398
Davidson-Roth FM Ref Classic		5,590
Denon TU-260L MkII	P40	130
Denon TU-215RD	P40	150
Denon TU-425RD	P40	200
Denon TU-1500RD	P40	250
Fanfare FT1	P08	1,395
H/K TU930	P30	150
H/K TU950	P30	200
Kenwood KT-2080	P20	130
Kenwood KT-3080	P30	180
Linn Kudos	P50	775
Linn Kremlin	P80	2,600
Magnum Dynalab FT11		499
Magnum Dynalab FT-101A		795
Magnum Dynalab Etude		1,250
Magnum Dynalab MD108		4,990
Marantz ST-48	P60	1,995
Marantz ST-17	P60	600
McIntosh MR7084	P50	2,499
McIntosh MX118	P50	4,999
McIntosh MX130	P50	6,999



TURNTABLES

KEY
⊙ - Arm included.
⊙ - Cartridge included.
UP TO £500

Audio Note AN-TT 1	349
Dual CS435-1	140
Dual 505-4 UK	220
Dual CS-750-1	330
Genexa Lab-710	60
Genexa Lab-810	70
Kenwood KD-492F	100
Michell Mycro	455
Moth Alamo	199
Moth Kanoot MkI Arm	279
Moth Kanoot Mk3 Arm	329
NAD 533	220
N'ham Interspace	500
Pioneer PL-J2500-C	80
Pioneer PL-990	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	170
Pro-Ject 1/510	200
Pro-Ject 2/510	250
Pro-Ject Classic/510	360
Pro-Ject 6/510	400
Pro-Ject 6.9	500
Rega Planar 78	214
Rega Planar 2	214
Rega Planar 3	274
Roksan Radius	470
Sherwood PM8550	160
Sony PS-LX150H	90
Sony PS-LX300H	150
Technics SL-J110D	120
Technics SL-BD20	160
Technics SL-BD22	180
Technics SL-1210MKII	400
Technics SL-1200MKII	400
Thorens TD-180 AT91	210
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	230
Thorens TD166 VI AT95E	370
Thorens TD-166 V/UK/RB	400

PRODUCTS TESTED & RATED

Turn over for a full round-up of all reviewed products!



TONEARMS

KEY
⊙ - Pivoted.
- Parallel tracking.

Air Tangent IC	#	4,600
Air Tangent 10B	#	8,600
Air Tangent Reference	#	14,000

MISSION

MISSION

MISSION

MISSION



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BRADFORD Clearstone, Rawson Square, City Centre (Formerly Ericks) TEL: 01274 309266	BOLTON Clearstone, Blackburn Road, City Centre (On the A666 Blackburn Road) TEL: 01204 531423	BIRMINGHAM Empire Superstore 21-22 Stephenson Street (Behind New St. Opp. Palisades Car Park) TEL: 0121 643 0972

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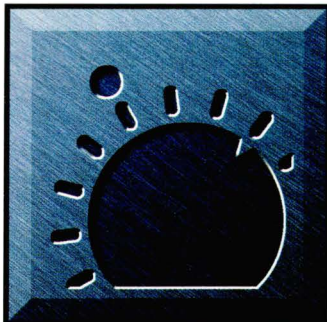
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YAMAHA NAD MICROMEGA MISSION KEF ACOUSTIC ENERGY
CELESTION ATACAMA TECHNICS TRICHORD TDL RELEXOS

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Amplifiers

The amplifier is at the heart of any hi-fi system, accepting the outputs from various music sources, increasing the amplitude of their signal and then driving the loudspeakers to produce sound. One-box 'integrated' amps rule the roost at low-to-middle price points, but if you pay more, the low-level and high-level signal processes are separated into preamp and power amp boxes, and even separate 'outboard' power supplies come into play. Another luxury is a separate amp for each stereo channel: such devices are known as monoblocks. Finally, output power and sound quality are not necessarily related. Some of the finest amplifiers outputs only 12 Watts, but will yield loudness aplenty when partnered with high-efficiency loudspeakers.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

LINE INPUTS: Number of input sockets for line-level (non-vinyl) sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.
MM PHONO INPUT: An input specially designed for moving magnet (high output) phono pickup cartridges.
MC PHONO INPUT: An input for moving coil (low output) phono pickup cartridges.
REMOTE CONTROL: An infra-red handset to adjust volume etc.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: An integral output for headphones.
POWER OUTPUT (Watts): Our measurement of an amp's RMS power output into 8 Ohms.
RECEIVER: An amplifier with built-in radio receiver (tuner).
FACTSBACK REFERENCE: The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R RECOMMENDED** **E EDITOR'S CHOICE**

Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS
 MC PHONO INPUTS
 REMOTE CONTROL
 HEADPHONE SOCKET
 POWER OUTPUT (W)
 RECEIVER
 FACTSBACK NO.
 ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT (E) COMMENTS

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Kraken APD6A	599	Compact, with Darth Vader styling, yet sound quality is meek and mild, despite strong midband dynamics	5	●				55		2150	175
AMC 3025a	140	Surprisingly potent and easy on the ear, if not especially analytical – classic bargain-basement material, in fact	4	●	●	●	●	30	●	2045	171
AMC 3050a	170	Tremendous value for money, and a full, big, if rather uninformative sound	4	●	●	●	●	45	●	1970	167
Arcam Alpha One	230	Rather like an Alpha 7 but without the remote control and what appears to be better sound quality still	6					35	●	2470	186
Arcam Alpha 7R	300	Decent, if slightly system fussy amplifier that no longer pulls all the right strings	5	●				45			196
Arcam Alpha 8R	380	The Alpha 8R sets a high level of resolution and stability, and has some useful features for home cinema users	5	●				50	●	2634	192
Arcam Alpha 9	500	Not quite a match for the Alpha 9/9P combo, the solo integrated is nevertheless colourful and explicitly detailed	7					70	●	2007	168
Arcam Alpha 10	800	Although not the best sounding in its class, the Alpha 10's modular nature demands it be taken seriously	5					100	●	2318	181
Arcam FMJ A22	1,000	Powerful, articulate, and expandable into a home cinema or multiroom amp/controller	7					100	●		201
ATC SIA2-150	1,984	An impressive sounding integrated amp with a dynamic, open and detailed sound	4					150	●		192
Aria S2	1,000	Glamorously packaged valve amp produces a real eyes closed, feet up kind of sound	4					12			190
Audio Analogue Puccini	450	Superbly finished, the entry-level Audio Analogue performs way out of its class	5	●	●			40		2147	175
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	595	Upgraded, more powerful Puccini is disappointingly sluggish and curiously lacking in musical vitality	5	●	●			40		2314	181
Audioagram MB1	493	The only flaws are the amateurish build, a number of technical problems and inconsistent sound quality	4				●	40	●	2235	178
AVI S2000MI	999	Fine, detailed amplifier with excellent timing and strong control of a wide range of loudspeaker loads	5					100	●	2155	175
Bryston B60R	1,249	Great build, but the lazy bass and opaque treble bracket an articulate midband. Comes with 20 year guarantee	5					60	●	2156	175
Cambridge Audio A500RC	200	Solid value, decent build and a surfeit of watts make this an attractive proposition, but it can sound slightly loose	6					50	●	2466	196
Copland CSA8	945	Sophisticated yet transparent, this is one of those amplifiers that sounds good even when the gloss has worn off	5					60	●	2010	168
Copland CSA 28	1,249	Elegant Scandinavian cool, abundantly detailed if somewhat system dependent	5	●				60	●	2542	189
Copland CTA 402	1,698	A unusually flexible valve amp with an attractive and textured sound	5	●				35			193
CR Developments CR324	569	Solid and capable on paper, this is a bit of a blunt instrument when let loose on the music	5					150		2315	181
Cymbal CA1	499	Lacklustre amplifier tends to underperform with complex material. Best with straightforward compact loudspeakers	6					40		2236	178
Creek 4330	279	Diminutive but classy amp will drive anything, and can be specified in various configurations	4	●				40		2630	192
Cyrus SL	398	Articulate amplifier with build quality to die for, superb, outgoing midband and lean but well-extended bass	6					50			168
Cyrus III	598	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance was not liked. Upgradeable using PSX PSU unit	5	●				50		1854	162
Cyrus 7	700	Welcome return to form for the Cyrus stable: this is the best sounding audio brick around	6					60	●		196
Denon PMA-250SE	140	This amp can sound rough when extended, but within its limits it is open, detailed and likeable	5					30	●	2046	171
Denon PMA-350SE	180	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, this SE model is a control freak, but can sound wonderful	5					50	●	1856	162
Denon PMA-535R	230	The kind of amp they made in the 70s, dressed to the nines, and nowhere to go	5	●				50	●	2627	192
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation, but musically unexciting	5	●	●			97	●	1802	157
Denon PMA-1500R	500	Recommended for its outrageous power, especially with problem speakers	5	●	●	●	●	70	●	2316	181
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	650	High 'air guitar' factor, and can punch above its weight, but check it will complement your system	5					60		2151	175
Densen DM-10	1,375	Big, bold and expressive amplifier, but sometimes rough around the edges, and not as powerful as it appears	6					75		2546	189
Edmund Audio ES110	400	Honest but unexciting straight line amp from REL associate company	6					85		2635	192
Electrocompaniet EC1-3	1,000	Basically good, but too many rough edges to warrant recommendation	6					75			201
Harman/Kardon HK630	200	Sharp, clean but sometimes slightly raw-sounding budget amp	4	●				40	●	2628	192
Harman/Kardon HK690	530	Bold, dynamic amplifier with plenty of balls, but not the most sophisticated sound on earth	6	●				100	●		196
Hofli Audis Signature	750	A 'no-feedback' circuit giving outstanding resolution, but significant load dependency	4	●				65		2319	181
JoLida 202	695	Well-built and technically accomplished, affordable valve integrated with subtle refined, if not quite gripping sound	4					40		2011	168
JVC AX-R5	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●				45	●	1466	149
Kenwood KAF-3010R	180	Plenty of twiddly bits yet weak on inputs, and basically good, but somewhat uneven sound quality	4	●				70	●	2463	186
Kenwood KA-5090R	300	Large, well equipped and high tech integrated, but TRAITR output still gives a harsh, unsubtle performance	5	●	●			65	●	2053	171
Krell KAV-500i	5,000	More at home in background listening/home cinema applications than out-and-out audio maniac set-ups	5					250	●		192
Lundahl Mag Amp	1,735	Unusual valve/magnetic amp hybrid with relaxed balance and good timbre	5					23			196
Magnum IA120	265	Mirror finish amplifier with bold, colourful delivery, but needs careful system matching to avoid loss of clarity	6					65	●	2054	171
Magnum IA170	330	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic; preserves colour and dynamics	6					96	●	1260	142
Magnum IA200	599	Sweet, valve-flavoured solid state amplifier which flatters where it doesn't cast light	7					160		1860	162
Magnum Class A SE	795	A MOSFET amplifier drawing inspiration from the world of valves, this is an erratically refined, detailed amplifier	5	●				80	●	2159	175
Marantz PM-6010SE	229	Good starter amplifier, with characteristic smooth, low key delivery	5	●				50	●		196
Marantz PM66 KI-Signature	400	It knows how to rock and roll with holographic detail and stereo, but prefers small/medium scale acoustic material	5	●	●	●	●	50	●	2003	168
Marantz PM-17	900	Probably worth it for the VBT terminals and other build features alone, but this model doesn't sing as it should	6	●	●	●	●	60		2323	181
Marantz PM-17 KI-Signature	1,300	Full feature audiophile amp where the end results don't quite justify the fantastic ingredients	6	●	●	●	●	60		2544	189
Monrio Asty	400	Engaging, but ill-disciplined, even OTT amplifier with unpredictable system compatibility	5					55		2237	178
Musical Fidelity E1	199	Richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special	6					30		2050	171

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Amplifiers

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Musical Fidelity E11	299	Well built minimalist amp with a five year guarantee, but can sound congested when extended	6						60	2232 178
Musical Fidelity X-A1	479	Idiosyncratic visuals just another plus for an amp that is powerful, well built, and serves the music superbly	6						50	2317 181
Musical Fidelity A3	849	Similar to the XA-100R internally, and a little too relaxed for some	5	●	●	●			85	196
Musical Fidelity X-A100R	999	Sings like a thoroughbred, but better with Mozart than Mötörhead	6			●			75	2545 189
MVL A2	970	Curiously designed, and curious sounding amplifier with Sound Sentinel circuits to address perceived weaknesses	9	●			●		100	201
Myryad T-40	400	The T-40 is a well built and sensible, but needs more dynamics and finesse	6			●	●		50	2636 192
Myryad M1120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, although it can sound rather brittle	6			●	●		60	2152 175
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 C320	200	Excellent budget amp from the maker of the seminal 3020 offers better clarity and neutrality and good build	6			●	●		40	2467 186
NAD C340	270	A classic NAD amplifier copes with any speaker, delivers plenty of power, and does so with calm decorum	6	●		●	●		50	2632 192
NAD 317	470	Build quality aside, the current improved version is a real powerhouse, but smooth and detailed too	6			●	●		80	196
NAD S300	1,900	Substantial integrated with loads of power and no shortage of finesse, slightly bass-strong	5			●			100	189
Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5						30	1748 154
Naim Nait 3R	780	Remote control variant of the basic Nait has a similarly dynamic credible sound but ultimately lacks power	5			●			30	2536 189
Opera Aida	795	Low power (in practice) minimalist integrated amp, but the mahogany wings don't help it to fly	5	●	●				60	201
Pioneer A-300R	200	Its bright and breezy sound is a natural tonic to those of us worn down by the ongoing stress of life	5	●	●	●	●		50	1469 149
Pioneer A-407R	230	Clean, consistent, finely detailed sound, good finish and (mainly) good build	5	●	●	●	●		45	2471 186
Pioneer A-607R	300	Lively, articulate amp with plenty of drive and a hint of brightness	5	●	●	●	●		60	2633 192
Pioneer A-300R Precision	400	Sophisticated variant of the A-300R. Not an obvious winner, but will slowly ply you with its subtle charms	5	●	●	●	●		35	1863 162
Pioneer A07	999	Curious blend of high-end attributes and inconsistent, though undeniably detailed sound	5	●					80	2160 175
Præcisa Acustica Sonoro	1,800	It is not often that transistor amplifiers are made to sound so palpably valve-like	5			●			100	2547 189
Primare A10	500	Sharp, clean and agile sound quality, class leading build and an excellent control system – what more can you ask?	6			●			50	201
Primare A20 MkII	799	Everything except packaging has changed in Mk II version: but ballsier model has lost none of its refinement	5			●			70	2321 181
Primare A30.1	1,499	Superb build and aesthetics, and undemonstrably musical down to its smallest screw	6			●			100	2548 189
Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier, derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, although at least it is well behaved	4	●					50	1865 162
Restek Fantasy II	1499	Muscular, but ultimately rather strident amplifier which needs careful system matching	6			●			100	2549 189
Roksan Caspian	795	Mainstream Roksan line level amp works well under most circumstances	6			●			70	201
Rose Scion	615	Unique two-box integrated gives real subtlety and low level resolution, but the sound lacks scale and weight	5	●	●				65	2009 168
Rotel RA-931	150	Rather dry and unforgiving sound from this internally well specified and attractively priced amplifier	4	●			●		35	2048 171
Rotel RA-971 MkII	225	Improved AR971 is a chip off the old block: bags of power, but with added precision and clarity	6				●		60	196
Sharp SM-SX100	10,000	The world's first stable, 1-bit digital amplifier is a technological milestone that should go from strength to strength	n/a						110	200
Sony TA-FB730R	200	Brilliantly sharp and realistic sound is offset by some obvious sonic flaws – and maxi feature set doesn't help	5	●	●	●	●		40	196
Sony TA-F448BE	250	Minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit with satisfactory effect – but keep the volume in check	5	●	●	●	●		55	2055 171
Sony TA-F3000ES	500	Champagne 'shoebox amp' may lack power reserves, but is quick and articulate. In every sense a knockout	5	●	●	●	●		35	2239 178
T+A PA-1220R	1,445	Unique presentation and feature set, but sometimes rather relentless sound quality	7			●	●		100	2550 189
Tact Millennium Mk II	7,000	This digital class D amplifier represents a bold declaration on the future expansion of digital audio in the home	n/a			●			150	194
TAG McLaren 60i	800	Clean, slightly antiseptic sound from this beautifully turned out entry level Audiolab 8000LX replacement	6			●	●		60	2540 189
TAG McLaren 60iRv	999	Looks, feels and sounds better than the Audiolab it supersedes. Smooth, open, refined but lacks body and drive	6			●	●		60	184
Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model	6						50	1868 162
Talk Electronics Cyclone 1	550	Much improved build quality and silver finish, but the sound lacks physicality and can sound strained	6			●			65	196
Talk Electronics Storm 2	650	Crisp, clean, well defined sound, arguably lacking warmth, but a good midrange purchase overall	6			●			50	2154 175
Teac A-E2000	180	Has the potential to cause significant damage in the budget amp sector once the wrinkles are ironed out	6						50	195
Technics SU-A660 Mk 3	200	Plenty of wellie for the price, but the sound can be a tad coarse and lacking in fine detail	5	●			●		37	186
Technics SU-A808	300	Intriguing amplifier, with abundant detail but dynamically rather flat	6	●		●	●		55	196
Technics SU-A800D Mk 2	300	Two-box amplifier looks great, has plenty of gadgets, and makes good, if slightly overexuberant, music	5	●	●	●	●		55	2234 178
Technics SU-A900D Mk 2	400	Looks like a pre/power amplifier, but in effect it's an integrated, with a rather soft-centred sound to match	5	●		●	●		70	2149 175
Token Audio K50	350	Stainless steel finish, others available. Sound is warm and attractive, though a little undynamic	5						50	2472 186
Yamaha AX-392	170	Standard budget fare, and it's easy to pick holes, but in undemanding surroundings it works creditably	6	●		●	●		60	2629 192
Yamaha AX-492	220	Powerful, well equipped amplifier at an attractive price, offers powerful and engaging music-making	5	●	●	●	●		85	2231 178
Yamaha AX-592	280	Fine, middle ranking amplifier, with a detailed midband but performance declines at frequency extremes	5	●	●	●	●		100	2056 171
PREAMPLIFIERS										
Amp Flux System 2	3,000	Three-box affair with a clean, spacious sound and plenty of slam. A touch steely, but undeniably potent	5			●	●		50	187
Alchemist Kraken APD7A MkII	549	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	6							187
Arcam Alpha 9C	400	Well specified and flexible preamp with sound only just lacking in greatness	6			●	●			187
Audio Note M Zero	299	Neat shoe box-size preamp. Able to impart music with real life and soul when partnered with P Zero power amps	5							191
Copland CTA-301MkII	1,249	Sweet sounding, but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●						1630 151
Creek P43R	350	Excellent sound, remote control operation and upgrade options from this fine value preamp	6			●	●			187
Crimson CS610	450	Good, clear sound, including a decent phono stage, but flexibility is limited	3	●	●					187
Cyrus aCA7	798	A decent enough unit at the price but not as good as the Cyrus aPA7 power amp it was tested with	5			●	●			190

