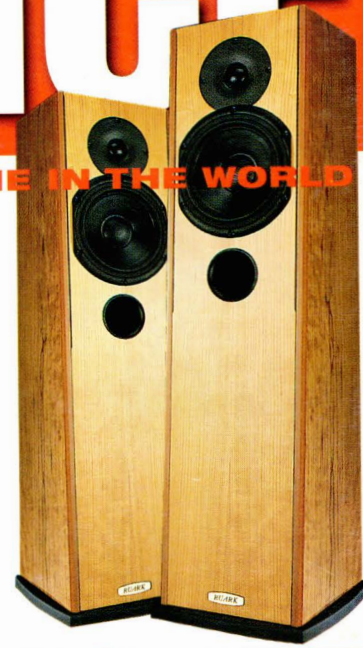


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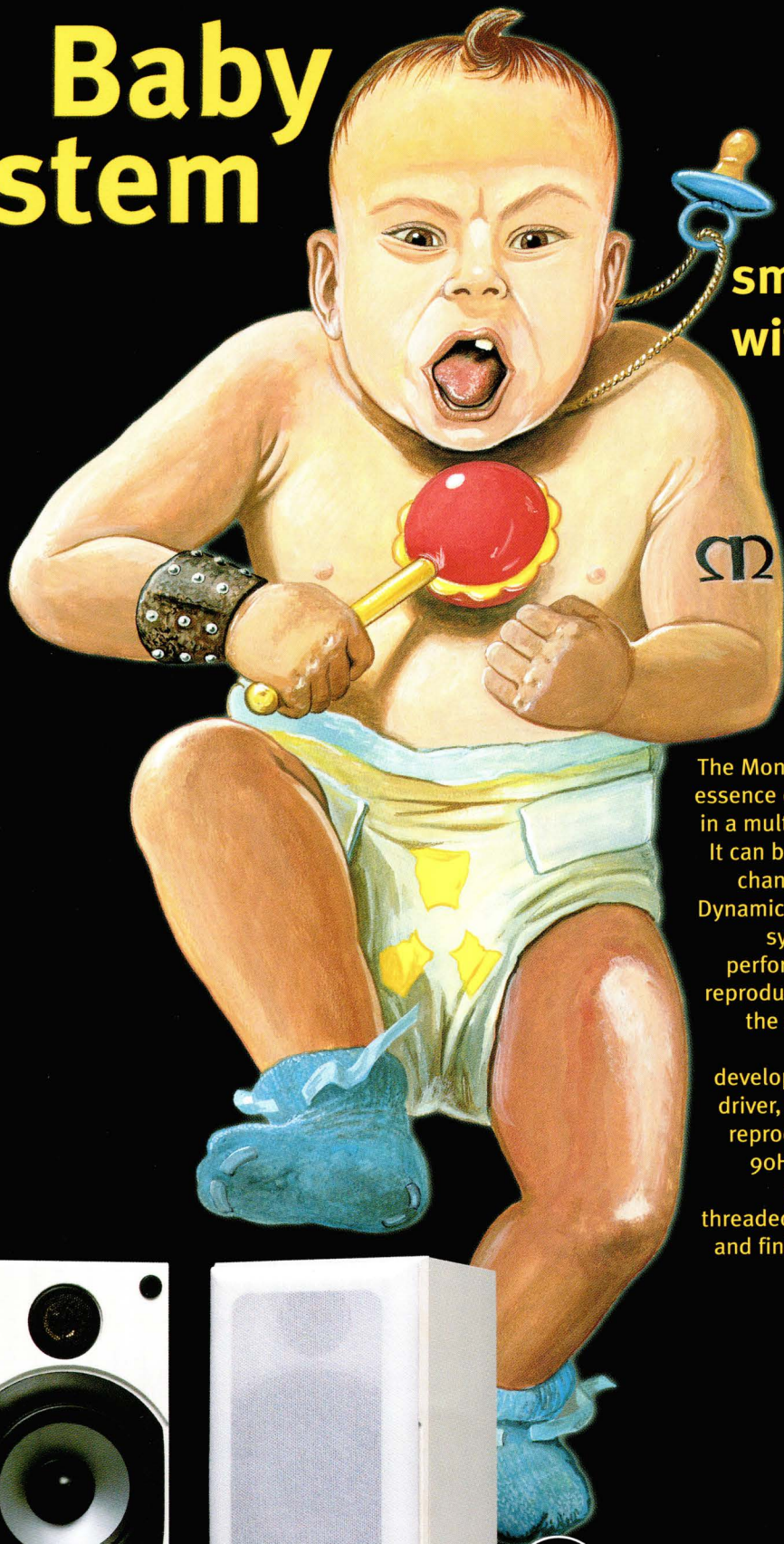
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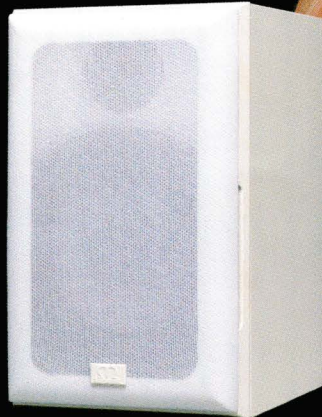
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HI-FI CHOICE

Future Publishing Ltd, 99 Baker Street, London W1M 1FB

ISSUE 203 • JUNE 2000

EDITORIAL

☎ (020) 7317 2600 Fax (020) 7317 2686

Regrettably we cannot speak with readers or answer queries on the telephone. Please send a letter, fax or e-mail instead.

● **Editor** Jason 'Judith Chalmers' Kennedy
jason.kennedy@futurenet.co.uk

● **Deputy Editor** Tim 'Windswept' Bower
tim.bower@futurenet.co.uk

● **Art Editor** Del 'Deep Throat' Gentleman
del.gentleman@futurenet.co.uk

● **Production Editor** Rachel 'The Orade' Phillips
rachel.phillips@futurenet.co.uk

● **Staff Writer** Lee 'Screw you guys, I'm going Home!' Dunkley
nick.gear@futurenet.co.uk

Consultant Editor Paul Messenger • **Technical Editor** Paul Miller

Contributors Helen Amy • Richard Black • Alvin Gold • Jimmy Hughes • Russ Moorcroft • Richard Stevenson • Phil Strongman • David Vivian • **Photography** Chris Foster

ADVERTISING

● **Advertising Fax** (020) 7486 5676

● **Group Ad Manager** Rob Debenham ☎ (020) 7317 0239
rob.debenham@futurenet.co.uk

● **Deputy Ad Manager** Andrew Goldsmith ☎ (020) 7317 0202
andrew.goldsmith@futurenet.co.uk

● **Senior Sales Executive** Debbie Madaren ☎ (020) 7317 0214
debbie.madaren@futurenet.co.uk

● **Sales Executive** Fiona Beech ☎ (020) 7317 0217
fiona.beech@futurenet.co.uk

● **Classified Sales Exec** Andrew Maxey ☎ (020) 7317 0202
andrew.maxey@futurenet.co.uk

PRODUCTION

☎ (01225) 442244

● **Production Coordinator** Rebecca Brooks

● **Production Manager** Fiona Milne
fiona.milne@futurenet.co.uk

MANAGEMENT

● **Publisher** Simon Davies ☎ (020) 7317 2600
simon.davies@futurenet.co.uk

● **Publishing Director** Mike Frey
mike.frey@futurenet.co.uk

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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 gets bitten by the style systems bug – which will be a great relief to the lovely Mrs Jase.



You will have noticed we're majoring on (life) style systems this month, a part of the market we rarely dabble in but which, due to recent trends, would seem appropriate for a bit of *Choice*-style assessment. At the higher end of the systems market, brands like Linn, Marantz and Nakamichi are taking on the traditional contenders like Sony and Kenwood.

As one might hope with such brands, these systems aren't just about looks: some offer a serious alternative to separates. So don't dismiss style systems as designer objêts – they can make music as well.

VCR FOR HI-FI

We've been trying to put together a group of CD and MD recorders for some time now, but as a result of hold-ups at Philips, several manufacturers haven't been able to supply machines. Some companies, however, are sourcing elsewhere and have managed to get recorders in. Last month we had a Pioneer dual deck, and this month there's one from a more unlikely source: LG.

Another such unit we've managed to get hold of is Teac's RW-800, which reflects the company's knowledge of the studio world and presumably this machine exists as a Tascam, albeit with different socketry and styling. It's by far the most comprehensively equipped CD-R/RW machine I've come across, with facilities for mixing inputs, accepting microphones and the ability to 'rehearse' your recording procedure. But from a casual user's point of view its strongest suit is the ability to make a timed recording. The is the first time anyone has made a digital audio recorder with a built-in timer – it may even be the first hi-fi recorder of any type to offer this facility.

In this instance it's only a 24-hour timer, but that means you can catch radio transmissions late at night on CD-RW, and if you remember to set the auto insert function it'll even put in a few track points for you. If you have a DAB tuner you can hook up an electrical or optical digital connection, and capture broadcasts without recourse to A/D or D/A conversion, the result being very fine indeed. I've finally been able to listen to the Gilles Peterson Worldwide show on BBC Radio 1 (midnight till 2am Wednesdays), and Solid Steel on BBC London Live (previously GLR) which rather inconveniently isn't available on DAB.

GIRL TROUBLE

You may remember my request for letters from readers' partners a couple of months back. The response wasn't overwhelming, but I did get one letter – from my wife! She has to live with a slowly fluctuating system that because of its esoteric tendencies rarely features straightforward controls.

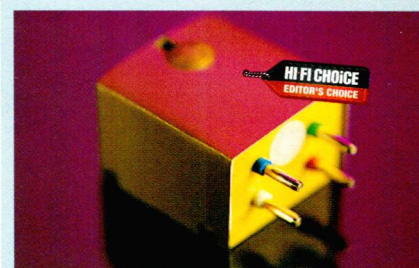
I've been using an old Michell Argo preamp for a while now, but its labelling would appear to leave a little to be desired. With the volume control marked 'Gain' and the turntable input marked 'Iso', it's not hard to see the source of her frustrations. I have to hold back from using the marginally better sounding tape monitor input for CD or LP for fear of rendering the system completely incomprehensible.

That preamp is no longer made, but one that still is the DNM that I had for a year or so. A fantastically good sounding little device, but one of the most ergonomically challenged preamps on the planet. Its twin volume pots aren't ganged and so have to be individually adjusted, and none of its source labels relate to the norms, save perhaps 'radio'. But the real Brownie point-loser with the least expensive Start version is the fact that there's an orange button marked 'Start' that renders the preamp mute when it is illuminated. For those brought up with remote control midi and mini systems, this is tantamount to farce.

The two examples I mention are fairly extreme, but hardly unique in their obscurity of ergonomics, and in an age where consumers have to accept less and less in the way of compromise this is a dangerous approach. I think it's high time we took a tip from the mass market approach and made our legends legible to all.

Jason Kennedy

EDITOR'S CHOICE



I reviewed it, I loved it. The Allaerts MC1B (p47) is a bit of a luxury, but if you prize your vinyl as you should and have a fairly serious turntable and phono stage I highly recommend you investigate this extremely capable cartridge.

The other winner is REL's Storm III (p12) subwoofer, which according to Tim is a low frequency provider par excellence. The sort you don't notice until you turn it off, and then you wonder where the music went. A subtle subwoofer: that's just the way we like 'em.



53 TURNTABLES

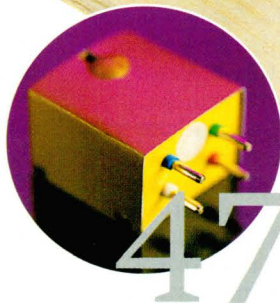
Paul Messenger puts seven vinyl-spinning decks through their paces.



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STYLE SYSTEMS

Ten classy-looking systems go head to head to prove their sonic worth.



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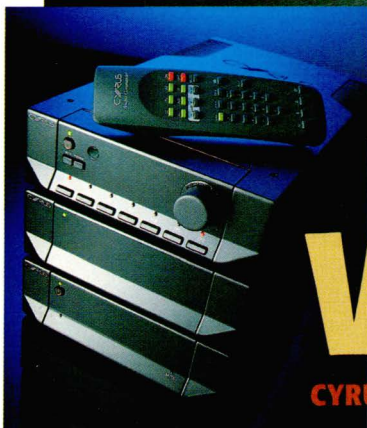
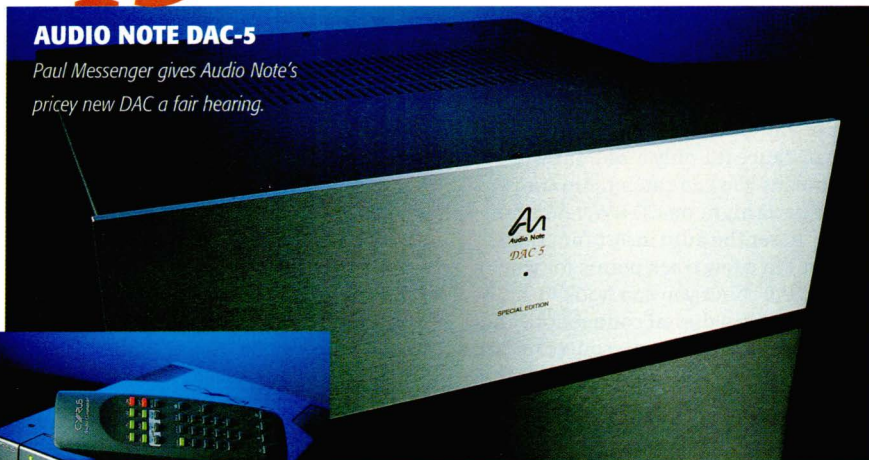
ALLAERTS MC1B

Jason Kennedy gets the needle with a cartridge costing £1,295.

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AUDIO NOTE DAC-5

Paul Messenger gives Audio Note's pricey new DAC a fair hearing.



WIN! 10

CYRUS AMPLIFIER PACKAGE WORTH £1,650

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Jimmy reawakens his love of vinyl with the Michell/Trichord Delphini two-box phono stage.

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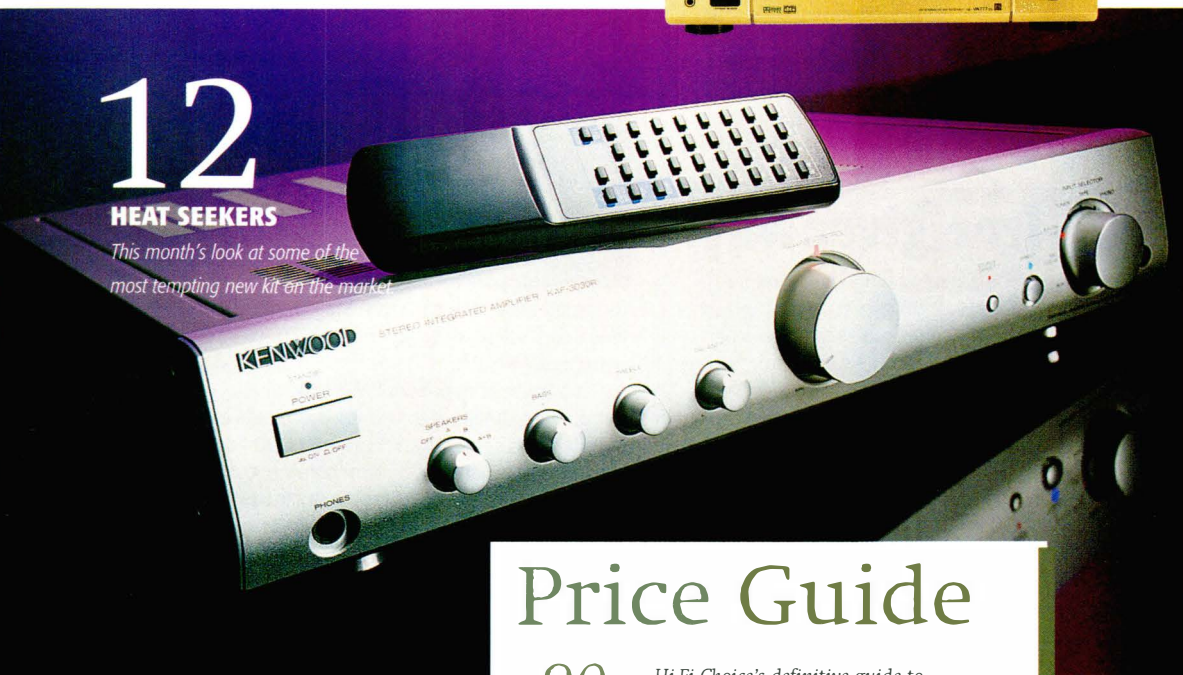
6 NEWS & VIEWS

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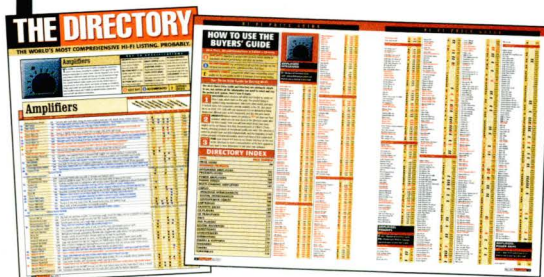
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THE HI-FI CHOICE ARCHIVE 129

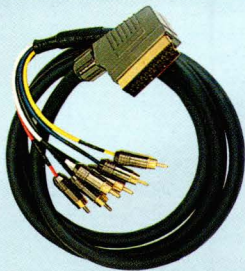
How to access our reviews and features archive via back issues, Factsback and photocopies.



NEWS & VIEWS

Tim Bown and Lee Dunkley defy e-mail crashes and worse to bring you all the top news.

NEWS IN BRIEF



STRAIGHT WIRE has unveiled a range of high performance SCART cables. The new range includes SCART-to-SCART cables and four types of SCART-to-phono (above) cables. All are straightforward in design with screened pure oxygen-free copper conductors and are available in 1.5, 3 or 5m lengths. Prices start at £34.99. ☎ (01423) 359054

DIXONS GROUP PLC has announced the expansion of the Grundig Fine Arts hi-fi range. Sold exclusively in the UK through its Currys and Dixons stores, the line-up will now carry nine models including CD and MiniDisc mini and micro systems and a Dolby Surround package. Prices range from £69.99 to £399.99. ☎ (0990) 500 049

SANYO has added four new systems to its audio line up. Two CD micro systems have joined the ranks: prices for the DC-DA100 and DC-DA350 are expected to start from £90 and £120 respectively. Two MiniDisc mini systems have also been introduced – the X5 Mini Hi-Fi Component System, which starts from £250, and the DC-M3T, starting from £200. All models are available now from your nearest Sanyo stockist. ☎ (01923) 246363



EMINENT AUDIO has introduced the Croft Series Vc valve power amplifier (above). The new version replaces the original Series V model, with improved technical specification claiming unprecedented midrange clarity, bass resolution and timing. Prices start from £1,200 for the standard finish, with a range of front panel wood finishes also available for an additional £25. ☎ (01746) 769156

TECHNICS has added four models to its systems line-up. The SC-DV170 AV mini system, costing about £700, features Dolby Digital sound, five speakers and a DVD multi-changer. Its more conventional features include a twin auto reverse cassette deck and RDS equipped AM/FM tuner. The SC-EH760, which costs about £500, is a slimmed-down version of the above, fitted with a CD multi-changer for those who already own a DVD player incorporating a Dolby

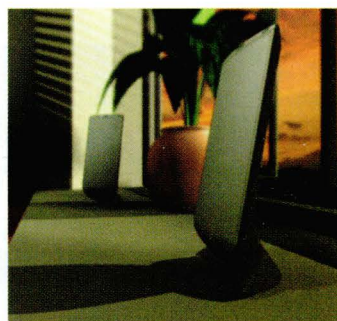
Mission gets flattened



Mission has unveiled its latest generation of NXT 'flat speaker' technology based products. The FS2 Series is a subwoofer/satellite speaker combo available in two forms – the two-channel FS2-A at £550 and five-channel FS2-AV at £800 – and is said to offer unrivalled versatility for domestic applications.

Utilising NXT technology from its ex-parent company, the Mission FS2 satellites employ ultra-thin vibrating panels to produce sound in place of traditional drive units in a box enclosure. They also incorporate an integral mounting system which allow them to be positioned across corners, flat on a wall, at a 45° angle, or freestanding via the supplied desktop stand. Like all NXT-based products, the way sound is dispersed is quite different from conventional designs – rather than produce pin-point stereo imaging, they create a diffuse sound field that makes speaker placement less critical (but compromises imaging).

The FS2 active subwoofer is also designed with convenience in mind. It is intended to sit in a corner and use room boundaries to enhance its performance; inside is a 150 Watt amp driving a 17cm paper-coned



Mission FS2 Series.

driver in a reflex tuned enclosure. Add this subwoofer to the satellites and the result is an exceptionally convenient and discreet loud-speaker system, easily upgradable from two to five channels should

the need arise. You can even interlock additional satellites in a stacked array, so improving power handling and dynamics. Versatile? Oh yes.

On a more conventional hi-fi tack, Mission has also announced details of a new addition to its audiophile-oriented 78 Series. The 783 is a £1,000 floorstander using the company's Keraform ceramic cone technology and 'transverse folded' cabinet construction, with a side-firing bass unit for powerful low frequency performance. It should be in the shops by the time you read this. Mission ☎ (01480) 451777

Dust-free giveaway!



Hi-fi can be a right pain to keep clean. It attracts dust like dung attracts flies, and when it comes to those wretched 'hard to reach' areas an ordinary duster often lacks the gumption (as it were). But fret no more, because a new cleaning product called Swiffer is here to tackle all your dusting conundrums. These specially constructed disposable dusting cloths use an electrostatic action to trap dust, dirt and hair, lifting it away with the minimum of effort. We've tried them and yes, they really work!

Swiffer cloths will be available from supermarkets in packs of eight, 16 or 32 and prices will start at £1.79. However, some of you won't have to part with a penny to try these handy little cloths for yourselves. The first 50 who write to the address below will receive a pack gratis, courtesy of Procter & Gamble. Write to: Swiffer Give-away, Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London W1M 1FB. Website: www.swiffer.com



And lo(-fi), a Genie appeared!

Philips' head honcho




Philips claims its new flagship headphones are an audiophile's dream. The SBC HP910 has been developed for professional and domestic use and is said to give superb audio reproduction across a frequency range from five to 32,000Hz, allowing the listener to really 'feel' the music.

The £70 headphones' body is made from aluminium, with fabric-covered foam ear cushions and a self-adjusting headband for a snug, comfortable fit. Samarium-cobalt is used in the speaker magnets to produce strong magnetic fields and the diaphragms are constructed using Mylar – widely regarded to be a high quality material for this particular application. The HP910s are available now.

Philips UK ☎ (020) 8689 2166

Philips SBC HP910.

Musical multi-channel

 Sony claims its latest integrated multi-channel amp delivers true audiophile performance with both music and movies, whether in two-channel mode or surround. The £1,500 TA-VA777ES features painstaking construction and circuit design unusual in integrated designs such as this, where more attention is often paid to cinema processing than sonic purity.

As if to prove the point, Sony sent us a massive 21-page document detailing the salient points of its design, just a few of which we will summarise here (you'll be relieved to hear). The amp's digital circuitry incorporates three advanced DSP chips, one for Dolby Digital and dts decoding, the other two for Digital Cinema Sound, a proprietary processing system developed in tandem with Sony's Hollywood-based film production company. All six channels feature 96kHz/24-bit DACs – these are in monaural configuration, as employed in many top-notch CD players.

Analogue circuitry is equally impressive. If you're feeding the amp an analogue signal from a turntable, say, or




Sony TA-VA777ES.

a high quality CD player, the video and digital processing can be switched out entirely so that the signal is fed directly to the master volume. The power amp section uses a 'dual pellet' transistor in a push-pull configuration, and the entire construction is built on a hefty vibration-resistant chassis. Sony reckons the result with two-channel sources is akin to a genuine high-fidelity analogue amp, plus you get top-drawer, multi-channel amplification and digital processing to boot.

The TA-VA777ES is available now; expect a review in these pages soon.

Sony ☎ (0990) 111999

Kenwood's back!

 Kenwood is launching a budget CD player, its first single-disc separate for some time. The £179 DPF-3030/S has a 24-bit-compatible DAC, Kenwood's proprietary DRIVE II filtering technology and a full range of programming facilities.


Following on from the KAF-3020R amp (see p12), the DPF-3030/S continues something of a return to old haunts for Kenwood. It has recently been concentrating on the pre-packaged audio market, where it has achieved considerable success (see our review of the

VH-600 system, p20). But its reputation with entry-level separates is still considerable – next month we review the DPF-3030/S and the DPF-R6030 CD multi-player. Kenwood ☎ (01923) 816444



Kenwood DPF-3030/S.

MF's X-A variations

 New products from Musical Fidelity don't arrive every day. Every month, perhaps... Fresh out of the blocks this time round is the X-A2, replacement for the highly successful X-A1 integrated amplifier. The new model is said to improve significantly on its excellent predecessor, yet the price has only increased by £20 to £499.

According to Musical Fidelity, the X-A2 discards the X-A1's circuit and is based instead on the the £999 X-A100R. In this case, the remote facilities have been removed and the freed-up space apparently used to further improve layout and performance. The resultant sound quality is said to beat even that of the X-A100R; there's no remote control, but it comes in at half the price. Expect a review soon.


Musical Fidelity

☎ (020) 8900 2866



Musical Fidelity X-A2.

PMC for you and me

 Professional speaker manufacturer PMC continues its assault on the domestic market with a mid-sized, two-way monitor. Created to appeal to studios and consumers alike, the AB2 uses the latest styling and construction techniques to make a cabinet that's attractive and sonically effective.

The speaker's front baffle features smoothly curved edges for two reasons. First, it gives the cabinet an elegant look, sweeping the real wood veneer around the side. Second, it helps eradicate unwanted reflections from the edge of the cabinet. A 24cm bass unit is incorporated in the 79cm high cabinet, along with a 27mm fabric dome tweeter, and PMC claims phenomenal bass clarity and depth down to 25Hz. It costs £2,050 in cherry, oak, walnut, rosewood or black ash finishes.

PMC ☎ (01707) 393002



NEWS IN BRIEF

Digital decoder or a processor. Two new micro systems also join the ranks. The SC-HD510 and SC-HD310 offering "high performance and elegant styling" are expected to cost around £430 and £350 respectively.

☎ (08705) 357357

NXT, the UK's flat-panel speaker technology company, exhibited at the March SAE show in Detroit, USA, at which it unveiled an NXT equipped Dodge Caravan. The vehicle, fully equipped with a DVD player and Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound system, was demonstrated to members of the US, Asian and European Automotive Industry and is currently visiting in-car entertainment manufacturers throughout the US. Web www.nxtsound.com

TDK has a new range of blank audio CD-R discs. The XS-IV range is supplied with a set of four index cards incorporating a new stylish cover design for personalising your recordings. Discs in the new range are set to cost £2.99 each. TDK has also introduced a limited number of XS-IV MiniDiscs with three Italian-designed covers. The special edition discs are limited to just 200,000 copies and are set to cost £2.49 each.

☎ (01737) 773773



JAMO, Europe's largest speaker manufacturer, is planning to reintroduce itself to the market. The relaunch is expected to take place during the summer with the introduction of the new E800 Series of loudspeakers. Watch this space for more details.

☎ (01327) 301300

VALUE DIRECT, the UK's largest online electrical retailer, has announced the launch of its new-look Web site. The new site claims to make on-line purchasing of its 5,000 electrical products even easier, beating high street prices on the sale of electrical items such as refrigerators, dishwashers, TVs and hi-fis.

Web: www.value-direct.co.uk



PIONEER has unveiled its first mini system with a CD-Recorder. The MCR X-MR7 (above) is a three-disc multi-changer with a separate CD-Recorder. The model also features a claimed 50 Watts per channel amplifier, FM/AM RDS tuner and wake-up timer and is expected to cost about £700.

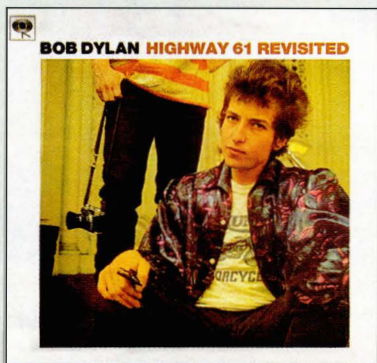
☎ (01753) 789500

PANASONIC has launched an integrated DVD player/receiver and speaker package. The SC-HT80 features a five-disc CD/DVD multi-changer and Dolby Digital receiver housed in one unit with five satellites and a subwoofer speaker package. It's expected to cost £599.

☎ (08705) 357357

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....



BOB DYLAN Highway 61 Revisited

The first all-electric Dylan album – the one that broke a thousand folkies' hearts – still sounds amazing, and this quality pressing brings it all back home: the fluid guitars, the full harmonica reeds and the unique gravelly vocals. Zimmerman's closer to a Zimmer frame now, but sweet'n'sour numbers like *Desolation Row* and *Like A Rolling Stone* show why he's never going to be forgotten. Simply Vinyl 180g LP

Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

PARLIAMENT Tear The Roof Off 1974-80

More timeless tunes getting a welcome vinyl reissue so George Clinton and Bootsy can once again strut their funky stuff. *Up For The Down Stroke* is full of jazzy, ever-circling musical skill, *Mothership Connection* is just plain weird while *Flashlight*, *P-Funk* and *Party People* are rhythm masterpieces.

Simply Vinyl treble 180g LP
Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

READ-MANZAREK Freshly Dug

Manzarek is the former Doors keyboardist, while Read is the drummer-vocalist from Crushed Butler, the 'first' punk band, circa 1970. Read is finishing a film about Syd Barrett while *Freshly Dug* is, essentially, his Bolanesque poetry supported by Manzarek's

improvised keyboards. It's all one-take stuff with a bizarre charm all its own. Steps it ain't. Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★
Ozit records CD

AMON TOBIN Supermodified

If Cap'n Beefheart was now a twentysomething instrumentalist this is what he'd sound like – all keyboard flourishes, snatched vocals, murky bass samples, well-timed off-beats and relentless riffs. Massive stuff. Ninja Tune CD

Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

VARIOUS Geosoniq Organic

A dance party tour of the Med with tape decks running would probably produce something like this – Third World arrangements backed by ProTools synth riddims. Considering that Neil Sparkes is the biggest name here, and these ten cuts are all years old, this is quite an exotic little collection. Zip Dog CD

Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

JOAO GILBERTO Joao Voz e Viola

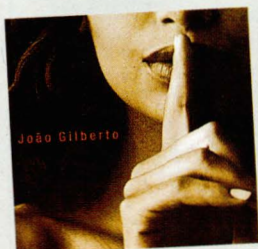
The Brazilian minstrel just keeps getting better with age and this, his latest offering, glows with gently-strummed warmth. There isn't much top on the mix, which makes this perfect as midground music – neither background nor foreground. Best served with cocktails, on Repeat play, as the sun sets. Verve CD

Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

THE ZOMBIES Singles Collection 1964-69

Sixties Beat classics like *She's Not There* and *Time of The Season* are augmented by more obscure material like the Townshend-style *Just Out of Reach* and the catchy *You Make Me Feel Good*. Immaculate Britpop before the age of total marketing. Big Beat CD

Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★



Professional touch



Finnish-based studio sound specialist Genelec is bringing its award-winning speakers into the home. Its first wave consists of three compact, active 'reference monitors', each designed to deliver great scale and precision from a space-saving enclosure.

Entry point is the HT205, a 25cm tall speaker with a 13cm mid/bass driver and 20mm tweeter. Priced at £350 (£700 for a pair), it incorporates an amp delivering 40W per channel for high and low frequencies. Next is the HT206 (£700 each), employing a slightly larger cabinet, a 16.5cm mid/bass driver and 80W of amplification for bass with 50W for higher frequencies. The HT208 tops the range at £1,150, incorporating a 21cm mid/bass driver, a 25mm tweeter and 120W across the frequency range. Finally, the HTS2 is a matching £1,300 active subwoofer with an integral 180W amp, completing a line-up that's just as applicable to multi-channel systems as it is to traditional two-channel set-ups.

SCV London ☎ (020) 7923 1892



Boston mass



Boston Acoustics has added two speakers to its Lynnfield VR line-up, a range renowned for its powerful bass. The VR965 and VR975 join the ranks at £850 and £1,250 respectively and incorporate side-firing active subwoofers to enable deep bass performance from a slim enclosure.

The VR965 incorporates an 80 Watt amp powering a 20cm bass driver, working in tandem with an 11cm midrange unit and Boston's patented 25mm Lynnfield VR tweeter. The VR975 increases amp power to 125 Watts, has a larger 25cm bass driver and adds a second 11cm midrange unit.

Also new from Boston is a range of four compact subwoofers: the PV400 (£300), PV600 (£500), PV800 (£700) and PV1000 (£1,200). All models are touted for




Boston VR975.

use in stereo music systems as well as multi-channel set-ups, featuring a full range of adjustment for "seamless" integration with your main speakers. The PV1000 appears to be a particularly interesting design, employing a long-throw drive unit coupled with a high-efficiency amp, said to be capable of producing more than 1,000 Watts, in order to deliver exceptionally deep bass from an unusually diminutive cabinet.

Portfolio Marketing
☎ (01489) 795519

Multi-channel monster

 Onkyo claims its top-of-the-range TX-DS989 multi-channel receiver is set to revolutionise home cinema. Chief among its attributes is the provision of full 7.1 channel amplification and complete THX Surround EX capability without the need for additional amplification, making it an integrated multi-channel solution with real heavyweight credentials.

Upgradability is key to this receiver's design, and it is claimed to be the first to incorporate fully future-proof architecture. An RS232 port and the provision for 4MB of flash memory only add to its flexibility, ensuring that future processing technologies can be added as and when necessary.

On the audio side, 192kHz/24-bit DACs for all channels should benefit the unit's performance with music as well as movies, while Onkyo claims its Wide Range Amplifier Technology (WRAT) ensures 100kHz plus bandwidth to suit the new super-high definition DVD-Audio and SACD formats. "Audiophile grade" components are used throughout, and Optimum Gain Volume Circuitry is employed to improve signal to noise ratio. If all that sounds attractive, £2,500 will secure you a piece of the action.

Onkyo ☎ (01788) 556777



Memphis Sessions

 US-based speaker specialist Eggleston Works has launched another high-end behemoth in UK. The mighty Andra costs £12,995, has a footprint of 38x46cm and weighs in at a hefty 210lbs per speaker. Its cabinet uses black Italian granite and sports an impressive complement of drivers, with two for deep bass, two for mid/bass and a 25mm cloth dome tweeter to dish out the high frequencies.

The two mid/bass drivers sport 7.5cm voice coils and "extremely rigid structural physics" for highly accurate pistonic motion, enabling exceptionally quick transients and minimising coloration. The drivers are loaded via independently tuned transmission lines, while loading for the two 30.5cm bass units is carried out in a pressure-driven configuration of two parallel chambers, the rear of which is vented. Internal wiring is by Transparent Audio, substantial Cardas rhodium binding posts connect the mid/bass drivers directly and a special nylon polyimide material is used for damping.

The company is located in downtown Memphis and cites the city's blues and rock'n'roll tradition as its inspiration.

Zentek Music ☎ (01892) 539595



Eggleston Works Andra.

PAUL MESSENGER

heads to the Lake District and gets that Russtic feeling.

One of those magical days in early Spring – perfect weather, lambs gambolling – I hauled myself from one corner of England to the other, to be present at the opening of the new headquarters of Russ Andrews Accessories.

Thanks to the stringent planning constrictions in the Lake District National Park, it's an exceptionally pretty building – all dry stone walls and large timber frame windows. I hesitate to call it a factory, although it does incorporate a 'factory shop', but in a sense it's also a call centre, as Russ decided to stop distributing his products through the regular network of hi-fi dealers three years ago and focus on mail order. That was a controversial decision. From the specialist dealer point of view at least, a mail-order accessory supplier is something of a parasite, taking the healthy profit margins on accessories without the overheads needed to stock and demonstrate the hardware components which form the essence of a system. However, in Russ' defence, he tried to sell Kimber cables and his other accessories through dealers for more than a decade. He made a living, but also became increasingly frustrated by the attitudes of dealers to his products and the way in which they were sold. All too often he felt customers were given poor or inappropriate advice.

I'm not taking sides here. I know a lot of dealers who try to do as good a job as they can. They need to: they're not in the businesses of impulse purchase or passing trade, and have to deliver the goods in order to attract long term repeat business from satisfied customers. But of course, Russ has to do exactly the same. As he told me, getting the attention of a potential customer is the difficult bit. After that, it's down to him to win credibility by providing the right advice, so the customer comes back for more. The bottom line is that RAA has doubled its turnover for each of the past three years and grown from four to twenty personnel, which makes it difficult to argue with the decision to take the mail order route. Twenty people might not sound that many, but it makes RAA bigger than many of the smaller specialist hi-fi manufacturers.

So what makes this company so successful? One reason presumably is that its products do live up to customers' expectations, and therefore bring those vital repeat orders, but that's simplistic. RAA operates according to a consistent, coherent philosophy, based on the huge amount of personal experience Russ has built up over thirty years. And it's a rather different philosophy from that practised by most dealers.

Dealers tend to be oriented towards selling the hardware, and in Russ' view pay insufficient attention to the role cables and other accessories play in maximising the total performance of a system. One of his complaints is that dealers are happy enough to sell an exotic pair of speaker cables, but doing so can easily make a system sound less musical because it hasn't attended to problems further up the chain. His key trick is to try to ensure the available budget is used to give the most musical result, and the business is geared so that customers can start modestly and part-exchange their way up the ladder while maintaining optimum results. And he doesn't demonstrate either, because he wants customers to try out the bits in their own systems, and consequently offers a 30-day money-back satisfaction guarantee.

I haven't tried the RAA approach myself, partly because it requires a pretty comprehensive system makeover, and partly because Kimber interconnects with the DIN-terminations my Naim components use have only recently become available. However, I've put my name on the list, and am looking forward to trying them out.

Meanwhile, the hot news from IAG Ltd (International Audio Group, home of Wharfedale and Quad) is that Chairman Stan Curtis has suddenly left the company, to be replaced by Toshio Tamaki (who previously headed both Sansui and Akai) as President, and Ryozo Takahashi as Sales and Marketing Director.

It's ironic that Stan should be leaving just as the two brands were looking increasingly healthy, and probably no coincidence that this news comes just a few weeks after the company laid off nearly all its UK R&D team. Some top-level mind-changing or disagreement is indicated by the fact that the company is now re-employing a Huntingdon-based R&D engineering team to operate alongside the forty or so engineers working in the parent company's three Chinese plants. IAG's press release stresses plans for continued expansion and substantial reinvestment in the more specialised product ranges.



Russ Andrews' favourite wire: Kimber Kable.

COMPETITION

WIN A THREE-BOX CYRUS AMP

Answer two simple questions and you could win a superb pre/power amp combo.

The amp is at the heart of a hi-fi system, controlling the source inputs and current flow to the speakers that bring music to life. If your system's sounding half-hearted, then look no further than this month's super prize giveaway. For the cost of a stamp you could get your hands on the latest high-end amplifier combo courtesy of Cyrus.

Worth £1,650, the three-box package comprises the newly introduced aCA7.5 preamplifier partnered with the company's PSX-R power supply and Power amplifier.

The new aCA7.5 stereo preamp costs £800 and replaces the successful aCA7 with subtle modifications to sensitive circuitry resulting in claimed unrivalled performance. Similarly equipped to its predecessor, the aCA7.5 has five line-level inputs, two tape loops, remote control and Cyrus' MC-Bus system control for integration with other Cyrus components.

The PSX-R power supply, costing £350, is designed to accompany the aCA7.5 preamplifier and claims further sound quality benefits.

Last, but not least, Cyrus' Power, costing £500, is a stereo power amp which offers 50 Watts per channel power output into eight Ohms and is upgradable via dedicated add-on PSX-Rs. These can turn it in to a fully balanced monoblock offering a 100 Watt power output.

If this sounds like the type of amplifier upgrade to get your pulse racing (and it should), answer the two simple questions below and you could get your hands on this superb amplifier combo for next to nothing.



HOW TO ENTER

Answer the questions below by circling the correct answers, then fill in your name, address and daytime telephone number in the spaces given.

The Questions

What model does the new Cyrus preamplifier replace?

- a) aCA7
- b) bCB7
- c) PSX-R

What is the name given to Cyrus' system control?

- a) MC-Hammer
- b) MC-Bus
- c) MC-Control

Post this entry form to:

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC 0006A),
Kirsty Husband, Database Direct, PO Box 9,
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All entries must arrive by First Post, Thursday 22 June 2000.

Please remember to tell us whether you are over 18 years of age.

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Please tick here if you are under 18 OR do not wish to receive further information on other products or services.

Please tick one only of the following:

- Are you a current subscriber? OR
- Are you a regular reader? OR
- Are you an occasional reader?

COMPETITION RULES

- 1) The Closing Date for the Cyrus Competition is First Post, Thursday 22 June 2000.
- 2) Winners of the Cyrus 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.
- 5) The Cyrus Competition is not open to employees of Future Publishing Ltd, Cyrus nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- 6) We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- 7) No cash alternatives will be offered.
- 8) We reserve the right to substitute alternative prizes with equal value to these shown, in the unlikely event of stock being temporarily unavailable.
- 9) By entering the competition, you agree to be bound by the rules.
- 10) All entries must be on this official entry coupon. If you do not wish to cut your magazine, you may send a photocopy of the page instead. Please note: only one entry form per household.

CHFC 0006A

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SHARP

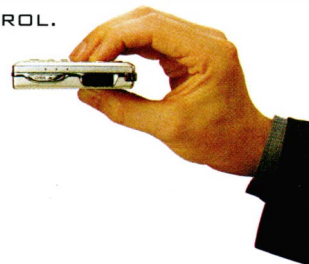
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HEAT SEEKERS

KENWOOD KAF-3030R £250

Paul Miller delves into Kenwood's latest integrated amplifier offering.

As the seasons turn, new amplifiers replace old, even if most are lost on the shelves of mass market product. After all, most product changes are really just derivations of what's gone before and rarely represent a genuine change of direction. Not so the new KAF-3030R, which not only looks more svelte than its predecessors but also benefits from a year's worth of 'tweaking' and re-auditioning specifically for the UK market. For a company the size of Kenwood, this represents a real commitment to specialist audio at a time when multi-channel bells and whistles are rapidly becoming the order of the day.

Available in black and an attractive champagne silver, the amp features gentle-action bass, treble and balance facilities with a motorised volume that's controlled via the RC-A0301 system handset. Four line, tape and one MM phono input are provided, the former including one marked "Adv DA/CD" which, when used with both "Direct" and "Source Direct" bypass options, provides an uninterrupted path through the amplifier. There are no digital inputs, DACs or other DSP circuits here. Instead, the "Advanced Digital Audio" logo simply refers to its wide (c.f. 100kHz) bandwidth which is intended to service 'future' formats like SACD and DVD-A.

The amp is rated at 50 Watts/8 Ohms but is capable of a little over 60 Watts/8 Ohms in practice, increasing to about 90W into lower impedance 4 Ohm speakers.

SOUND QUALITY

Technically, everything checks out perfectly well in the lab while, in the listening room, the real mettle of this new budget amp is quickly revealed. Once thoroughly warmed up, its performance takes on an almost liquid quality, the sound flowing into the room while underpinned by a strong, rhythmic bass. Its music has a real sense of integrity, vocals displaying passion and drama while instruments enjoy a sense of space and colour that's free of obvious artifice.

Sure enough, the amplifier may not sound perfectly transparent or explicitly detailed but its performance is, nevertheless, thoroughly enjoyable, free of strain and very encouraging from the point of view of longer-term listening. Such foibles as there are simply aren't all that obvious. The KAF-3030R just gets on with the job with slick, but inherently sympathetic, efficiency.



Kenwood ☎ (01923) 816444



Four times the fun with two decks.

LG ADR-620 £350

Lee Dunkley finds that LG can no longer be 'dubbed' as just an AV brand.

Twins are the new black. Er, twin CD-R decks, that is. With uncompromised sound quality and falling prices, CD-R has grown in popularity, paving the way for the new breed of CD-Recordable machines offering CD playback and recording from one box.

The newest product of this type to hit the high street comes from LG Electronics in the form of the competitively priced ADR-620 CD-Recorder. Equipped with a 96kHz multi-bit Delta Sigma DAC, this is the company's first CD product to reach UK shores and marks its continued expansion in the digital arena.

This twin-deck machine is laden with editing features and offers the flexibility of continuous twin-deck playback or the ability to feed one deck to a second room system. It's a bulky looking player with a somewhat unfashionable appearance, but build quality is of a good standard and operation is for the most part intuitive.

Whereas last month's 'heat-seeking' Pioneer PDR-W739 twin-deck CD-R featured double-speed recording, the LG model has 4x recording speed, offering dubbing of an entire disc in one quarter of its playback time. Superb! Standard and double-speed dubbing are also available. The centrally mounted display shows the usual track information and recording levels, yet without any useful markings to assist with manual level adjustments. The front panel coaxial digital input is handy for connecting portable devices and the player comes supplied with a busy but well laid-out remote control handset.

SOUND QUALITY

Insert a pre-recorded CD and the player's loading mechanism rattles into action and is noticeably slow to read a disc's table of contents (TOC). Unusually, the LG requires a coaxial digital connection (supplied) to link playback and record decks before recording can commence. Forget to connect it and you may be mystified by the LG's failure to detect a signal. However, the player's sonic abilities proved to be reassuring, and it's perfectly adept at making good quality digital copies with little to suggest any loss during transfer, even at the highest dubbing speed.

On CD playback alone, the '620 is unlikely to win the race to replace your dedicated CD player. Pre-recorded discs had a tendency to sound shut in, lacking in detail and expression. Bass notes sounded sluggish and uncommunicative, lacking musical interest. As a CD 'burner' at the price the LG passes muster, but its CD playback and few design quirks aren't destined to win the hearts of the hi-fi brigade.



LG ☎ (0870) 607 5544

Svelte, smooth and seriously sympathetic.



RUARK Prelude R £749

Lee Dunkley raises the curtain on Ruark's newest floorstander.

Keeping up to date with the loudspeaker market can be quite a challenge. The emergence of multi-channel formats has meant manufacturers are revising their ranges with new, improved and more stylish products that appeal to both hi-fi and AV markets.

The latest model to grab our attention comes from Ruark's revised Contemporary Series. The Essex-based company has recently made substantial upgrades to the existing speaker range and also introduced a new model. The resulting modifications have culminated in the Contemporary R Series, the 'R' standing for 'Reference'.

The Prelude R, costing £749, is completely new to the range and replaces the long-standing Templar II model. A medium-sized floorstander, the Prelude is a two-way design employing a 180mm doped paper cone mid/bass driver partnered by a 25mm silk fabric dome tweeter. Cabinets are constructed from 18mm MDF with substantial internal bracing and an elegant sloping front baffle for improved time alignment between drive units. A forward-firing bass reflex port affords placement closer to rear walls. Our model came supplied mass loaded for improved bass performance and stability, and is available finished in numerous real-wood veneer finishes.

SOUND QUALITY

In a stylised break from the norm, the Contemporary R range comes with black plastic mesh speaker grilles. Removing them may improve appearances, dependent on your aesthetic taste, but does little to influence the sound should you prefer the grilles installed.

The Preludes are a communicative and dynamic speaker with a balanced delivery over the whole frequency range. Bass is tuneful and displays no sign of over-bloating on tracks with oodles of bass extension. Their particular forté lies with vocals and acoustic music styles, and is particularly coherent in conveying the passion of a piece and recording environment.

Spin a few blunted dance beats and the midband bass is tight and rhythmic yet can sound rather dry and overdamped, with a slightly hard, gritty edge which can become wearing over extended listening. Some adjustments with the mass loading and positioning may help to achieve a more fluid mid bass result here.

Clearly a very capable floorstander, the newest model in Ruark's Contemporary range is coherent and enjoyable. The competitive price tag and its medium size are destined to make it a winner in many a living room.



Ruark ☎ (01702) 601410



Storm III – not your Nan's radiogram.

REL Storm III £800-900

Tim Bownen dives in at the deep end with REL's latest subwoofer.

Those Welsh wizards at REL have a reputation as evangelists. They preach the word of bass, spreading the gospel of subwoofer use beyond mere home cinema. They say a properly integrated sub can help drive a room without drawing attention to itself, making music all the more moving by adding depth that's powerful but not obvious – until you switch it off.

REL's founder, Richard Lord, speaks of bass with religious zeal yet knows most subwoofers are anything but musical. Many are built for maximum bangs per buck; they add plenty of boom to a movie explosion, but sound bloated and detached with music. It was with this in mind that Lord launched his 'ST' range of active subs some years ago, which came to consist of Strata, Storm, Stadium, Stentor and Studio. The range has now reached MkIII status.

The Storm III consists of a 65cm tall box made of 30mm MDF and finished in black (£800) or one of five wood veneers (£900). Inside there's a new 150 Watt amplifier, a "musically correct" crossover and a downward-firing 25cm long-throw driver.

To hook up, one can take a direct LFE feed from a multi-channel amp or processor into the sub's low-level RCA input, or connect at speaker level from the power amp's terminals to ensure it receives the same signal as your speakers – preferable for musical performance. The volume for these connections can be controlled independently, which allows performance to be tailored for both music and movie applications. Other controls for phase and filter adjustment ensure that this is a subwoofer that can be fine-tuned to suit most rooms.

SOUND QUALITY

For some home cinema fanatics, the character of REL subs can be a little bit softhearted. They don't supply the visceral impact of some American designs, that ultra-quick, sharp thud some enthusiasts crave as a hail of bullets rattles across the screen. But with music such subs are far too mouthy, failing to offer the coherent qualities necessary for high fidelity reproduction.

The Storm III is an altogether different box of tricks. It delivers tremendous depth when required yet never makes a fuss, blending in seamlessly with the music when properly set up. If you stick it out of sight you may forget it's there, but you can be sure it's doing its work, unlocking hugely satisfying low frequency information as a bow draws across a double bass string or a kick drum thuds into the room. Music has more power without gaining unnecessary force – that's the magic of *real* bass.

Quite simply, the Storm III is our favourite sub at less than £1,000 for music or general multi-channel applications.



REL ☎ (01656) 768777

Prelude R: not as smooth as it looks.



www.tagmclarenaudio.com

TAG McLaren



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The DPA32R^{4th} is more than just a top class preamplifier. It also includes superb 96 kHz/24 bit da-converters and 96 kHz/20 bit ad-converters thus allowing direct connection of digital and analog components.

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A precision twin phase-locked loop reduces jitter to an absolute minimum, while the TAGtronic Synchronisation Link sends a signal to products designed for this advanced technology to synchronise its clock to the master reference within the DPA32R^{4th}.

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The DPA32R^{4th} is fully remote controlled. Its custom-designed display features our 'Dot Burst' layout for increased legibility, an array of display fields and a graphical dot matrix area for comprehensive feedback. A powerful 16-bit micro controller makes the DPA32R^{4th} very easy to use, inputs have descriptive names and analog inputs have adjustable sensitivity, allowing levels to be matched for optimum signal to noise ratio and convenience.



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Digital Radio (DAB) is the most significant advance in radio technology since the introduction of FM Stereo. DAB brings the benefit of high-quality, interference-free reception of a wide range of exciting programmes. The DPA32R^{4th} can, at any time, be upgraded to Digital Radio by simply adding our hi-tech DAB module jointly developed with Bosch Multimedia Systems. Using

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All software is stored in Flash Memory and entirely user upgradable, over the Internet using a PC connected to the integrated TAGtronic Communications Bus. This bus also allows the easy transfer and sharing of information for multi-room installations and powerful communication between components.



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e-mail: helpdesk@tagmclarenaudio.com

DAVID VIVIAN

Brace yourselves – David's got an exclusive. He's the first to work out how to pronounce Aonghus O'hEocha's name...

You know how it is. Some things look serious and some things don't. Let's take a monitor-class speaker costing about £1,200. It's going to be a square or squarish box – six-sided because, well, that's how it comes.

Square is good. Square implies a healthy respect for tradition and disdain for modish frivolity. Square is smart. Square is convenient. Square is where it's at and, for the majority of speaker makers, where it always will be. And, what's more, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

The way Aonghus O'hEocha (pronounced Angus Ahoka) sees it, though, square is just square. Pretty boring, and not a particularly effective shape for a speaker to be. When he says "balls" to square speakers, he means it. You've already clocked the snap. It's of the O'hEocha D2-al (for aluminium) and, yes, it's as close to looking like a loudspeaker as Brandon Block (a latter day Tony Blackburn apparently – Ed) is to being a tee-totaller. How refreshing, how *spherical*.

First question. Purely on aesthetic grounds, could you live with it? Of course you could. People will think that you're a rich eccentric with a fabulous sense of humour rather than a boring old hi-fi buff. A friend put its price at £10k and assumed I was about to embark on a career in stand-up. Cool. Don't try too hard to describe the D2, either, because you'll go crazy. A big staring eye on a stalk? Quite possibly. Something stolen from Austin Powers' shag pad? If you say so. A cyborg jellyfish? You're cracking up already...

Two things you should know. One, if your listening room has plain walls, the D2 will throw off terrific spun metal patterns as the morning sunlight hits it. Beats a lava lamp hands down. Two: decor-wise it's invisible. As long as you can accommodate the shape, colour clashes will never be an issue. The D2-al in shiny finish (brushed is an option) simply reflects its surroundings. Actually, there's even a 'three' on this list. Shine a spotlight on it and it will illuminate an entire corner of a room in a strange and rather spooky way. Merely as metallic thing, the D2 justifies its existence in your living room.

What will really bake your noodle, though, is this: according to designer Aonghus, the D2's shape is purely a function of the quest for optimum

sonic performance. In a perfect world, all loudspeakers would look like this.

Aonghus, an affable six foot, six inch-tall Dubliner who looks a lot like Louis Theroux, used to work in the car industry as an engine designer. His speciality was gas flow dynamics, but he's a whizz with alloy fabrications, too, and knows an awful lot about rigidity and bending modes (stop sniggering at the back). The D2-al is made

"Don't try to describe it. You'll go crazy. A big staring eye on a stalk? Quite possibly. Something stolen from Austin Powers' shag pad? If you say so. A cyborg jellyfish?"



from a composite of high-grade 3003A aluminium and Ethyl Vinyl Acetate (EVA). The aluminium provides the structural stiffness, the EVA the mass and damping; it also enhances air flow inside the enclosure. The upshot is a speaker that eschews conventional hi-fi wisdom in just about every way you could imagine. Its shape evolved out of the requirement to extract the flattest frequency response possible from an enclosure, and that precluded any chance of it ending up a box.

The reasoning goes like this. Boxes promote internal standing waves which lead to 'boxy' colorations; spheres and curved surfaces are particularly good at dissipating them and their undesirable effects. The panels of a box tend to 'flap about' at high volumes; a sphere is nature's most rigid shape and can't help but resonate less. Easy enough to understand. The D2's slender neck and bell-shaped bottom chamber, though, were arrived at after only after extensive time on the computer with the kind of CFD (computational fluid dynamics) programmes more normally applied to engine design. Although the reflex port is small and located at the back of the sphere, its alignment with the lower chamber is crucial. The combination works as a kind of bass augmentation system, allowing remarkable extension (down to a claimed 35Hz at -6 dB) for such a modestly-sized enclosure (14 litres) that weighs just 13kg, including those extraordinary steel and spun aluminium tripod spikes. Drive units are high quality jobs by Morel (chosen after exhaustive auditioning). The

soft dome double Neodymium tweeter is housed in its own phase-aligned pod, constructed from solid aluminium billet and mounted on the main sphere by an extruded aluminium fin.