GAMUT AUDIO – the new name in hi-fi*



"This amplifier combines Naim-style timing with Levinson-style power and resolution. It may not look much for the money but it sounds like a bargain."
HI-FI CHOICE Nov 1998

GAMUT D200

UK distributor: RT Services 01235 810455
Made by AmpSpeaker: www.ampspeaker.com
Tel: int.+45 561 48585/ Fax: int.+45 561 48583

Say no more. We improved the looks. Now the Gamut D200 is available with silver or black fronts, with or without handles. Gorgeous. Even better it's still £2995, no "improvement" there. 250 watt monoblocks available in February 2000. Now there's sound quality and looks – a real bargain. * Previously known and reviewed as Sirius

GAMUT: "the entire range of musical notes" (Webster's Unabridged Dictionary)

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PRODUCT (€) COMMENTS

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Densen Beat B-200	1,000	A versatile preamp with a high 'air-guitar' factor and Densen's characteristic styling	6	●	●					191	
B ECA Vista	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system. (Tested with Lectern power amp)	5						1302	145	
E Levinson 380	3,995	True high end preamplifier combines precision and warmth with unusual configurability	6			●				195	
LFD Mistral Linestage	449	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6						1930	165	
Meridian 501	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. (Tested with 555 power amp)	5	●		●			1303	145	
Meridian 502	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation	7			●				162	
Michell Orca	1,650	Line-level design with a gorgeous remote and focused, spacious sound. (Tested with Alecto power amps)	6			●				187	
Moth 30 Active Line Stage	349	Excellent-sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp	4						1931	165	
Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp	5			●				166	
R Musical Fidelity X-PRE	200	Cleverly configured preamp with many upgrade options, and open, lively and engaging sound	4						2152	175	
R Musical Fidelity X-P100	800	Good long-term listening prospects; detailed and a little fruitiness (tested with X-A200 power amp)	6	●		●				200	
R NAD 114	270	Beer-budget preamp which sounds focused, detailed and consistent	6	●	●	●			1932	165	
R NAD Silverline S100	600	Beautifully built kit that sounds as good as it looks (tested with S200 power amp)	7			●				200	
Naim NAC92R	630	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry. (Tested with NAP90 power amp)	5			●			1936	165	
Naim NAC102	1,000	More of a 'character act' than a neutral reproduction system, majors on excitement at the expense of subtlety	6			●				200	
R Rega Hal	998	Passive line stages dedicated to Exon power amps	6	●	●	●			1942	165	
Rotel RC-971	150	Low price is offset by rather coarse sound quality with certain types of music. (Tested with RB-971 power amp)	5			●				178	
Rotel RC-995	525	Highly capable, though less astonishing value than matching RB-991 power amp (tested as pair)	6	●	●	●				200	
Samuel Johnson pca100	1,800	Stylish wood and metal fascia - precise, clean sound with an emphasis on leading edges	6			●	●			201	
TAG McLaren PA20R	1,500	Refinement of Audiolab original with clean, detailed sound but limited thrill power. (T/w 125M monoblocks)	6			●	●			184	
Talk Hurricane 2L	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6						1937	165	
Technics SU-C3000	2,997	Price includes SE-A3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	5	●						188	
Technics SU-C1010	300	Although the sound's basically all there, it's arguable that a good integrated offers more, for less	6	●						200	
Thule Spirit PR100	400	High-tech preamp slightly marred by tendency to veil the sound	5			●				187	
POWER AMPLIFIERS											
Alch. Kraken APD&A Mk II	549	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	1						55	187	
B Arcam Alpha 9P	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1						60	1929	165
R Arcam Alpha 10P	600	Well made and flexible: upgradeable to 3 channels. Good sound lacking the last degree of detail	1						100	187	
Audio Note P Zero	599	Neat shoe box size valve monoblocks, priced per pair. Impart music with life and soul. (Tested with P Zero preamp)	1						8	191	
E Border Patrol 300B SE	3,995	Single ended valve power amp with passion, grace and fire, and plenty of grunt to boot	1						8.5	186	
Cary CAD 2A3SE	1,575	Monoblock valve power amp. Low power but gives delightful speed, coherence and transparency	1						5	196	
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1						67	1630	151
B Creek A52SE	599	Well designed and built amplifier with plenty of power, detail and refinement	6						100	187	
R Crimson CS630	800	Space-saving slimline monoblocks with both grunt and finesse	1						100	187	
Crimson 620C	875	Not entirely satisfactory power amp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	1						50	181	
Cyrus Power	498	Detail and midband clarity and stand-out qualities. Smooth and refined with most types of music but bass-soft	1						50	183	
Cyrus aPA7	1,896	Low feedback design that's a positive departure from the transistorised norm. (Tested with Cyrus aCA7 pre)	1						150	190	
R Densen B-300	800	Expensive but highly musical. Colourful and warm sound with strong timing and listener involvement	1						100	183	
B ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1						50	1302	145
E Gamut D200	2,995	Single MOSFET pair per side gives tremendous resolution and timing (balanced only). Formerly Sirius	1						200	183	
E Levinson 334	5,495	A mailed fist in a velvet glove; refined, authoritative and transparent	1						125	195	
LFD Mistral Power	449	Infectious upper band vitality, but LF dynamics lacking - likewise 'grip' and transparency	1						60	1930	165
E Mana Stealth MA-1	4,800	A monoblock with an uncanny ability to drag you into the music, and spend half the night sitting up listening	2						200	198	
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
Michell Alecto Monoblocks	1,950	Hefty beasts offering real power and striking imaging. Not the last word in timing. (Tested with Orca preamp)	1						100	187	
Moth 60 Watt Stereo	599	Miniature power amp lacks control and finesse - not comfortable with difficult speaker loads	1						60	1931	165
B Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. Demonstrated solid balance and proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1						100	155	
R Musical Fidelity X-A50	500	Cleverly configured and attractively packaged, open, lively and engaging sound. Reviewed with X-PRE	1						50	175	
R Musical Fidelity X-A200	1,000	Good long-term listening prospects; detailed and a little fruity (tested with X-P100 preamp)	1						200	200	
Musical Fidelity NuVista 300	3,300	Powerful smooth sound with tremendous bass extension. Capacity to fulfil the demands of the most dynamic material	1						350	199	
Myriad MA120	450	Based on M1120 integrated - see latter for comments, but sounds significantly better when bi-amped with M1120	1						60	1935	165
R NAD 214	370	A little lightweight, but detailed, consistent sound quality, and excellent value for money	1						80	1932	165
R NAD Silverline S200	1,400	Beautifully built kit that sounds as good as it looks with heaps of power (tested with S100 preamp)	1						200	200	
Naim NAP90	450	Power amp from a Nait integrated with some improvements	1						30	1936	165
Naim NAP180	1,122	More of a 'character act' than a truly neutral reproduction system, majors on excitement at the expense of subtlety	1						60	200	200
Samuel Johnson ppa100	2,200	Stylish wood and metal fascia - nimble, high resolution and highly coherent sound	1						50	201	
Technics SE-A1010	350	Although the sound's basically all there, it's arguable that a good integrated offers more, for less	1						●	90	200
Technics SE-A3000	2,997	Price includes SU-C3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	1						●	100	188
Thule Spirit PA100	600	More successful than matching preamp: sound is gutsy and lively, and generally clean	1						100	187	
R Rega Exon	1,196	Monoblock, priced each, dedicated for Hal preamp. Bold, outgoing, in-command kind of sound	1						125	1942	165
B Roksan Caspian Power	595	Excels musically and in conventional hi-fi terms. A power amp for people with long-term satisfaction in mind	1						70	183	
Rotel RB-971	200	Somewhat better than the accompanying preamp - clean, mean and bridgeable. (Tested with RC-971)	1						70	178	
B Rotel RB-991	600	Top stuff and stunning value: rather outshone the matching RC-995 preamp (tested as pair)	1						200	200	
Rotel RB-980BX	450	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid-back and occasionally smeared sound	1						120	155	
TAG McLaren 125M	2,400	Refined Audiolab replacement monoblocks with clean sound but limited thrill power. (T/w PA20R preamp)	1						145	184	
Talk Tornado 2	600	Good, but slightly retiring sound which lacks the authority to stand out in a crowd	1						65	1937	165
PHONO STAGES											
Clearaudio Symphono	740	Slightly inconsistent balance mars the performance of this lively performer	0			●				201	
R Creek OBH-9	160	A neat little unit with an essentially neutral and listenable character	0			●				189	
Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	826	Very hi-tech product which tends too much towards smoothness except at climaxes, which can be rough	0			●				189	
Densen DP-Drive/DP-02	350	Quite unusual design in many ways: sound is mostly good but never quite shakes off a 'synthetic' quality	0			●				189	
R Electrocompaniet ECP-1	495	An excellent phono amp that combines well-rounded balance with detail and low noise	0	●						189	
R Michell Iso/Lithos	599	With the Lithos power supply upgrade, the Iso is a very capable phono stage with just a hint of bass fullness	0			●				189	
B Moth 30 Series Phono	249	Fine sound all round, in any kind of music, from this bargain phono stage	0			●				189	
R Musical Fidelity X-LP	130	A little bass lightness does not seriously mar the performance of this fine value unit	0	●						189	
Musical Fidelity X-LP2/X-PSU	628	An enjoyable listening experience in its way, but a bit short on inner details	0			●				201	
NAD PP-1	40	A basic phono stage that does its job rather coarsely: a bit bass-shy too	0			●				189	
R Pass Labs XOno	2,995	Not absolutely neutral, but the overall result is so beguiling it's hard to resist	0	●		●				201	
R Primare R-20	500	Fights a little shy of densely scored music, but generally an enjoyable and neutral performer	0	●		●				201	
R Pro-Ject Phono Box	40	Moving-coil compatibility is a dubious extra in a way, but MM performance is acceptable at this giveaway price	0	●		●				201	
R QED Discaver DS-1	35	It's cheap, it's cheerful, it's OK - perfectly adequate for use with a phono-less integrated, though not very refined	0	●						189	

CONTINUED

Amplifiers

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO LINE INPUTS MC PHONO INPUTS REMOTE CONTROL HEADPHONE INPUTS POWER OUTPUT (W) RECEIVER FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO LINE INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE INPUTS	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Roksan Artaxerxes X/DS1.5	1,150	Delicate and well balanced, slightly congested at climaxes. Power supply expensive, but runs two Roksan components	0	●	●	●				189
TAG McLaren PPA20	1,549	One of the best-equipped phono stages available. Resolution is excellent, but timing is marginally behind the best	0	●	●	●				187
R Tom Evans The Groove	1,500	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for information retrieval off any LP	0		●	●				201
MULTI-CHANNEL AMPLIFIERS										
R Arcam Alpha 10 DAVE/10P	2,500	Packed with a diversity of electronics that against engineering odds sounds extremely good				●	●	110		198
Cyrus AV5	1,000	Few processors are as adept with music. An effective multi-channel solution for music fans				●		N/A		201
R Denon AVR-3300	800	Not as powerful as Denon claims, but nonetheless capable of impressive high-fidelity multi-channel sound				●	●	75	●	198
B Marantz SR5000	500	Something of a rough diamond, but a powerful and entertaining package				●	●	105	●	198
NAD T770	1,000	Lacks both transparency and subtlety while the omission of dts will be a drawback for some at this price				●	●	90	●	198
Nakamichi AV-10	1,000	A very powerful AV receiver that's easy to install and set-up with a civilised and subtle performance				●	●	140	●	198
Pioneer VSX-908RDS	1,000	A flexible heavyweight AV receiver whose sound is just a little too stodgy and lacking in crispness				●	●	80	●	198
R Roksan Caspian DSP	2,290	A potent combination offering the bare essentials of DD and dts decoding				●		130		198
R Rotel RSP-985/RPB-985 MkII	2,225	The hugely versatile processor is the weaker subjective link in this otherwise impressive combo				●		130		198
Sony TA-E9000ES/N9000ES	2,300	Big, gold, powerful and remarkably versatile but fails to cut the sonic mustard				●	●	110		198



Cables

Cables are an integral part of a hi-fi system, required to connect source components to amplifiers, and the latter to speakers.

- Analogue interconnects connect source components and amplifiers, and run between pre and power amps. They are priced for one-metre terminated pairs.
- Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs or digital recorders. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.
- Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- SYMMETRICAL: A twisted pair of conductors.
- COAXIAL: A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.
- STRANDED: Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.
- SOLID CORE: Single or multiple, individually insulated strands.
- COPPER: Material used for conductor.
- SILVER: Material used for conductor.
- DIG CABLE TYPE: O - optical digital; E - electrical digital for CD Players, DACS and digital recorders.
- FACTSBACK REFERENCE: The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
- ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

Cables

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED METRE PAIR)											
Acoustic Precision Eikos	89	Not entirely neutral: probably best suited to upbeat music. Very stiff construction			●	●	●				188
Audio Note AN-A	18	Not especially impressive: warm but well-rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is quite clear			●		●	●			108
Audio Note AN-C	35	Neutral but lacking in subtle texture and unable to distinguish fine detail					●	●		1687	131
R Audio Note AN-S	99	Up-beat and enthusiastic sound with satisfyingly deep and grumbly bass			●		●	●	●	1687	131
Audio Note AN-V	179	15 individually insulated silver strands make up this very clean and dynamically unchallenged cable					●		●	1687	131
Audioquest Topaz X2	60	Well made but let down by a pervading sense of muddle and congestion in the sound			●		●	●			188
R Audioquest Coral	99	Slightly forward imaging hardly detracts from its excellent tonal qualities and detail			●		●	●			200
R CableTalk Advanced 2	35	Slight roughness in loud music barely detracts from a well-balanced performance with good imaging					●	●	●	2166	176
R Cable Talk Studio 2	65	A first-class performer from tonal, dynamic and rhythmic standpoints			●		●	●			160
Cambridge Pacific	30	Lacks subtlety and bass impact but is otherwise quite serviceable for the price				●	●	●		2167	176
R Cambridge Audio Studio Ref	40	Dynamic cable with strong soundstaging and only a slight lack of detail				●	●	●			160
Cambridge Silver Spirit 60	100	Good bass but a lack of detail and differentiation of instruments			●		●	●			188
Chord Cobra 2	50	Good, strong sound with full-bodied music, less happy with smaller forces					●	●		2167	176
Chord Chameleon 2	90	Deep bass is fine but despite that the sound can be a bit hard and lacking body and resonance			●		●	●			188
R Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare			●		●	●			160
R DNM Reson	40	Seemed a little harsh in the test system, but can work well and should be tried					●	●	●		200
Goertz M1 Interconnect	145	Soft sound lacking in bite, with excessive and plummy bass (NB sample used in review was only 0.5m)			●		●	●		2168	176
Insert Audio IC100 MKII	47	Mostly good sound is let down by pervasive dryness					●	●		2169	176
R Insert Audio Image 5.1	85	Very good detail and imaging: perhaps a touch bass-light					●	●	●		200
B Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble					●	●	●	1692	131



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CONTINUED

Cables

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Ixos Gamma 1002	39	Lumpy bass, grainy treble, and poor integration. Nice colour, though	●	●	●	●	●	●		2169	176
Ixos 103	45	Even-handed and generous sound, bass has a well-rounded, bouncy quality	●	●	●	●	●	●		1692	131
Ixos 102	60	A bit bright and undynamic, this cable is nevertheless a good all-rounder, whose faults are largely subtractive	●	●	●	●	●	●			160
Ixos 1000	90	Nothing badly wrong, just a little bit bland and outshone by others at the price	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
Ixos 101	100	A cable with personality: its veiled and shut in quality bring an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike	●	●	●	●	●	●		1693	131
Kimber PBJ	68	Assured sound, solid and natural bass and clear treble – excellent performance all round	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
Kimber Hero	110	Slight roughness detracts from some music; seems well suited to rock and jazz. Lively and detailed	●	●	●	●	●	●		2170	176
Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy	●	●	●	●	●	●			108
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed, but there's a sense of distance between music and listener: vocals are coarse rather than liquid	●	●	●	●	●	●			108
Nordost Black Knight	60	Flat black cable that is distinctive but slightly coloured – but not in a wholly negative manner	●	●	●	●	●	●			160
Nordost Solar Wind	85	Good tone and dynamics, with just occasionally a touch of bass-lightness in busy music	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
Nordost Blue Heaven	145	Very good bass and only slightly grainy treble add up to a well integrated, natural-sounding cable	●	●	●	●	●	●			176
Precious Metals SS35	50	Extended bass, but dry character suits electronic music better than acoustic	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
Prowire Silver	60	A good cable in every way, with just the occasional hint of coloration and coarseness	●	●	●	●	●	●		2171	176
QED Qnect 2	30	Very well balanced, refined and detailed, this is everything a good cable should be, and excellent value	●	●	●	●	●	●		2172	176
QED Qnect 4S	70	Some coloration and roughness in the midrange and treble, but bass is gratifyingly solid	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
QED Qnex Silver Spiral	90	A great cable for lovers of big sounds	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
Reference CS1	75	A moderate performer, with a little coloration and a tendency to lose bass at dimaxes	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight	●	●	●	●	●	●			160
SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. We're unsure about the flesh-coloured finish, though...	●	●	●	●	●	●			160
SonicLink Black	49	Nickel-plated copper with a slight dryness in the bass and a hint of treble roll-off don't compromise integration	●	●	●	●	●	●		2172	176
SonicLink Lilac	65	Some dryness can affect transient sounds, though tone is generally good, especially in the bass	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
SonicLink Violet	85	Better bass than treble – a little dry in the upper octaves	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
Straight Wire Chorus	40	A very confident cable with good bass, though perhaps a shade of treble loss	●	●	●	●	●	●		2173	176
Straight Wire Sonata	80	Tonal balance favours lower frequencies but despite this it's a very listenable cable	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
Straight Wire Encore II	100	Slightly variable bass performance is a weakness in this otherwise capable cable	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
Supra EFF-ISL	80	Excellent sound in all areas – nothing to criticise	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
Tara Labs Prism 22	64	Mild tendency to plumminess offsets some hardness in complex music with mixed results	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
Tara Labs Prism 55-i	195	Good with laid-back music, but seems lazy with more exciting material	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
TCI Viper	55	Fine performance in all areas: just the smallest hint of sibilance. Very good value	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
van den Hul The Storm	25	Price for 0.8m. Rich and warm but bass is rolled off: however there's plenty of drive and top end is clean	●	●	●	●	●	●		1701	131
van den Hul Source HB	50	Price for 0.8m. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness	●	●	●	●	●	●			160
van den Hul PB5	50	A highly neutral cable with fine dynamic and rhythmic performance too – excellent	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
van den Hul D102 MkIII HB	80	A fine cable, but the competition has crept up and it no longer leads the pack	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of information	●	●	●	●	●	●		1702	131
van den Hul The Second	240	Wonderfully open and relaxing but also intimately detailed, slightly softens percussive dynamics	●	●	●	●	●	●		1702	131

DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED LINEAR METRE)

Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear-cut transparency	●	●	●	●	●	●	E		108
Chord Codac	36	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
Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft-edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colorations; plenty of weight, smooth	●	●	●	●	●	●	E	1707	131
Kimber Kable Opti-link	50	Appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet sounds a little brighter and livelier than most	●	●	●	●	●	●	O		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 75 Ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	E		108
Siltech HF-6	145	Sounds detailed, very clean and 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 bit over-crisp at times – very compelling, however	●	●	●	●	●	●	E	1709	131
van den Hul The First	125	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly cautious compared to some. Plenty of subtle information and integration	●	●	●	●	●	●	E	1710	131

LOUDSPEAKER CABLES (PRICES PER METRE LENGTH)

ALR Jordan QMM	5	Generally neutral, if sometimes bass-shy, but not very communicative	●	●	●	●	●	●			183	
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that are 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	150	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●	●	●	●	●	●			109	
Audioquest F-14	2.2	Ideal for laying under carpets. F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound	●	●	●	●	●	●			109	
Audioquest F-18	3.60	Slightly lumpy bass and lack of midrange detail: can also be a bit dry	●	●	●	●	●	●			192	
Audioquest Type 4	5	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains 'bite'	●	●	●	●	●	●			109	
Audioquest Type 6	9	A very inflexible cable in which the sonic ends don't quite justify the means	●	●	●	●	●	●			183	
Bandridge LC7409	4	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings	●	●	●	●	●	●		1800	157	
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25	Quite well-balanced but tends to lose bass lines in complex music	●	●	●	●	●	●			168	
Cable Talk Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained	●	●	●	●	●	●		1800	157	
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	8	Can make stereo images recede, and favours the upper bass	●	●	●	●	●	●			192	
DNM LSC350	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension	●	●	●	●	●	●			168	
Chord Company Odyssey	17	Relatively vice-free cable with good detail throughout the range and generally neutral bass	●	●	●	●	●	●			192	
DNM LSCB500	12	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire	●	●	●	●	●	●		1716	133	
DPA Black Sixteen	100	Unflappable resolution of musical details. No dampening of dynamics, simply oodles of taut information	●	●	●	●	●	●		1717	133	
Gale XL189	1	Slightly bright and not too subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system	●	●	●	●	●	●			168	
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. Can be slightly manipulative	●	●	●	●	●	●			1800	157
Goertz M2	32	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility	●	●	●	●	●	●			168	
Hitachi LC-OFc	7	Very crisp, very clear and very confident. In the right system would be very expensive to better	●	●	●	●	●	●			109	
Ixos Gamma 6006	5	Bass is better than treble, which can become spitty and sibilant – though only slightly	●	●	●	●	●	●			192	
Kimber 4PR	90 (5m)	Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right	●	●	●	●	●	●			192	
Kimber 4TC	19.6	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas	●	●	●	●	●	●			168	
Kimber 4VS	9	A good mix of virtues including particularly fine bass	●	●	●	●	●	●			183	
Linn K20	4	Seems to work best with lively, unobtrusive music – can be dry and edgy	●	●	●	●	●	●			183	
Naim NAC A5	5.5	A 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems, where it works a treat	●	●	●	●	●	●			109	
Nordost Octava	3	Fair bass but confused treble and some coloration	●	●	●	●	●	●			168	
Nordost Flatline Gold II	9.50	Exciting sound but a bit too 'in-ya-face', and bass is not always even	●	●	●	●	●	●			192	
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey-sounding – strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance. A bit bass-shy, tho	●	●	●	●	●	●			133	

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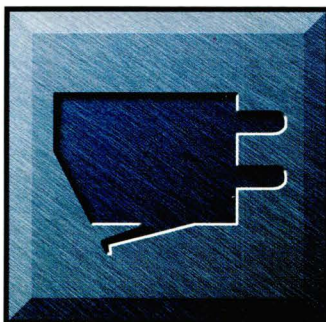
Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
O tofon SPK200	4.99	Good strong bass and fair detail, only slightly marred by a little dryness	●				●	●			183
Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric, with robust, full-blooded bass – if slightly bright at times					●	●			133
Precious Metals SL102	10	Unusual construction gives rather strained sound, only really cheering up with simple musical textures	●				●	●			183
Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound – but too messy and bloated for its own good	●				●	●			183
Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design; shame about the sound quality	●				●	●		1800	157
QED Qudos	2.25	Despite high-tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, its music-making failed to gel					●	●		1800	157
QED Profile 4x4	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding					●	●			168
QED Qudos Silver	5	<i>A few minor flaws but overall performance is very assured for this price</i>	●				●	●			192
SonicLink S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●				●	●			168
SonicLink AST150	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST150 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced					●	●		1800	157
SonicLink AST150	3.95	Slightly plummy bass and a useful way of holding musical strands together					●	●		1800	157
Sonic Link AST200x2	5.95	At its best with exciting music, this cable seems shy of subtler details	●				●	●			192
Straight Wire Rhythm	6	Its major flaw seems to be woolly and indistinct bass, which pervades most types of music	●				●	●			192
Straight Wire Quartet	8	<i>A good all-rounder with full tone, clear detail and natural ambience</i>	●				●	●			183
Supra Ply 3.4	6.95	Clean sound which stays together well at high levels, with full bass – perhaps a touch of treble restriction	●				●	●			183
Tara Labs Klara	2.95	A good budget cable with an even spread of virtues – and very minor vices – across the board	●				●	●			183
van den Hul Gold Water	7	Bass becomes shy when there's a lot happening, and detail could be clearer	●				●	●			183
van den Hul The Clearwater	7	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky-sounding cable					●	●	●		109
van den Hul CS122	12	Good dynamics can make for exciting sound, but fine detail suffers and the treble is often dry	●				●	●			192
van den Hul The Magnum	38	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twin-lead cable, The Magnum sounds soft and old-fashioned					●	●	●		109
van den Hul The Wind	40	<i>'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass</i>					●	●	●		109
van den Hul Revolution	76	Silver-plated OFC combined with carbon fibre prompts a sombre character with an easy and relaxed treble					●	●	●	1726	133



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs, and generally more expensive low- and very-low-output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono-input-equipped valve amps need a transformer to cope with MC cartridges. ■ Even basic high-output MM cartridge designs will benefit from a customised amplifier input load. Consult your dealer for further details on this topic.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MM:** Moving-magnet cartridge with a normal output, suitable for all amplifier phono inputs.
 - **MC:** Moving-coil cartridge with a low output, only suitable for high-sensitivity MC amplifier phono inputs.
 - **REPLACEABLE STYLUS:** Most MM cartridges have a stylus (needle) that can be removed and replaced when worn out.
 - **OUTPUT (mV):** Cartridge output in millivolts.
 - **MASS (g):** The mass of your chosen cartridge
- affects the choice of partnering tonearm. Consult dealers or manufacturers to establish which arms and pickups work well together.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

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STATUS

Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS

MM MC REPLACEABLE STYLUS OUTPUT (mV) MASS (g) FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Audio Technica AT-95E	20	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced			●	2.8			48
Audio Technica AT-OC9ML	330	A well-finished cartridge with a sound that's smoothly detailed, but also rather unexciting		●		0.4	8		192
Clea audio Signature	1,495	<i>A great all-round performer with fine dynamic vitality and a seductive midband intimacy</i>			●	0.55	11.5	2142	175
Denon DL110	70	<i>A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well</i>		●		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	<i>Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether, and a bargain at the price</i>		●					103
Dynavector DV-20X L	299	Articulate-sounding, with impressive treble resolve, though lightweight at times. Needs a high quality turntable and arm		●		0.25	8.6		192
Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	450	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent		●		0.15	5.3		158
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	1,698	A real smoothie, but pricey. Worth checking out for its delicate laid-back transparency and low needle-talk		●		0.25	8.5	2142	175
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	19	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●			5.0	7		67
Goldring 1012GX	79	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency coloration apparent	●			6.5	7		85
Goldring 1022GX	99	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●			6.5	7		85
Goldring Eroica LX	110	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative	●			0.5	8		84
Goldring 1042	120	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively, though	●			6.5	6		91
Goldring Elite	220	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound is not the cleanest	●			0.5	8		103
Goldring Excel VX	525	Good bass drive but dull and imprecise higher up. An old-fashioned sound that falls short of the true high end	●			0.45	8	2143	175
Grado Prestige Gold	149	<i>Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge</i>		●		4	6		158
Grado Reference	995	Loads of tracking headroom but treble is limited. A prospect for mid-oriented valve amp users		●		1.7	6.5	2143	175
Linn K9	125	<i>Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus</i>		●		4.5	5		Col
London Decca Maroon	259	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever		●		5.0	6		67
London Decca S Gold	399	Immediate and detailed, but coloured and nonlinear, with a questionable effect on records		●		5.0	6		84
Lyra Lydian Beta	599	A thoroughly enjoyable cartridge – smooth, agile and dynamic in character		●		0.5	8		192
Lyra Lydian	649	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed		●		0.3	7		158
Lyra a Clavis Da Capo	995	<i>A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard</i>		●		0.1	7		143
Lyra Parnassus D.C.t	1,895	A real little jewel of a cartridge, with many good qualities, but handicapped by a rather too obvious treble peak		●		0.22	10.5	2144	175
Ortofon S10/P	38	<i>For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality</i>		●		3.0	5		85
Ortofon S20/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, but the S20/P has a lively, effervescent sound		●		3.0	5		67

CONTINUED

Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle – take it as it comes	●	3.3	4	103
Ortofon MC15 Super II	130	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and close up	●	0.35	7	103
Ortofon MC25E	180	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable	●	0.5	11	139
Ortofon MC25FL	250	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP	●	0.5	11	139
Ortofon MC 10 Supreme	300	A full and cultured-sounding cartridge, with collective attributes far outweighing its shortcomings	●	0.5	10.7	192
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	525	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings	●	0.5	10.7	158
Ortofon Rohmann	1,000	A class act in nearly every respect, with fine groove security and a very smooth and even-handed sound	●	0.25	8.5	2144
Ortofon MC3000II	1,100	A real ear-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere – one of the very best	●	0.12	10	84
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo	●	0.12	10	91
Rega Bias	39	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow body, but the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound	●	5	4	67
Rega Elys	85	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is more detailed, accurate and convincing	●	5.0	5	67
Reson Recca	250	If you're after a high quality moving magnet cartridge, they don't get much better than this	●	6.5	6.3	192
Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but smoother and more civilised	●	6.5	5	91
Sunikio Blue Point Special	250	A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties – one of the best around for less than £300	●	2.5	9	192
van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●	5.5	6	103
van den Hul DDT-II	600	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing, but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy	●	0.35	7.6	158
van den Hul MC-10	750	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-One	900	This extends all the positive qualities of the 10, but adds greater authority and scale – worth all the extra money	●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-Two	1,200	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal	●	0.4	6	72
van den Hul Frog	1,500	Seems to control/suppress surface noise better than its rivals. This delicate and subtle performer has great charm	●	0.65	7	2145
van den Hul G' hopper III GLA	2,800	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available. It has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse	●	0.4	6	122
Wilson besench Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive	●	0.58	6	158
Wilson besench Carbon	1,573	Carbon fibre body contributes to a delightfully clean and open midrange, and a quick, lively and coherent sound	●	0.45	7	2145



Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Cassette decks hook up to the 'tape loop' inputs and outputs offered by most modern amplifiers. It's worth taking care to choose the best tapes for a specific machine. For example, expensive metal tapes will be a wasted investment for a cheap deck. Many better-specified decks have manual or automatic bias adjustment to get the best from specific samples of tape. Twin decks offer the possibility of copying from tape to tape, playing two cassettes sequentially or recording onto two tapes at once. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but uni-directional mechanisms promise better sound. Dolby S is the ultimate noise reduction system, and three-head decks permit record monitoring off-tape.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **DOLBY B/C:** The first and second Dolby hiss-killers.
- **DOLBY S:** A desirable derivative of Dolby SR professional noise-reduction.
- **DOLBY HX-PRO:** Extends headroom for cassette recording.
- **3-HEAD:** Permits monitoring off-tape while you're recording.
- **TWIN DECK:** Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play.
- **AUTOREVERSE:** Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.
- **AUTO CALIBRATION:** The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.
- **ADJUSTABLE BIAS:** Permits manual optimisation of tape.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.

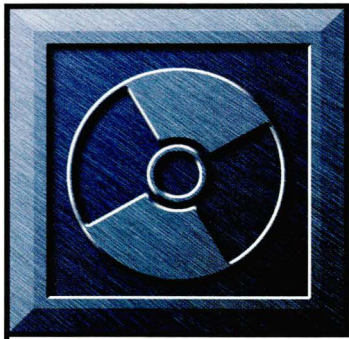
B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Cassette Decks

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed deck. Astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1513	136	
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin for those who want bells, whistles – and music	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1377	146	
Denon DRM-550	160	There are some technical limitations, but this remains a fine-sounding deck, and excellent value	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	
Denon DRW-580	200	Twin deck: OK for casual use, but will quickly pall with more quality critical applications	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	171	
Denon DRS-640	200	Draw-loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well-adjusted sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1591	140	
Denon DRM-650S	230	An improvement on predecessors, it offers a wide-ranging, sound. Dolby S is not the best feature	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164	
Denon DRM-740	270	Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment, offers good, if somewhat detached sonics	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1514	136
Denon DRS-810	310	Draw-loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	127	
Harman/Kardon TD420	250	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well-conceived, minimum features design	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1592	140
Harman/Kardon TD450	350	Draw loader with poor tape navigation features; good midband but shallow bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile-sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1380	146
JVC TD-W718	300	Twin deck. Good for creative live recording, but no timer standby. Respectable performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2039	171
Kenwood KX-W6080	200	Modestly decent-sounding twin deck, with some transport instability and ragged bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2040	171
Marantz SD455	170	Works well as a single deck, especially on replay, but dubbing at high/low speed compromises sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	184
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
NAD 616	300	Twin deck with basic features. No Dolby setting memory, transport is too unstable for audiophile use	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2041	171
Nakamichi DR-10	800	An ergonomic oddity, but one of the last of the great cassette decks. Worth considering against MD	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	195
Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer-loading mini-size component with 3 heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146
Pioneer CT-S550S	250	Great features, good with cheap low bias tapes, but slightly synthetic sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
Pioneer CT-W806DR	300	Had it not been for the iffy transport quality, this sophisticated twin would have been Recommended	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2042	171
Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High-class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1385	146
Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
Teac V-1050	180	One of the cheapest 3-head machines around, but it shows in very 'thick' sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	184
Technics RS-AZ6	200	For those who can't afford the RS-AZ7; clarity over the widest bandwidth thanks to AZ thin-film head	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
Technics RS-AZ7	270	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in state-of-the-art	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
Yamaha KX-490	200	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent deck, with a lightweight tonality, but stability and strong detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2043	171



CD/DVD Players

All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see p129). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical type. The former is preferable for the ultimate sound. A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which converts the disc's digital bitstream into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue converter, or DAC. Although most players are contained within a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs. The first new DVD players have not excelled with CD software.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.
- **AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT:** Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- **OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For optical connection to an outboard DAC.
- **ST OPT DIG OUTPUT:** High-speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- **BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:** Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.
- **HEADPHONE SOCKET:** For 'can' users.
- **VARIABLE OUTPUT:** Remotely adjustable output level (usually non-audiophile).
- **MULTI-DISC:** Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
- **DAC TYPE:** BS – Philips Bitstream; MB – multi-bit; Hyb – hybrid of multi-bit and bitstream technologies; 1bit – single bit types eg MASH, bitstream, PWM, etc; CC – constant calibration.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full information, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the magazine.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared. Factsback information page.