Brief listening sessions with my regular AVI and Chord amps and an especially tasty T+A 1220 R CD player (more on which next month) suggested some exceptional qualities. Bass that's taut and tuneful yet goes all the way down with beautifully judged weight and control; a fabulously natural and unforced midband with a real sense of tactile presence and a rare ability to go really loud without the slightest hint of strain. Mmmm. The treble could seem a bit on the obvious side, and top-to-bottom integration wasn't quite as good as, say, an AVI Biggatron's. But nothing a little judicious tweaking couldn't fix.

On the whole, I'm completely sold on the D2s. They may not look serious but, believe me, they are. Truly, madly and ever so deeply.

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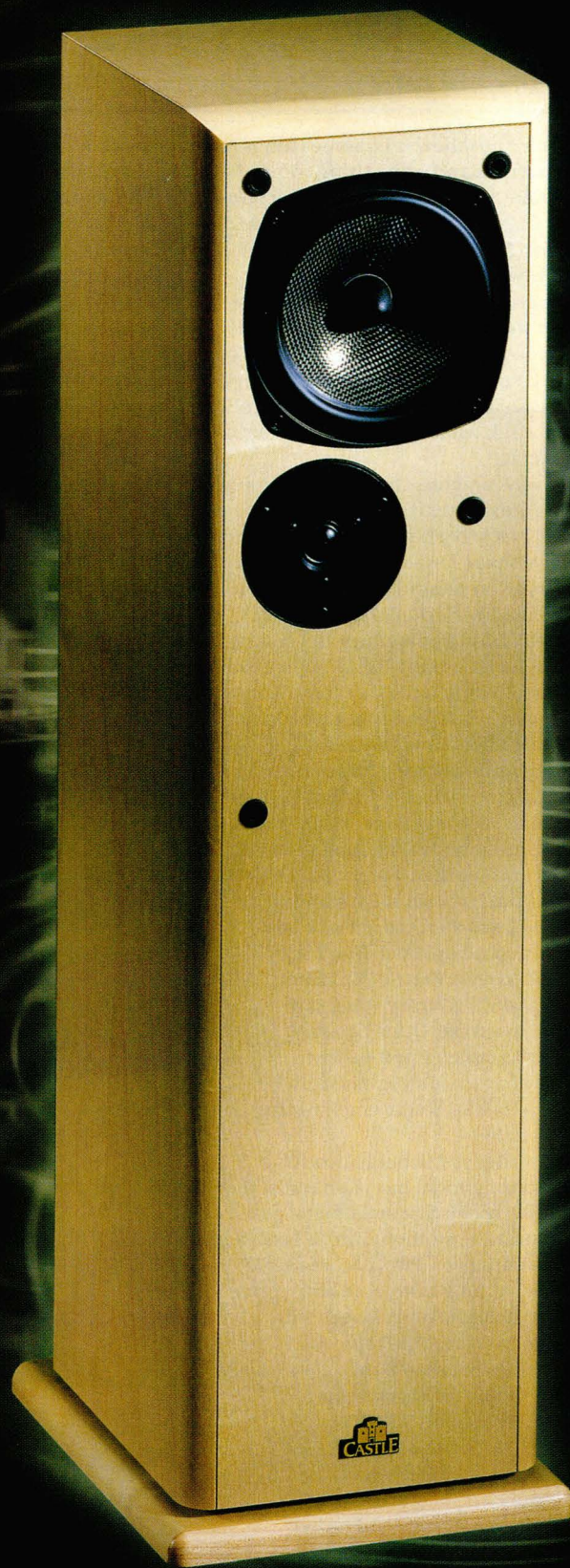


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LETTERS

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

WHERE WILL IT END?

As a coffin-dodging hi-fi nerd, I am out of date and unsympathetic to computer-based music. I have replaced most of my vinyl collection at great expense with compact disc equivalents. I've compared the formats and still think vinyl is better, although not as convenient as CD. Apart from making more money recycling the same music, I cannot see why record companies switched formats in the first place and are now threatening a reprise!

Philip Potter, via fax



SUPREME SYNERGY

Like most buyers, I researched almost every related magazine before upgrading my hi-fi. I have to acknowledge *Choice* for providing the most effective reviews and breadth of coverage with relevant and objective editorials, all seemingly uninfluenced by advertisers.

Auditioning a bunch of 'Best Buys' was largely uninspiring, however. This has been my experience over many years of listening to some of the big name speaker manufacturers with a variety of CD and amp combinations.

When you get synergy it blows your socks off, or, as in this case, converted my wife to an enthusiast from first listen. The system: Myriad's MC100 CD player, bi-amped with the Myriad MI120 integrated and MA120 power amp with Monitor Audio Silver Series 7i speakers. Supremely detailed with controlled bass, the sound is enthralling and blows away the opposition I tried.

Ian, Camberley

RULE BRITANNIA

I frequently read *Hi-Fi Choice* and find it a superbly refreshing change to the gamut of American high-end 'comic books' we have. A few of our esteemed publications don't have the spine to criticise speakers honestly enough. They 'softball' reviews for fear of losing sponsor dollars or hurting a smaller company. They tend to hover within the same few big name manufacturers and don't dare to truthfully publish 'blind' listening test results.

I really enjoy the way *HFC* presents its reviews with the use of graphics and comparative details and don't over hype products like many of our reviewers. I wish you continued excellence with your magazine and look forward to future issues.

Scott Lowell, via e-mail

WILD AT HEART

I feel prompted to write regarding David Vivian's April article wherein he suggests combining mega-amps with beer budget speakers. What's driving me wild

is exactly what system he is using. I see that its Chord (and I am interested) but he doesn't say exactly what, and maybe I've missed out – from the picture I can probably have a guess at what it is – and together with the price looking at the Chord Website I can take a good guess. But I am still interested in the rest – cables etc. The article is extremely interesting – probably more because it shows a possible route for us all. But the fact that he is so interested means that I would like a listen.

Steve Fox, via e-mail

The Editor replies... The Chord amps that David currently uses are a CPA 3200 preamp and SPM 1200C power amp, the rest of the system consists of Musical Fidelity X-Ray CD player, Tannoy MX2 speakers and QED Silver Anniversary interconnect and Genesis speaker cable. Hardly conventional but a novel way to skin a cat.

SOUND JUDGEMENT

I read with interest the review on amplifiers in *HFC* 201. Particularly I noted the views on the MVL A2. I was fortunate to win an MVL A2+ in a rival magazine's competition last year, and some of the comments regarding its initial sound were familiar to me.

The reviewer states that with advancing volume the sound became constrained and shut in. I initially found this to be the case and contacted MVL. They courteously explained that the unique design of the amp made it necessary to run it with partnering

speakers for 24 to 48 hours. The result was a dramatic improvement and exactly as MVL had predicted, sounding consistent across the power range.

I note that in your review each amplifier was 'run in' over an extended period and warmed up prior to each listening session but does not state whether the amps were run in through the speakers they were tested with. Could this, perhaps, be the reason for the poor impression of the MVL?

Robin H Wright, Glamorgan

Alvin Gold replies... The MVL's literature specifically notes that no running in or warming up is required, though as it happens much of our running in was with the test loudspeakers. The reality is that the MVL amplifier tested (an A2, not the A2+ that you own) had a number of significant limitations that were independently identified in Paul Miller's lab tests, the listening panel and by myself.

THAT SINKING FEELING

I write regarding the Jimmy Hughes piece on Seismic Sinks for floorstanders in *HFC* 200. He's right, of course. All the more reason why it might be worth pointing out that a similar result can be achieved by visiting your local stone merchants. I got two pieces of beautifully polished black granite for £35.

I certainly noticed a big difference.

John Shand, Manchester



WRITE TO US

Let it all flow and send us your points of view on all that is hi-fi. The author of the best missive wins a prize for their efforts. Get writing to: The Letters Page, *Hi-Fi Choice*, Future Publishing, 99 Baker Street, London W1M 1FB, or send your e-mail to: jason.kennedy@futurenet.co.uk



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Style Systems

Richard Stevenson sets out to discover whether mainstream music systems are necessarily a case of style over substance.

Beauty, some say, is in the eye of the beholder. While audiophiles might argue that it's actually nearer the ears, the mass market thinks not. Over the past few years, decorating the living room has evolved into 'interior design' and music systems have moved away from big, black boxes towards more visual subtlety and style statements. This has given birth to hundreds of stylish mini, micro and lifestyle audio products catering for what one hi-fi manufacturer described as "the Ikea generation".

There can be little doubt as to the popularity of lifestyle systems: they now account for the core of home audio sales in the UK. Once the exclusive remit of the High Street 'TV and radio' shop or big multiple retailers, a cursory look in most hi-fi shops today reveals an array of these trendy little systems. The good news is that sound quality is getting better and better. Even manufacturers producing entry-level products are focusing on a combining good looks and decent sonic performance. Many now include well engineered wood cabinet speakers as standard or give the customer a chance to build a modular system as they want it – in other words, many of the benefits of real hi-fi.

This trend is not just a budget phenomenon. More traditional hi-fi manufacturers are entering the fray with high quality, high design components aimed at a more discerning customer. Enter, then, our line-up of ten classy systems, promising hitherto unrealised combinations of audio excellence and visual appeal... or at least that's the idea.

The systems fall roughly into two groups: those up to £700 in basic trim and those above. Seven hundred quid is an interesting price point in the systems market. It indicates a level beyond which the average person in the street, unmoved by the joys of hi-fi, is unlikely to go. Spending more than this amount of money on a system, on the other hand, indicates a fairly serious commitment to listening to music.

Considering the aim of a lifestyle system is to provide convenience, sound and style, there's an impressively wide range of approaches assembled here. In the sub-£700 group only the Sony and the Yamaha have much in common, both being silver component systems between mini and micro in size. While the Sony offers a traditional modular system with wood-effect loudspeakers, the Yamaha blows its budget on black piano lacquer speaker cabinets and hangs the system name on this feature. The Teac offers a very compact and gold-coloured slant on the traditional micro-component theme, and the Pioneer and Kenwood take the plunge into fancy electronics and groovy cabinets.

THE CAST LIST	
Denon 6.5	£700.00
Kenwood VH-600 (with MD)	£650.00
Linn Klassik	£1,020.00
Marantz Perla	£1,000.00
Nakamichi Soundspace 8	£1,100.00
Onkyo FSR-435	£500.00
Pioneer NS-8 (with CD-R)	£700.00
Sony SD1 (with MD)	£550.00
Teac Reference 100 (with MD)	£550.00
Yamaha Piano Craft	£400.00

Somewhat visually different from this pack is the Onkyo, which is as near to a complete music system in a standard hi-fi sized box as you are likely to get.

Of the more expensive group, Denon is the only maker to offer traditional components – an amp, CD player etc – in mini-sized cabinets. The other three have very little in common save inserting a CD at some point and having music emerge. The one thing all ten of these systems have in common, however, is integration. Even the three-component systems are linked by dedicated remote control leads allowing one-touch power, recording and input selection functions. This is a luxury rarely afforded to hi-fi and certainly not if you opt for the pick'n'mix approach to system building.

Lined up pre-testing, all ten systems looked spectacularly good, simply oozing class and panache all over the place. But we at HFC do not fall for such meretricious charms that easily, and set about a thorough audio workout to see if they could win our affections sonically. We encompassed the systems' own loudspeakers (where available) and then moved on to testing with some current favourite hi-fi speakers in case improvements could be wrought in the traditional, upgrading way. All music sources and recording media were given a fair trial and volumes ranged from peaceful to party in order to get a good feel for the system's overall capabilities.

So with the Ikea catalogue in one hand and a fresh cappuccino in the other, the battle was on to see if visual style and sonic grace really could live together.



How the tests were done

The diversity of systems featured in this test caused quite a few problems regarding a level playing field from which to start. In an attempt to give every model a chance to shine, each was placed in turn on an Alphason equipment rack topped with a Mana Sound Frame. In all but the sub/sat systems, the supplied speaker cable was replaced with Gale XL-315 (£2/m) and speakers were positioned on Atacama Nexus 6 stands – fresh from their Best Buy award last issue.

All models save the Denon, Marantz and Onkyo were supplied with speakers, but that wasn't going to stop us trying a few alternative models to get a feel for the performance of the electronics alone. We used Tannoy's mX1 (£120), a good looking and sounding standmounter, and Acoustic Energy's Aegis Three (£350), a floorstanding speaker that can fill larger rooms. Blank software for recording on was kindly supplied by those masters of the art TDK.

THE MUSIC WE USED

A veritable concert of mainstream music was chosen for this test covering classical, pop, rock and dance. Vivaldi/Royal Philharmonic – *The Four Seasons* (Tring)
 Talvin Singh – *OK* (Island)
 Red Hot Chili Peppers – *Californication* (Warner)
 Dr Dre – *2001* (Aftermath)
 Rebecca Pidgeon – *The Raven* (Chesky)



KENWOOD VH-600 (with MD)

You can rely on Kenwood to come up with a system a little different from the norm, and the sexy little VH-600 is no exception. As supplied, the CD receiver (£400) and MD recorder (£250) are mini-sized boxes with quite a unique look – especially when installed vertically. The bright blue LCD displays show just about every function you could ever want along with some particularly Kenwood-style animated graphics. They also do the neat trick of automatically changing orientation when the system's turned on its side: cool.

Underneath the bonnet, Kenwood has gone to some lengths to ensure decent sound quality as well. The amplifier section operates in class A mode at low volumes, although this does mean it gets rather hot and shouldn't be installed at the bottom if stacked. More interesting still is that the system supports both CD text and HDCD – a subset of the CD format with quite a following in the US. While HDCD isn't likely to become the world's most popular enhanced CD format, there's more HDCD software around at present than DVD-A or SACD.

If stacked horizontally, Kenwood supplies a plastic spacer that sits between components and rather thoughtfully incorporates a cable tidy – doubly important in a clean, lean lifestyle system. Concealing the cables is a fiddly operation, but it does make for a wonderfully spaghetti-free system once in place.

The remote control is very plain by Kenwood standards, offering all the functions of the main unit but only the basic features of the MD deck. A second, equally mundane remote control is supplied with the MD deck, although it would have



been a lot slicker to have simply put all of the functions on a single system remote. That aside, between the remote controls a host of one-touch or semi-automated functions can be accessed to good effect.

The standard speakers are a cracking design and look a million dollars with grilles in place. But their real visual appeal is revealed when these are removed, unearthing a sexy blue aluminium mid bass unit and cup-shaped tweeter. These are surrounded by a light wood coloured baffle with shiny steel grille mounting lugs, making the speakers a work of art in themselves.

The good looks, trick functions and neat extras etch a lifestyle name for the VH-600 even before the first disc is spun.

SOUND QUALITY

And the sound doesn't disappoint, either. The bass output of the speakers supplied is rich and full, and a very good match for the system. By comparison, the little Tannoy mX1s erred on the side of thinness and didn't have the Kenwoods' clout.

The overall balance is pretty lively, with good extension across much of the more demanding material I tried. The congested Red Hot Chili Peppers CD fairly romped into the room and, while it was probably not as detailed or as subtle as it could be, it was thoroughly enjoyable.

Hooked up to the Aegis Threes, the Kenwood system really sings. The sound is expressive and clear without any overbearing features at either end of the spectrum. The bass is deep and even-handed, and is backed up by a particularly clean midband presentation. This positively encourages heroic use of the volume control, and the Kenwood holds together up to impressively high volumes.

The MiniDisc section is well specified and produces off-CD recordings that are as near as dammit impossible to tell from the original on the system itself. Playing the recorded MD on separate reference set-up

revealed a few minor flaws, as the sound emerged as a slightly boomy and larger-than-life facsimile of the original recording.

The tuner does a similarly fine job, although it prefers a strong signal to reveal anything like its best. The sound is a little more forward than with a CD source, which tends to highlight some of weaknesses of FM broadcasts, but this is quite acceptable with nearby stations.

CONCLUSIONS

The Kenwood consistently presented a lively and enjoyable sound which, while a somewhat simplified view of music, has a strong appeal. It looks good, has some excellent features and combined with some decent speaker cable and stands has got all the right ingredients for a lifestyle Best Buy. **RS**



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £650 (with MD)

■ A fine lifestyle system combining visual appeal and a solid sonic presentation.

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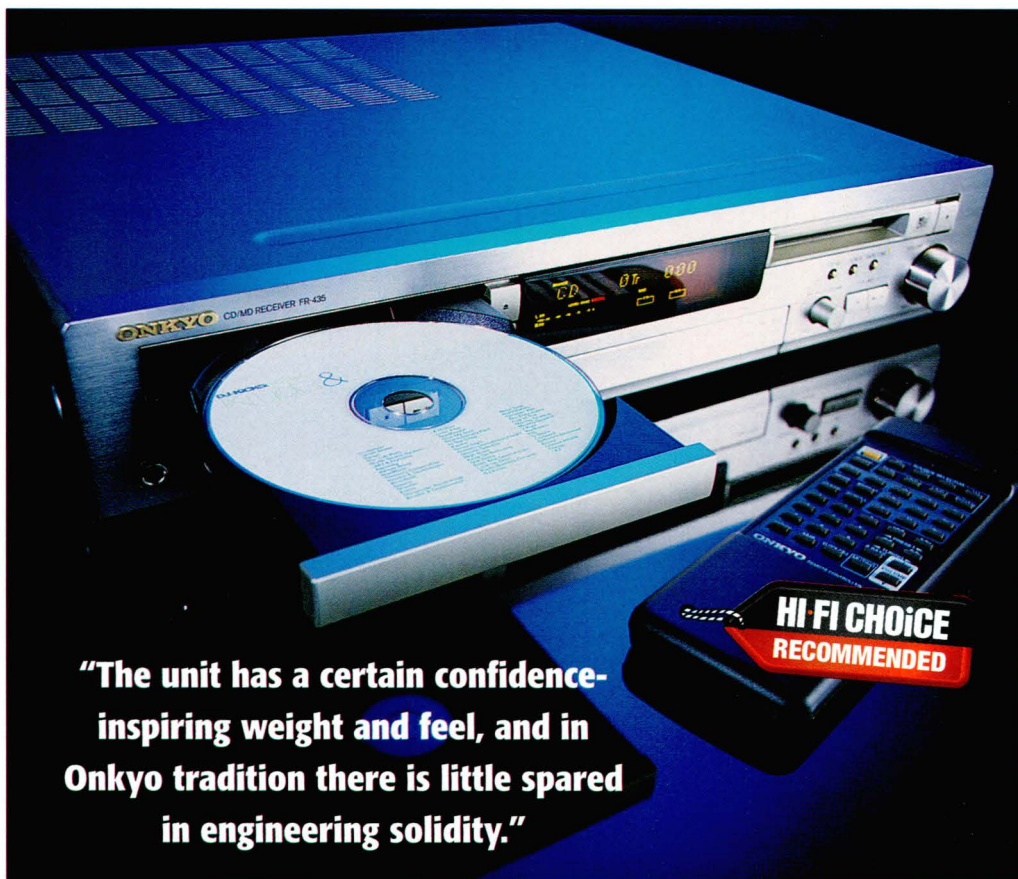
The Onkyo is one of the few models here to dance the fine cosmetic line between style and tradition by offering a complete lifestyle system in a very 'hi-fi', 440mm wide box. This in itself lends it some extra kudos to those looking for a one-box system with a hint of audiophile pretension, but does mean you need quite an acreage of shelf space to accommodate it.

Despite combining CD, MD and an RDS receiver, the Onkyo has a slick, uncluttered design. Switched on it is very much a minimalist design with a subtle, classy-looking yellow and red display. The light gold finish is slick, and with the flap that hides many of the minor controls in place you could easily mistake this unit for a standard hi-fi component.

Being an all-in-one system reduces the spaghetti count considerably and makes hooking up the FR-435 a simple case of connecting the speakers and the aerial lead. A selection of analogue and digital inputs and outputs are provided for future expansion, and there's even a line-level subwoofer output. And although it rather goes against the 'lifestyle' grain, there's a preamp output just in case you want to upgrade it with a power amp in the future.

The unit has a certain confidence-inspiring weight and feel, and in Onkyo tradition there is little spared in engineering solidity. The remote control looks like a bit of an afterthought by comparison, being a black slab festooned with buttons too small for my sausage-like digits. On the upside, there is only one to control the entire system.

Our test sample was not supplied with speakers, but now that Jamo distributes Onkyo in the UK, a package has been devised. This consists



"The unit has a certain confidence-inspiring weight and feel, and in Onkyo tradition there is little spared in engineering solidity."

of the FR-435 and a pair of Jamo Cornet 145 speakers for about £600, saving £30 (the price of some better cable) on the cost of the system and speakers bought separately.

SOUND QUALITY

Firing up the Onkyo connected to Tannoy mX1s, you're greeted with a detailed and immediate presentation set within a wide soundstage. It has a crisp and uncluttered nature that lends itself well to more subtle music, especially female vocal and lighter classical. Rebecca Pidgeon's

voice on the hi-fi reviewer's favourite test track, *Spanish Harlem*, elicited a healthy spread of goose bumps – and that's always a good sign.

The Onkyo/Tannoy combination was overly bass-shy for rock and pop music in standard trim, but there is a subtle bass boost switch that gives an extra punch without too great a clouding of the rest of the audio band. The trade-off reveals itself as a lack of separation in the lower frequencies, but while headbanging away to the Peppers' *Around The World* that seemed rather academic.

Switching to the AE Aegis Threes, the extra cabinet volume of the floorstanders adds several degrees of bass weight while keeping the upper frequencies agile and fairly detailed. Pushing the volume up allows the sound to get well out of the boxes, although there isn't sufficient grunt to fill a larger room.

The Onkyo proved very capable of hauling in distant RDS radio signals, but the somewhat forward nature of the system emphasises FM hiss and tends towards splashy treble as the volume increases. However, it promptly made up for this by locking on to a reasonable London FM-frequency Virgin Radio (albeit in mono) 20 miles outside of the M25.

MiniDisc recording from either CD or the radio could not be simpler, and the performance is eminently

capable. Playback of MD is a little tame in comparison with CD, just rounding off the upper frequency extremes – although this is not altogether a bad trait against the Onkyo's up-front sound.

CONCLUSIONS

The open and lightweight sound is never going to establish the Onkyo as a party animal, but in terms of offering a crisp and detailed performance there are few models in this group to touch it. Despite its compact size, it is best partnered with larger, preferably floorstanding, speakers to eke out the bass, and this may not fit in with everybody's ideal lifestyle concept. That aside, in purely sonic terms it offers a very clean performance warranting a cautious Recommendation. **RS**



VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£500.00
<p>■ A system of subtlety rather than energy, showing a rare clarity.</p> <p>■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE</p> <p>✉ Jamo, Oakfield Park, Bilton Road, Rugby, Warwickshire CV22 7AL</p> <p>☎ (01788) 556777</p>	

SONY SD1 (with MD)

The SD1 is a flexible little system in terms of components, allowing a modular approach to system-building. The centrepiece is the SD1 CD receiver unit, supplied with some good looking bookshelf speakers for about £350. The matching SD1-M MD recorder (tested here) adds £200 to the price tag, and there's also the SD1-T cassette deck (£100) for analogue recording. For the complete Sony package, a trendy little Corian and glass stand is available, which will set you back another £50.

Each component is connected by a daisy chain of unswitched AC outlets from the receiver unit meaning that, no matter what guise the system, you're only going to have to find a single plug socket, which is useful. Powered up, the system has a quite unremarkable appearance – but open the little glass flaps and the main function buttons light up in blue. There are a few analogue and digital connections around the back and, in a smart move for the Sony fan, the MD deck has an output dedicated to Sony MD personals for some slick direct editing functions.

The two-way, standmounting speakers supplied with the SD-1 are very well put together little cabinets sporting a smooth, heavily bevelled baffle and finished in a nice light-wood vinyl wrap. There's a minimalist grey cloth grille, but the yellow bass driver appeals if you want to make a statement. The speakers also have a chunky set of 4mm binding posts – odd considering the the system's receiver unit is stuck with dubious spring-clip terminals.

The system remote is stylish, with only the basic functions showing and the rest hidden behind a "Kirk to Enterprise" forward-opening flap. With a little practice of the wrist action you can get it to flip open...



"Powered up, the system has an unremarkable appearance – but open the glass flaps and the function buttons light up."

SOUND QUALITY

With the supplied loudspeakers the sound is clean, if a little thin and weedy. As the volume increases this turns quite aggressive and splashy as the amplifier's low power struggles to keep control.

The effect was very similar with the Tannoy speakers, which are both a cosmetic and a sonic match for the Sonys – albeit with a touch more bass response. The Winter movement of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* became alarmingly reminiscent of the screeching music in the *Psycho* shower scene at anything above gentle listening levels, and the

warmth drained from Rebecca Pidgeon's voice.

Hooking up the floorstanding Aegis Three speakers produced an altogether richer and deeper performance, although the forward and ragged treble re-emerges as the volume is increased. This becomes increasingly fatiguing, and after the five main test CDs there was little enthusiasm to delve any further into the music collection.

On the upside, recording via the MiniDisc deck was very good. Even playing the MD in a (Sony MD) reference system demonstrated an above average performance, with good extension at both ends of the spectrum. Basic operation and sync functions are all very slick and easy to use, making this one of the few systems where the instruction manual is all but redundant.

The RDS tuner section offers a fair performance sonically and does a fine job of pulling in even weak FM signals, complete with their RDS information. Hiss is somewhat pronounced but several distant stations were rendered listenable where other models in this test group simply turned them into a cacophony of FM hash.

The SD1 has a sibling model, the SD3, which for a few dollars more (£50) offers a satellite and sub-woofer system. And having been

told that both the sats and the sub glow a variety of colours in the dark, of course, I just had to give it a try. Soundwise, the system doesn't set the world on fire, being particularly weedy and detached. However, ten minutes warming to the colourful glow from the satellites and you're hooked. Then again, one man's lava lamp is another man's kitsch.

CONCLUSIONS

At low listening levels the SD1 is quite expressive with reasonable stereo, but pump up the volume on the under-powered amp and it all goes horribly wrong. Sadly, the SD1 is a long way from being one of Sony's best systems, despite offering a horde of useful Sonyphile functions in a well-integrated and easy to use package.

RS



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £550 (with MD)

■ A well integrated system but sonically a way off Sony's best.