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CD/DVD Players

SPECIFICATIONS

- AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT
- OPTICAL DIG OUT
- ST OPT DIG OUT
- BAL ANALOGUE OUT
- HEADPHONE SOCKET
- VARIABLE OUTPUT
- MULTI-DISC
- DAC TYPE
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
B Acurus ACD11	899	First-rate if costly player, which combines a delightful transparency with an uncontrived naturalness	●	●						1bit	1962	166	
Acoustic Precision Eikos	1,850	Seriously customised Pioneer with extraordinary resolution and world beating imaging and bass	●							1bit		165	
Advantage CD15	3,995	A CD player of some stature – what it lacks in dynamics it makes up for in subtlety and flow	●					●	●	20bit		193	
Alchemist Kraken	1,249	Distinctive looking player likely to suit a Alchemist system, but will result in variable results elsewhere	●							24/96		190	
R Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation	●							Hyb		169	
AMC CD8A	150	Has balanced output, but is otherwise rather grey and unremarkable					●			BS	2071	172	
B AMC CD9/DAC8	290	Beer-budget two-box system (player plus DAC) is smooth, attractive and easy on the ear	●							CC	2261	179	
Anthem CD1	1,595	Unusual combination of high-end player, complete with HDCD, and changer. Good, but noisy	●	●						MB	2219	178	
B Arcam Alpha 75E	350	Revamped starter model is a clear improvement on very likeable predecessor	●				●			MB		195	
R Arcam Alpha MCD	450	Excellent bass and natural midband, but just a touch of treble dryness, from this very listenable changer	●						●	MB	2220	178	
R Arcam Alpha 8	520	Refined, intricately detailed but a little cautious. Should be broadly compatible with a variety of amps	●							BS	1873	163	
B Arcam Alpha 85E	600	Excellent (and very reasonably priced) HDCD-compatible player is a strong all-rounder	●				●			1bit		176	
R Arcam Alpha 9	800	Refined, articulate player which employs new DAC technology to great effect	●							Ring		188	
Audio Analogue Paganini	750	Basically good, but sometimes heavy-handed player								24bit		191	
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●				BS	1875	163	
Audio Note AN-CD1	600	Easy on the ear, and for a valve player, easy on the pocket, but a bit Radio 2-flavoured	●							Hyb		188	
Audio Note AN-CD2	999	High output impedance makes performance unduly system fussy	●							MB		195	
AVI S2000MC2	899	A chip off the old block. This model's in-yr-face balance obstructs an otherwise finely detailed sound	●							MB	2179	176	
R AVI S2000MC Reference	1,399	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us. A fine performer in a sympathetic system	●							MB		169	
Balanced Audio Tech VK-DS	3,995	A valve-infused player with a big and engaging sound. Lacks a little subtlety	●					●	●	18bit		194	
Cambridge Audio D100	120	Hard, clangy and coloured sounding, and with suspect control logic				●				DS		200	
R Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up-and-at-'em sound quality	●							Hyb	1268	147	
B Cambridge Audio CD4SE	200	Among the best encountered at the price, considerably more refined and convincing than the CD4	●							BS	1877	163	
R Cambridge Audio CD6	250	A sharp, articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●					●		BS		159	
R Copland CDA-266	1,199	Simple yet elegant design is unexpectedly sophisticated under the skin, and effective in execution	●							MB	2183	176	
Copland CDA 289	1,898	Beautifully built and musically enjoyable. Lacks some precision, but still among the best below £2,000	●							20bit		194	
Copland CDA-288	2,199	A gentle giant of a player that errs in favour of pastel shades rather than bold daubs of colour	●			●				MB	1880	163	
R Cymbol CDP12	1,299	Clean, detailed and airy HDCD-equipped player with minimalist trappings	●							Hyb	2184	176	
R Cyrus dAD1.5	395	Improved dAD1 variant has improved digital filter for a more natural, easy on the ear quality	●							Hyb		191	
R Cyrus dAD3	598	A relaxed style of delivery that convinces with guile and subtlety rather than orchestral ordnance	●							BS	1887	163	
R Cyrus dAD3 Q24	900	Bold, lean and lively player demands sympathetic system matching	●							DS		200	
R Denon DCD-435	130	Good low cost player, and a step up from the DCD-425, its predecessor								DS		191	
R Denon DCD-655	180	Fine, slightly soft-edged budget player, and a good ameliorative for aggressive, edgy systems								MB		200	
R Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear	●							MB	1269	147	
R Denon DCD-835	280	Refined version of Denon's multi-bit technology is a bit of a star	●							MB		184	
Denon DCD-1550AR	350	Disappointing bland and ploddy sound from an immaculately constructed, high-tech player	●							MB	2266	179	
Denon DCD-1650AR	700	Powerful, authoritative, and well equipped too, but this player sometimes lacks subtlety	●							MB		195	
R Denon DCD-3000	1,000	Sings with the temperament of a huge orchestra under the baton of a timid conductor	●							MB	1881	163	
Exposure CD player	1,049	Slightly weak sounding, but otherwise well optimised, if costly player	●							MB		188	
Harman/Kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is amplifier fussy	●							1bit		159	
R Harman/Kardon HD740	300	Powerful but subtle and involving player: welcome back, Harman/Kardon	●							DS		191	
R Harman/Kardon FL8300	300	Generally capable changer with relaxed sound and firm bass. Just a hint of roughness on occasion	●							MB	2220	178	
Harman/Kardon HD760	500	Sophisticated internally, but mildly disappointing when treading the boards in anger	●							MB		195	
Helios Model 3	650	Disappointing entry level model from Helios lacks verve and transparency	●							DS		188	
R Helios Model 2	950	This player may not be to everyone's taste, but it is an individual, with some interesting things to say	●							1bit	2180	176	
R JVC XL-V184BK	120	Excellent budget player, well presented, a little opaque, but its heart is in the right place								1bit	2072	172	
R JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined sound	●							1bit	1270	147	
R JVC XL-Z574	250	Strong resolving power, good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin	●							1bit		159	
R JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even-handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●							1bit	1637	151	
B Kenwood DP-3080	170	Bold, dynamic and outgoing sound, although somewhat aggressive. Poor build quality and finish	●							1bit		159	
Kenwood DPF-3010	180	Grey, somewhat mechanical sounding player	●							Hyb		191	
B Kenwood DP-4090	250	Focuses a clear, wide aperture lens on the music – and has CD Text too	●							1bit	2076	172	
Kenwood DP-5090	300	Disappointing senior brother to the excellent DP-4090, but surface interface is good	●							1bit	2267	179	
B Kenwood DP-7090	400	A lively and compelling performer with an even-handed and coherent disposition	●							MB	1885	163	
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multi-room features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●							Hyb		1762	155
Marantz CD-48	200	Somewhat inconsistent, middle ranking player which hints at better things	●							1bit	2077	172	
B Marantz CD6000 OSE	300	Superbly constructed, slightly emasculated sounding, but smooth and articulate	●							1bit		200	
R Marantz CD-63 MKII KI Sig	400	It's the quintessential sound of Marantz – warm, open, and smooth almost to a fault	●							Hyb		169	
R Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●							BS	1763	155	
R Marantz CD-17KI Sig	1,100	Minor QC problems aside, this is a superbly turned-out machine, but ultimately a little bland	●							BS	2181	176	
R Marantz CD-7	3,500	A superbly designed CD player, both inside and out. Precise and dramatic in equal measure	●							16bit		194	

CONTINUED

CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

AES/EBU DIGITAL OUTPUT
OPTICAL DIG OUT
ST OPT DIG OUT
BAL ANALOGUE OUT
HEADPHONE OUT
VARIABLE SOCKET
MULTI-DISC
FACTS/DAC TYPE
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU DIGITAL OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE OUT	VARIABLE SOCKET	MULTI-DISC	FACTS/DAC TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER	
R Mercurus Tanto	1,395	Believable tonal colours and textures, refinement takes preference over dynamics – but it's not cheap	●							DS	169	
B Meridian 506	1,100	Revised 506 includes MSR remote and a new DJA chip, which makes it livelier and more detailed	●			●				1bit 2182	176	
Monrio Asty	695	Well built player has solid, propulsive sound quality that deteriorates towards HF	●							DS	200	
Monrio Privilege	995	Costly and well-engineered, but ultimately rather heavy-handed and dull, if refined player	●							MB 1963	166	
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	799	Brilliantly packaged and clean but slightly antiseptic sounding player	●			●				MB	184	
B Musical Fidelity A3 CD	800	Excellent player has few faults apart from a slight loss of EHF detail	●			●				DS	200	
Myryad T-10	400	Rather ordinary player fails to shine with good music recordings	●							DS	184	
Myryad T-20	600	Matter of fact styling and sound quality, a tad bright for some systems	●							DS	195	
F Myryad MC100	700	A little extra get-up-and-go wouldn't go amiss, but its sheer maturity and composure ensure listenability	●							BS 1889	163	
Myryad MCD500	1,300	Well-built, attractive player, showing much promise, but can be a little heavy-going on audition	●							1bit 2185	176	
NAD 522	170	Crude, mechanical sounding player fails to tickle the music buds	●							1bit 2262	179	
F NAD 524	250	Clean, clear and essentially musical player in the NAD mould	●							MB	191	
NAD C540	330	Not cheap, and disc handling is pedestrian at best, but the C540 is smooth & elegant with just a hint of aggression	●							DS	200	
F NAD Silverline S500	1,100	It sounds as good as it looks, which is notably refined and easy on the ear	●	●	●			●		MB	195	
F Naim Audio CD3.5	1,000	Forward and explicit sound needs careful system matching	●							Hyb	188	
F Naim Audio CD2	2,000	Provides bags of detail with a solid stereo focus but not all the romanticism we know to be possible	●							MB 1890	163	
F Naim NACDSII/XPS	5,625	Brings you the Naim sound, but for once doesn't have to rely on Naim ancillaries to get the results	●							MB	188	
R Onkyo DX-7222	150	Competitive following recent price cut, and on the whole a strong performer musically	●			●				BS	200	
Onkyo DX-7510	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●			●				BS 1640	151	
Parasound C/DP-1000	499	Comes on like a high end player, but ultimately sounds a bit weak and soft-centred	●							Hyb	184	
B Philips CD-721	130	Surprisingly well-sorted, articulate if slightly glossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead	●							1bit 159		
Philips CD751	150	Inconsistent and occasionally opaque and scrawny sounding cheapie	●							1bit 172		
Pioneer PD-S507	200	Low cost Legato Link implementation sounds gentle but slightly muddled	●			●				DS	191	
F Pioneer PD-S707	300	Idiosyncratic Legato Link dominated sound, but always subtle and interesting	●			●				MB	184	
Pioneer PD-F906	350	Interesting appearance and concept, but this changer's sound is lacklustre and ergonomics frustrating	●			●				1bit 2223	178	
Pioneer PD-S904	400	Too much legato – literally – in sound, but a very smooth performer	●			●				1bit 1641	151	
F Pioneer PDS-06	550	Technologically sophisticated. Pioneer's first multi-bit player for years is polished and capable	●			●				MB 2176	176	
B Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	460	Assured, fluid-sounding player, with great spatial coherence	●			●				1bit 1965	166	
Primare D20	799	Well presented player doesn't quite cut the mustard, though it performs promisingly	●							BS	188	
Revox Exception E426	2,250	Very stylish with a light, agile sound that extends superbly and has fine timing	●					●		BS	182	
Roksan Kandy	475	Slightly old-fashioned sound quality player available in various colour schemes	●			●				DS	200	
F Roksan DP3P	1,495	Dramatic and compelling. Classical listeners should be ready to 'air conduct' when auditioning	●							BS 1896	163	
F Roksan Caspian	895	Solid, articulate, and fundamentally well-engineered player, but with some subtle low-level limitations	●							Hyb	169	
Rotel RCD-951	300	Disappointing chopped-down RCD-971 – buy the original	●							MB	191	
B Rotel RCD-971	450	Odd disc handling logic, but bold, detailed and refined sound make this a must	●							MB	184	
B Rotel RCD-991	750	Confirms Rotel's status as must watch brand: great stuff	●	●	●	●		●		MB	195	
F Sherwood CD-4030R	180	Easy on the ear, smooth-sounding player, with limits set by the slightly soft, compressed quality	●			●				BS	159	
Sherwood CD1	1,100	A very neutral, even handed sounding player with a rather flat, lifeless sound. Beautiful construction	●							BS 1899	163	
Sony CDP-XE530	140	Well equipped, but raw, scrappy sounding player lacks depth and weight.	●							Pulse	200	
Sony CDP-XE510	180	Souped up CDP-XE500 which tells a rather bland and unengaging story	●							1bit 172		
F Sony CDP-XB720E	200	Good basic performance and a number of filter settings make this an interesting player for tweaks	●			●				Low bit	184	
B Sony CDP-XB930E	300	Yet another first rate UK optimised player with all the bells and whistles	●			●				Pulse	195	
Sony CDP-XA20ES	450	High-tech, with a long list of gadgets, oddly configured player that ultimately sounds less than compelling	●			●				1bit 2177	176	
F Sony CDP-X3000ES	500	Shoebbox format player, looks to die for, switchable digital filters to tweak the already excellent sound	●			●				BS	169	
F Sony SCD-777ES	1,700	Beautifully built SACD player that looks like a bit of a CD player bargain	●			●				BS	198	
F Sony SCD-1	2,500	The first SACD player sounds fabulous but there's not much competition and limited software as yet	●			●				BS	194	
T+A CD1210R	1,185	Intriguing player with rather pushy basic sound, but has switchable digital filters	●			●				DS	188	
Talk Electronics Thunder 1	550	Entry level upgradeable Talk Electronics player sounds slightly muted	●							DS	200	
Talk Electronics Thunder 2	699	Fine player, slightly lacking in dynamics, but readily, if expensively upgradeable in various ways	●							1-bit 191		
F Talk Electronics Thunder 3	1,000	Clean, fast, and availability of a complete upgrade path make this a good long term proposition	●							DS	195	
F TAG McLaren CD20R	1,249	Dry and unatmospheric, but plenty of presence – recommended with caution	●							BS	188	
B Teac CDP-3450SE	200	For once a budget player where gadgets take second place to respectable, budget amp-friendly sonics	●			●				1bit 1960	166	
Teac CD-5	350	Bright, breezy and upbeat – but short in the trouser department	●			●				BS 1643	151	
Teac VRDS-8	600	Superb build quality is matched to good, but not exceptional sound quality	●			●				MB	184	
Teac VRDS-9	700	Well-presented. This Teac is crisp, yet shallow, and inconsistent in sound quality and partnering skills	●			●				1bit 2178	176	
Teac VRDS-10SE	850	Superbly built and presented, but rather leaden bass, with an over-prominent mid/top	●			●				BS	169	
Teac VRDS-25x	1,000	Excellent, individualistic player with bold, colourful sound, but test sample had iffy CD-R compatibility	●			●				MB	195	
Technics SL-PG480A	130	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unsubtle, slightly harsh top end	●							1bit 159		
Technics SL-PS670D	200	Fine, middle ranking player which sounds solid, sometimes even a little stolid	●			●				1bit 2264	179	
Technics SL-PS770D	250	High tech and well built technology battleship which smooths the rough edges off the music	●			●				BS 2080	172	
F Technics SL-MC410	250	If you fancy a CD player that holds 111 discs, this one's cheap, pretty capable, and easy to use	●							Hyb	2224	178
Thule Spirit CD100	600	Definitely a try before you buy machine, but the bass and mid are excellent	●							DS	188	
Trichord Genesis	549	Breathed-on Pioneer is warm and mellifluous, but ultimately lacks drive and authority	●							Hyb	169	
Trichord Revelation	799	Well-ordered and clean sound that may be a little too refined for some, images well	●							1bit 1966	166	
Tube Technology Fusion	1,100	Our early test sample was primitive and flawed, but showed signs of greatness	●							PA	195	
Tube Technology Fulcrum	2,800	An imaginative two-box player with a smooth sound that lacks some lustre	●			●				24bit	194	
Wadia 830	3,000	Envelope busting dynamics, power and imaging in a rather unexciting box (digital volume control)	●							MB	183	
E Wadia 860x	7,450	If you want to discover what CDs are really capable of this has few peers	●	●	●	●	●	●		MB	199	
Yamaha CDX-493	180	Open and lively, but this player is also messy and lacking resolving power	●			●				Hyb	191	
Yamaha CD-X993	400	A bit of a lush, though the sound is singularly free of grain, and equipment levels are strong	●			●				BS	184	
YBA Spécial	695	There is nothing here to justify the pricing or the high-end parentage. Avoid	●							MB	195	
F YBA CD1α	3,895	A remarkably fluid and graceful sound – one of the best we've heard below £5,000	●							18bit	194	

TRANSPORTS

Audio Note CDT Zero	399	Neat shoe box size transport sounds smooth and fluid in the right system. (Tested with DAC Zero)	●								191
Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing	●			●					1323 144
Roksan Attezza ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of sounding exciting with the right material	●							1bit 1867	162
Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound. (Tested with D-T1)	●			●					1325 144
Theta Data Basic II	2,397	Uses a Philips CDM9 Pro mechanism and works a treat with more lively DACs	●								1494 130
Thorens TCD2000	999	Lively presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble. (Tested with TDA 2000 DAC)	●			●					1867 162
R Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer	●			●					1867 162

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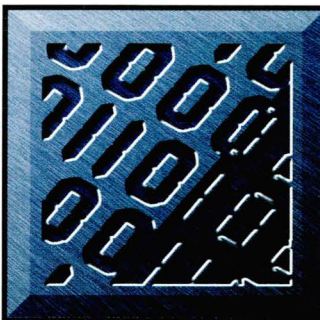
CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

OPTICAL DIG OUT
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT
BAL ANALOGUE OUT
ST OPT DIG OUT
HEADPHONE OUT
VARIABLE OUTPUT
MULT-DISC
DAC TYPE
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	OPTICAL DIG OUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	HEADPHONE OUT	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULT-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
DACS													
Alchemist TS-D-1	300	24/96-equipped DAC sounds tidy but a little shut-in with both 16-bit CDs and 24-bit, 96kHz DVDs										BS	187
Audio Note DAC Zero	369	Neat valve-equipped DAC sounds smooth and fluid in the right system. (Tested with CDT Zero transport)										Hyb	191
Linn Numerik	1,500	A new 20-bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a bit dry and humourless										MB	1323 144
Musical Fidelity X-24K	300	24/96 ready with a warm, natural sound and good soundstaging (tested with Pioneer DV-717)										MB	187
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590	The sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail. (Tested with Lambda transport)										MB	1106 133
PS Audio Reference Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics										MB	1069 132
Roksan Attessa ATT-DA2/DS5	1,145	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material										1bit	1867 162
Teac D-T1	500	Teamed with VRDS-T1 for test, this superb quality unit is tidy and composed										BS	1325 144
Thorens TDA2000	700	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble										BS	1867 162
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer. Switchable phase, dither etc.										Hyb	1867 162
DVD PLAYERS													
Denon DVD-2500	500	Good picture, but nondescript sound, except when using the digital output at full 24/96 throttle	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Denon DVD-3000	700	Enjoyable rather than analytical, includes 24/96 and AC-3/MPEG-2 Audio	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Denon DVD-5000	1,600	The first DVD-V player that ain't bad as a CD player. A fine musical device	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	187
Hitachi DV-P2E	400	DVD player, based on last generation Pioneer, is good but uninspiring	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
JVC XV-S2000	475	DVD player with excellent picture but flat sound in most modes	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	PEM	190
JVC XV-D701	500	Good video player, but rather undeveloped musically – CD Text is neat, though	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Kenwood DVF-9010	1000	DVD player with brilliant picture and clean, lively sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
Nakamichi DVD-10	800	Not the most compelling model in the resurrected Nakamichi line-up	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Panasonic DVD-A150	400	Simple, mid-market DVD player is vice-free but limited for the audiophile	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
Panasonic DVD-A360E	580	Powerful equipment, and unthrottled digital output notwithstanding, sound quality is modest at best	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Philips DVD750	400	Clever DVD with CD-R/CD-RW compatibility and surprisingly keen sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Pioneer DV-515	400	Unusually well equipped (CD-R compatible etc) DVD with more than fair sound and picture quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	190
Pioneer DV-626D	450	Superbly equipped, and more than respectable sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Pioneer DV-717	550	Superb DVD player with good picture quality and which really knows how to play 24/96 discs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	190
Samsung DVD-907	500	DVD player with below average picture, and lacklustre sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
Sony DVP-S7700	950	Powerfully endowed player offers articulate and believable sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Teac DV-1000	400	Blowsy, and occasionally astringent sounding, but otherwise straightforward and reasonably priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Theta DaViD	4,650	A top-notch CD transport, that also plays DVD-Video discs well. Pricy for a DVD transport, but worth it	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	191
Thomson DTH2000	380	This DVD player's main attributes are reasonable pricing and fair to good all round performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
Toshiba SD9000	800	Costly, high tech player with stunning pictures and crisp, slightly lightweight sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198
Yamaha DVD-S795	529	Fare price, and an unconstrained digital output, but otherwise unexciting	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	198