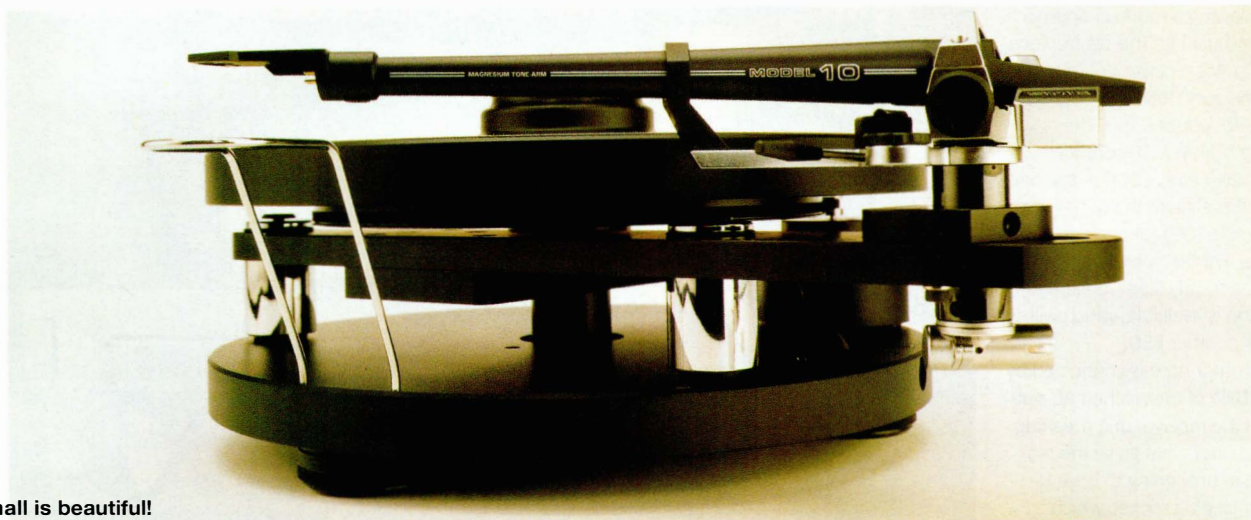
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TEAC Reference 100 (with MD)

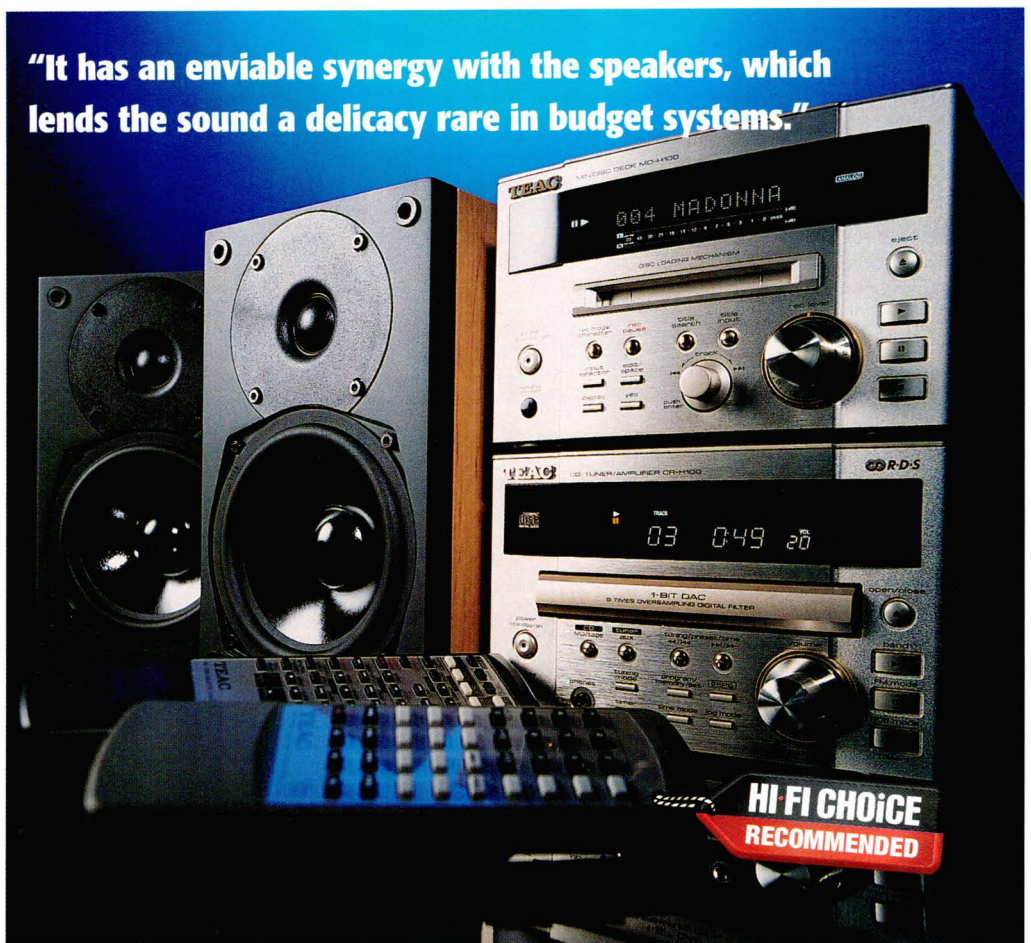
Teach knows a thing or two about stylish gold kit, and the 100 series is indeed a sexy little system, looking much more expensive than it actually is. Finish and build quality isn't up to the classy Reference 300 or 500 series, but this smaller system retains much of their character and appeal.

In size terms this is firmly into micro-system territory, being only a little more than 17cm wide and supplied here with a pair of tiny bookshelf speakers. These are almost the same height as the two stacked components, which rather encourages using the system all pushed together. Despite taking up no more room than a portable, this wouldn't extract anything like its full potential.

The dinky speakers are very much a standard offering, being a simple two-way design in a little ported cabinet with a light wood vinyl wrap. The dark blue grille is uninspiring in comparison with some of the designs in this test, and without the grille they don't look any more exciting. However, as with other Teac systems, the Reference 100 allows pick'n'mix selection of components, so specifying the system without the standard speakers saves £70.

Connecting the MiniDisc deck and base unit with the system link lead and an optical cable (not supplied!) is simple enough, and offers some synchronised functions across the two components. The system link will also extend to a Teac cassette deck, but only allows control over the power and automatic input selection.

The CD receiver offers a number of preset sound equalising modes listed as classic, vocal, pops and rock. Each has a quite obvious effect on the sound by highlighting various frequencies in the range in which



the title material dominates. After an initial play, these are best forgotten: they simply colour the sound.

SOUND QUALITY

One of the more pleasant surprises of this test was the Teac's little speakers. Despite their diminutive dimensions and uninspiring looks, they've got it where it counts, sounding relaxed and well balanced. The upper frequencies are projected well, giving a firm sense of space and imagery. Bass is lightweight, but

it is also tight and tuneful – and don't let the size of the cabinets deceive: they go impressively loud for such a dinky design.

Trying the Teac system with the Tannoy mX1s didn't bring much in way of great improvements, although bass response is a little more full and rounded. The trade-off,

however, is to lose some of the delicacy of the system, making it sound altogether less convincing.

Used with the AEs, the system's bass remains a little dull and the otherwise clean top end begins to get a touch aggressive. Nor did the floorstanders respond well to increasing the volume, going from a reasonably accurate performance to grimace-inducing distortion with the Teac's volume knob only a little past the 11 o'clock position. Reconnecting the Teac speakers underlines the synergy between these components as the sound reverts to an altogether more balanced and detailed offering.

The MD deck is quite a slick operating device once you've got past the controls, which seem to be spread haphazardly over both remotes and the fascia of the deck itself, with no single set offering all available functions. This aside, the Teac makes fine MD recordings with very little noticeable degradation of the sound. Bass remains delicate and agile, and the top end sounds well extended without the blandness than can affect MD recordings.

The RDS tuner is not sensational in sonic terms, giving FM broadcasts a distinctly shut-in sound, quite opposite to the openness of the CD source. Signal pull is low-to-average

in terms of locking on to a clean stereo image, although if you're prepared to manually find the distant signals and listen in mono, other stations are available.

CONCLUSIONS

The Reference 100 is a good looking and reasonable sounding system straight out of the box. It has an enviable synergy with the standard speakers, and this lends the sound a sonic delicacy very rare in budget systems. Bass is thin on the ground and there are a few operational shenanigans to overcome, but in terms of an acceptable lifestyle system it offers a good mix of sound and style. Recommended. **RS**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£550 (with MD)

A delicate performer with the small but surprisingly competent system speakers.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Teac, 5 Marlin House, The Croxley Centre, Watford, Herts, WD1 8YA
(01923) 819630



YAMAHA Piano Craft

Grand pianos are traditionally black and glossy. It was a surprise, then, to unwrap Yamaha's Piano Craft system components and find a light silver matt finish. However, removing the speakers from the box unearthed the namesake in the form of a two-way bookshelf design flanked by piano-black lacquered sides. Placed on stands they look cooler than a polar bear's nose.

The system itself comes in three boxes as standard comprising a receiver, CD player and cassette deck. An MD option will be in the shops for a premium of £200, but alas was not available in time for this review. Cosmetically the system has not got the style of the Teac or the panache of the Kenwood, but it has a clean and uncluttered appeal.

Around the back things get a little untidy with all the separate boxes needing hooking together both with audio connections and the system linking remote cable. There are solid looking binding post speaker connections, albeit without 4mm banana plug sockets, and a selection of analogue and digital connections. One of these is a line-level sub-

woofer output that hooks up to Yamaha's SW45 active sub (at an extra £140) to boost bass response.

The controls feel a little plasticky, but the system is supplied with a single, well laid-out remote control. Once all the units are connected together they behave like an integrated system and offer a host of automatic features based around input selection and recording.

Although there is little in the way of features to make this system stand out from the crowd, the speaker finish elevates it from mundane to special in lifestyle terms.

Considering that this finish can cost a premium of up to £200 on



"Fully run-in, the treble is still on the bright side of neutral, but this is accompanied by oodles of gung-ho bass."

up-market speakers, at £400 Yamaha's Piano Craft system offers good material value for money.

SOUND QUALITY

With such visual sophistication it was with some disappointment the speakers got off to a false start. 'Brash and aggressive' summed up their performance, although as my listening went on matters improved noticeably as the speakers ran in. Thus they were left for a day happily playing the radio to an empty room before the review reconvened.

On day two the sound was much improved. Fully run-in, the treble is still on the bright side, but

this is accompanied by oodles of gung-ho bass that thumps out of the speaker's rear port enough to ruffle wall-curtains half a metre away. The overall effect is a colourful, up-front and impressively loud performance hinting at a 'never mind the quality – feel the width' philosophy.

The Tannoy mX1s are an unlikely partner considering the system's selling point standard speakers, but some subtle improvement can be had from the change. The sometimes fierce upper frequencies are tamed a little, leaving a raw but powerful sound. A similar result ensues connected to the AE floorstanders, and after half a dozen high-octane Dr Dre gangsta tracks I was bopping around the room with my arms folded and threatening to shoot the cat – who was not impressed.

The Peppers' complex *Californication* proved less of a spectacular performance with all of the speakers tested and underlines the nature of the Yamaha. It struggles to unravel the complex mix of ragged vocals and guitars, but still managed to convey most of the emotion of the album. In sonic terms, it simply fails to dot the 'i's and cross the 't's.

The cassette mechanism is a simple to use, tray-loading design and offers reasonable results. The replay is a little more laid-back than the original, but this has benefit in terms of low hiss even without the aid of

the Dolby noise reduction systems. Radio performance is more than acceptable with a strong signal, but despite picking up just about any hint of an FM wave, there's an awful lot of background hash with weaker signals. The sonic signature of the system also plays its part here, making heavily compressed pop stations sound considerably better than spoken word or classical ones.

CONCLUSIONS

The Piano Craft system is something of a wolf in sheep's clothing as the sexy piano-finish speakers and subtle looks hide the heart of a rocker. Sonic subtlety is not high on the agenda, but raw energy and enjoyment is – and that isn't altogether bad. Recommended if you like that sort of thing, and I do. **RS**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£650 (with MD)

Classy looks and bags of energy make the Piano Craft ideal for the style-conscious rocker.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

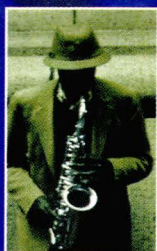
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DENON 6.5

DENON 6.5

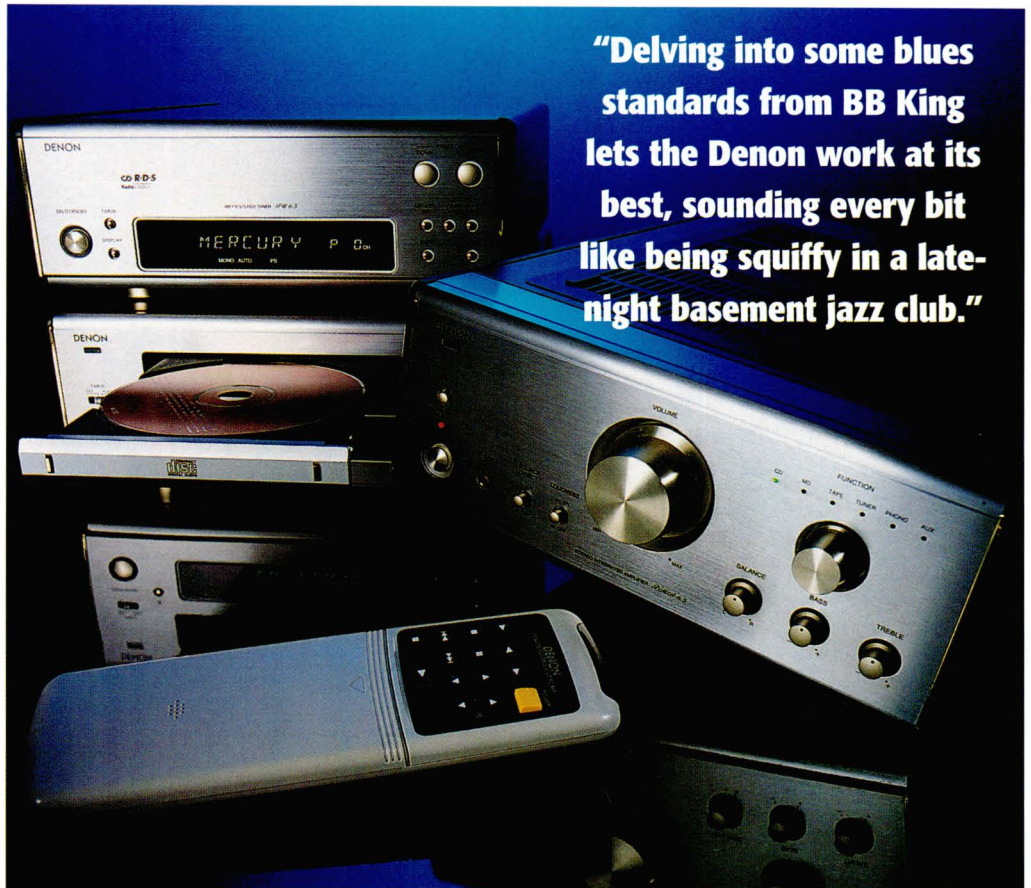
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Denon's 6.5 system has been around for some time and is proving popular as the demand for lifestyle systems grows. It is a fully modular system although, as each unit is an individual component, you could argue this is simply a hi-fi separates system in mini-sized cases. One function that does separate it from the hi-fi breed is a daisy chain system link cable allowing one-touch power on and off and synchronised recording functions.

Tested here are the main amplifier (£250), tuner (£200) and CD player (£250), although a cassette deck (£200), MD recorder (£350) and matching Denon SEE-313 speakers (£150) are available. The electronics combine a solid looking aluminium fascia with less than confidence-inspiring plastic side panels. This makes each component quite light, so if you're considering stacking them some Blu-Tack will be required to save them sliding about. Also, if stacking it is best to avoid putting the amplifier at the bottom, because after extended high-volume listening the heat build-up trips thermal protection relays and shuts the unit down until it cools (oops!).

The controls themselves have a good solid feel and include anodised aluminium knobs and little gold buttons that add up to quite a stylish combination. But add a cassette deck and/or an MD recorder and the bulky components get a little less 'lifestyle' and a little more 'hi-fi'.

Around the back a surprise inclusion is that near-extinct connection – a phono (record player) input. It's questionable how many 6.5 system buyers will use this facility, but top marks to Denon for catering for those who will. Each component is supplied with interconnects, but these really need upgrading to extract the Denon's full potential.



"Delving into some blues standards from BB King lets the Denon work at its best, sounding every bit like being squiffy in a late-night basement jazz club."

Once everything's hooked up it's very simple to use, with all the functions coming easily to hand without having to wade through the manual. The single system remote, which is quite strangely buff-coloured, happily controls all the components.

SOUND QUALITY

The little Tannoy speakers revealed something of the system's potential, offering a performance that was entertaining, if a little congested. The balance is inoffensive to a fault, with the extreme upper and lower frequencies taking something of a back stage to the midrange. Rebecca

Pidgeon's warm and breathy vocals flowed from the speakers with her natural sibilance mellowed and somewhat detached from her voice.

With Talvin Singh, and indeed the Vivaldi, this laid-back style keeps the soundstage two-dimensional and ultimately disappointing. Increasing the volume enlivens the presentation, although as things get going the Tannoys approach their limits and add their own colorations. Delving into some blues standards from BB King lets the Denon work at its best, sounding every bit like being squiffy in a late-night basement jazz club.

The AE Aegis Threes proved an altogether better match. The floor-standers' ability to extract upper and lower frequency information is just the tonic to the Denon's otherwise lax attitude, and the sound becomes deeper and more convincing.

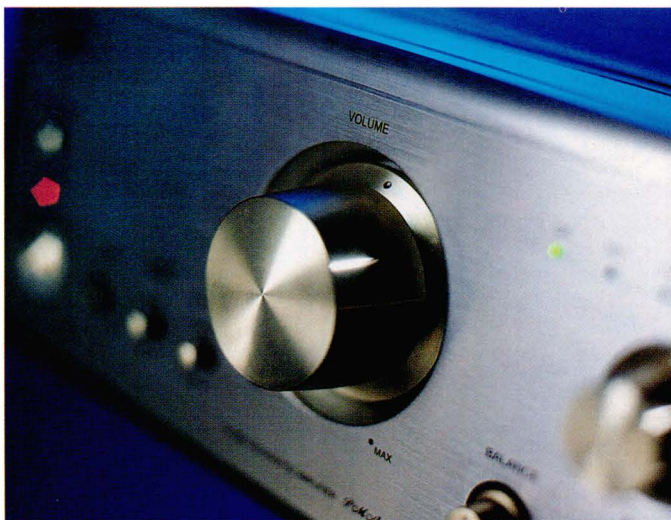
With more aggressive material such as Dr Dre and the Chili Peppers, the system's easygoing nature encourages serious volumes and lets the Denon shine. Although an awful lot of detail is lost, the music seems to bypass the concerns about fidelity and appeals directly to the soul. It is the sort of combination that gets you digging out CDs you haven't played for years and rediscovering what 4am looks like.

One of this system's strongest components is the tuner. The sound

is full-bodied and shares many of the sonic virtues of Denon's excellent TU260L MkII hi-fi tuner – albeit in a more stylish case. Locked on to a strong signal it is a star performer, offering a rich presentation that, FM hiss aside, can sound like a CD. With distant stations, switching to mono eliminates much of the hash rendering the result quite listenable.

CONCLUSIONS

The Denon 6.5 is a stylish system offering a warm and solid, if somewhat simplified, presentation. Its sensitivity to different types of speakers will play a great part in its ultimate appeal and, although undoubtedly an entertainer with the right partner, it remains too laid-back for full recommendation. **RS**



VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£650 (with MD)
<p>A stylish component system with a warm and full-bodied sound, short on delicacy and detail.</p> <p>TWO YEAR GUARANTEE</p> <p>Kenwood Electronics, Dwight Road, Watford, Herts WD1 8EB (01923) 816444</p>	

LINN Classik

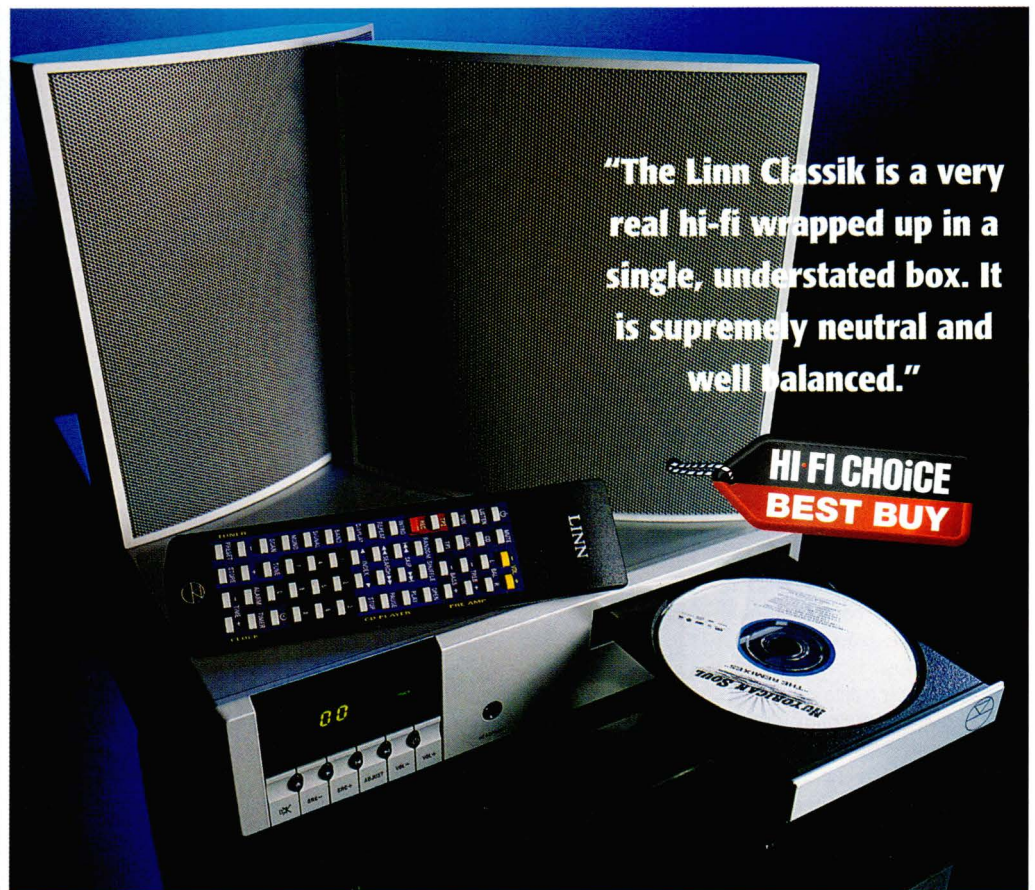
Jumping up to over £1,000, Linn's Classik very much redefines the term 'lifestyle system'. A single-box amp, tuner and CD in a neutral coloured case, the build is solid and inspiring. The terminals are all gold plated, power output is double that of most other systems in this test and there's considerably less in the way of garish displays and cosmetic accoutrements. Linn recommends using either its stylish Local speakers (£195) or traditional Kans (£325) with the Classik, so we tried out both for this test.

The design is unerringly Linn house style, being a plain, odd-sized box with all the controls and display clustered to one side. The choice of nondescript grey does allow very discreet installation, blending in with any décor but failing miserably to look like a grand's worth of kit as far as impressing visitors is concerned.

Around the back there's a single set of speaker outputs, a preamp output for upgrading with power amps, an auxiliary input and a single tape loop. Being a single box CD receiver, the Classik has no built-in recording device. This would not be of great importance, but for the lack of digital outputs. Although there are analogue outputs, this effectively bars digital recording to an MD or CD-R deck, which can only be described as a glaring oversight.

Be prepared for some head scratching over the connections, too: the aerial lead is an F-type screw socket (against nine other models in this test with standard coaxial sockets) and the speaker connections require the new style Deltron plugs – although these are supplied. Similarly, speaker cable is included, but at only 2.5m long it will prove inadequate in many installations.

Operationally, the Classik is a little confusing if you're unfamiliar with



other Linn electronics, and the 'sausage finger'-unfriendly remote control is functional but uninspiring. However, this is overcome with familiarity, and once you get used to it operation is in fact quite easy.

SOUND QUALITY

First up for a brief stint were the little Local speakers. These compact, moulded cabinets can be placed on stands or wallmounted. However, they are no match for the Classik system, sounding thin, tinny and coloured. They were very soon back in their boxes, hanging their speaker terminals in disgrace.

Hooking up the Kans was an altogether more enjoyable experience. Having spent several days listening to the first group of lifestyle systems, the Classik/Kan combination was a fast-track journey back to the world of real hi-fi. The sound is rich and detailed, giving well-recorded female vocals a very tangible presence in the room. With *The Four Seasons* CD the soundstage is a sweeping vista, full of detail and beautifully positioned instruments. This is certainly a system that was put together by ear first and eye second.

The Tannoy mX1s sound rather dull in comparison, with droning bass lines and lifeless upper frequencies. The naturalness of the original combination disappears, leaving the listener acutely aware of the speakers. The AE floorstanders, however, quickly re-establish faith in the Classik, combining much, if not quite all, of the presence of the Kans with a thumping good bass response. Rock and dance tracks have plenty of weight and drive, and the system retains enough air at the top end to sound equally impressive with female vocal and light classics.

Refitting an F-type connector to the aerial lead is worth the aggravation (and the trip to Tandy), because the tuner is also rather good. The sound lives up well to the CD, albeit with a hint of mush in the treble

range, the tonal balance on spoken word programming is best in this test by miles. RDS would have been a nice touch but, sadly, is missing.

CONCLUSIONS

Excluding the Local speakers from the equation, the Linn Classik is a very real hi-fi wrapped up in a single, understated box. It is supremely neutral and well balanced, and with the Kans or the AE speakers would not sound out of place up against a similarly priced stack of traditional hi-fi separates. There are a few niggles in terms of the lack of digital output and a rather obtuse operating system, but for pure sound quality in a compact system there is very little to touch it at this price – which rather qualifies it as a Best Buy. **RS**



VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,020 + spkrs

Don't let the single box fool you, the Classik is very capable hi-fi in a compact package.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE
 Linn Products, Floors Road, Waterfoot, Eaglesham, Glasgow G76 0EP
 ☎ (0141) 307 7777

MARANTZ Perla

MARANTZ PERLA

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Lifestyle comes in many guises, and Marantz's Perla system racks up another angle on sound with style. This particular slant comes from giving standard width hi-fi components – namely an RDS receiver and CD/cassette deck – a cosmetic makeover, a bobbly aluminium case and a rather slick motorised door. Add in a communications bus between components and a system remote control, and the result is the latest incarnation of Marantz's Slim Line series.

The visual effect is quite impressive, especially as the flaps can be opened or closed by a light touch on the top right corner of each unit. This system also wins the award for sexiest remote of the test by miles, the slender, aluminium-topped control simply oozing style. It's weighty and comfortable in the hand, and could probably double as an offensive weapon at a push.

Its operation is a little complex in order to keep the button count to a minimum, but most of the major functions on both components are catered for. The IR sensor on each component is slung underneath the case at the front, which allows control of functions even with the door flaps closed.

Connections at the rear are pretty much the standard fodder of an auxiliary input and a single set of speaker terminals, although the addition of a secondary tape loop is handy. There is an optical digital output for a MiniDisc or CD-R deck, and a link-cable connection that can daisy-chain to other Marantz components using the D-BUS control system. This allows additional components to be controlled from the single remote, although this is not as simple as it sounds and eventually necessitated a perusal of the user manual.



"The Perla offers potentially the best compromise of sound quality and aesthetics in this test."

SOUND QUALITY

The Perla is a powerful little system, claiming 45 Watts per side, which is shown in its grip on the speakers. With the diminutive Tannoy mX1s, the sound is punchy with no shortage of grunt. Rock tracks make the most of this, but more complex or delicate material is weakened by a blurring of instruments and loss of subtlety. The Talvin Singh track *Sutrix* ably demonstrates this as the fast, bass-heavy rhythm emerges with admirable energy but the female vocal at the back of the mix sounds like it's on the wrong side of the recording studio glass.

With the Aegis Threes connected, the Marantz lets rip with a weighty performance that gets better as the volume increases. In a mad Red Hot Chili Peppers hour, the combo lacked nothing in drive and attack – right up to the point where the AEs started screaming for mercy and the neighbours started chucking half-bricks. Backing off of the volume shepherded the music back inside the usually agile floorstanders, leaving everything a little flat.

Switching from CD to the RDS radio was rewarded with more warm and solid sound. With a strong signal the Perla is quite a smoothie, extracting a reasonably detailed programme without accentuating the FM hiss. Tuning sensitivity is excellent, drawing in signals from way out, although the RDS pick-up is a little reluctant on all but the strongest of signals. Occasionally even these trip the Marantz up and it refuses to show anything but the frequency. There is no Radiotext function either, which is a shame if you listen predominantly to the BBC stations that make the most of this facility.

Tape functions are less than intuitive, and it took a while to work out how to go about dubbing between CD and tape using the automatic recording level system that searches for peaks throughout the CD before it kicks off. Ergonomics aside, the

Perla worked very well with and without Dolby noise reduction, although the latter had the noticeable effect of dampening the dynamics. Played in other hi-fi equipment, tapes recorded on the Marantz sounded a little lifeless but were blissfully free of any obvious pitch distortions.

CONCLUSIONS

The Perla offers potentially the best compromise of sound quality and aesthetics in this test, mixing a solid and gutsy performance with serious style kudos in the motorised door department. Careful partnering of speakers is essential to get the best from the system, but in the context of offering a bit of something for everyone it is Recommended. **RS**



VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,000.00

■ A gutsy sounding system concealing its virtues behind slick motorised doors.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

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

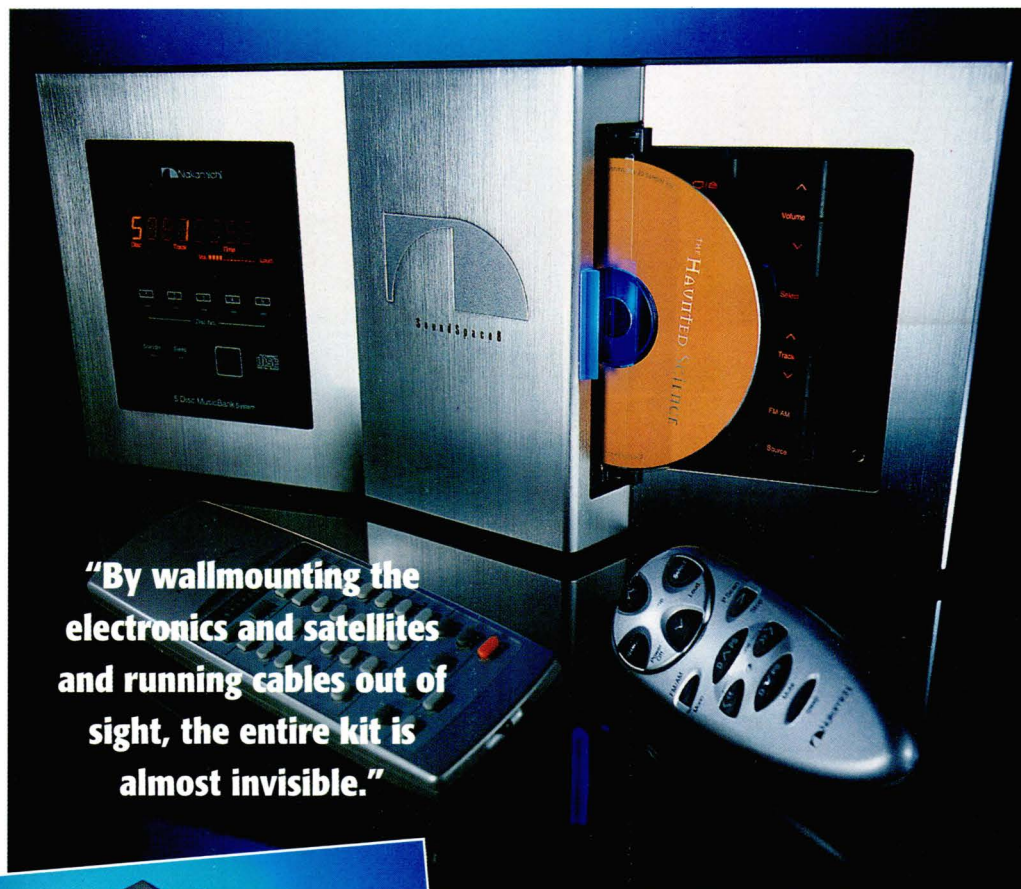
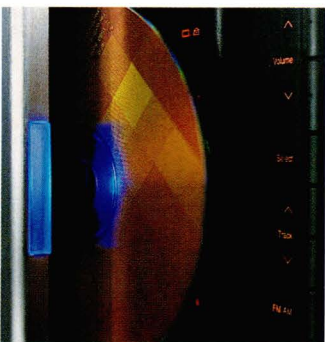
NAKAMICHI Soundspace 8

And now for something completely different. Nakamichi's Soundspace 8 is slim, slinky, holds five CDs and hangs on the wall. This is 'lifestyle' in the extreme and the discrete design doesn't stop at the electronics. The speaker system comprises two dinky satellites and a stylish active subwoofer straight out of the 1927 Fritz Lang *Metropolis* school of design.

The entire system hooks together with a single pair of interconnects and a chunky combined power/control lead. These emerge from the system through a neat little cable tidy to keep everything tangle-free. The mains supply goes directly to the subwoofer which also contains the amp, thus reducing the size and power requirements of the main unit. By wallmounting the electronics and satellites and running cables out of sight, the entire kit is almost invisible. For those not wanting on-the-wall hi-fi, a couple of little stabilising feet are supplied, although sitting on table the Soundspace 8 certainly loses some of its charm.

Connection for the aerial is behind a little side flap, which to successfully refit requires that the aerial lead be terminated with a right-angle coax plug. There are connections for both an analogue tape deck and MD personal recorder, but the thought of either unit littering the glass-topped coffee table or beech-laminate floor is probably too much to bear for the average Soundspace 8 owner.

Bizarrely, the system is supplied with two remote controls that do almost the same thing. The smallest of the two is a slinky little egg-shaped device to control the basic functions on a day-to-day basis. The main remote is a more traditional slab of buttons giving access to the lesser-used functions, including the strange 'illum' button.



"By wallmounting the electronics and satellites and running cables out of sight, the entire kit is almost invisible."



This toggles the display illumination of the main unit between green and red, and, just to add to this visual statement, when the CD tray is open the prism on the front glows blue.

All the leads required to get the system running are supplied in the package, including good lengths of speaker cable to run from the sub to the satellites. This is a no-less weird Nakamichi design, using copper for the positive conductor and steel for the return path. Surreal? Oh yeah.

SOUND QUALITY

In hi-fi terms, the Soundspace 8 is sonically challenged. The little satellites do a fair job of projecting the upper frequencies into the room,

although they are quite splashy and aggressive when the volume increases. Neither is their integration with the sub the smoothest in the world, especially as the overall efficiency of the sub is higher than the satellites. Not only does this make the speaker system rather obvious, it also necessitates an adjustment of the sub level almost every time you change volume.

The subwoofer itself requires careful positioning, as the upper frequency roll-off is high enough to audibly place it in the room. At low volumes it dominates the little satellites, even when set to minimum, and as the volume increases the port chuffs and puffs like a steam engine. This limits the volume to about 90dB, which is OK for a gentle listening but is not going to throw a party in anything bigger than the broom cupboard.

Set up at about an 85dB average in-room, subwoofer tweaked and CDs loaded, the Soundspace 8 finally gets around to making the right noises. With up-tempo material you soon find your feet tapping and head bobbing to the warm throb of the sub. It is a colourful presentation,

quite musical but prone to gloss over drama or excitement. And it's rose-tinted to an extent that makes all four of Vivaldi's *Seasons* sound like a warm week in summer.

Switching to the radio, the tuner picked up the top five strongest signals easily, although it was a little remiss in locking onto the distant ones. Sound was adequate for non-critical listening, but in comparison with the other three models in this group it was well below par.

CONCLUSIONS

The Soundspace 8 is an interesting alternative to the traditional music system. Despite its sonic foibles, it's hard to dislike in concept and will win many friends on style alone. Hmm, now what if I just put it in the dining room. **RS**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,100.00

Nakamichi's hang-on-the wall music system is stylish but sonically challenged.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

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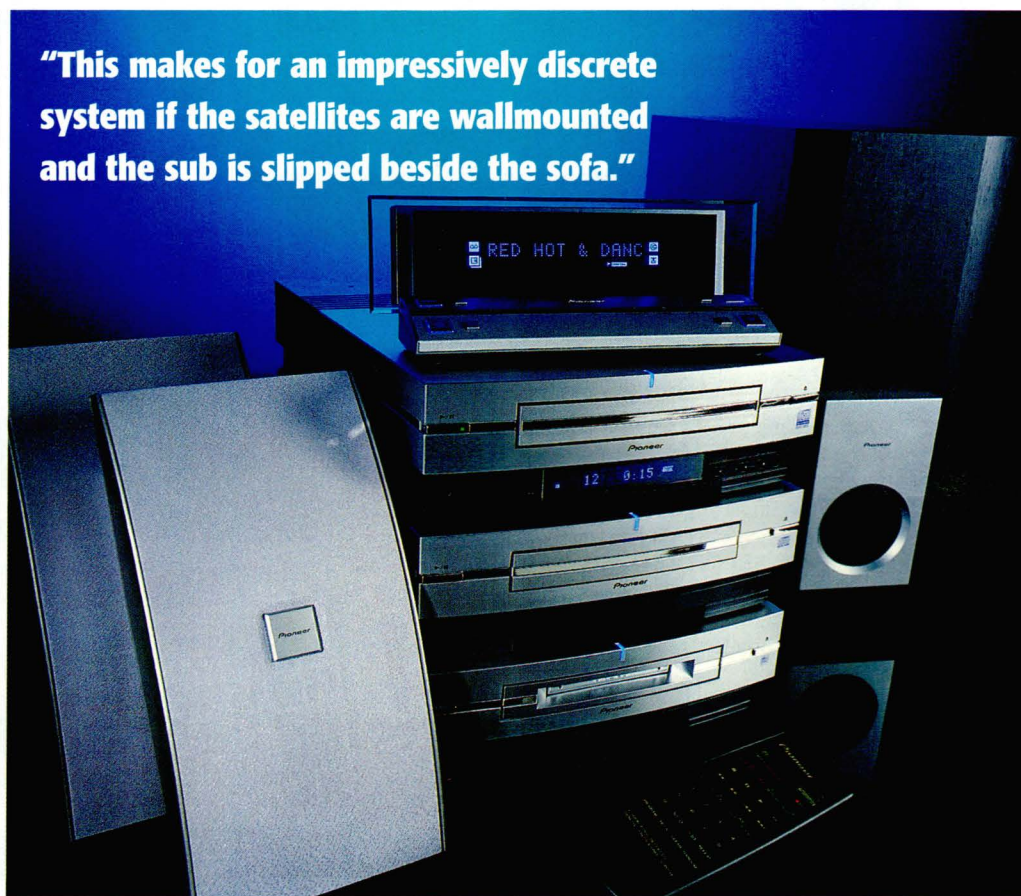
PIONEER NS-8 (with CD-R)

Pioneer's NS-7 lifestyle system sold by the shedload. It was sleek, sexy, didn't sound too bad and managed to flaunt an image of designer hi-fi – just what the UK consumer was looking for. A few years on and the system has been revised to NS-8 guise and is tested here with a new CD-R option.

Styling falls on the understated side of elegance with a rather plain two-tone grey fascia. More than making up for this minimalism is the gorgeous fluorescent blue display that's detached from the main system. The cable joining the two gives a range of about 1.5m, allowing the unit itself to be put inside a cupboard and the display on top for the ultimate in subtle music systems. The display also acts as holster for the sexy system remote (and IR sensor), and can be set to display the time or date to sneakily disguise it as a common but stylish digital clock. Top feature if you're prone to misplacing remote controls is a superb locator function that makes the remote beep if you clap three times.

The satellites and subwoofer look distinctly tacky in comparison to the system itself and offer only spring-clip terminals. If you don't like the finish, an identical system is available, the NS-9, featuring wood effect speakers at no extra cost. The satellites are quite large, but offer a host of mounting options for stands, shelves or walls; the sub is quite narrow and hence versatile when it comes to positioning. Note also that as the system splits the sub and sat output internally, you can't upgrade the system with full-range speakers.

The system integrates with an MD recorder (£200) or cassette deck (£100) through the system linking cables, but the CD-R is very much a standalone product. For future



"This makes for an impressively discrete system if the satellites are wallmounted and the sub is slipped beside the sofa."

upgrades there are number of analogue and digital inputs and outputs to choose from.

SOUND QUALITY

With the supplied speaker package, purely sonic awards for the Pioneer are always going to be conspicuous by their absence. Even when the subwoofer level is set to low, the mid-bass tends to dominate the mix without being tight enough to give it much attack. Although the performance is by no means the last word in high fidelity, it isn't offensive and possesses an essential musicality

that passes the foot-tapping test with ease. Dr Dre and the Chili Peppers benefited the most from this colourful mix while Talvin Singh's ambient and detailed *OK* was anything but.

Considering the satellites are plastic and the sub is a traditional chip-board cabinet, the integration of the two is amazingly seamless and the system can hit quite serious volumes before the sound really falls apart. This makes for an impressively discrete system if the satellites are wallmounted and the sub is slipped down beside the sofa.

The CD-R unit is cosmetically matched to the rest of the system, but by dint of being a recent addition it isn't an integral part of it. It therefore has its own display and remote control, and offers no integrated functions or use of the detached display – which, of course, rather scuppers some of the better points of the system as a whole.

Performance is well up to the Pioneer standard, making as near as dammit identical copies of the test CDs (for personal use only, Officer!) Testing these discs on a reference system revealed a slight raggedness at the top end, but nothing too detrimental to the overall recording.

Radio performance is also exemplary, hauling in distant signals and making the most of stronger ones. Again the sound is warm and funky,

which keeps any FM nastiness at bay, and the RDS radiotext scrolling across the trendy display is really quite mesmerising.

CONCLUSIONS

The sound of Pioneer's NS-8 is neither accurate nor refined and is coloured to quite a psychedelic degree, which in *Hi-Fi Choice* terms is going to exclude it from formal recommendation. However, it does have something of a funky and enjoyable nature that lends itself well to simple rock and pop music. With the better-integrated MiniDisc deck rather than the separate CD-R it can also be hidden away in a cupboard to become the most discrete system in this test. And do I love that display? Oh yes.

RS



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £700 (with CD-R)

More fun and funky than hi-fi, but potentially the most discrete lifestyle system on the market

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Pioneer, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Slough, Berks SL2 4PQ
(01753) 789789

CONCLUSIONS

STYLE SYSTEMS

After this test, assembling a more diverse group of products for review is going to be a tall order at *HFC*. Within the lower priced group alone the differences between systems were far greater than that between similarly priced hi-fi components. The Kenwood VH-600 is undoubtedly the star of this group, offering a solid sonic performance with all the panache and convenience a modern lifestyle system should have. In this context it emerges firmly on top of the entire ten-strong line-up, although in purely sonic terms Linn's Classik is in another league altogether.

The Onkyo FSR-435 and Teac Reference 100 have possibly the closest matched sound of any two systems in this test, despite quite different methods of getting there. Both are subtle and detailed, and at their best with delicate music. Right at the other end of the spectrum, Yamaha's Piano Craft was made to rock and roll, offering a full-on, in-yer-face sound without a subtle note to be heard – and this from the most cosmetically understated and chic design in the bunch.

Sony's SD1 and Pioneer's NS-8 systems had distinct sonic signatures that kept them out of the placings, but both offer impressive integration and some unique features. Certainly if I wanted a little system for the bedroom it would be the basic £400 NS-8 over anything else in this test.

The disparity is even more marked among the higher priced components. Comparing the Soundspace 8 with the Classik, for example, is rather like an A/B comparison between a spoon and a pencil – they simply aren't made for the same job. The Nakamichi majors on design and discrete installation, sadly to the detriment of sound quality.

Meanwhile, Linn has simply crowbarred a CD mechanism and tuner chip into an already successful hi-fi amplifier for superb sound quality. However, to appreciate the latter you are going to have to put up with the style compromise of trailing wires and standmounted speakers.

Both the Marantz and the Denon systems are entertaining performers, but neither are the last word in high-fidelity detail. The Denon has quite an imposing character, being dark and full-bodied – which is perfect for the blues, if little else. The Perla system just gets the better of the two sonically, keeping a good tempo with the Acoustic Energy speakers and driving them impressively loud without too much complaint.

Of the systems tested with an MD deck or CD-R option, it was clear that the differences between an original CD and a digital recording of it were less pronounced than with a fully fledged hi-fi system. Similarly, there was no simple, global answer as to whether upgrading a lifestyle system with hi-fi loudspeakers is worth the investment. As the Teac system proved – with the £70 supplied speakers gelling better with the Reference 100 than the £350 AE floorstanders – there's a lot to be said for synergy. On the other hand, Marantz's Perla system leapt several notches up the performance ladder by swapping the bookshelf Tannoy mX1s for the very same AE floorstanders.

An interesting group test indeed, potentially throwing up more questions than it answered. Taking the results on sound quality alone, the true test of a system is to simply equate its performance with a similarly priced combination of separate hi-fi components.

Out of the ten lifestyle systems assembled here, only the Linn genuinely manages such an accolade. However, my good lady, for example, would happily throw out the entire visual and ergonomic carnage of my reference hi-fi system for the Soundspace 8, without so much as a second thought for its sonic calibre.

This diametric opinion underlines quite what a different kettle of transistors these lifestyle systems are in comparison with pure hi-fi. It's very easy to rate them simply in terms of sound, build and value, but altogether trickier to quantify what indeed appeals to the eye of the beholder.

BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDED



LINN Classik £1,020

The Classik wins the day hands down by offering all the sonic advantages of a similarly priced hi-fi system in a single, compact box. It is supremely neutral and well balanced when used with Linn's Kan loudspeakers (£295).



KENWOOD VH-600 £650

Sexy features and an expressive, even-handed sound set Kenwood's VH-600 system out from the crowd below £700. It is awash with nice touches operationally and the supplied speakers sound superb and look a million dollars.



MARANTZ Perla £1,000

A fine combination of designer style and sonic guts give the Perla a broad appeal. Partnered with the right speakers it offers a rhythmic charm that is hard to resist.



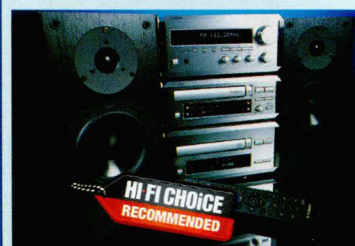
ONKYO FSR-435 £500

The light and airy presentation of the Onkyo allows it to extract musical detail admirably. Certainly not a system for headbangers, but a more refined sound would be difficult to find at the price.



TEAC Reference 100 (with MD) £550

This competent micro system has a delicate and detailed touch. The supplied speakers are excellent and, although tiny, offer performance well beyond their size.



YAMAHA Piano Craft £400

The Yamaha's eclectic mix of classical styling and an energetic penchant for rock and dance music give it a unique and appealing slant on the lifestyle genre.

"It's a rare combination of superb sound, and terrific value"

WHAT HI-FI?

and only available from these authorised dealers...

ABERDEEN Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01224 587070	BOURNEMOUTH Movement Audio 01202 529988	Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01228 590775	EPPING Chew & Osborne 01992 574242	HULL The Audio Room 01482 896166	Bartletts Hi-Fi 020 7607 2148	Superfi 0161 835 1156	Richer Sounds 0115 924 1551	Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 0114 255 5861	TEWKESBURY Sight & Sound 01684 298109
ACCRINGTON Cryers 01254 391440	BRACKNELL B&B Hi-Fi 01344 424556	CASTLEFORD Eric Willey Hi-Fi 01977 556774	EPSOM Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01372 745883	Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01482 587171	Brians Hi-Fi 020 7631 1109	MANSFIELD Techniques 01623 26315	Superfi 0115 941 2137	Superfi 0114 272 3768	THORNTON HEATH AWE 020 8653 3657
AYLESBURY Northwood Audio 01296 428790	BRADFORD Erricks 01274 309266	CHELTENHAM Audio T 01242 583960	EXETER Audio Excellence 01392 491194	Superfi 01482 324051	Chelsea A.V. 020 7352 2596	MARGATE LMD Audio 01943 220092	OXFORD Audio T 01865 765961	SHREWSBURY Creative Audio 01743 241924	TRURO E.T.S. 01872 79809
BANBURY Blinkhorns 01295 259859	BRENTWOOD Audio T 01277 264730	CHESTER Audio Excellence 01244 345576	EXMOUTH Laws 01395 272838	Zen Audio 01482 587397	Francis of Streatham 020 8769 0466	MARKET Harborough 01858 461460	Oxford Audio 01865 790879	Shropshire Hi-Fi 01743 232317	TUNBRIDGE WELLS Sevenoaks Hi-Fi 01892 531543
BANGOR I & H Griffiths 01248 370655	BRIGHTON Hills Sound & Vision 01273 418006	CHICHESTER Now That's... Hi-Fi 01243 537788	FALKIRK Hi-Fi Corner 01324 629011	INVERNESS The Music Station 01463 225523	Garland Electronics 020 8200 7676	MIDDLESBROUGH Gilson Audio 01642 248793	PENZANCE E.T.S. 01736 64274	01743 241924	UXBRIDGE Uxbridge Audio 01892 531543
BARNSTAPLE J & A Video Centre 01271 324384	BRISTOL Audio Excellence 0117 926 4975	CHORLEY Monitor Sound 01257 271935	GATESHEAD Linton Audio 0191 460 0999	IPSWICH Eastern Audio 01473 212171	020 8769 0466	MILTON KEYNES Technosound 01908 604949	PERTH W.M. Coupar 01738 634809	01743 232317	WALLINGFORD Astley Audio 01491 839305
BATH Moss of Bath 01225 465058	BRISTOL Audio Excellence 0117 926 4975	COVENTRY Frank Harvey Hi-Fi 024 7652 5200	GLASGOW Glasgow Audio 0141 332 4707	KETERING Classic Hi-Fi 01536 310855	020 7323 2747	NELSON Wilkinson's Hi-Fi 01282 612901	PETERBOROUGH Link Electronics 01733 553333	01743 232317	WARRINGTON Doug Brady Hi-Fi 01925 828099
BECKENHAM Musical Images 0181 663 3777	BRISTOL Audio Excellence 0117 926 4975	CREWE Cloughs A.V. 01270 257030	KINGSTON UPON THAMES Richer Sounds 0141 226 5711	KIDDERMINSTER MAX 01562 822236	Martin-Kleiser 020 8400 5555	NEW MALDEN Grandix 020 8336 0012	PLYMOUTH Richer Sounds 01752 222256	01743 232317	WATFORD Hi-Fi City 01923 226169
BEDFORD Richard's A.V. 01234 365165	BRISTOL Audio Excellence 0117 926 4975	CROYDON Audio Tech 020 8660 1177	LANCASTER Practical Hi-Fi 01524 39657	LEEDS Richer Sounds 0113 245 5717	M. O'Brien Hi-Fi 020 8946 1528	NEWCASTLE Global Hi-Fi 0191 230 3600	PORTSMOUTH Now That's Hi-Fi 023 9281 1230	01743 232317	WEYBRIDGE Cosmic 01932 854522
BELFAST Audio Times 028 9024 9117	BRISTOL Audio Excellence 0117 926 4975	DARLINGTON Hi-Fi Experience 01325 481418	GLouceSTER Audio Excellence 01452 300046	LEICESTER Richer Sounds 0113 245 5717	Musical Images 020 7497 1346	NEWCASTLE Global Hi-Fi 0191 230 3600	PRESTON Practical Hi-Fi 01772 883958	01743 232317	WILMSLOW Swift Hi-Fi 01625 526213
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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

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

Quoting HFC CT 06/00 HiFi Choice Magazine

I've just bought a NAD 317 amp following its review in *Hi-Fi Choice*.

Which speaker cable would you recommend I use with this amp and PSB 400i speakers?

*John Montgomery,
via e-mail*

QED Qudos Silver is an all-round safe bet, smooth and detailed in equal measure. It should suit your set-up well.



Technics DVD-A10.

Having one of those 'bad system' days? Believe us, we know the feeling. But fear not, Tim Bower has all the answers.

Multi-colored hock shop



I currently have a system that is used for both music and home theatre. The hardware consists of a Pioneer Elite VSX-26TX receiver, a Cambridge Audio CD4SE CD player connected with Cardas Crosslink interconnects. The speakers are Monitor Audio Silver Series 5is bi-wired with Kimber 4TC cable. I recently added a Parasound HCA-1000A two-channel amplifier to improve the sound quality when listening to music. I am considering upgrading my CD player to either a Rega Planet or an Arcam Alpha 7SE. There's a place around the corner from me that buys and sells used equipment which is asking \$425 for the Rega, plus my old CD player in trade. Is it worth upgrading to either one of these players from my CD4SE, or should I hold out for something more high-end like the Arcam Alpha 9? Eventually I would like to have a separate music-only system and purchase a preamp to use with my current amp and CD player.

David Berezin, USA



Rotel RCD-991.

an engaging and rhythmic performer. It's a definite case of try before you buy, and make sure any auditions are carried out with your own amp. That said, you've clearly got at least one eye on the future, so listen to one or two more costly machines and judge for yourself whether the extra is worth spending. By picking a player like Arcam's Alpha 9 (£800) or Rotel's RCD-991 (£750), you would have the basis for a top-notch two-channel music system – a perfect front end for that separate music set-up you aspire to. If you're looking at the long term, a little more saving can go a long way!

Your Cambridge is a cracking little CD player, one of our favourite ever budget models. However, the Arcam and the Rega are a cut above, and you may find that they bring worthwhile improvements to your system. The Rega can be a particularly interesting proposition – it doesn't suit all systems but in the right set up it's

A Timelord writes...



I've started upgrading and now I'm looking to replace my ageing Pioneer PD-S703 CD player. I've been thinking about the Rega Planet or Rotel RCD-991. But now, in Holland, Sony has put its £550 SCD-XB940 on the market, and Technics has launched the A-10 DVD-A player. I want to be ready for the future but it all seems pretty misty. Do I buy an SACD player, a DVD-A player, or stick with conventional CD until the mist clears?

Tim, Holland

We're confused by your assertion that Sony's new lower priced SACD player and Technics' first DVD-A player are already on sale in Holland. Both are still pre-production as we go to press, and a full launch isn't expected for either product until later this year.

But to answer your question, if music is your priority and you want to buy now, get a CD player. Compact Disc will remain the prevalent format for pre-recorded music for years to come, and it's sensible to view SACD and DVD-Audio as an adjunct rather than a replacement. A top-quality machine dedicated to playing CD is likely to do that specific job better than anything else, so you shouldn't worry about making an investment that will be obsolete in the foreseeable future.

Forgive and forget



I am interested in buying the Tannoy Precision 40. Can you tell me if it has been taken out of production? I was wondering why this range has never been featured in your tests.

Hans Waterman, via e-mail

We did in fact feature a speaker from the Precision range soon after launch. The P20 cost £400 and did reasonably well in issue 177, but ultimately it sounded rather boring. The range as a whole received a lukewarm reception, at a time when Tannoy was lapping up praise for its budget Mercury range, and the company decided to wind down production. As far as we know, no Precision speakers are now supplied by Tannoy, at least in the UK. However, the firm is expected to launch an entirely new range later this year.



Tannoy Precision 20.



Aw, you're making us blush

Q First I want to thank you all for a great magazine! It's the only one I trust, so that's why I've decided to ask you for a little help. I recently bought a Rotel RCD-991 CD player and I'm very pleased with it, but it doesn't match my amplifier too well. I'm thinking of getting a new one and having listened to the Primare A.30.1. I find it most impressive, but will it work well with my CD? I can't try one at home so I would be glad if you experts could come up with some advice!
Marten, Sweden

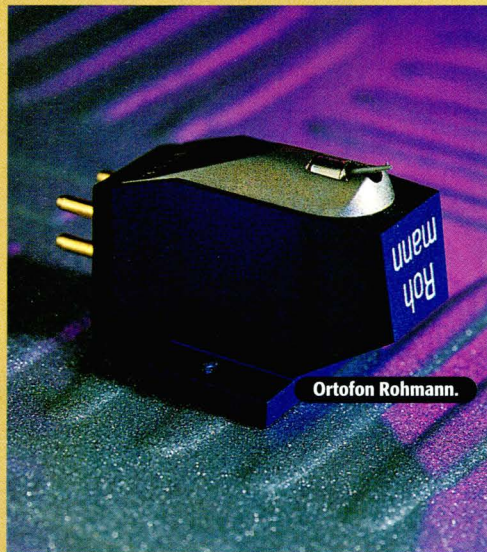
We've never tried that exact combo, Marten, so it's impossible to say with 100 per cent certainty. However, we see absolutely no reason why the pair shouldn't work well together. Both are superbly well judged products – musical, coherent and without obvious sonic foibles. The real question is how your speakers interact with the amp, this is a more synergistically sensitive interface and should be auditioned.