Digital Recorders

Domestic digital recording has been possible since the launch of digital audio tape (DAT) in the '80s. Since then DAT has remained expensive and largely esoteric, favoured only by well-heeled or professional users. Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc (MD) were launched in the early '90s but only MD has stayed the course. A little later came domestic CD-Recorders using CD-R discs, while the latest twist is the arrival of re-recordable CDs known as CD-RW discs. The recording quality hierarchy is as follows: DAT, CD-R/CD-RW, MD. MD is probably the most convenient to use, and offers sophisticated editing facilities, while CD-R is ideal for making digital 'clones' of prerecorded CDs. DAT is the medium of choice for high-quality location recording.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- FORMAT:** Type of recorder – see left for descriptions.
- DAC TYPE:** Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream; MB - multibit; Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream; 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc
- ADC TYPE:** The analogue to digital convertor (ADC) converts sound into digits during live recording. Types of ADC are as per DACs (qv).
- PORTABLE:** Battery operable, but not necessarily personal-stereo-sized.
- OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for optical cable.
- ELEC IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for electrical cable.
- FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback section of our Archive page.
- ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

Digital Recorders

SPECIFICATIONS

OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS
ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER
PORTABLE
DAC TYPE
ADC TYPE
FORMAT

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
MINIDISCS						
Denon DMD-1000	300	A good machine, but it still doesn't manage to shake off the MiniDisc plague of losing the listener's interest	●	●		184
Denon DMD-1300	500	Sound sometimes lacks integration but tonal balance is good and it handles loud music with panache	●	●	2193	177
Kenwood DMF-9020	500	One of the best MD decks yet for sound quality, and the first to make titling a practical proposition	●	●		191
Kenwood DM-9090	550	Slight sibilance and image vagueness do not detract from excellent balance and solid bass	●	●	2194	177
Marantz CM635	500	CD player and MD recorder in one box: a practical idea but sound and features don't really match the asking price	●	●		191
Onkyo MD-121	450	Mid-sized deck that sounds slightly coloured at times, though immediate and lively	●	●	2195	177
Pioneer MJ-D707	250	A handy set of features for the price, though sound is not outstanding	●	●		191
Sharp MD-R1 MkII	200	It's cheap: sound is not outrageously bettered by rather pricier competition. A bit thin on features though	●	●		191
Sharp MDR3H	300	Nifty machine combining a 3-disc CD changer with a MD recorder. Sound on both is rather below par, though	●	●		184
Sharp MD-R2	300	Budget recorder that loses little or nothing in comparisons with much more expensive models – highly capable	●	●	2196	177
Sony MDS-JB920	300	One of the better MD decks, its sound is neutral and dynamic. European Audio Recorder of the Year '98-'99	●	●		184
Sony MDS-JA20ES	500	Sound quality about as good as it gets with MD to date, and a very comprehensive features set too	●	●		191
Sony MDS-JA55ES	650	Probably the best MD deck to date, with consistently less quality loss over a wide range of programme. Lots of features	●	●		194
Yamaha MDX-793	300	Nice machine to use and has some useful features, but sound quality a little wanting	●	●		191
CD RECORDERS						
Marantz DR700	600	Dearer than Philips and Traxdata equivalents, with apparently only a smarter front panel to show for it	●	●		191
Philips CDR-880	499	Capable of making perfect copies of CD digital, and very acceptable copies of anything analogue too	●	●		184
Pioneer PDR-555RW	480	Competitor to Philips' CDR-880; can't make perfect copies but has the edge in replay and analogue record sound	●	●		184
Pioneer PDR-04	700	Scaled down version of the PDR-05 with auto level setting but all the socketry and features you need to make CDs	●	●		171
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000	The first domestic CD-R deck – excellent sound quality	●	●	1652	152
Traxdata Traxaudio 900	499	Identical to Philips and Marantz models: it makes bit-perfect copies of CDs and has perfectly acceptable replay	●	●		191



Headphones

There are several different ways of making a headphone. The most expensive models employ electrostatically-driven diaphragms within an open-backed earcup. Most mid-price designs feature dynamic, moving-coil-driven diaphragms in open, semi-open or closed-back designs. An open-backed headphone can sound remarkably transparent, but also permits the ingress of external noise. Closed-back designs keep out unwanted sound, but may be less comfortable to wear and more coloured. The latest development is the cordless headphone using either infrared light or, more recently, radio waves. Quality is improving, but has yet to match the best corded designs.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **TYPE:** Operating principle: D - dynamic, E - electrostatic
- **SUPRA-AURAL:** Where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.
- **CIRCAURAL:** Where the earcup encloses the ear.
- **OPEN BACK:** Offers an open sound but lets in noise.
- **CLOSED BACK:** Keeps out external noise.
- **MASS (g):** Mass in grams
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Load offered to the headphone amplifier. Many headphones offer a significantly higher value than loudspeakers, for example, but this does not mean they will be incompatible with the majority of amplifiers.
- **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR:** Compatible with mini-jacked components, eg personal stereos.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback section of our Archive page.
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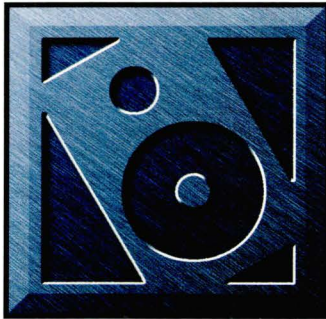
B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Headphones

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TYPE	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	MASS (g)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
AKG 301	70	Big 'phones with even and detailed sound but lacks sufficient bass weight	D					230	100		194	
AKG K 240 DF	100	Inoffensive 'phones that are very laid back, if lacking in grunt	D					240	600		186	
R AKG K1000	700	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs	D					270	120		99	
R Audio Technica ATH910PRO	80	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found	D					280	40		55	
R Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	100	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal	D					250	66		194	
R Audio Technica ATH-M40	120	Incredible detail and honesty from these classically designed studio 'phone	D					250	60		186	
Beyer DT311	50	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone	D					124	40		1098	133
Beyer DT411	63	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price	D					120	250		111	
Beyer DT331	65	Clear and extremely detailed sound with rather thin bass	D					210	40		194	
Beyer DT431	81	Nice looking 'phones that may not be the best players on the field, but will always give 100 per cent	D					210	40		186	
R Beyer DT511	106	Superb midband clarity and speed slightly at odds with soft bass. Even so, high tingle factor	D					200	250		2063	172
R Beyer DT531	135	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D					245	250		144	
B Beyer DT831	140	These provide silky, smooth textures in abundance and we're not just talking about the velvet ear pads	D				1/2	295	250		186	
Beyer DT100	160	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	D					350	600		157	
R Beyer DT911	170	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
Denon AH-D750	130	Loud and gutsy, meaty bass, good with rock and dance. Can sound thick and clumsy	D					250	30		2063	172
Grado SR-40	45	Cheap and nasty appearance largely redeemed by cheerful, up-beat sound. Very comfortable	D					120	32		2064	172
B Grado SR60	79	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste	D					200	32		194	
Grado SR-80	100	Open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes	D					60	8		1801	157
R Grado SR125	150	What these 'phones lack in style they make up for ten-fold in physical quality	D					200	32		186	
R Grado SR-225	200	Warm, darkly-coloured tonally and ultimately lacking in clarity, but true to the spirit of the music	D					200	32		1883	163
B Jecklin Float Model 1	79	While very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness	D					400	200		55	
JVC HA-D50	45	Detailed but with a characteristic mid-band all of their own and a modest amount of lower bass	D					290	56		194	
JVC HA-W60	49	Remarkable lack of interference and hiss ameliorates adequate sound of this cordless design	D					165	1/8		172	
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colorations	D					220	32		121	
R JVC HA-W200RF	75	Distinct lack of hiss from these FM cordless 'phones ensures that detail and depth are easily heard	D					180	20,000		186	
Koss TD/80	50	Oodles of bass but with a recessed midband; tiresome on the head with prolonged wearing	D					250	60		194	
Koss R/100	100	Rather cheap looking 'phones that supply good detail but are severely lacking in midrange excitement	D					215	60		186	
Precide Ergo Model 2	140	Still has much of the spaciousness of the Float from which it is derived, but coarse mid/top	D					380	100		1892	163
B Philips SBC 3396	70	Remarkably airy for closed-back designs. Fine tonal balance, punchy delivery. Amazing value for money	D					255	32		2064	172
Philips SBC HP900	90	Sharper, snappier midrange than 3396: initially impressive but blows it on balance and listenability	D					200	32		2065	172
Sennheiser IS 380	55	As close as you'll get to real hi-fi with infra-red phones at this price. Inevitable hiss spoils the illusion	D					192	1/8		172	
R Sennheiser HD 455	55	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound; modular, but can become dislodged from head	D					185	60		1801	157
Sennheiser HD 500	70	A disappointing pair that offer good stereo-imaging, but little else	D					210	32		186	
Sennheiser HD 475	80	Elegant, uncluttered sound and very comfortable but lean bass saps satisfaction	D					120	60		2065	172
Sennheiser RS 400	80	FM cordless 'phones that are very wearable, but slightly woolly sounding with interference problems	D					160	N/A		186	
R Sennheiser HD 570 Symph	90	Comfortable, light-weight 'phones with a detailed and open sound but lacks bass depth on weightier music	D					210	64		194	
R Sennheiser HD 545	125	Fine all-rounder that takes all styles of music in its stride. Ear-clamping headband	D					255	150		2066	172
B Sennheiser HD 565 Ovation	150	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable	D					255	150		1801	157
Sennheiser HE 60/HEV70/UK	998	Very nearly a superb electrostatic, with a pure midband, but top end is sibilant and edgy	E					260	N/A		1898	163
Sony MDR-605LP	50	Funky looking headphones that have a very bold, but tiring sound, with coloured bass	D					145	40		186	
Sony MDR-CD770	100	Neutrality and comfort make the Sony easy to live with. Correct-sounding too, yet musically unrewarding	D								1801	157
Sony MDR-V700DJ	100	Great looking fold-away 'phones with exceptional build quality. Kickin' bass	D					300	24		194	
B Sony MDR-CD1700	200	Astonishingly detailed, uncoloured and free of the usual artefacts from a sealed back headphone	D					325	32		1901	163
Sony MDR-F1	100	Natural, easy-going sound teamed with great looks and comfort. Shame about the lightweight bass	D					300	12		2066	172
Technics RP-DJ1200	130	Functional design with head-pulping bass and muggy tonal balance. Good job they're sweat-proof	D					230	32		2067	172
B Stax Lambda Nova Basic	449	Refined, articulate, yet with real presence – and a notable bargain by electrostatic standards	E					347	N/A		1902	163
Vivanco Cyberwave FMH3000	40	The only cordless 'phone to offer genuine walkabout freedom, but sounds like a cheap FM tuner	D					210	FM		172	
Vivanco IR5800	50	Consistently musical infra-red design. Doesn't reach for sonic heights so hiss can be forgiven	D				1/2	226	1/8		172	
R Vivanco SR650	50	Unusually comfortable 'phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive	D					175			1801	157
B Vivanco SR750	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics	D					188			1801	157
R Vivanco SR 950	80	Cuddly feel and sound make these an enjoyable pair of 'phones	D					252	32		194	
Vivanco FM7980	80	A fair amount of whine and crackle detracts from 'phones which are otherwise very listenable	D					280	9,000		186	
Vivanco FM8180	99	Well thought-out features and a better than average sound are, at times, marred by intrusive hiss	D					240	9,000		186	



Loudspeakers

As the last link in the hi-fi chain, loudspeakers are at the mercy of incoming signals. Nevertheless, distortions introduced by loudspeakers tend to be the most obvious. Inside the average loudspeaker is a simple electrical circuit (the crossover) which splits the incoming, full-frequency-range signal for the specific drive units to handle: highs to the 'tweeter', lows to the 'woofer'. For any speaker, designers must balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against bass extension (how low it goes). Subwoofers augment bass and are either passive (unamplified) or, preferably, active (self-amplified). Our 'bass from' figures are based on measurements in a particular room therefore results will vary in different environments.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SIZE WxHxD (cm):** Width by height by depth in centimetres.
- **FLOORSTANDER:** Requires no stand support.
- **SENSITIVITY (dB/W):** How much sound results for a given electrical input — the higher the figure, the louder the speaker. An 'A' indicates active operation.
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Impedance, measured in Ohms, indicates how much resistance the speaker presents to an amplifier. As impedance decreases, demands on an amplifier increase.
- **BASS FROM (Hz):** The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce effectively.
- **FREE SPACE:** Speakers which should not sit close to walls.
- **CLOSE TO WALL:** Speakers which should sit between 3 and 12cm from the rear wall.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback section of our Archive page.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (dB/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Acoustic Energy Aegis Centre	140	Good value centre-front speaker but a tad shut in and with a slightly obvious top end (price per speaker)	46,17,20		89	5	50	●			198
R	Acoustic Energy Aegis One	150	At a new low price, this has a very natural and transparent midband, erring a little on the dull side	19,36,5,24		87	6	40	●			187
R	Acoustic Energy Aegis Two	250	Floorstanding variation on the Aegis One theme, with a neutral, even and detailed if slightly shiny sound	19,87,24		89	8	40	●			201
R	Acoustic Energy Aegis Three	350	High value floorstander has deep and even bass and a smooth neutrality thereafter	19,90,25		90	5	22	●			198
R	Acoustic Energy AE120SE	500	Attractive styling and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance, and a difficult amp load	18,97,28		89.5	10	25	●			199
R	Acoustic Energy AE520	1,000	Could be more neutral, but high-class build is reflected in a high-class sound. Very elegant too	21,98,30		91	3	25	●			190
R	ALR Entry 2	250	Metal cone stand-mount has a generous performance envelope, but sound quality was controversial	20,33,29		90	4	22	●			201
R	ALR Jordan Note 7	2,500	A beguiling Anglo-German collaboration delivers metal-cone precision with fine dynamic range	25,107,32		92	4	25	●			196
R	AR 15	275	Neat and chunky wall/stand-mount certainly knows how to rock and roll, less convincing on the delicate stuff	22,37,22		90	4	45	●			201
R	ATC SCM10	1,000	A compact speaker with good transparency but lightweight bass	18,38,25.5		80	8	65	●			192
R	Audio Gem Emerald	540	Pretty, compact floorstander with lively if lightweight sound	18,94,21		87	6	40	●			1905 164
R	Audio Note AN-J/B	799	Light damping and local unevenness add some coloration, but don't spoil the speaker	38,58,25		93	8	25	●			110
R	Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	Coherent, dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity — but ugly	36,84,28		94	8	20	●			106
R	Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually-styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47		88	8	28	●			1344 143
R	Audiovector C2	799	Elegant two-and-a-half-way has a big, full bandwidth sound, but midband seemed a little underdeveloped	19,106,27		90	4	20	●			190
R	Audiovector M2	1,399	High-class, smooth and slightly laid-back performer has driving bass. It's upgradable, too	20,102,30		89	4	22	●			180
R	AVI NuNeutron	500	A smooth and subtle though pricey sub-miniature, albeit with the inevitable limitations of the breed	14,27,23		86	4	50	●			190
R	AVI Positron	899	This 'mini-floorstander' is capable of great precision and delicacy, but in a rather small-scale way	17,5,74,24.5		85	6	40	●			2130 174
R	B&W DM302	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45	●			1778 156
R	B&W 602 S2	300	Large stand-mount has fine dynamic literacy and good communication skills at a very competitive price	23,5,49,29		90	5	28	●			201
R	B&W DM305	350	Ridged paper cone gives lively sound, clever box, but a little uneven	22,87,31		89	4	40	●			1908 164
R	B&W LCR6	349	Large, gutsy standmount intended for all-round AV use delivers fine performance as a stereo pair too	20,5,55,32		90	5	20	●			198
R	B&W CDM2SE	400	Beautifully styled and finished, respectable midband. Lacks definition towards frequency extremes	22,32,25		87	6	40	●			183
R	B&W 603 S2	450	Capable of being driven seriously loud, but the cautious balance seems less happy playing at low levels	23,5,87,29		91	4	22	●			193
R	B&W CDM1SE	600	A great looking standmount with one of the best midbands around, and a subtle blend of other qualities	22,37,29		88	5	40	●			2209 177
R	B&W CDM7	1,000	A combination of serious welly and physical elegance; but a basic lack of midband smoothness	22,97,29		90	4	22	●			2131 174
R	B&W Nautilus 805	1,400	A small-sounding loudspeaker dynamically, but very stylish, clean and 'unboxy', delivering loads of detail	24,42,31		89	12	28	●			199
R	B&W Nautilus 804	2,500	The prettiest Nautilus has tremendous clarity and imaging but lacks the welly of bigger models	24,101,5,24.5		89	8	38	●			200
R	B&W Nautilus 802	6,000	Outstanding example of the high-tech speaker builder's art, needs real power but gives real sound	39,111,55		91	8	34	●			183
R	B&W Nautilus 801	8,500	The 801 is a magnificent loudspeaker in nearly every respect, but it is one that likes to play loud	52,111,69		91	8	34	●			186
R	Blueroom Minipod	249	The Minipod can show its competitors a thing or two about freedom from boxiness and looks fab	18,34,17		91	4	50	●			193
R	Cabasse Farella 400	950	Exciting but very up-front-and-in-yeer-face sound. High sensitivity, fine build and good dynamic drive	26,92,32		92	5	28	●			180
R	Carlsson OA52.2	1,500	Ultra-discreet design integrates cleverly with the listening room. Impressively unboxy, but sounds a bit thin	41,54,37		90	8	20	●			195
R	Castle Keep	250	Substantial centre-front speaker based on Harlech drivers but with rather brighter voicing	48,17,27-29		88	8	45	●			198
R	Castle Richmond	250	Tiny real-wood miniature has a lightweight but very coherent sound, a bit in-yeer-face but plenty of fun	17,33,20		90	5	50	●			201
R	Castle Inversion 15	425	This striking looking standmount is a good all-rounder, commendably free from boxiness	19-22,42,25		91	4	30	●			193
R	Castle Kendal	500	A beautifully finished compact floorstander with a decidedly forward but communicative sound	17,76,20		86	6	45	●			2204 177
R	Castle Severn 2	539	Carbon fibre cone gives lovely, subtle midband but treble is a bit dull and bass a bit thumpy	21,84,25		87	8	30	●			2120 174
R	Castle Harlech	880	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33		88	8	28	●			1820 160
R	Castle Inversion 100	1,975	Large semi-omni design with gorgeous Art Deco styling, sounds open but bass alignment is ill-tuned	26,5,111,45		91	8	20	●			195
R	Celestion 12i	119	Not without virtue, but the relentless enthusiasm and mid-band colorations can become wearing	19,31,21		88	6	45	●			2254 179
R	Celestion 23i	300	Cosmetically flawed, but the bottom end has fine get-up-and-go, and works well with dance tracks	24,86,27		89	6	30	●			2200 177
R	Celestion A Compact	600	Provided the room isn't too large and your tastes not too heavy, this is a charming little number	17,24,21		90	3	45	●			193
R	Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35		88	6	25	●			1910 164
R	Celestion A2	1,500	Full-scale, big sound from ultra-elegant floorstander. Smooth and slightly laid back presentation	24,93,39		89	6	22	●			180
R	Chario Syntar 100	249	Pretty with a pleasantly easygoing balance, but not the most communicative or exciting sound around	18,32,27		87	6	45	●			2020 170
R	Chario Hiper 1000	300	Classy looking standmount has a sweet, easygoing sound with fine midband voicing	18,35,28		87	4	45	●			187
R	Chario Constellation Lynx	550	Beautiful near-miniature is let down by a midband too laid back for its own good	20,36,26		87	3	40	●			190
R	Chario Academy Millennium 2	2,100	Price includes stands. A showy speaker that lives up to its own hype	22,53,35		90	4	55	●			190
R	Dali 606	400	A big bruiser at a tempting price. Sounds refined and polite, but also packs some punch	22,97,32		91	4	25	●			2121 174
R	Dali Royal Menuet MkII	400	Classy sub-miniature with a beautiful box and fine ingredients, but a little lacking in subtlety and excitement	16,26,18		87	3	50	●			190
R	Definitive Technology CLR2002	595	Pricey, but undoubtedly one of the better centre-front speakers around, with fine timing and open voicing	55,5,175,31		90	4	40	●			198
R	Definitive Technology BP2X	595	Pricey but effective bi-polar surround speaker, with unusually high sensitivity	23,37,15		94	4	120	●			198
R	Definitive Technology BP2004	1,700	Pricey bi-polar floorstander has a fine midband, let down by its built-in powered subwoofer	19,104,31		91	5	28	●			198
R	Dynaudio Audience 5	400	Follows the Dynaudio tradition for fine midband transparency, but the overall timbre is a bit thin	20,31,26		85	4	40	●			2205 177
R	Dynaudio Audience 40	400	Classy engineering content creates a winning combination of neutrality, dynamic range and involvement	17,28,25		87	4	40	●			190
R	Dynaudio LR/C 120	439	Slim centre and front standmount, has an evenhanded but rather laid back balance but lacks drive	16,5,57,31		89	5	25	●			198
R	Dynaudio Audience 50	577	This standmount doesn't look big, but sound quality can match many models at twice the price	20,33,25		86	4	30	●			2122 174
R	Dynaudio Audience 70	1,100	A highly competent and neutral speaker, but pricey for vinyl finish, and doesn't quite drag you into the music	20,5,93,25		88	6	20	●			199
R	Dynaudio Contour 1.8 MkII	1,842	Wonderful voice-band delicacy and loads of deep bass from a very elegant and compact box	21,95,29		85	4	20	●			1986 167
R	Elac CL102 II	599	Chunky floorstander with classy drivers has a neutral, slightly 'shiny' character, and could have more punch	20,95,28		88	9	23	●			199
R	Elac CL 310i Jet	800	It's pricey, and you can buy better performance for the money. Small speaker, good sound	12,3,20,8,28.2		86	4	42	●			191
R	Eltax Liberty 3+	150	Bright, bassy, laid back and attractively evenhanded, but dynamically challenged. Big box for your dosh	20,5,38,34		86	4	25	●			187
R	Eltax Linear Response	249	A curiously dumpy shape, but smooth, laid-back performer is easy on the ears, with fine tonal accuracy	25,35,32		85	4	40	●			2201 177
R	Eltax Chroma Front	300	Gorgeous shiny styling package at an ultra-competitive price, suffers from an excess of rather flabby bass	19,98,28		87	4	25	●			201

CONTINUED

Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (db/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (HZ) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Energy e:XL 25	400	Neat slimline design delivers a fine all round performance for the price, but could sound smoother	15,87,31	●	90	4	25	●	●		201	
Epos ES12	499	High quality luxury standmount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25		85	8	45	●	●	1823	160	
Epos ES25	1,655	Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance	24,90,35	●	88	6	22	●	●	1346	143	
Gale Z1	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27		88	7	40	●	●	2021	170	
Heybrook Prima 2	159	Great openness, speed and timing. Sounds fresh and vital, though sometimes lacks scale and weight	20,29,18		87	6	50	●	●	2256	179	
Heybrook Heylette	200	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature with classy main driver now has fine overall balance to match	19,5,30,22		88	4	45	●	●		187	
Heybrook Optima	259	A dumpy ugly duckling with a heart of gold. Deserves a better tweeter, but communicates well	22,88,29	●	94	4	30	●	●		193	
Heybrook Heylios	269	Classically styled stand-mount has a fine balance of smoothness and dynamics, plus real wood veneer	23,5,36,27		89	6	25	●	●		201	
Heybrook Ultima	649	Has the bass wallop to justify its dual hi-fi/home cinema roles, but doesn't excite	22,97,29	●	89	6	45	●	●	2126	174	
Heybrook Duet	750	Looks slightly old-fashioned, sounds a bit coloured but its fine timing and liveliness serve music well	23,43,30		88	11	27	●	●		199	
Heybrook Octet	1,800	Good-looking but pricey floorstander with novel drivers and a fine ceramic-enclosure midband	24,97,31	●	90	6	25	●	●		180	
Indigo Three	500	Cute 'n' chunky standmount is an entertaining communicator. Great fun, despite some sonic weirdness	23,30,5,32		86	17	24	●	●		199	
Infinity Delta 60	700	Striking and massive floorstander, lots of speaker for the price, but seems a victim of its own complexity	16-29,115,41	●	90	4	25	●	●		183	
Jamo BX100A	350	Offering a cracking output for their size, these rock boxes can be a bit bright but have decent bass	31,5,54,28		91	8	40	●	●	1758	155	
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom'n'tizz character sounded crude	22,90,29	●	90	4	28	●	●	1659	152	
Jamo Comet 195	350	Loads of bass, should have plenty of yooof-appeal – it looks the business, and is priced attractively	20,5,91,31		90	3	26	●	●		183	
Jamo 477A	500	Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price	19,77,28	●	88	4	40	●	●		1549	138
Jamo 507A	700	Imaginative styling keeps the front view super slim yet still it packs a punch. Glass top is a nice touch	22,94,37	●	88	3	40	●	●		2126	174
JBL LX2	250	Invigorating, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with enthusiasm	22,40,27		97	5	40	●	●	2022	170	
JBL Ti200	400	Very substantial standmount knows how to rock and roll, but can sound uncouth on more delicate material	21,41,30		82	8	40	●	●		193	
JBL L20	700	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 SVA1500	700	A distinctive Pro-style bi-radial horn tweeter, with a fun sound, enlivened by a juicy bass thump	17,5,1,31		86	8	40	●	●	2127	174	
JBL L40	1,000	Classic, large, three-way standmount is full of vim and vigour, with a superb sense of balance	30,65,31		88	4	23	●	●	1976	167	
JBL 4312 II	1,000	Crude but startlingly effective dynamics. The original party animal knows just how to rock'n'roll	36,60,30		94	4	25	●	●		190	
JBL SVA 2100	1,250	Monstrously large and brutish styling, goes very loud as well as deep. Fine focus but some boxiness	37,114,52	●	91	8	<20	●	●		180	
JBL L90	1,500	A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a bit crude	24,94,35	●	91	6	23	●	●	1348	143	
JBL LX70	550	Bassmeister supreme, shame the rest doesn't match up. Fine sensitivity but an itchy, scratchy treble	26,5,94,30	●	91	4	33	●	●		183	
JMLab Tantal 507	295	Competent all-rounder, this compact standmount has a good heart and sweet treble, but sounds a bit small	21,38,27		93	4	40	●	●		193	
JMLab Tantal 515	495	Lively and open if bright. Sound is entertaining and informative, but presentation is nondescript	20,94,26	●	92	5	32	●	●		183	
JMLab Cobalt 815	999	Hefty real-wood floorstander has a slight 'boom'n'tizz' character but delivers big speaker grip and dynamics	22,100,31	●	90.5	9.5	22	●	●		199	
JMLab Spectral 909.1	1,375	Multi-driver array in a large and very substantial enclosure. Good scale but lacks delicacy and sweetness	27,107,35	●	90	4	20	●	●		180	
JMLab Electra 915	1,795	Fine headroom and bass, and classy engineering too, but also a tricky amp load which lacks delicacy	26,5,106,36	●	92	4	20	●	●		195	
JMLab Mezzo Utopia	7,250	Looks good and sounds even better. A genuinely big speaker with fantastic coherence	35,115,47	●	92	4	30	●	●		186	
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 ML510	130	Lots of good quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components	20,34,22		88	5	50	●	●		169	
JPW ML910	330	Loads of speaker for the money, plenty of headroom and loudness capability, but sounds dull	23,104,30	●	91	4	43	●	●		183	
JPW ML1010	400	A seriously substantial speaker for the price, and an obvious choice for those who like their music loud	22,5,115,40	●	91	6	25	●	●	2031	170	
JPW Ruby 1	400	Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good if slightly edgy balance	19,32,21		87	6	55	●	●	1572	139	
JPW Ruby 4	1,000	Twin metal-cone main drivers improve the dynamic performance and bass extension, with little sacrifice	22,94,26	●	88	8	25	●	●	2132	174	
KEF Coda 7	129	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be more taut and build tougher	18,30,23		88	6	50	●	●	1783	156	
KEF Cresta 2	149	A good looking/value package but sonically disappointing, and no match for the Q15	20,5,37,24		91	4	40	●	●		195	
KEF Coda 8	189	Outstandingly well-balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29		86	6	28	●	●	1784	156	
KEF Q15	200	Beautifully balanced and voiced standmount, but a potentially tricky amplifier load at high frequencies	20,5,31,27		90	2.5	30	●	●		187	
KEF Coda 9	299	Uneven budget three-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●	●	1785	156	
KEF RDM One	499	Cute and tiny, nice midband but lack of bass warmth and weight	23,30,24		88	6	70	●	●	1913	164	
KEF Q65	799	Dumpy-looking three-way has loads of bass and a laid-back midband; goes loud but lacks poise and impact	23,95,31	●	92	2.5	25	●	●		190	
KEF RDM Three	1,500	Definitely a speaker aimed at long-term satisfaction rather than immediate impressiveness. Nice	24,100,27	●	90	4	40	●	●		189	
KEF Reference Model 2	1,599	Classy, large floorstander that has massive headroom and clean mid-to-treble, but limited deep bass	23,103,34	●	89	4	30	●	●	1987	167	
Keswick Audio Aria II	379	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24		89	8	20	●	●	1405	148	
Keswick Audio Torino	999	Good value, lively contender with distinctive styling. Goes loud and deep but could be smoother	18-26, 93,28	●	90	4	20	●	●	1977	167	
Linn Kan	295	Great bass discrimination from size, ensuring a very informative, if slightly shut-in experience	19,31,19		86	4	45	●	●		187	
Linn Kellidh Passive	750	Stunning timing and coherence, awesome bass drive	20,83,28	●	87	4	22	●	●	1552	138	
Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving	20,90,28	●	87	4	25	●	●		118	
Living Voice Auditorium	1,500	Pretty, compact floorstander has wonderful coherence, high sensitivity and fine dynamic integrity	21,5,98,29	●	91	4	25	●	●		180	
Living Voice Avatar OBX-R	4,000	Discreet but extremely fine design with external crossover and an affinity with valves	21,5,104,27	●	89	8	45	●	●		196	
Magnat Vintage 320	350	Loads of speaker for your money, but the sound is thick, heavy and lacking in presence and authority	25,102,30	●	90	4	20	●	●		201	
Magnat Vector 77	450	Tall, dark and a lot of speaker for the money. Beautiful balance, but lacking in subtlety and transparency	22,115,29	●	89	5	30	●	●		183	
Magnat Vintage 720	1,200	Slightly crude in some respects but lots of heart, fine scale, decent dynamic coherence and integrity	29,113,52	●	88	4	20	●	●		180	
Mission 700	130	A lot of speaker for the money. Good bass weight and extension and goes loud with ease	18,34,26		87	8	40	●	●	2257	179	
Mission 771	170	Beautiful standmount miniature has a delightfully well balanced and voiced sound, and real wood finish	17,31,22		86	7	45	●	●		187	
Mission 77C	199	A good centre-front match for 77-series, the triple tweeter might be a curiosity, but voicing is very good	42,17,21		91	4	100	●	●		198	
Mission 77DS	199	Neat flush-mount surround speaker has no bass but a smooth midband and nicely restrained treble	34,26,12		92	4	120	●	●		198	
Mission 780	299	Gorgeous miniature has a fine midband and clean, bright treble, slightly odd bottom end	16,5,28,27		86	6	40	●	●		201	
Mission 773e	400	Beautifully designed slim floorstander could be more neutral but still delivers an all-round entertaining sound	17,5,88,26	●	92	4	30	●	●		193	
Mission 774	500	Gorgeous floorstander is an entertaining communicator, despite some balance oddities (bright treble)	18,95,31	●	90	4	40	●	●		183	
Mission 752 Freedom	578	A beautifully judged compromise in the art of combining presentation with a decent sound	20,90,25	●	89	8	45	●	●	2123	174	
Mission 782	699	Ultra-compact floorstander has a glorious midband and slightly odd bass. Good communication skills	16,5,82,28	●	86	9.5	25	85	●		199	
Mission 753 Freedom	798	Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics	21,90,31	●	89	4	40	●	●	1914	164	
Mission 754 Freedom 5	1,298	Tall but exceptionally elegant floorstander gives fine midband projection; goes loud but limited deep bass	22,111,31	●	88	4	40	●	●	1981	167	
Monitor Audio 702PMC	700	A good all-round standmount with intimate midband focus	20,40,25		87	8	30	●	●	2128	174	
Monitor Audio MA703PMC	800	Lovely but pricey floorstander has upfront, coherent, 'shiny' sound	20,89,27	●	88	8	50	●	●	1826	160	
Musical Tech Kestrel Evolution	315	Cutey styled, devery compact and a smooth, subtle and coherent performer, best suited to smaller rooms	20,85,19	●	86	4	40	●	●		201	
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	
Musical Technology PM15	450	A subtle, understated but very involving example of the 'classic' luxury-finish compact standmount	20,41,27		88	5	38	●	●		183	
Musical Technology Falcon	680	Big speaker has a big but also surprisingly smooth and civilised sound. Fine material value too	33,117,30	●	89	4	22	●	●		190	
Musical Technology Condor	1,000	Lots of clever ideas in a floorstander, which places transparency and smoothness ahead of dynamic drama	25,91,23	●	85	4	28	●	●	2134	174	
Naim Intro	660	Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth	24,89,27	●	89	6	30	●	●	1916	164	
Naim Credo	1,060	Involving sound, but rather forward and cold. Good clarity, but some coloration and a lack of richness	24,89,30	●	88	8	28	●	●		180	