That's one hell of a tip

Q I recently upgraded my turntable to a Michell Orbe with an SME IV arm, which I am using with a Denon DL304 cartridge carried over from my previous turntable. I would like to upgrade my cartridge and have about £1,000 to spend. The cartridges I am interested in are the Ortofon Rohmann, the Koetsu Red and the Clearaudio Victory, but on contacting several dealers I have received conflicting advice.

Two dealers have said that the Rohmann is too bright with the SME arm. Another dealer has advised me to go with the Linn Arkiv and two other dealers have suggested I only consider the Koetsu. I am aware that dealers are biased towards what they stock and sell, but it is making life very difficult because no one will allow me to listen to the cartridges in question. All the dealers say that once the cartridge hits the vinyl it is regarded as second hand, so they expect me to spend £1,000-plus based purely on their recommendations.

Andrew Lam, via e-mail



A difficult situation, Andrew. While it's not fair to accuse all hi-fi dealers of bias, it's almost impossible to consider parting with so much money for an item as subjective in its performance as a turntable cartridge without so much as an audition. You wouldn't be expected to buy a car without a test drive, would you? It seems hard to believe that there aren't dealers out there that would at least let you take such an expensive item on approval, especially if they can't get their

hands on a suitable demonstrator. Contact the manufacturers concerned or their distributors and ask which outlets you should visit (the numbers are below).

The Ortofon is the only one of those cartridges we have tested: it is truly excellent and should match well with your SME arm. But we've heard good things about the Koetsu too, so an audition/home trial really is the way to go. Contacts: Ortofon – Henley Designs (01491) 834700; Koetsu – Absolute Sounds (020) 8971 3909; Clearaudio – Audio Reference (01483) 575344; Linn – (0141) 307 7777. You could also ask SME for its recommendations – (01903) 814321.

CD-aaaargh!

Q Can you recommend a good audio CD recorder that can exactly or very closely preserve the quality of the original when dubbing? Any information would be appreciated.
Michael Harper, via e-mail

It's a little difficult to recommend CD-Recorders at present because many 'second wave' models have been delayed. This is basically down to problems at Philips, the company that originated the format. However, as we went to press, we were promised that a new Philips range is at last imminent, and that should herald the launch of recorders from other manufacturers based on its mechanism.

The situation is as frustrating for us as for you – we've been trying to get a CD-R group test together since last year! But it appears we'll at last have sufficient for a test within the next couple of months.

Of the models currently available, Pioneer's 'second wave' PDR-509 makes near-perfect copies, comes with a host of useful features and is highly recommended at £300. If you fancy a bargain, Traxdata's Traxaudio 900 (a Philips clone) is now available for about half its original £400 price tag. And there's a TEAC model that looks interesting – it incorporates a VCR-style timer.



HELP

Q I'm looking for a CD player for less than £200. What do you suggest?

James Dunne, via e-mail

A The Cambridge D500 is excellent, and just creeps in under your budget ceiling. For an even more affordable option try the NAD C520.


I want a DVD player that works well with DVDs and CDs. I can spend up to £450.

Barry (no, not that one), via e-mail

Pioneer's DVD-525 is a great performer with DVD-Video discs, and is the best we've heard at this price with CDs.




It's hi-fi Jenga!

 After 11 years of faithful service, the multiplay CD player in my Pioneer separates system has finally given up the ghost. I am trying to find a replacement CD player for under £250, for which I have two specific requirements. First, I need to have an optical digital output. Second, because of a shortage of space, the unit will have to go at the bottom of the separates stack, so it must be more than 36cm wide and more than 32cm deep.

Of the CD players you have recommended in *Hi-Fi Choice*, I can't find one that satisfies both requirements. It doesn't have to be a multiplayer, but it needs to be compatible with my Pioneer AX-350 amplifier. Can you help?
Nigel Kieser, Hertfordshire

Hmm. We know that you're short of space, Nigel, but do you really have to stack your components one on top of the other? There are plenty of affordable, slim, practical racks around these days, and your ears would thank you if you bought one to put your kit on. However, if you really have no choice, try placing some compliant isolation feet between each component. These are typically made from a 'rubbery' material like sorbothane and are readily available from specialist hi-fi outlets.

Zen amplification

 Do you have any plans to review the various headphone amplifiers available on the UK market? For example, the models from Creek, Naim, QED, Musical Fidelity, Sugden and the Earmax amplifier from The Audiophile Club. It would be interesting to compare these amps against the likes of the more affordable Stax systems, or CD players with good audiophile quality headphone outputs like the Sonic Frontiers SFCD1.


John Newsham, New Zealand

A good suggestion, John. We haven't reviewed headphone amps for some time, although in issue 172 we did have a small group including the Creek and the first X-Cans, both of which were recommended. We have also subsequently used some of those products you mention.

Of course, even the more affordable headphone amps will outperform the majority of 'phone outputs supplied with CD players, and very few high-end machines offer such a facility for sonic reasons (the Sonic Frontiers is an exception). Musical Fidelity's X-Cans V2 (£150) is a good affordable option, offering a clear and neutral sound, while the Creek OBH-11 (£129) is a crisp-sounding alternative. Higher up the scale, the Earmax is a gorgeous miniature valve amp conveying a smooth, effortless quality – perfect for valve fans who spend a fair amount of time with cans clasped around their heads.

The vast majority of CD players around £250 have optical digital outputs, so no problems there. In terms of dimensions, standard width for full-size separates is about 43cm, so that's OK too. However, depth is a different story. Few (if any) budget players stretch back as far as 32cm, so if it really has to go at the bottom of the stack, and the feet of the component above are spaced to such a degree, you may need to seek an alternative solution. If you can't solve to problem by adding compliant feet alone, why not get a piece of MDF cut to the appropriate size and place it on top of the player? That way you could pick a top budget model like the Cambridge D500 and Sony CDP-XB720E, both at £200.

Nether wallops

 I own an EAR Yoshino V20 amp, Copland CD266 CD player and B&W CDM1SE speakers, connected with Goertz M1 speaker cables and DNM Reson interconnects. Until now I've mostly been listening to R&B, pop and a bit of light rock music like Jewel and Sheryl Crow, and I've been very satisfied with the sound. However, recently my tastes have shifted towards heavier types of music, like Tupac Shakur and some grunge. I love my system, but I need more bass! My room's about 6x4m and I've got about £500 to spare.
Fazrie, Edinburgh

Most people find their music taste mellows over time, but you're clearly heading the other way. Nice one. As for your system, there's no doubt you've got got some excellent gear. However, it would seem the root of your recent problem is with your speakers – though well-detailed and wonderfully natural in the midrange, they're a bit laid-back and light-weight in the bass. You have two options: change the speakers or try a sub-woofer. We would recommend the latter course of action because you retain the system you like but gain bass weight. Try models from REL and M&K.




REL Storm III.



Musical Fidelity X-Cans V2.



Man on a Mission

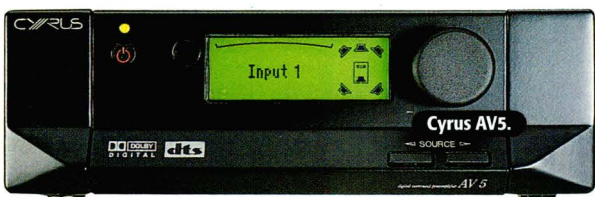
 I currently own a Technics mini system and I'm interested in upgrading to separates. I have already bought some Mission 702e speakers, but where do I go from there? As you can probably tell, I am a complete novice and I need some sound advice. Can you help?

Steve, via e-mail


We certainly can. The 702e is a big, easy-to-drive budget floorstander and a logical upgrade for mini system owners, yet its quality is sufficient to improve notably when hooked up to decent

separate components. In terms of its character, it delivers deep, thumpsome bass and a sometimes grainy treble, so pick electronics of a smooth and even nature.

NAD would be a good place to start. The C520 CD player (£170) is of suitable character, and partners well with the C320 amp (£200). Cambridge Audio is another option, and the D500 CD player (£200) proved a bit of a star when group tested last month. Try it with the Cambridge A500RC amp (£200). Between the two combinations, the Cambridge outfit has a little more vitality about it but the NAD balance may be better suited to your speakers.



Couch potato corner

 I'm thinking of upgrading to a surround sound system. I love to watch movies, but I also love to listen to all styles of music, particularly classical. Before I go and audition some gear I'd like your opinion on how my old kit stacks up against the current breed of surround sound offerings. I purchased my system about ten years ago. It consists of a NAD Monitor Series 7600 amp with a Monitor Series 5000 CD player, and a pair of Orpheus Dolomite speakers bi-wired with Audioquest cable.

I'd like to know how this stacks up against the current range of surround sound amps and DVD players. Has there been significant gain in amp and CD technology to merit switching to a surround sound system? I don't want to go backwards in music quality.

By the way, I loved the surround sound reviews in HFC 198. It's good to see some honest views on this very hyped-up topic.


Colin Blair, via e-mail

Until recently, you'd have been best advised to build two separate systems – one for two-channel music and another for movie surround. However, unless you've got a room for each, and buckets of spare cash, most people would find this option impractical.

But the the serious hi-fi brands are getting in on the act, and it's now fairly easy to put together a system that delivers the 'best' of both worlds. Pick a top-notch preamp/processor like those from Cyrus, Roksan and (particularly) TAG McLaren, add five channels of suitably adept power amplification, stir in a high quality speaker package and season with the source components of your choice. Integration is now key, even at lower price points, but it's still best to steer clear of the cheaper integrated multi-channel amps.

Few DVD players can claim to stack up next to the best CD players when it comes to CD, which will remain the major music carrier for years to come. However, the Pioneer machines do an impressive job on the whole, and forthcoming DVD-A/V 'universal' players from the likes of Pioneer and Technics would make an interesting comparison. For now, keep your CD player, and start auditioning DVD players, processors, power amps and speakers.

Telly? What's that?

 I use a pair of Quad 10L loudspeakers with a Quad 77 CD/amp combo. I am informed that magnetic interference has caused a green hue to my television, which is situated in close proximity to the speakers.

As separating them would compromise my stereo 'hot spot', can you suggest a pair of stand-mounting speakers in the £600 category with the appropriate shielding?

John Harvey, Lincolnshire

Before changing your speakers, why not try pulling your Quads away from the TV and toeing them in a bit – this should retain the imaging qualities and save your screen. If that doesn't work, a large proportion of new and recent speakers include magnetically shielded drive units, mainly because the rise of home cinema has made the placement of speakers next to a TV more of an issue.

Our current favourites within your specifications include the Dynaudio Audience 50 (£577), B&W CDM1SE (£600) and Celestion Compact (£599), or the dearer A1.



So far I have a Sony CDP-XB920E CD player and a Marantz PM-66 KI-Signature amp. Which speakers would you recommend?

I listen to rock, techno and alternative music.

Tanjung, via e-mail

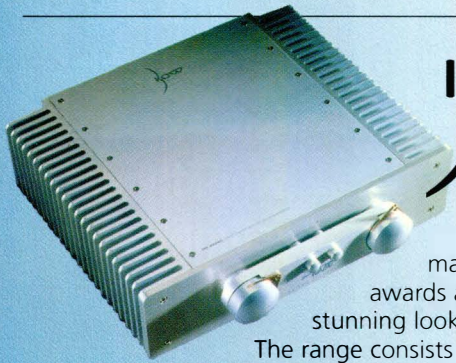
If you want small speakers, Dynaudio's Audience 40 knows how to rock. For floorstanders, try the entertaining Mission 773e against the smoother Tannoy mX3.

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EXCELLENCE

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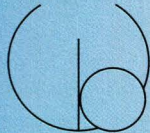


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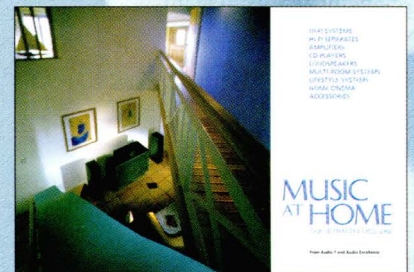
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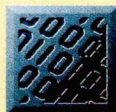
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BUYING GUIDE TO RECORDERS

PART TWO - THE DIGITAL AGE



Fed up with clunky, noisy cassette tape? Why not indulge in a spot of digital recording for a hassle and hiss-free life. The digital revolution has ushered in a new age for home recording enthusiasts, allowing virtually perfect copies to be made from digital sources at the touch of a button. Whether you're archiving your collection or making compilations, there's a digital format that is perfect for you. But which one?

DAT

Back in the 1980s, Digital Audio Tape was the first digital recording format to arrive on the domestic scene. It offered a level of performance previously unobtainable in compact form and was immediately embraced by recording studios, where it is still widely used.

When launched, DAT was hailed as the next big thing, but the record companies, petrified by the potential for piracy, refused to support the format as a domestic product. Hardware prices remained high and consequently the format never really took off in the home – a shame as it offers arguably the best tape quality of all, and is perfect for recording on-location.

MiniDisc

Sony's MiniDisc format was virtually an instant hit in Japan, its small size and flexibility wowing punters from the off. Take up in the UK was much slower – people compared it with CD, pointed out that its compressed sound is of lower quality and treated it with suspicion.

A few years on and MD is now officially a Big Seller, its high street profile bolstered by super-sexy personal stereos and funky blank software. Sony positioned the format as "the future of tape", existing alongside CD rather than as a competitor. A growing selection of pre-recorded material is available, but MD's *raison d'être* is as a highly convenient recording technology.

MD's great strength is its versatility. You can record and re-record many times over, and as a re-writable digital format its discs are very cheap. They're also extremely compact and hardwearing, and less susceptible to joggling than CD, which makes it an ideal format for personal use on the move. Editing facilities are second to none – you can erase mistakes, name tracks and re-order a disc's contents with a few simple button pushes, making it ideal for building compilations.

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

Digital Compact Cassette

Sony developed DCC at around the same time as Sony produced MiniDisc, and the two went head-to-head to become the first mass-market digital recording format. As with VHS versus Betamax, there had to be a winner, and though DCC arguably offered better performance (at the time), its reliance on 'old fashioned' tape was a major reason for its eventual downfall.

Recordable CD

When Pioneer brought recordable compact disc to consumers a few years back, buyers had to shell out over £1,000 to make their own CDs; now you can indulge for as little as two or three hundred quid. There are even twin decks available for one-box disc-to-disc dubbing and the likes of Pioneer and TEAC are incorporating CD recorders into mini and micro systems.

The current generation of CD recorders all support CD-RW, a re-writable format launched by Philips. You have a choice of two disc types on which to record – CD-R discs are the cheapest, but you can only record on them once. The CD-RW discs are more expensive, but you can re-record on them hundreds of times.

Although the latest machines incorporate some useful editing facilities, CD-RW isn't as flexible as MD. However, recording quality is higher – if you're recording from CD, the best models will give you a copy that is effectively identical to the original. In terms of compatibility, most CD players will playback CD-Rs, but many have trouble with CD-RW (though you can play the disc back on your own recorder). If you want to play CD-Rs on a DVD player, check for compatibility.

Many manufacturers are now producing CD recorders, but the scene has been plagued by launch delays and that makes recommendations difficult. Philips' latest generation has been held up for months by software bugs, and several manufacturers who base their recorders on Philips' technology have had to postpone launch as a result. By the time you read this product should be reaching shops (fingers crossed).

Computers and the Internet

An increasing number of people are using their PCs to record music. Some use their CD-RW drives in place of hi-fi recorders to burn their own CDs, others download music files from Websites and store them on their hard drive or small, portable solid-state recorders.

These digital music files use a 'codec' to make them small enough to upload to the Web and download via a normal 'phone line – the most common is MP3, but rivals are fast emerging like Liquid Audio and RealMedia. Sound quality is not up with the best, but this is a fascinating indication of the way in which we may acquire much of our music in the future.

FIVE OF THE BEST



MINIDISCS

SHARP MD-R2 £180

We reviewed this model two years ago at its original price of £300 and found it offered great value for money – imagine how good it is now it costs just £180!



SONY MDS-JA555ES – £650

Sony invented MD, and this is arguably its best deck yet – a fully specified machine that shows how good this versatile format can sound.

SONY MDS-JB930 – £300

This MD recorder is a perfect example of the breed – well built, superbly specified and a great performer. An excellent buy.



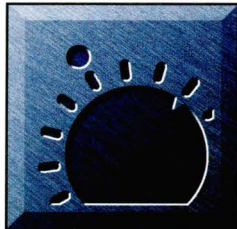
CD RECORDERS

PIONEER PDR-509 – £300

One of the most advanced CD recorders currently available to consumers. Near-perfect digital recording and decent playback quality make this a machine to beat.

TRAXDATA Traxaudio 900 – £500 (or less)

While we wait for a host of new Philips-based CD recorders to hit the market, this old Philips clone remains great value – especially now you can buy it for as little as £200.



PAUL MILLER'S OASIS OF SANITY

Paul explores the innards of Audio Note's innovative new AN DAC-5 outboard converter.

In last October's *Oasis* (HFC 194), I suggested SACD's superb sound quality might not just be a function of its extended 90kHz+ bandwidth, but also a benefit of avoiding a conventional digital filter. Certainly as far as CD players are concerned, digital or oversampling filters have been considered a necessity.

Eighteen years ago, the first Philips CD player might have only boasted some 14-bit resolution, but it was still equipped with a 4x oversampling filter. Today, even the so-called 24-bit CD players (see *Oasis*, HFC 188) feature digital filters operating at 8x oversampling or greater.

And then there's the new AN DAC-5 outboard converter from Audio Note, which has no digital filter whatsoever...

Paul Messenger reviews this astronomically-priced box on page 49, but so unusual is its design, I thought a good going-over in *Oasis* would shed some light on Audio Note's radical approach. The premise behind the AN DAC-5 is quite simple: that the sonic 'footprint' of digital filtering outweighs the likely benefits of its implementation. We've already covered the reasons why all CD players (and outboard DACs) are

equipped with digital filters in *Oasis* in HFC 188, and explored the effects of different filters in HFC 189.

LOFTY CONVERSION

In HFC 188 we discovered that, during D/A conversion, the original music signal is reconstructed along with a mirror image that is 'reflected' either side of the 44.1kHz sample rate (known as F_s) and its harmonics (2Fs, 3Fs, 4Fs etc). Left exposed, these ultrasonic signals, which are at the same level as the music, could play havoc with the partnering amp and loudspeakers, particularly those equipped with metal-dome tweeters. Intermodulation distortions will fold back into the audio range, causing very real and audible colorations.

Quite frankly, digital filters are the cheapest and most effective method of removing these unwanted reflections and recovering the music signal intact. For example, a simple 2x oversampling digital filter increases the effective sampling rate (the rate at which data is clocked through the D/A converter) from 44.1kHz to 88.2kHz, just as a 4x filter elevates this to 176.4kHz or 4Fs (see Figure 1).

The unwanted digital images are, therefore, pushed out towards higher frequencies (2Fs and 4Fs, respectively) where they may be 'scrubbed out' by a relatively gentle and cost-effective analogue filter circuit after the digital-to-analogue conversion.

the excellent rejection of digital images by a standard digital filter with a 'brick wall' filter action. Only the audio band (3) is allowed through, leaving a carpet of very low-level noise (4) at ultrasonic frequencies. A CD player with this type of output places no extra stress on the

"The premise behind the DAC-5 is simple: that the sonic 'footprint' of digital filtering outweighs the likely benefits."

TWISTED FIR-STARTER

It has long been debated that the maths behind conventional FIR (Finite Impulse Response) digital filters is less than ideal for purist audio. These filters work by constructing an impulse (1) for each 16-bit sample, but their effectiveness (the steepness of the filter action) is linked to a ringing or rippling (2) either side of the 'peak'.

Figure 2 demonstrates

partnering amp and speakers.

Nevertheless, to some, the attendant 'ringing' is undesirable even though, without it, the digital filter would prove ineffective. The pre-echo (ringing to the left of the impulse) is

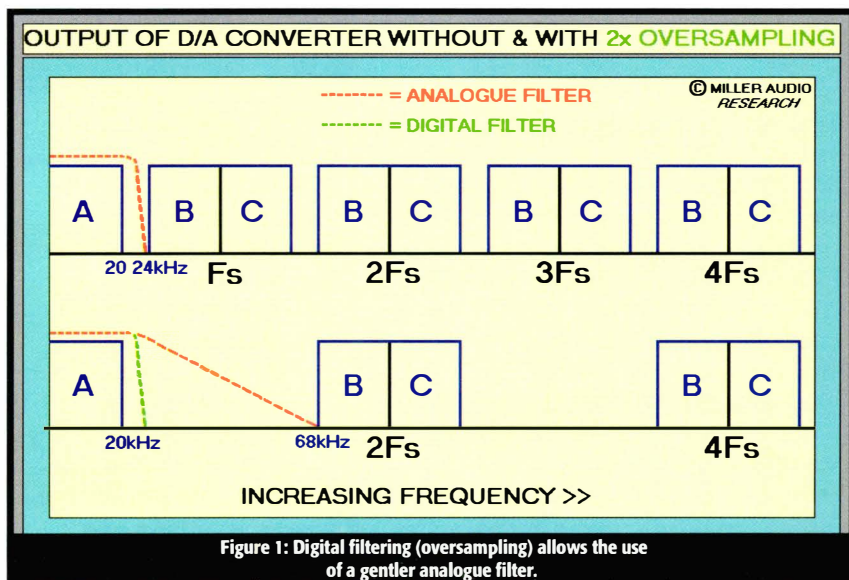


Figure 1: Digital filtering (oversampling) allows the use of a gentler analogue filter.

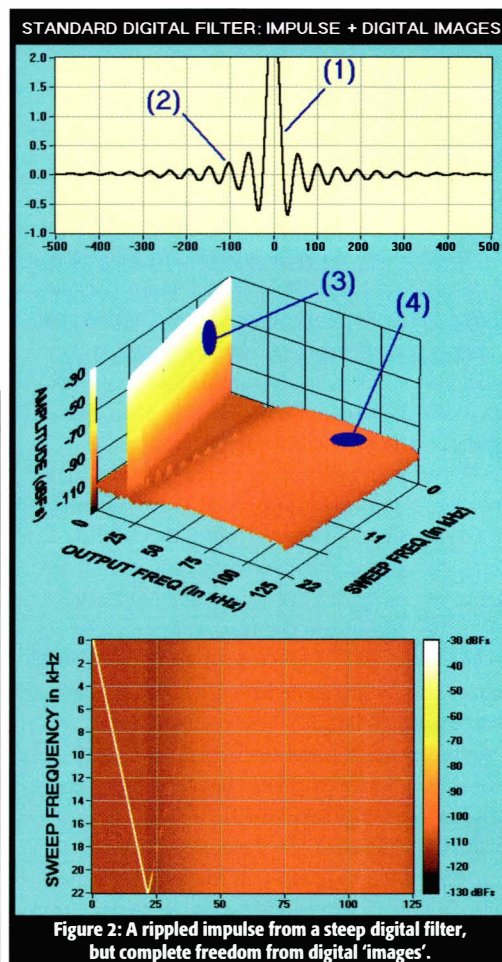


Figure 2: A rippled impulse from a steep digital filter, but complete freedom from digital 'images'.

particularly disagreeable because it occurs *before* the musical event. A pre-echo is unnatural, but it's an inherent consequence of engineering a filter steep enough to remove those digital images that reflect back from the 44.1kHz (Fs) sample frequency. The ringing should not be *directly* audible but, as I've suggested before, any intermodulation or 'smearing' fractionally before the musical event might affect stereo imagery and what some listeners refer to as 'timing'.

RINGING OUT THE OLD

Figure 3 demonstrates the action of a gentler (typically 8th-order) digital filter of the type used by Pioneer in its Legato Link players.

This is still an FIR filter, but the impulse is windowed using a Spline polynomial to reduce the pre/post echo (5). Far less ringing, to be sure, but the 'filter' itself is proportionally gentler, falling by 4dB at 20kHz, and proving less effective in its suppression of any digital images (6) reflecting back off the 44.1kHz sample frequency. The music signal 'meets' its

reflected image at 22.05kHz (half the 44.1kHz sample rate) as seen on the 3D plot (7). The gentle downwards curve of the image (6) demonstrates the action of the filter, but all this 'energy' is entirely spurious and bears no harmonic relationship to the music at hand. Most amplifiers, however, will handle this out-of-band 'rubbish' without introducing any audible intermodulation distortion, while the reduced ringing effect may yet yield some subjective benefit.

THE PLOTS THICKEN

Figure 4 clearly shows what happens when the digital filter is removed altogether - what Audio Note describes as '1x oversampling'. The impulse response is theoretically perfect, just a single peak (8) running off the top of the plot with no pre- or post-echoes.

However, because there's no echo or rippling, neither is there any filter action. What then emerges is clearly revealed by the 3D plot. The music is contained in the slab marked (9) while the remainder of the 'zig-zag' is nothing more

than images or reflections of (9) bouncing back and forth off the 44.1kHz sample frequency. You can even see a 44.1kHz tone leaking through at (10).

These zig-zagged images gradually fade away at higher frequencies (to the right of the 3D and overhead plots) as Audio Note's very gentle 3rd-order analogue filter eats into the digital rubbish. The problem is that the energy of this digital spurious far outweighs the total content of the music signal itself and, likely as not, will result in additional distortions being generated by the partnering amplifier.

Indeed, the complex criss-crossing (11) visible in the first 0-25kHz sector of the bottom plot of Figure 4 shows any number of distortions generated in Audio Note's valve output stage in response to all this digital spurious at higher frequencies. The signal hasn't even left the DAC-5, and already it's causing problems!

Nevertheless, many listeners clearly like the sound of this product despite its levels of noise and distortion, which suggests that the freedom from

GLOSSARY

- DIGITAL IMAGE:** the mirror of the music signal reflected back off the 44.1kHz sample rate. This is an artefact of the digital technology used by CD.
- DISTORTION (HARMONIC):** unwanted signals that appear at multiples of the wanted signal. i.e. the harmonic distortion of 3kHz will appear at 6kHz, 9kHz, 12kHz etc.
- FIR:** (In this case) the most common type of digital filter.
- IMPULSE:** Description of a frequency response in the time domain used by the digital filter.
- POLYNOMIAL:** (in this instance) An equation or set of mathematical coefficients used to modify the 'shape' of the filter's impulse response.
- SAMPLE RATE:** The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For CD this is 44.1kHz or once every 0.023msec (0.023 thousandths of a second).

filter ringing may be very important indeed.

Unfortunately, any attempt at correlation is clouded because the DAC introduces other, entirely separate, colorations. For example, the high impedance output of its valve stage promotes a restricted, midrange-orientated response (-2.6dB at 20Hz and -4dB at 20kHz) when driving a conventional solid-state amp.

Jitter is low enough at 450psec, but any subjective impact will be blunted by its higher levels of harmonic distortion (0.05 per cent at -30dBfs, rising to 1.5 per cent at peak output).

The power supplies inject some extra hum harmonics and the left/right channel matching is below average, but errors in low-level linearity are held to within 2.5dB over a 100dB dynamic range.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

The point is, this DAC is unconventional beyond its lack of a digital filter, so it's inevitably going to sound 'different' from everything else. Whether you think 'different' equals 'better' in this instance is a matter of taste, but full marks go to Audio Note for providing such colourful food for thought.