CONTINUED

Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (db/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTS/BACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS								
Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy – smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	●	88	6	25	●	1352	143
Naim NBL	6,648	Elegant, large floorstander is exceptionally informative with an awesome dynamic range and dry, forward balance	29,116,47	●	89	4	20	●		200
Neat Critique 2	445	Contemporary standmount has a clean, crisp sound with lovely natural midband voicing	22,32,24	●	86	6	50	●		183
Neat Mystique Mk2	575	This elegant package delivers a fine overall sound quality; some might find the top end too insistent	20,86,18	●	85	6	23	●	2211	177
Neat Elite	1,195	A highly entertaining all-rounder, has a planar tweeter that sounds sweet, if not particularly smooth	20,88,18	●	88.5	6	25	●		195
Neat Petite II/Gravitas	2,000	Beautifully presented miniature/subwoofer combo with ribbon tweeter gives smooth, laid-back sound	23,105,40	●	85	6	25	●	1988	167
NHT Super One	250	A fine compromise between size and performance, sensitivity and hence loudness capability is modest	18,5,29,5,23	●	85	8	30	●		170
NHT 1.5	400	This compact standmount sounds much bigger than it has any right to. Good timing and communication skills	18,42,19-26	●	85	6	40	●		177
NHT Super Two	550	Black and shiny compact three-way floorstander has marvellously even balance and good coherence	18,5,100,26	●	87	8.5	25	●		199
Opera Prima	495	Good-looking hardwood enclosure, plus fine mid and treble, but less satisfactory bass	19,34,31	●	90	4	40	●		190
Origin Live Conqueror	1,650	Chunky floorstanding three-way has lovely cabinetwork and lively sound, but limited deep bass	24,94,27	●	88	8	30	●	1989	167
Orelle Swing	1,200	A superb example of what an essentially small loudspeaker can do, with bags of brio and enthusiasm	18,101,28	●	87	8	45	●		195
PMC TB1S	430	Pro-audio version of TB1, cheaper because of black paint finish	20,41,30	●	87	6	40	●	2207	177
PMC TB1	482	A classy, laid-back performer that likes going loud and loves the bass guitar	20,40,31	●	87	8	45	●	1830	160
PMC LB1	999	Still fully competitive eight years after our original review, this genuine compact monitor is now a modern classic	17,5,53,26	●	87	6.5	40	●		199
PMC AB1	1,496	Lovely, panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room	26,79,43	●	89	6	22	●		114
Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	●	89	8	25	●	1155	138
Polk RT16	799	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39	●	91	4	22	●	1831	160
Polk CS 1000p	999	Monstrously large and heavy centre-front speaker, presumably for those with monstrous intentions	87,22,35	●	92	4	25	●		198
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
Polk RTE 1000p	1,300	Tall elegant tower with built-in powered bass 'subwoofer' that needs using with discretion. Bright but engaging	20,110,35	●	91	4	25	●		198
ProAc Response 2.5	2,700	For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good boxes, this speaker should be first port of call	22,107,25	●	86	8	30	●	1457	149
ProAc Studio 125	1,000	Pretty if pricey compact floorstander with a beautifully natural and neutral midband, and some bass thump	20,94,28	●	87	8	28	●		192
QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal standmount with heavy, laid-back balance but remarkably unboxy sound	27,37,36	●	83	4	25	●		167
Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative	19,31,19	●	87	8	50	●		114
Rega EL8	298	Kyte drivers in compact floorstander give more bass but less coherence	17,72,20	●	86	8	55	●		122
Rega Jura	450	Beefy sounding, chunky floorstander sounds very 'direct coupled' to the music, if a touch 'boom'n'tizz'	22,5,92,5,26	●	90	5	25	●		193
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
Rehdeko RK 115a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic coherence	34,42,27	●	95	8	55	●	1982	167
RMS Revelation Series 1	1,299	Innovative metal-box compact with integral port/stand – clean with good timing but very laid-back balance	20,99,24	●	81	8	22	●	1983	167
Roksan ROKone	595	Large standmount is musically very communicative, if a little coloured	21,45,33	●	89	6	30	●	1834	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
Roksan OJ3X Black	995	Innovative low-line, two-way floorstander with decoupled tweeter; great bass and fine dynamic range	28,79,46	●	84	8	20	●	1979	167
Royd Minstrel	275	Not much welly or loudness, but fine coherence and timing; a bit bright	18,69,12	●	86	8	30	●	1167	135
Royd Doublet	485	Great value compact floorstander: lively and very informative, if a little uneven	18,93,19	●	90	4	28	●	1835	160
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Extremely musical and communicative speaker that's fun to listen to. Aesthetics could be better, though	20,31,18	●	86	8	35	●		139
Ruark Epilogue	269	Beautifully finished miniature with a lively balance and plenty of charm; best suited to smaller rooms	17,29,23	●	87	8	47	●		183
Ruark Sceptre	599	'Traditional' cabinetwork with classy veneer and shiny gilt fixings, hampered by rather wayward sound balance	21,38,31	●	87	8	40	●	2129	174
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence	23,84,32	●	88	8	30	●		118
Ruark Crusader	1,599	Elegant luxury three-way with wonderfully even-handed, if rather laid-back balance	24,94,31	●	85	6	22	●	1990	167
Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to vanish behind the music	25,88,34	●	88	6	45	●	1227	140
Ruark Excalibur	7,000	A big, handsome speaker with a big, laid-back but open sound, rocking bass and loads of headroom	30,125,53	●	90	4	30	●		186
Sequence 400	329	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great	25,100,7	●	86	8	45	●	1917	164
Shahinian Arc	1,875	Occasionally wonderful, small, floorstanding omni directional design: bright but coherent and revealing	35,69,25	●	88	6	24	●		110
Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact: neutral if bright, tough work for amps	20,40,25	●	83	3	30	●	1918	164
Snell K.5	795	Classic AV-ready stand mount is very solidly engineered. Sound is neutral but lacks excitement	22,46,30	●	87	6	25	●		190
Snell XA75ps	4,500	Active bass floorstander with marvellous mid coherence, slightly suspect bass integration.	28,117,50	●	91	6	25	●		194
Soliloquy SM 2A3	1,095	Fine match in balance, coherence, transparency and speed. Intended for use with Cary CAD 2A3SE	35,5,19,30	●	91	8	45	●		196
Sonus Faber Concertino	599	A beautifully neutral loudspeaker in a beautiful Italian suit of clothes. Classy, if quite pricey	21,32,29	●	87	5	30	●		193
South Coast Speakers Lancelot	895	Pretty compact standmount has nice ribbon tweeter but sounds a bit soft and lacks dynamic vigour	19,36,26	●	84	8	45	●		199
Spendor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound	18,89,27	●	87	8	30	●	1836	160
System Audio 1130	499	Super-slim, super-smooth, involving experience, but not ideal if you like your bass deep and loud	3,100,21	●	89	4	43	●		183
System Audio 1150	749	Pricey but persuasive, sonic subtleties sneak up to confound a dodgy first impression. Super-slim	16,105,26	●	90	4	30	●		190
Tannoy Mercury M1	120	Sounds much bigger and expensive than it is. Solid, tuneful bass, wide open soundstage, excellent imaging	17,30,20	●	87	8	50	●	2259	179
Tannoy Mercury M2	140	A fine all-rounder with big box and deep bass for the price; could be sweeter and tighter	20,5,38,28	●	87	8	25	●		169
Tannoy R1	200	Pretty little mini-monitor is smooth, well mannered and polite to a fault, lacks dynamic expression	17,30,22	●	86	4	30	●		187
Tannoy Saturn S6C	200	A punchy compact standmount based on a serious cast-frame, pro-style dual-concentric driver	38,21,29	●	89	6	25	●		198
Tannoy Mercury M3	230	Good-looking floorstander; very neutral and even-handed, with fine midband but weak dynamics and drive	20,5,87,28	●	87	7	20	●	2025	170
Tannoy mX3	300	A great all-round compromise at a very modest price, combining good looks with fine midband voicing	18,5,87,26	●	90	5	40	●		201
Tannoy Revolution R2	350	Bargain price real wood floorstander is beautifully voiced and very even-handed, if a tad laid back	17,94,24	●	90	4	20	●		193
Tannoy Saturn S6LCR	400	A punchy compact standmount based on a serious cast-frame, pro-style dual-concentric driver	21,38,29	●	89	6	25	●		198
Tannoy Saturn S6	500	Fine value vinyl floorstander offers plenty of genuine grunt and real dynamic tension	21,89,29	●	91	4	20	●		198
Tannoy Revolution R3	550	Handsome real-wood floorstander does a decent job, but lacks the evenness of its smaller R2 brother	18,5,103,28	●	89	8.5	28	●		199
Tannoy D300	999	Gorgeous-looking compact floorstander. And a fine all-round performer, too	16-24,85,23	●	87	6	26	●		167
Tannoy D500	1,999	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	6,600	These awesome horn-loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive	large	●	99	8	38	●		C93
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	●	85	8	25	●	1666	152
Triangle Cometes	359	Communicative standmount has great midband dynamics, but the very bright top end might be intrusive	22,40,29	●	91	4	42	●		193
Triangle Zephyr II	599	Loads of fun. Dramatic dynamics and righteous timing will give any hi-fi system a wake-up call	22,94,29	●	91	4	25	●		190
Totem Model One	1,195	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size	17,31,23	●	87	4	28	●		122
Veritas H3	6,000	Loads of fun with wonderful dynamic and temporal integrity from horn-loaded Lowther drivers	30,110,47	●	104	4	50	●		191
Vienna Acoustics Mozart	1,500	Gorgeous slimline floorstander sounds very laid-back but very charming, and musically literate	17,97,30	●	88	7.5	25	●		199
Wilson benesch Bishop	20,000	Deep and even bass sets new standards for cleanliness and clarity; lovely open midband too	23,161,561	●	89	4	S20	●		189
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140	A good-hearted, lively and up-front performer that's a little lacking in subtlety and smoothness	19,29,5,23	●	88	4	45	●		169
W'dale Diamond 7.2 Anniversary	200	Lively and exuberant, but a tad untidy with it; can sound a bit cold and hard	19,29,5,24	●	88	4	40	●		187
Wharfedale Valdsu 400	200	Very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	25,80,26	●	91	8	30	●	1414	148
Wharfedale Valdsu 500	300	These rock boxes can move plenty of air, albeit not as subtly as alternatives	25,108,26,5	●	91	4	40	●	1758	155

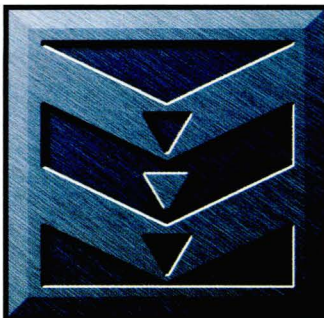
CONTINUED

Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (db/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (HZ) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PRICE	HEIGHT	DEPTH	WIDTH	SENSITIVITY	IMPEDANCE	BASS FROM	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
R	Zingali Overture 2S	1,975	Gorgeous, pricey, imposing standmount has a horn tweeter of great delicacy. Impressively weighty	30,57,38	90	8	25	●						195	
SUBWOOFERS															
	Acoustic Energy AE108S	299	Lots of loud subwoofer for your money, though ultimately more film than music oriented	50,42,43						20			●	2247	179
	B&W ASW1000	499	(Active) Very competently engineered all round, and goes (unnecessarily) very loud	54,47,48				A		20			●	2248	179
R	JB&W SW1000	499	Bulky heavyweight is a high quality item, able to generate more bass output than music is likely to need	54,47,50	●			A		A20	●			198	
R	JPW SW60	349	A real heavyweight, sounds clean and transparent, if perhaps a little understated. Usefully flexible	55,47,39						20			●	2249	179
	KEF Model 30B	499	(Active) Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension	38.5,37,43	●			A		45				1736	154
R	M&K MX70	900	(Active) Justifies cost and belies its diminutive size, with an agility that makes sense of the toughest material	25.5,46,35				A		25			●	2250	179
	Mission 7AS2	399	Ugly if very effective at supplying very low bass, but filter could do with more flexibility higher up	56,30,31	●					<20	●			198	
R	REL Q50	375	(Active) Genuinely deep, clean bass from an attractively compact and cost-effective package	40,41,42				A		20			●	2251	179
	Soliloquy S10	1,050	(Active) Pretty subwoofer, cosmetically matching SM 2A3 speakers, pricey and mid-bass a bit strong	51,30.5,46	●			A		25			●		196



Stands & Supports

Hi-fi supports are more important than you might imagine – they can have very subtle effects on the sound of your system! There are two kinds of support: those for equipment and those (stands) for loudspeakers. Equipment supports keep vibrations and resonances from affecting electronic components, while speaker stands hold enclosures stock-still and ensure they are at the correct height for your ears. Equipment supports may be rigid affairs fabricated from steel or more exotic materials; or they may have a form of suspension. Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models, and vary between open-frame and solid-pillar types. Always check with speaker and electronics manufacturers to see which supports they recommend.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **HEIGHT (cm):** How tall is your support?
- **TOP PLATE SIZE (cm):** Dimensions of top surface on stand or equipment support.
- **FILLABLE:** Some speaker stands can be mass-loaded with sand or lead-shot to improve sound.
- **WELDED:** The better stands and supports are welded together rather than just bolted.
- **NUMBER OF SHELVES:** The number of tiers on an equipment rack or support.
- **SHELF TYPE:** The material from which shelves are made. Wood generally means Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF).
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faded review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback section of our Archive page.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stands & Supports

SPECIFICATIONS

TOP PLATE SIZE (cm) FILLABLE WELDED NUMBER OF SHELVES SHELF TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PRICE	HEIGHT	DEPTH	WIDTH	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS														
R	Avik Furniture A4	350	Good sound and stylish Scandinavian looks at an affordable price	80.5	47					4	Wood		193	
	Alphason GR 17/17-AS	275	Great looks but sound can be bettered for the money	36	60,39					4	Glass		181	
	Apollo Soprano	275	Uninspiring looks and sonic performance that can be beaten at this price	68.5	45.5					4	Glass		193	
R	Atacama Europa	240	Stylish, expandable modular design with agreeable full-bodied sound – great value	67	48.6					4	Wood		193	
R	Audiophile Furniture Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43					4	MDF		193	
R	Avid Isosshelf	1,100	An enthusiasts equipment support stand free from coloration if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48					5	MDF		193	
R	Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1,199	Blockbusting size and build. Super sound quality	92	45,49					●	4	Marb	181	
R	Elemental Audio Isotube X4	849	A hefty stand that demonstrates just how much difference a good support can make	90	49					●	4	Glass	193	
	Fi-Rax R4	399	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass							5	Glass	1633	151	
R	Frameworks H500/H175	404	Two-shelf stand and isolation platform combo in tubular steel – made a spectacular impression on audition	70	52,34					●	3	Glass	1952	166
	Ixos Deadrock 704	250	Looks unassuming but sound is full and inviting		46,39					4	Resin		181	
R	Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	King of its type: angle iron, chipboard and glass combine to make a significant difference to sound quality	56	49,39					●	1	Glass	147	
R	Mana 5 Tier Sound Table	600	Infinitely upgradeable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle-iron design that adds speed and bandwidth	91	49, 39					●	5	Glass	1633	151
R	Optimum Int 2000 OPT490	299	25kg stand with shelves between variable-height tubular uprights. Sounds smooth and relaxed with sturdy bass	50	60,40					4	Glass	1953	166	
R	Optimum Int 2000 OPT660	349	Glitzy style isn't reflected in sound, which is wholesome	82	60,52					5	Glass		181	
R	Projekt Furniture A4	215	An elegant support stand that blends in to any home environment with a laid-back sound	56	48					4	Wood		193	
R	Quadraspire Q4	250	Easy to live with, tonally neutral	54	40,49					4	MDF	1633	151	
R	Sound Organisation Z560	160	Welded and bolted members give structural integrity. While performance is not up with the best, it's great value	90	46,36					●	5	Wood	1954	166
	Sound Organisation Z545	160	Budget price and great looks make this a great value stand	73	46					●	4	Glass	193	
R	Soundstyle X100	230	Looks lovely, sounds lively but slightly bright	64	49,28					●	4	Glass	181	
	Soundstyle Radius SR100	280	Stylish looks and a smooth sound	63.5	49.5					●	4	Glass	193	
R	Soundstyle Select 6105	290	Respectable sonics: structurally solid and smart	78	43,36					5	Glass	1633	151	
	Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320	Veneered shelves clamped between tubular uprights. Delivers with classical material	82	48,27					4	Wood	1955	166	
	Stands Unique Sound Tower	289	Wooden uprights combine with glass shelves to provide a fresh, forward sound, but bass could be quicker	81	72,42					5	Glass	1633	151	
R	Standesign Design 4	190	An all-in-one support at a budget price with good sonic performance	88.5	50.8					●	4	Glass	193	
R	Target B5	175	Free of colorations, fine grip and good value	81	49,36					●	5	Wood	1633	151
R	Townshend Seismic Stand	1,245	It's big, it wobbles and it's pricey. But this is the ultimate equipment support	72	58,45					3	Wood		181	
R	Wilson benesch Asside	590	Sounds even better than it looks. And it looks wonderful	72	37,50					4	Wood		181	
SPEAKER STANDS														
	Alphason HDS	85	A reasonable stand with a smooth but rather bland sound balance. Good finish options	45-60	15.5,15.5					●			189	
	Apollo Olympus	75	A popular stand and a decent performer, but unremarkable by today's standards	40-60	15,12.5					●			189	
	Apollo AZ6	80	Fine engineering value, but sound is unexceptional and top-plate small	66	15,13					●	●		159	
R	Atacama BD21	55	Good looking and good value, but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17					●			159	
R	Atacama R724	150	Atacama uses its market strength to deliver a superbly appointed product at a very reasonable price	60	15,17					●	●		189	
R	Atacama SE24	70	Stands out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of its performance	61	19.5,17					●	●		1373	146
R	Custom Design R/S 300	70	Combining strong aesthetic and sonic appeal at a popular price point, this is a good stand all round	40.6-60.9	15,15					●	●		189	
R	Elemental Isotube SZse	599	Stands of distinction, able to free the speaker's sound from its box in a way budget stands simply can't	61	23,27					●	●		189	
R	JPW H51	120	A purposeful stand, a touch dry-sounding but particularly strong with bass. Great for rock and dance music	61	19,21					●	●		189	
R	Mana Soundframes	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks, these make music effortless and natural. Can be stacked	5						●	●		1373	146
R	Partington A-4	119	An oddball stand with a sound that's sheer class. More open and focused than almost anything below £150	50-100	19,22					●	●		189	
R	RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	349	Pricey carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A								159	
R	Russ Andrews Torlyte	599	Subtle and musical-sounding stands, though a touch more 'pizzazz' is need for Recommendation at this price	61	33.5,24								189	
	Sound Organisation Z524	69	A coherent-sounding stand with particular strengths in the midband, though quality drops at the frequency extremes	61	16,17								189	
R	Stands Unique HP	220	Real wood disguises high-performance tuned technology	59	22,23								159	

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Stands & Supports

SPECIFICATIONS

TOP PLATE HEIGHT	FILLABLE WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.
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STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TOP PLATE HEIGHT	FILLABLE WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.
Target R1	280	Truly high-mass four-pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack	53	15,21	● ●	1373	146
Target TR60	68	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less-than-audiophile-oriented, twin-column design	60	15,15	● ●	1373	146