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

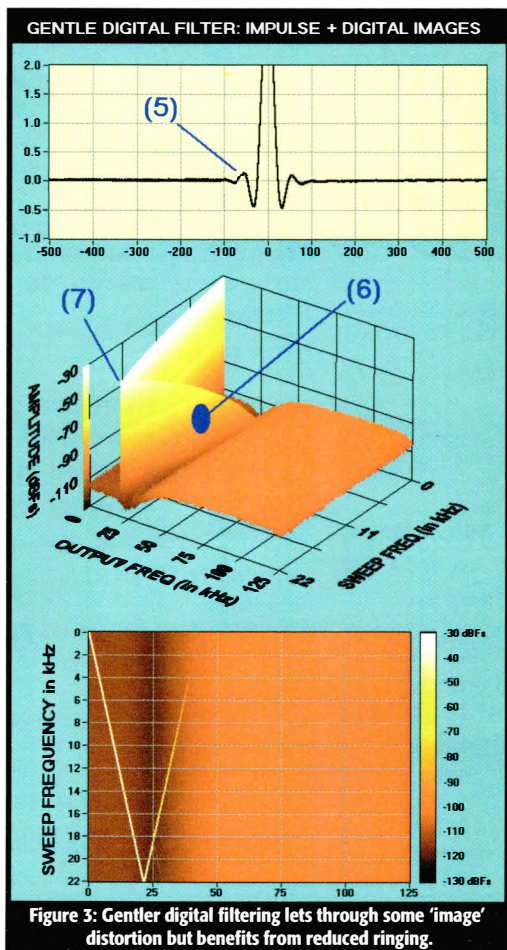


Figure 3: Gentler digital filtering lets through some 'image' distortion but benefits from reduced ringing.

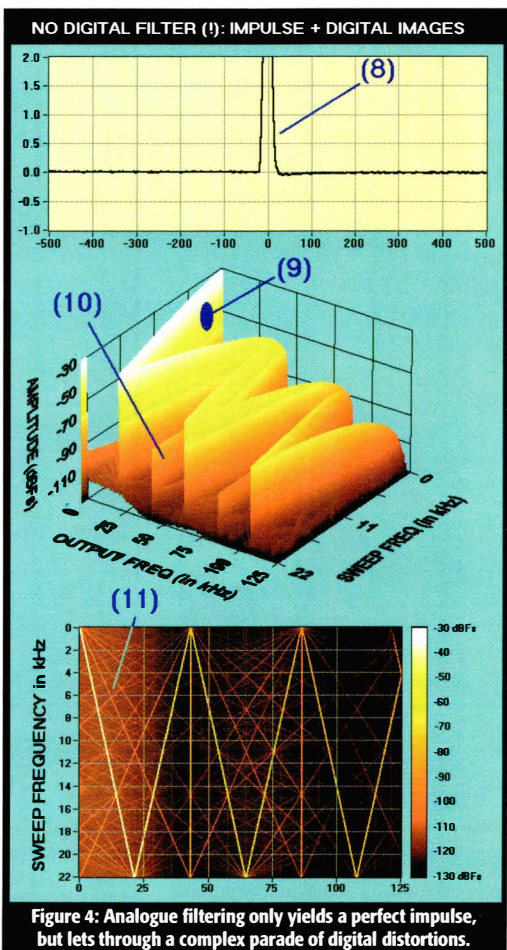


Figure 4: Analogue filtering only yields a perfect impulse, but lets through a complex parade of digital distortions.

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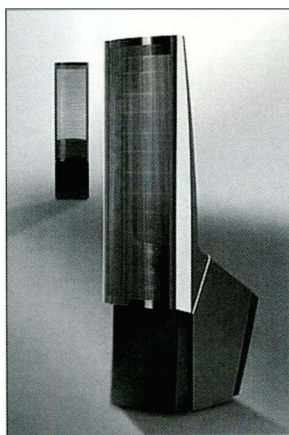
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RedAllaerts

It's the Digital Age, so why on earth are we looking at a cartridge? Jason Kennedy gets the needle.

A cartridge maker in the 21st century must feel like a (cart) wheelwright did in the early days of the 20th century: an endangered species. But those who build 'needles' have survived the transition into technical obsolescence remarkably well. There aren't many of them but there never were – just as there never were that many people prepared to spend a month's wages on a cartridge.

Jan Allaerts, the maker of this model, is a Belgian who started out repairing hi-fi in the late '70s but gradually became more and more of a cartridge specialist and eventually made the leap from mechanic to manufacturer. The process of looking at so many different examples of cartridge design enabled Jan to choose the best design elements and amalgamate them in his own creations.

He came to the conclusion that it's the details that count, even down to the molecular structure of materials – his cartridges features 'polar shoes' (magnetic pole pieces) which are hand carved so as not to upset their internal electrical potential. Jan also considers the housing to be highly important, choosing a box-shaped body shell made out of a very soft grade of aluminium with an oxide coating. This is wrapped by a fine plate that is held on with miniature screws either side and internally plated with 24-carat gold, forming a Faraday cage to keep out RF noise. I was initially interested to know whether this shield could be removed to good effect as per Sumiko's Blue Point Special and other designs, but receiving the above information put paid to that idea and made me wonder if such 'nude' designs were being compromised in the process of shedding their cases.

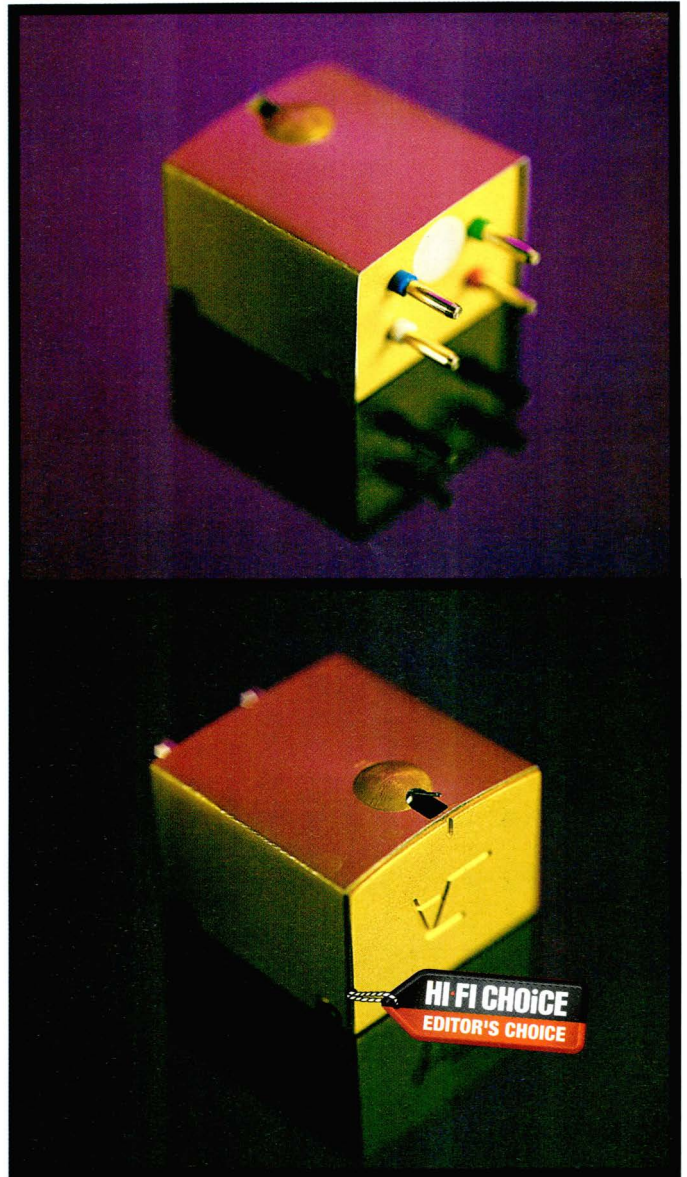
A number of unusual practices go into creating the Allaerts 'gold block'. The coils which produce electrical output are made of wire that's too fine to be wound by machine, the three gramme breaking strain requiring a very steady hand to survive the process. While the cantilever suspension is designed to avoid the perishing that can affect some cartridges and which causes premature sound quality reduction. There are four cartridges in the range, with prices from £850 for the MC1 Eco (economy?) to £2,995 for the MC2 Finish. The differences are in materials and stylus type, the two top models using Geiger S tips while the Eco and Boron have Geiger Is. The MC1 Boron under scrutiny here features an Alnico magnet, copper/silver coil wire and a Boron/Sapphire cantilever. Priced at £1,295, it produces half a millivolt into a 100 Ohm load with tracking force of two grammes.

Sound quality

A needle is nothing without a turntable and arm to hold it in place over the vinyl, so the MC1B was duly mounted in the trusty SME Model 20A and its output connected to the Tom Evans Audio Groove phono stage, a combination that seemed to suit it nicely. It made a positive impression from the out, delivering alarming bass power alongside broad dynamic and tonal variety from The Aphex Twin's robust *Windowlicker*. Moving onto something more subtle, Shostakovich's *String Quartet No 8* revealed the cartridge's ability to reveal timbre, string tone and presence which it did with considerable aplomb. With Ellington's *Afro-Eurasian Eclipse* it once again revealed a particularly powerful and tactile bottom end from both double bass and piano.

In an attempt to pin down its character I made a few comparisons with CD, which revealed a slight softness but better timing, different imaging and greater subtlety of tone. By comparison with the considerably dearer van den Hul Grasshopper III GLA cartridge, there was also a degree less bite, but the Allaerts compensated for this with relatively strong image depth.

I wouldn't say that the MC1B was a soft or mellow cartridge; however, I'm inclined to find it more neutral than most, and it's certainly



more lively than an admittedly rather 'tired' Wilson benesch Carbon I tried. It has a very high degree of transparency, each record revealing a wealth of detail about its style and age of recording as well as the innermost nuances of the performance. The combination with The Groove extracted some hitherto unheard bass notes on familiar material, proving that there's still progress being made in the vinyl world even if the real world has gone digital.

Conclusion

This Allaerts cartridge proved impossible to criticise: either I'm losing my faculties (no comments please) or there aren't enough new cartridges getting reviewed these days. Or this is a very, very good cartridge. I imagine there are models that might equal it, but would be most surprised if there were any that could beat it at the price. If you're in the market for a serious needle, get on the waiting list now.

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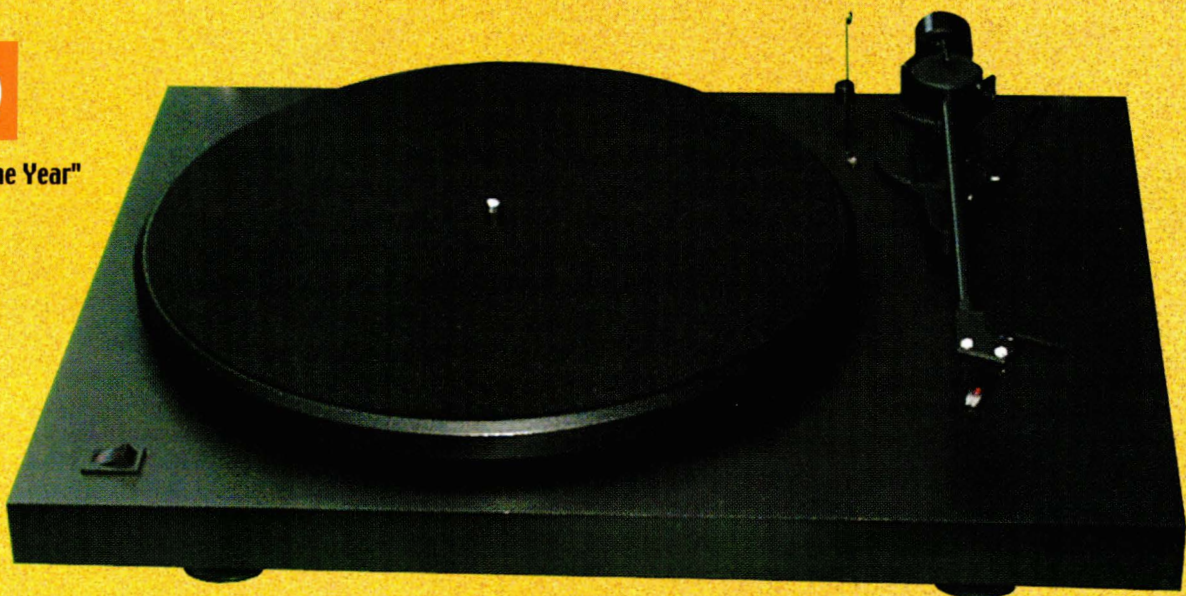


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DAC to Basics

Paul Messenger goes against the grain to give Audio Note's pricey new DAC a fair hearing.

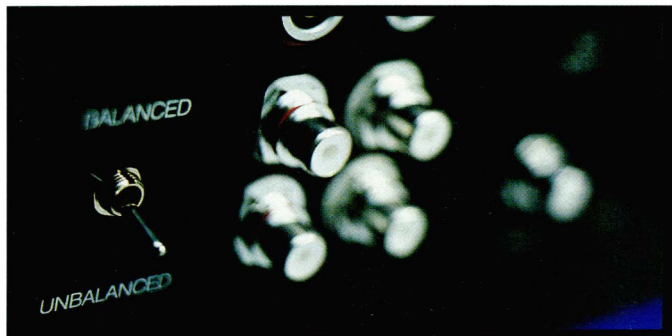


This is just the sort of product I'd normally go out of my way to avoid. It's an outboard DAC (digital-to-analogue converter), and my prejudices have long favoured the 'one-box' approach which by-passes the standard digital interface. And it costs a potentially ruinous £18,500, so there's no way I can let myself fall in love with it, and I shouldn't really subject myself to the temptation. But it's such an unorthodox and unusual device, curiosity got the better of good judgement. The fact that it's got valves inside is interesting, but probably largely incidental – valves are what Audio Note does naturally, as a matter of course.

What really distinguishes this DAC from the conventional is that it avoids performing any oversample filtering on the digital signal prior to making the actual conversion to an analogue signal. This is very unusual indeed – and not just because it ignores the usual 'oversampling' multiplication technique, which changes the original data stream into one running at a higher speed, to make the ultimate conversion easier, but much more controversially because it even omits the filtering in the digital domain. A 'brick wall' digital filter is normally regarded as mandatory in such situations, to remove the unwanted ultrasonic 'alias' signals that arise in the digital coding/decoding process, but its time-domain ripples have long been a source of concern to some engineers.

Instead, the DAC-5 simply feeds the raw data directly to an 18-bit Analogue Devices DAC, whose output is then current-to-voltage converted by a transformer (this is a manufacturer that likes transformer-coupling), and followed by silver-wired inductors to provide a relatively gentle analogue filter. An Audio Note valve output stage then feeds the balanced and unbalanced stereo analogue audio output alternatives.

So far, so simple. So where's the money gone? Into all that classy componentry presumably, and some very hefty power supplies too, judging by the sheer size of this beast and the effort needed to lift it off the ground. Features are minimal, with phono and BNC digital inputs, and the option of balanced or unbalanced outputs. You'll need a CD transport to feed this DAC, and since you're paying £18,500 for the latter, AN will throw in a 'silver mini' £399 CDT-ZERO free of charge.



Sound quality

Gorgeous is probably the best word to describe the DAC-5's sound. Sumptuous and seductive get close too, but it's not just a matter of the sound this DAC makes – it's much more to do with the way the music seems to come through, effortlessly and naturally, with real sounding textures and none of the rather empty, over-etched clarity I've always associated with the CD medium.

In strict neutrality terms there are some grounds for criticism. The extreme top end sounds gently rolled-off and not totally open and transparent, while the bass seems just a touch 'loose' and short of authority. Transients are sharply etched, free from time-smear and appropriately dynamic, but much more significant is that I simply don't hear 'digital' here. I just hear music. It's a totally beguiling effect that would seem to justify this component, however silly its price tag.

Conclusions

I haven't seen Paul Miller's findings at the time of writing (see *Oasis*, p44), and suspect the DAC-5 may give some fairly bizarre lab results. Its sound quality, however, is so astonishingly natural and convincingly realistic as to render any technical shortcomings irrelevant. The only problem is that the extravagant price will restrict it to a fortunate few. It'll be interesting to see whether this radical approach can bring similar sonic benefits when applied to a more cost effective package.

★★★★★

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Carmen

On Strong

Alvin Gold and Paul Miller examine a new CD/DVD transport from Theta with an hispanic twist.

Theta's Carmen is a dual-function device that can operate as a minimum compromise (never say no compromise!) CD and DVD transport. Note transport, not player: it has video outputs that can be patched to a TV monitor or projector, but the audio outputs are digital only; you'll need a D/A converter like the Theta Generation VDS Pro, for example, which was used for part of this test alongside a Krell KPS25SC CD transport-cum-digital and analogue preamplifier, or a multi-channel A/V preamp/processor. Stereo performance of the Carmen was mainly assessed using Martin-Logan Prodigy electrostatic hybrid speakers (which will be the subject of a forthcoming report), although the transport was also briefly plumbed in to an existing A/V system using a combination of speakers (JMLabs, Castle etc.) driven by a Lexicon MC-1 processor and Parasound HCA-2205 five-channel power amp.

Anyone with any experience of Theta will know roughly what to expect. This is a transport designed to live up to Theta's high-end credentials, and there are few shortcuts. But it is far from being 'cost no object'. In fact, it is the second and less costly of two Theta DVD/CD transports, the other being the DaViD, ('better power supplies, a better video section and better metalwork'), which costs £4,650. In practice you may find that the differences are not big with most video hardware, but there is a significant difference in stereo sound quality in favour of the more costly unit.

If your picture of a high-end DVD player is that it is long on performance and short on features, the Carmen will come as a breath of fresh air. The only respect in which users may feel short-changed is the remote control, which is a rebadged and rather cramped Pioneer unit which is hardly commensurate with the price. The on-screen menu system has 'basic' and 'expert' settings - which are patronising, as well as failing to live up to the billing - but the on-screen set-up and other 'furniture' is otherwise no better or worse than others of its type. Which means roughly equivalent to computer practice of, oh, 20 years ago. The feature list is extensive, and - wonder of wonders - the player will automatically detect and switch regional coding automatically, although that wasn't the case with my early sample.

The component video interface is a prerequisite for high-end displays, but RGB would help in the UK. What is appreciated is the ability to drive two audio outputs simultaneously: one handles PCM, Dolby Digital or dts, which will suit any home cinema amp or processor, and the other PCM only, which would be appropriate for a stereo music

D/A converter as it carries a straight stereo output or a two-channel mixdown from a multi-channel source without danger of frying tweeters with raw dts.

Of course, the Carmen's ability to stream 96kHz audio is very much in keeping with its 'music first' pretensions, but it is the options list that really makes the eyes water. There's the possibility of AT&T/ST and Theta's own Laser Linque digital audio feeds and a painstaking implementation of progressive scan video, aka 480p, which de-interlaces the output in the digital domain prior to D/A conversion. Line multipliers usually work on an analogue input, which means daisy-chaining D/A and A/D stages. An RS232 option allows the unit to be computer controlled in a multi-room system.

Apart from the rough-sounding loader, the Theta worked superbly, with quick track access, a dimmable display and a complete lack of video output when playing CDs, which must benefit the internal electrical environment, and all of which contribute to a fully rounded whole. With DVDs, picture quality is first rate. In its normal picture mode - there are alternatives for particular types of programme material - the Carmen generates a wide dynamic colour range with excellent shadow detail, truly excellent blacks, and a level

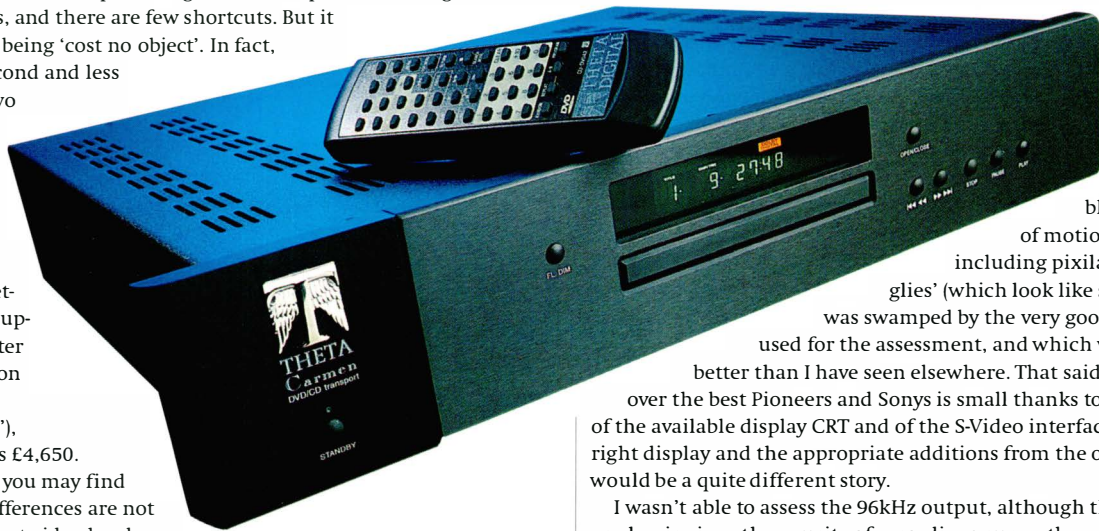
of motion artefacts including pixilation and 'jaggies' (which look like saw teeth) that was swamped by the very good Philips TV used for the assessment, and which was certainly better than I have seen elsewhere. That said, the margin over the best Pioneers and Sonys is small thanks to the limitations of the available display CRT and of the S-Video interface. With the right display and the appropriate additions from the options list, it would be a quite different story.

I wasn't able to assess the 96kHz output, although this is probably academic given the paucity of recordings currently available in this format, but for CD replay this is the first DVD I have used (DaViD apart) which is completely credible when driving systems with the resolving ability of the one used for the test. Nevertheless, I was surprised by the scale of the differences to the previously mentioned (and very much more expensive) Krell, which has a more laid back, and some might say analogue-like quality and dark hue tonality. The Theta is sharper and more immediate, but still large in image scale and dynamics, and it still has a genuinely powerful, earth-moving bass when needed. These comments apply when using the Theta D/A converter and the Krell as a digital preamplifier.

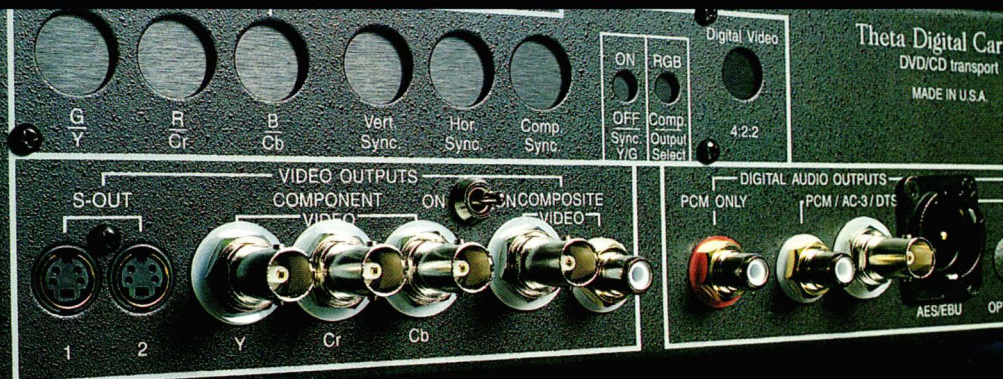
These last are qualities it shares with the Krell, but not too many others, and if the Krell is clearly the better CD player - it ought to be, of course, and it is - the Theta has all the scale and articulation, and the lack of clutter with complex material, that are the prerequisites and special preserve of the true heavyweights. It's also well equipped, extremely upgradable, and transparent to regional coding. Right now, the Carmen is surely the finest of its type.

★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆

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"The Theta has all the scale and articulation that are the special preserve of the true heavyweights."



THE LAB TESTS

At the heart of this machine is a modified decoder board from Pioneer, featuring – naturally – a PD3410A processor. Theta has worked in its own ‘house style’ by equipping the Carmen with a custom power supply board and additional signal conditioning for its various digital audio, composite and component video outputs. Some 14 separately regulated supplies are specified for the various transport, digital audio and video circuits. There’s even an additional damping-plate over the clamp in the CD/DVD mechanism. Just a pity that Theta didn’t go the whole hog and replace the standard plastic drawer with a ‘substitute’ loader made of alloy. This would not have been overly expensive and, if nothing else, would have contributed to the aesthetic impact of the machine. Then again, the Carmen is the ‘low cost’ cousin to the DaViD II, which features superior power supplies, video section and metalwork. In its basic form, the

Carmen offers a standard PCM-only digital output with additional phono, BNC and XLR connections all handling PCM, dts and Dolby Digital-encoded digital formats. For video, Theta offers two S-Type outputs, two Composite Outputs (RCA & BNC) plus component video (Y, Cr, Cb) from three BNCs. Sophisticated features are available as optional extras, including a 4:2:2 digital video output for connection to an external line-doubler. In common with Pioneer’s own DVD players, and the Theta DaViD for that matter, the Carmen will output S/PDIF audio data transparently (at their native 44.1kHz (CD) and 48kHz/96kHz (DVD) sample rates). Do remember to check the on-screen menu, however, because the Carmen’s default state has 96kHz data automatically downsampled to 48kHz for compatibility with all outboard DACs and decoders. If your choice of DAC will accept 96kHz inputs, then this option must be selected from the Carmen’s set-up menu.

The graph (above) shows how data emerging from the Carmen’s digital outputs has its rate increased to accommodate the 44.1kHz (CD, green trace) through to 48kHz (DVD, blue trace) and 96kHz (DVD, red trace) sampling frequencies. For easy comparison, I have synchronised the three digital signals at the left-hand edge of the graph while shrinking the amplitude (height) of both 48kHz and 96kHz waveforms. These plots also show the excellent waveshape and minimal ringing associated with the Theta Carmen’s digital output when driving a standard 75 Ohm digital input. The 1,525mVpk output level is also only fractionally above average and residual jitter typically <200psec, suggesting that the Carmen will prove very compatible indeed with a wide variety of DACs and decoders. This is a class act, from past masters of the digital art.



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Turntables

Paul Messenger trawls through his record collection and reveals in a selection of turntables costing less than £700.

Contrary to predictions, vinyl hadn't disappeared by 1990, and in fact seems to be enjoying something of a revival as we enter the new millennium. As digital formats proliferate with little thought for the confusion this causes, vinyl looks set to remain an oasis of stability for decades to come.

The seven turntables gathered here fit under a price ceiling of £700. Even though we reviewers can't resist the temptation to try out the far more expensive stuff, £700 is a cut-off point which accommodates ninety-something percent of the record players sold today. Our selection is pretty representative of the vinyl spinners you'll find at any specialist hi-fi dealer, offering a sonically very persuasive alternative to the CD and DVD players available.

Much more than with digital sources, there are big differences between one turntable and another. The designer has a broad palette of techniques and materials to choose from, which will have some influence on the result. The 'less is more' rule also applies, so the four more expensive examples all come without cartridges, whereas the cheaper three come fitted with modest moving magnet cartridges.

It's a matter of attitude. Someone spending £220 on a turntable will probably be less serious about vinyl replay than someone spending more than £500. The former will probably expect a ready-to-go package and be happy with a modest cartridge, whereas the latter will expect to spend extra on an altogether more serious cartridge, and would probably leave a 'starter' model unused. By the same token, the less costly turntables are more likely to have automatic arm operation. Amid the variety of different design approaches, the golden rule about turntables is that the whole is invariably more than the sum of the parts, along with the caveat that every turntable's performance is affected by the support upon which it sits.

How the tests were done

When it comes to assessing turntables, there's no substitute for sitting down and listening to them. Measurements, whether standardised or unorthodox, can be interesting, but relying on them usually gives misleading results, as there are just too many variables to deal with and many interactions are poorly understood.

Four of our seven models came with cartridges installed. For the rest we used a pair of Dynavector 10X-4 high output moving-coil cartridges. Four platforms were used to check environmental/siting flexibility: a light wall shelf, a low cost Sound Organisation equipment rack, a glass-topped Mana support, and a heavy wooden cabinet with 40mm thick wood top. Reference was also made to CD, using a number of discs duplicated on CD and vinyl, and a Rega Planet CD player.