Tonearms

Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). However, hard-core vinyl fans should invest in a more expensive separate motor unit with specialist tone-arm – the only way to make the most of vinyl LPs. It is essential to achieve operational synergy between such components, so this is one area of hi-fi where the skills of a knowledgeable dealer are invaluable. The quality of a tonearm's construction and design affect sound quality significantly. There are three basic arm designs listed in the key, and each has strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, being usually the most practical and affordable.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **EFFECTIVE MASS:** This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.
- **PARALLEL TRACKING:** An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
- **PIVOTED:** Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.
- **UNI-PIVOT:** Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
- **EFFECTIVE LENGTH (CM):** Length of the arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.
- **ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT:** Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback section of our Archive page.
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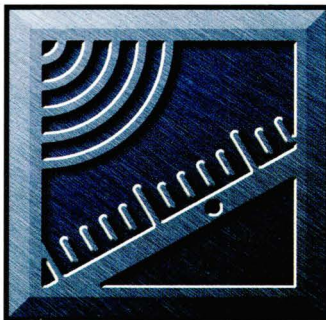
Tonearms

SPECIFICATIONS

PARALLEL TRACKING	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.
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STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PARALLEL TRACKING	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,250	Large, solid and well made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High	●	●	●	●	79	
Linn Ekos	1,500	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Medium	●	●	229	●	67	
Mothy/RB250	109	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low	●	●	237	●	60	
Rega RB300	174	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low	●	●	237	●	60	
Roksan Tabriz Basic	350	Targeted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases – a touch bright though	Low	●	●	240	●	91	
SME Series IV	983	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low	●	●	233	●	60	
SME Series V	1,461	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price	Low	●	●	233	●	60	



Tuners

TV has stolen radio's status as the foremost broadcast entertainment medium, but with its Radio Four plays and Radio Three music, the BBC still makes a potent case for audiophile reception equipment. For how much longer, under the cost-conscious Birtist régime, remains to be seen. Another new imponderable is the arrival of digital radio broadcasting, though reception apparatus is currently non-existent outside of the in-car market. These days tuners play second fiddle to hi-fi sources like CD, but in many ways they are a greater engineering challenge than digital equipment, and thus higher price-tags clearly equate to superior performance. High-quality, roof-mounted antennae are essential for audiophile listening, so factor them into your budget.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **WAVEBANDS:** FM – (VHF), M – MW, L – LW.
- **PRESETS:** Number of station frequencies that can be stored.
- **RDS:** (Radio Data System) was originally designed for in-car applications. RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, traffic news and other information about broadcasts.
- **REMOTE CONTROL:** Infra-red control handset supplied.
- **SIGNAL STRENGTH METER:** Indicates strength of signal from aerial – useful for aligning your 'twg' during installation.
- **ROTARY TUNING KNOB:** Experience has shown that this analogue throwback is ergonomically far superior to the button-based approach.
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Tuners

SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
AMC T7	130	Performance adequate but price is sharp, especially with remote control. Some hum	FM, M	30	●	●	●	●	1945	166
Arcam Alpha 7	230	Indifferent RF performance but a touch of audiophile sound quality with clean, strong signals	FM, M, L	24	●	●	●	●	1946	166
Arcam Alpha 10 DRT	800	The first DAB tuner and arguably still the best, but the system's still not perfect	DAB	7	●	●	●	●		199
Cambridge T500	180	Very capable tuner suited to good and less good reception conditions	FM, M, L	64	●	●	●	●		193
Creek T43	399	Quality UK-made tuner offering classy sound in all areas at a very fair price	FM, M, L	64	●	●	●	●		193
Symbol C-DAB 1	1,000	The first 'high-end' DAB tuner, although format is the ultimate limitation. Gorgeous finish	DAB	8	●	●	●	●		199
Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM, M, L	40	●	●	●	●		193
Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	1947	166
Denon TU-1500RD	250	A well balanced and clean sound with good bass and treble extension	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●		184
Magnum Dynalab FT11	499	All-analogue tuner: receives weak or tightly packed stations but loses out on noise and sonic neutrality	FM	3	●	●	●	●		184
Harmay/Kardon TU950	200	Bulky but effective, delivering fine RF performance and good sound for the price	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	1948	166
Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price	FM	80	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Marantz ST-48	120	A classic budget model which manages a performance only just behind much more expensive models	FM, M	60	●	●	●	●		184
Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and has a subjectively larger-than-life presentation	FM	20	●	●	●	●	1810	157
Myryad T-30	400	Attractive product that produces attractive sounds too: capable of very musical performance with a good aerial	FM	29	●	●	●	●		193
Myryad T-10	530	A very smart unit which works well and offers good rhythmic drive and vitality, albeit at a price	FM	20	●	●	●	●		184
NAD C440	200	Rather polite sound, a little vague at times, that seldom offends but never excites	FM, M	30	●	●	●	●		193
Naim NATO1	1,730	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM		●	●	●	●	1254	142
Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance; slightly disappointing sound	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	1949	166
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	300	Lots of features, plus a sound that's low on noise and high on communication, adds up to a good value package	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●		184
Roksan Caspian	595	Neat facia with great ergonomics, but sound is not really any better than models at half the price	FM	50	●	●	●	●		184
Sony ST-SE500	140	A lot of features for the money, but sound lacks detail and has some coloration	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●		193
Rotel RT-935AX	160	Good ergonomics and sound quality at a realistic price, but limited features and RF selectivity	FM, M	20	●	●	●	●	1950	166
Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to perform at its best	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	1810	157

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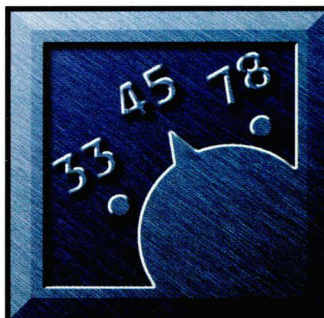
Tuners

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS PRESETS REMOTE CONTROL SIG. STRENGTH METER ROT. TUNING KNOB FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	FM,M,L	30						
Sony STS-B920S	180	A little hiss and image compression don't detract from the clean performance of this feature-packed tuner	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	●		184
Technics ST-GT350L	130	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Technics ST-GT1000	500	Handy tuner that combines DAB, FM and AM in one unit and substantially lowers the price bar for DAB entry	DAB,FM,M	97	●	●	●	●		199
Thorens TRT2000	499	Not exactly neutral sounding, but nonetheless makes listening fun	FM,M	59	●	●	●	●	1810	157



Turntables

Specialist turntables are at the heart of high-fidelity sound. CD players may offer ultra-low noise and a flat frequency response, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative rhythmical timing taken for granted by serious turntable users. Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Because turntables are mechanical devices, designed to retrieve micron-small modulations engraved into vinyl, engineering quality is of paramount importance. This is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do, and require the finest equipment support systems.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MANUAL:** You do all the work.
- **AUTO:** The record player does all the work.
- **SEMI-AUTO:** You put the needle on, the turntable lifts it off at the end of the record.
- **SPEEDS:** In RPM to correspond with long-playing records or seven/12-inch singles.
- **SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS:** Sprung suspension to minimise structural interference.
- **EXTERNAL PSU:** Outboard power supply; generally indicative of higher-quality performance.
- **SUPPLIED WITH ARM:** Many turntables do not come with a tonearm fitted, but if this category is checked, the deck is already thus equipped.
- **SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE:** If a turntable comes complete with arm and cartridge.
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Turntables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUAL AUTO SEMI-AUTO SPEEDS SUSP. SUBCHASSIS SUPPLIED WITH ARM SUPPLIED WITH CART. FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NO.

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSP. SUBCHASSIS	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART.	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NO.
Avid Acutus	4,995	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings, don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	194
Clearaudio Reference	3,990	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail, but can sound bold	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1328 144
DNM Rota 2	5,600	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on its own table	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1328 144
Dual 505-4 UK	250	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	103
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,950	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	91
Linn LP12 Basik	1,100	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 Gyrodec	875	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	55
Michell Gyro SE	775	A stunningly desirable combination of looks, solidity and sound make this a tempting turntable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	190
Michell Orbe 'SE'	1,725	A Superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	192
Moth Kanoot	329	Rather coarse-sounding deck that requires decent isolation and comes with a Rega RB300 arm	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1907 164
Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	750	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	159
Pink Triangle Tarantella II	850	A turntable that looks unlike any other, with rare ability too. Quirky, but sound is immensely likeable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	192
Pro-ject 2	300	Remarkably effective at the price, with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1907 164
Pro-ject Perspective	750	Flexible facilities and competitive package, but performance of turntable alone is behind the best	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	192
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	850	Don't think of this as a deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Oracle Delphi – it's that good	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	138
Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	48
Rega Planar 3	274	Sounds musical in a balanced manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1907 164
Reson RS1	600	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	159
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 10A	3,333	Elegant and extremely capable design with Series V/309 hybrid arm, superbly built	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	195
SME Model 20.2A	4,863	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45/78	186
Thorens TD166 W/UK/RB	400	Refined, solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM/MC budget 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
Well Tempered Record Player	850	Intriguing and challenging. Musically not ideal, but its limpid quality and lack of artificiality set standards	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1180 136
Wilson benesch The Circle	795	A beautiful turntable with a sumptuous sound, all at a very reasonable price – a clear Best Buy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	192

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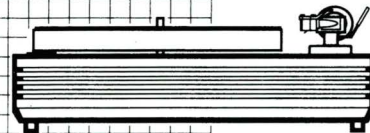
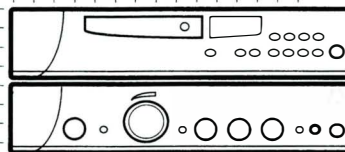
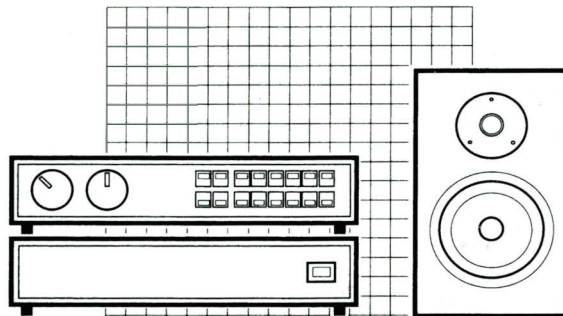
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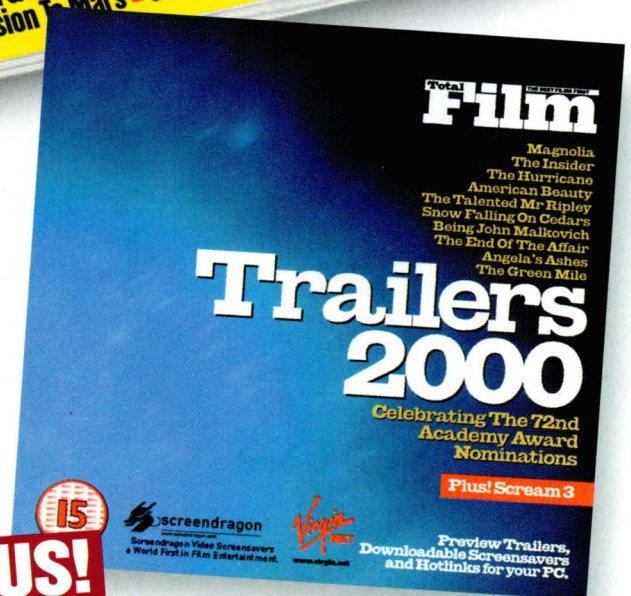
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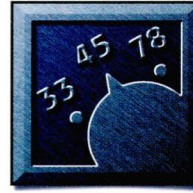
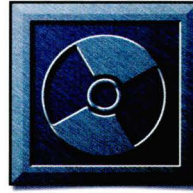
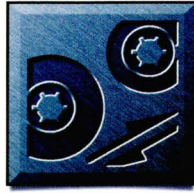
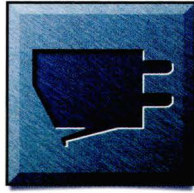
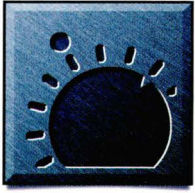


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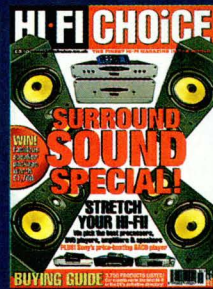
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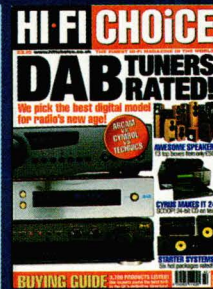
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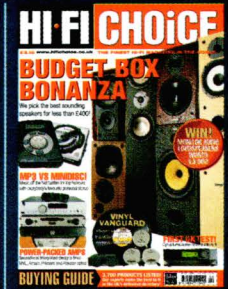
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1996	150-161	Jan, April, BBG	Very limited
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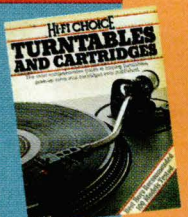
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JIMMY HUGHES

The Godfather of Gadgets finally comes out of the closet – yes, our Jimmy's a foot fetishist. And proud of it.

Spiked feet are so universally accepted, it's easy to forget why they came into being and how they evolved. Basically, spikes were originally employed to stabilise loudspeakers on carpeted floors – to pierce the carpet and make contact with the hard floor beneath so that speaker and stand would be rigidly fixed. Only later was it noted that spiked supports under components like amps and turntables were similarly beneficial.

Many enthusiasts like the effect produced by spiked speaker supports, but there's a practical problem: not everyone has carpeted floors. So, how to stop spiked points scratching the surface on which they sit? You can put coins under the points, but it can be very tricky to adjust speaker positioning.

Similar considerations arise when using spikes or cones under amps and CD players; you risk scratching or marking your support surface. A way around this is to invert the cone or spike so the point contacts the bottom of the hi-fi component being supported. The drawback? The base of your component gets damaged instead! And in any case, best sound quality typically occurs with the spike pointing down rather than up...

If you're with me thus far, you'll be pleased to learn Soundcare spikes are designed to overcome these problems by giving the spiked point its own integral cup. Since spike and cup are not detachable, you've two flat faces which greatly reduce the possibility of damage to surfaces. And you can stick the supplied self-adhesive padded protective discs over the base for even greater protection.

The range of Soundcare spikes is quite wide, with various types at different price points (no pun intended). Simplest is Spike 2, supplied in sets of three, which is designed to be placed under loudspeakers

or smaller components like amps, CD players, or turntables. Fitting is simple; just put three Spike 2s under the component of your choice – and that's it. You can use the adhesive pads to stick the spikes in place, but avoid doing this initially so you can A/B compare the sound with and without.

Since many floorstanding speakers and speaker stands are threaded to take spikes, Soundcare offer the Spike 1, available in a number of thread sizes to suit differing requirements. One advantage of this spike



over the self-adhesive type is that it gives the opportunity to adjust for uneven floors. The threaded version costs £49.50 for a set of four; Spike 2s are £31.20 for a set of three.

For components like CD players and amps with feet that unscrew, Soundcare offers a version with a plastic 'foot' that can be used to replace the existing foot. The Soundcare spike fits into a hollow in the plastic foot and is held in place by an adhesive pad.

Soundcare is a Norwegian company, which claims to have tried lots of different materials before settling on the combination used – hardened steel for the spike and zinc for the thrust pad, with a moulded ABS

plastics covering to hold the whole thing together. Zinc was chosen for its inert, anti-resonant properties.

While Soundcare spikes are very tough and should support the heaviest speakers comfortably, the instructions warn against tilting the unit with which the spikes are used by more than five degrees to avoid damage to the spike and its outer housing.

So what did they sound like? I started with a set of the Spike 2s and put them under my Audio Signal Enhancer – a valve line stage that goes between CD player and amp. I chose this because it's small and light (making quick A/B comparisons easy to do), and because it seems to be unusually sensitive to what it sits on – for example, it doesn't like Ringmat Feet (see last issue).

First impressions were of a sharper, more lucid sound, with slightly greater dynamics and projection. Bass seemed a shade tighter and firmer, while the treble was crisper and more detailed. I liked the effect Soundcare spikes had on music very much, feeling that

“There was definitely an improvement in clarity and detail using the Soundcare spikes – and no problems with scratched flooring.”

they gave an impressively focused, tight presentation without being too stark.

Later, I tried fitting the self-adhesive pads, and this mellowed things slightly without losing the brilliance and bite.

I also experimented with Soundcare spikes under one of the Townshend Seismic Sinks I use with my Rel subwoofers, again with good results. Adding Soundcare spikes made the bass slightly cleaner and tighter, with greater kick and attack. Because I have wooden flooring, I've thus far avoided conventional spikes – they're not practical. In any case, I didn't think I needed them.

However, there was definitely an improvement in clarity and detail using the Soundcare spikes – and no problems with scratched flooring to worry about.

Definitely recommended, then. The prudent should start with a single set (say, for amplifier or CD player), to see how things go. But be warned; you'll almost certainly be back for more!

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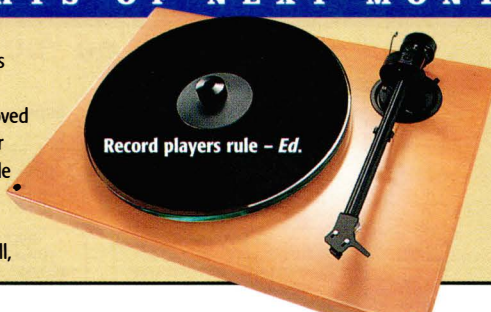
HIGHLIGHTS OF NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE ...

WITH OUR REPUTATION?

We hate to admit it, but sometimes a full-wack hi-fi is just out of the question. Whether it's down to cost, space or a 'difference of artistic opinion' with your loved ones, what can you buy that won't compromise your sonic requirements? We're putting a clutch of 'lifestyle systems' through their paces to find out.

TURNING THE TABLES

Vinyl stalwart Paul Messenger is sharpening his quill,



ready to bring you his impressions of a group of the latest turntables costing up to £600. NAD, Rega and Thorens will be among the brands represented.

ELECTRICAL MACRAMÉ!

Not content with filling his home with all manner of interconnects last month, Richard Black will be Super Testing a lavishly proportioned selection of speaker cables for your delight and delectation.

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WE KNOW ABOUT BASS



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