Hints & tips

A turntable is a very sensitive device that measures mechanical vibrations right across the audio band, and an enormous dynamic range. Even with good isolation, turntables are significantly affected by the surface upon which they're sitting. Do experiment by trying alternatives if at all possible.

If you're planning to install a cartridge yourself, take care over the alignment. Use a proper protractor, and take particular care to get the alignment as good as possible at the inner grooves of the record, this is where errors are most critical.

THE CAST LIST

Audio Note AN-TT1/ARM	£594 (excl. cart)
Dual CS 455-1	£220 (incl. cart)
NAD 533	£220 (incl. cart)
Pro-ject Classic Cherry	£450 (incl. cart)
Rega Planar 25	£619 (excl. cart)
Thorens TD146 Mk VI	£550 (excl. cart)
VPI HW 19 Junior/RB300	£650 (excl. cart)

Glossary

CARTRIDGE: Tracks the undulating record groove with a flexibly-mounted stylus. The movement of the stylus in relation to the cartridge body is used to generate an electrical signal.

PLATTER: The circular platform on which a record rests, usually driven by a belt attached to a motor. Sound can vary with different platter materials.

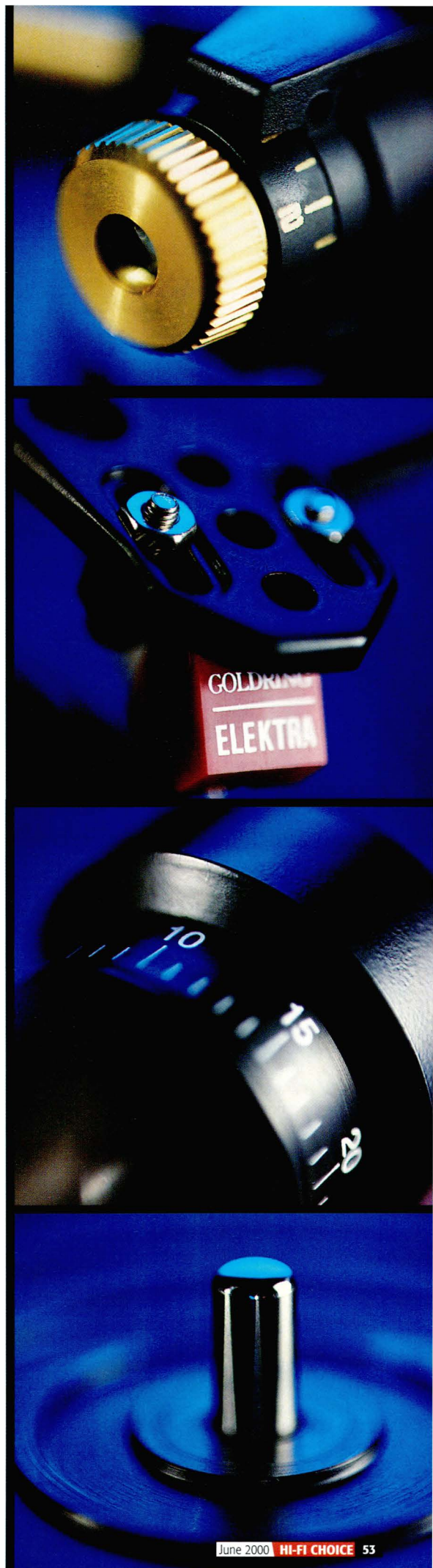
PLINTH: A turntable's base, which should be designed to resist vibration.

SUB-CHASSIS: Platform on which the platter and

armboard can be mounted in order to isolate them from motor borne and external vibration.

SUSPENSION: This is either compliant, using springs or a rubber-like material, or non-compliant, employing a stiff, self-damping substance like carbon fibre.

TONEARM: A slender tube, usually pivoted, which sweeps the stylus across a record in an arc. As with all turntable components, the material and level of engineering are critical to performance.



AUDIO NOTE AN-TT1/ARM 1

Known primarily for its exotic valve amplification and moving coil cartridges, Audio Note has recently been introducing a comprehensive range of much more affordable components. The company has long had an interest in record playing machinery, and the TT1 brings together a number of its design preferences in a turntable priced at £425, which comes optionally fitted with either of two Rega-based tonearms that are fully re-wired by Audio Note (£169 for the ARM 1, tried here, or £299 for the ARM 2, based on the RB250 and RB300 respectively).

Three IQ-series moving magnet cartridges (sourced from Goldring to AN specs) are priced at £135, £155 and £295. The arm fitted to our sample was the less expensive ARM 1, mechanically similar to that fitted to the NAD (p57), but with the important distinction that Audio Note's own high grade cabling is fitted, both inside the arm and between the arm and preamplifier.

The TT1 shows the clear influence of two earlier turntables which Audio Note has long favoured. The overall outline bears a marked resemblance to the Systemdek IIX. At a much higher price, Audio Note also produces a variation on the legendary Voyd turntable, known for its tri-motor drive and lightweight acrylic platter, and while the TT1 only has a single motor, it does feature an acrylic platter and hub.

Available in black or walnut, styling is not a strong point. Apart from a rather large AN logo screen-printed on the plinth edge, all is studiously plain and unadorned, if usefully compact. Uncommon (but not unknown) at this sort of price, the Audio Note features a full floating subchassis layout. The main bearing, hub and platter are all rigidly coupled together, and then suspended on three springs to isolate the whole sub-assembly from the motor, the plinth and, of course, external vibrations of all kinds.

The high degree of isolation afforded by the suspended subchassis is obviously a worthwhile bonus, and should make the siting

"This turntable simply doesn't paper over the cracks, but that's what hi-fi ought to be about – telling it like it is."



of the turntable less critical, although in practice a proper turntable support of some kind is still worthwhile. The downside is that operation feels a bit strange at first, but having used a 'bouncy' turntable for years, I now find the 'solid' alternatives mildly disconcerting! Our first sample of the TT1 was itself mildly disconcerting as a permanent slight tremor suggested a touch of the DTs. An isolated instance, I suspect, as a second sample showed no such problem.

There's nothing in the way of features here, the TT1 adopting the usual approach of budget enthusiast-oriented turntables to the relatively rare need to change speeds, which involves lifting off the main platter and moving the drive belt to the alternative speed. Someone forgot to include the instructions, but the unit somehow survived my exploratory depredations until a single sheet of clarification arrived by fax.

Should one need to, the subchassis is easily levelled using three allen bolts recessed into the plinth just outside the platter edge.

The dust cover has counter-sprung hinges, and opens about 45°. The centre spindle seemed to be a rather tight fit – I nearly resorted to the washing up liquid to free one of my discs!

SOUND QUALITY

A turntable at this price has no right sounding this good or involving. Auditioned with the supplied IQ1 cartridge fitted, the TT1 delivers a beautifully open, coherent sound with impressively wide dynamic range and bandwidth. It does lack a little bottom-end weight and warmth, and the perceived balance is consequently dry and a little 'forward', but the midband's openness and dynamic vividness is quite exceptional, giving voices great expression, power and subtlety.

True, it can get a bit edgy and

in-er-face with some (modern, compressed) recordings, so I wouldn't necessarily commend it to Oasis fans. This turntable simply doesn't paper over the cracks, and isn't kind to the iniquities of the modern recording studio, but that's what hi-fi ought to be about – telling it like it really is, for good or ill.

For the most part, however, the TT1 is thoroughly seductive and communicative, sounding particularly 'clean' and natural with acoustic material. Importantly, both leading and trailing edges of notes seem particularly well defined, and mechanical energy doesn't seem to hang around in the system, to limit the dynamic range and blur the definition.

CONCLUSIONS

Simple, unpretentious and relatively inexpensive, Audio Note's TT1 delivers a real taste of true high-end performance at a realistically affordable price. It might not be the prettiest or easiest turntable to use, but if you're after a record-spinner that drags you most effectively into the music, and gets the maximum possible excitement out of it to boot – and, of course, if you're not too worried by that bouncy subchassis – do your best to check this one out.

PMc

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £594 (exc.cart)

A simple, unpretentious turntable that delivers a taste of true high-end performance at a realistically affordable price.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Audio Note (UK) Ltd, Unit C, Peacock Ind Est, 125-127 Davigdor Rd, Hove BN3 1SG
☎ (01273) 220511

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Cartridge supplied?	No
■ Suspended subchassis?	Yes
■ Manual or electronic speed change? Manual	
■ Dimensions (WxHxD):	
lid down: 47x15x36cm/lid up: 47x39x41cm	
■ Speeds:	33.3, 45rpm

DUAL CS 455-1

Dual is a long established German brand, whose name (if memory serves) derives from an early turntable with two separate sources of power – electricity or clockwork! When Dual began, mains domestic electricity was far from universal. The brand didn't become big in Britain until the 1970s, when the 505-series became the turntable of choice in thousands of budget hi-fi systems. The 505 is still around, now in Mk4 form priced at £275, and sits just one rung further up the Dual hierarchy from this CS 455-1, which comes in 'gold' or 'silver' colour variations.

Dual turntables seem to have been absent from the UK hi-fi scene for the past few years, but last year importer Yello was set up, and was very happy to add the Dual name to its list. For the moment at least, Yello is concentrating on the lower priced models in the range, some six in total (up to and including the 505.4).

In truth, the 455.1 seems a very different kind of animal to the others assembled for this test, its automatic and powered arm somehow much more reminiscent of the way autochangers are built than the six other (manually operated) devices in the group. There's a measure of subchassis isolation from external sources of vibration, although not from the motor, which is mounted on the same subchassis. A transformer plug supplies low voltage power to the deck itself.

The platter is pressed steel, damped by a rubber ring fixed to the underside around the inside of the edge. Although the gyro-type bearings feel tight and smooth, the tonearm itself uses a slim tube and a detachable plastic headshell, and feels altogether flimsier than those that are fitted to the manual players.

The deck comes fitted with an Ortofon OM-series moving magnet cartridge, one of the slim 'Concorde-shaped' models (which are particularly easy to cue accurately). Alternative cartridges are very easy to fit thanks to the



detachable head, although the mechanical interface between cartridge and tonearm lacks the rigidity of regular, fixed-headshell arrangements.

To someone who has used manual turntables for years, automatic operation can be a source of mild frustration. To those without such experience, there's reassurance in the ease with which a record starts playing, and security in the knowledge that the arm will return to the rest and the unit will switch itself off when a disc has finished playing. There's the option of playing the whole side from beginning to end, or using the viscous damped cue lever to select individual tracks. Used manually, the turntable starts rotating as soon as the arm is removed from its rest.

One consequence of the automatic operation was that I couldn't use my normal method to give

the cartridge a good running in, which is to choose an album with signal in the run-out groove (the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* and the Chemical Brothers' *Surrender* are two examples), and just leave it playing for a few hours. With the Dual, it just lifts off, returns to rest and switches off.

Uniquely in the group assembled here, the 455.1 provides a 78rpm speed option, which some vinyl collectors will find useful. Note that a stylus with a larger radius tip needs to be used to play these, but such a stylus assembly is readily available and easy to fit.

SOUND QUALITY

Auditioned immediately after the similarly priced, but entirely manually operated NAD turntable, the Dual proved to be a singular disappointment. Weak was the first word that sprang to mind, because the sound was seriously

lacking dynamic punch and range. In context, I felt that the 455-1's performance provided a good clue as to why the CD format took off/over in the mass market.

Whereas an enthusiast-oriented manual turntable can give a decent CD player a very good run for its money, the Dual's relative lack of dynamic range, coherence and precision left it struggling to get on terms either sonically or musically.

The bass end sounds detached and thumpy, partly because there's an audible lack of upper bass/lower mid energy and warmth. Further up the band, this lack of warmth leaves the top end sounding rather exposed and thin, an impression that is not helped by some brashness and untidiness in its presentation.

CONCLUSIONS

There's a certain hassle-free charm about the way this automatic record player goes about its task. It is a neat, compact and good looking unit that gets on with its task simply and without fuss, but the sound quality does fall short of the standards achieved elsewhere by simpler, manually

operated record players. **PME**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £220 (exc.cart)

Attractively neat record player offers automatic convenience (and 78rpm), but doesn't sonically match its simpler, manual rivals.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Yello, 9 Westleigh Office Park, Scirocco Close, Moulton Park, Northampton NN3 6AP
(01604) 491999

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Cartridge supplied?	Yes
■ Suspended subchassis?	Yes
■ Manual or electronic speed change?	Electronic
■ Dimensions (WxHxD):	
lid down: 44x12.5x36cm/lid up: 44x35x38cm	
■ Speeds:	33.3, 45, 78rpm

A NEW REALISM—Audio Research delivered true reference sound quality with its **Reference 1 preamp** and **Reference 600 monoblocs**. A number of customers looking for Reference 600 sound quality have asked for slightly lower output power and a smaller chassis. The new **Reference 300** is the smaller, quieter and cooler answer to these customer's needs. Good news too for existing Reference 600 customers who can opt for the **MkII factory update** while new-build **Reference 600MkIIs** are now available. The all-valve **Reference 2** stereo line preamp offers the same full microprocessor remote control of volume, balance, record and input selection with both balance and single ended inputs (eight plus full tape loop) and outputs (two main, one tape) as its illustrious predecessor. But all new audio and power supply circuits have advanced the state-of-the-art yet again.

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

Winning the race

REALISM

Reference 2 all-valve line stage preamplifier
Reference Phono all-valve phono stage
 — this is as real as it gets



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.

Don't lose out in the race for sonic realism?—contact **Absolute Sounds** for full information and a list of dealers where you can experience **Audio Research**.



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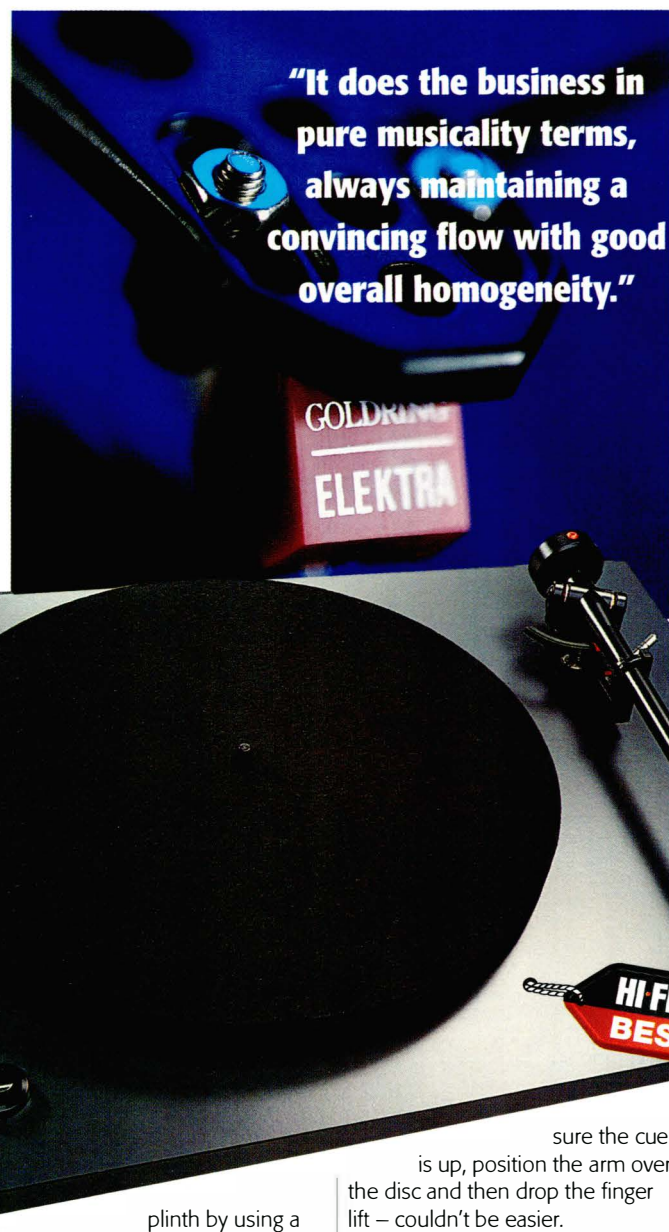
NAD 533

One of the more principled and consistent of the mainstream specialist brands, NAD produces a full line of sources and amplification, and treats this £220 533 turntable as seriously as any of its other components. When I think of NAD and turntables, I'm reminded of an ingenious – if rather bizarre and controversial – device with a flat, springily compliant tonearm that appeared a couple of decades back, sourced from somewhere in the then Eastern Block. Mercifully, this 533 is no relation whatsoever, in any evolutionary sense.

Instead, it's a close relation of the Rega Planar 2, made by Rega for NAD on an OEM basis. The two have a great deal in common, the most obvious distinctions being that the 533 has an MDF (rather than a glass) platter, has a fixed (rather than floating) motor mounting, and comes ready fitted with a modest, Goldring-sourced moving magnet cartridge. Another obvious difference is that the NAD is likely to be rather more widely available, simply because the brand has a larger number of dealers around the country.

The basic design of this turntable goes right back to the early 1970s, but remains as valid today as it was then, and will probably continue for as long as vinyl carries on spinning. Being a budget device oriented towards performance rather than convenience, there's little in the way of frills, but critical components like the platter and tonearm bearings maintain very close engineering tolerances.

Sombrely styled in black and dark grey, a single and substantial slab of wood composite laminated in traditional 'NAD grey' forms the foundation, and is supported on three little rubber feet, which provide a measure of vibration resistance (although not at subsonic frequencies). The platter main bearing, tonearm and motor are all mounted firmly to the plinth, while the solid and essentially non-resonant smoked plastic cover is decoupled from the



"It does the business in pure musicality terms, always maintaining a convincing flow with good overall homogeneity."

plinth by using a deliberately 'loose' plastic hinge arrangement.

The tonearm is the simplest and least expensive of Rega's RB-series, but that still means it benefits from the structural integrity of the single-casting tube/headshell and pre-loaded bearings. As mentioned, the turntable comes with a Goldring Elektra cartridge already fitted, but changing it is a straightforward (if fiddly) operation. Both 33.3 and 45rpm speeds are available, changed by lifting off the platter and moving the drive belt from one pulley to another.

Initial set-up shouldn't take more than ten minutes and, speed change apart, operation is very simple and intuitive. Lift the lid – it stays up by itself when near vertical – and turn on the small toggle switch, front left. Hopefully the turntable is going at the right speed! Unlock the arm clip, make

sure the cue is up, position the arm over the disc and then drop the finger lift – couldn't be easier.

Do take some care in siting this turntable: its 'solid' construction provides little protection against, for example, footfall shock exciting the subsonic arm/cartridge resonance. Such a design is bound to be affected by the surface on which it sits to some degree, and a wall shelf or dedicated stand will probably give the best results.

SOUND QUALITY

This turntable costs less than half the group average (£472), so it's hardly surprising that the sound quality is a little coarse and crude in comparison to the rest of the group. But when price is taken into account, the NAD gives a rather good account of itself, with a pleasing overall coherence which is pretty effective at getting the musical message across, even if the presentation is a trifle crude.

Auditioned with the supplied

cartridge, the top end seems a little lacking in ultimate extension and transparency, and also has some slightly aggressive tendencies a little lower down. The overall impression is of a sound which is a little small in scale, weight and dynamic range, but which keeps all the most important bits hanging together pretty well. It handles small scale material better than the very complex, which has a tendency to get a bit congested, but it always remains cheerfully communicative, swinging along with enthusiasm.

It loses out slightly to a (significantly more expensive) CD player, especially in terms of power, clarity and coloration, and does sound a bit laid-back and vague towards frequency extremes. But it does the business in pure musicality terms, always maintaining a convincing flow with good overall homogeneity.

CONCLUSIONS

A simple and well founded turntable combined with a tonearm which is fine value for money helps deliver an

impressive level of performance at a very modest price. The sound quality may not match up to the higher priced decks in this group, but at this price it deserves a Best Buy rating. A logical choice for anyone on a tight budget. **PM**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £220 (inc. cart)

Sonically a little crude, but this neat and discreet deck gives musically satisfying results at a very modest price.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Lenbrook UK, Unit 15 Faraday Rd, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 3RY
(01296) 482017

SPECIFICATIONS

Cartridge supplied?	Yes
Suspended subchassis?	No
Manual or electronic speed change?	Manual
Dimensions (WxHxD):	lid down: 44x11.5x35cm/lid up: 44x40.5x43cm
Speeds:	33.3, 45 rpm

PRO-JECT Classic Cherry

"It created a good first impression, with good scale and a decently wide dynamic range."

If any one distributor has been responsible for the recent revival of record player sales in the UK, it's probably the very enthusiastic Henley Designs operation, which imports the extensive Pro-ject range of turntables from the Czech Republic. Henley also has the Danish Ortofon cartridges in its portfolio of products, so the two are usually bundled together as attractive ready-to-go packages, making a significant saving on the individual aggregate price.

Pro-ject itself has been building hi-fi for more than fifty years, the Czech parent company employing some 5,000 people. Not all of these are making turntables, of course, but Henley has been keeping that section very busy recently, especially since launching the budget-priced Pro-ject Debut last year.

This £450 Classic Cherry is the sixth model up an eight-strong range of turntable/arm combos which Henley distributes, and is a close relative of the plain £360 Classic. Not that either should be called 'plain': the standard Classic is finished in piano lacquer black, whereas the Classic Cherry's sturdy MDF heart is decorated in a cherry real wood veneer (with a piano black option).

The Classics all place strong emphasis on the aesthetics of the players, but also offer considerably more in basic engineering content than the budget Pro-jects, especially in the rather classy looking Pro-ject 9 tonearm which comes

as a standard fitting here, alongside an Ortofon 510 MkII moving magnet cartridge (which normally retails for £40). All Classic models are 'solid' designs, whereas Pro-ject's more upmarket 6 and Perspective models graduate to suspended subchassis operation.

The basis of this turntable is an exceedingly hefty plinth of veneered MDF, onto which is mounted the main bearing/platter and tonearm. Its weight alone brings some immunity from external vibrations, while springy feet provide a measure of decoupling from shelf-borne effects, although its cause isn't going to be helped by using a rather resonant plastic lid and coupling this to the plinth via friction hinges. The manual points out that the player should sound better with the lid removed; alternatively, if there's a wall behind to rest the lid against, leave the hinges fairly loose to avoid coupling vibrations it picks up into the plinth proper.

The motor itself is suspended on an O-ring, so that its vibrations

are decoupled from the plinth, a similar arrangement in outline to that used by Rega on its classic Planar 2 and 3 models. That similarity is also echoed by Pro-ject's decision to use a heavy glass platter topped by a felt mat and running on a plastic inner hub.

One Pro-ject feature unique in this test is that the tonearm's internal wiring is terminated in a pair of sockets mounted on the plinth, along with an earth screw terminal. Although any 'break' in the wiring between cartridge and amplifier is better avoided, that's difficult to achieve, and this arrangement does allow the major connecting link to amp

programme, however, the satisfaction index gradually started to slide somewhat. The problem seems to lie in the overall coherence, or rather some lack thereof, and turning up the volume only seemed to draw further attention to it – I soon backed off the throttle here.

The bottom end is just a little thumpy, softened and detached, so rather than driving the music along, it tends to take a back seat in the proceedings, which doesn't serve modern dance material too well. The broad midband seems fine, the presence just a shade laid back, but the top end is altogether less comfortable, sounding rather thin, edgy and untidy.

CONCLUSIONS

The ingredients used to make this very attractive belt drive turntable all look positive and well founded,

but the whole doesn't quite seem to add up to the sum of its parts. Pricewise it sits very close to the group average, but is also rather out on its own – more than twice the price of the two cheapest models, yet significantly less expensive than the other four.

Although its dynamic performance is very respectable, on balance the sound quality falls a little short of that required for formal Recommendation. **PMe**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £450 (exc.cart)

A great looking turntable with a generous and dynamic sound, but lacks something in overall coherence.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Henley Designs, The Old Coach House, The Street, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford, Oxon OX10 8EH
(01491) 834700

SPECIFICATIONS

Cartridge supplied?	Yes
Suspended subchassis?	No
Manual or electronic speed change?	Manual

Dimensions (WxHxD):

lid down: 47x14x34cm/lid up: 47x39x42cm

Speeds: 33.3, 45rpm

REGA Planar 25

Rega's Planar 25 turntable, launched in 1998, was named in celebration of the company's 25th anniversary. In that quarter-century, this one-time turntable specialist has grown from a minnow company into one of the pillars of the specialist hi-fi industry, extending its activities across the full component spectrum and maintaining an impressive consistency of approach.

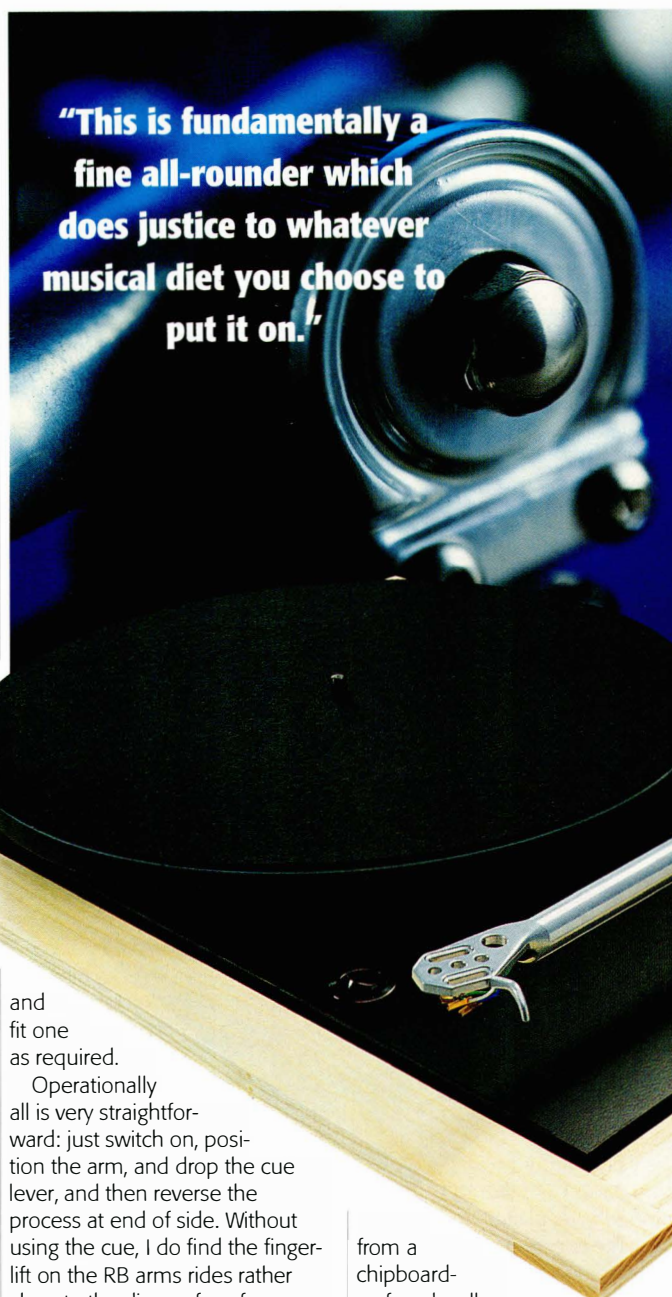
The £619 P25 slots into the large gap between the company's longstanding, near-budget price Planar 2 and Planar 3 turntables and the altogether more expensive Planar 9 (£1,698). Costing a little more than twice the price of the P3, yet with the looks of the P9, in essence it uses the 3's glass platter with the very stylish plinth and motor-mount of the 9. It has a built-in power supply that's much less elaborate than the 9's out-board affair, but which goes much further down the motor-smoothing road than the cheaper Rega models.

The tonearm used here is the RB600, a variation which slots between the '300 of the 3 and the '900 used by the 9, with a polished 'silver' (aluminium powder coat) finish, a small, high density (tungsten) counterweight and chunky, low-capacitance cables with classy Neutrik phono plugs.

Like all Rega turntables, it's a solid plinth, belt-drive design with feet that offer a measure of isolation from external vibration, but not the degree afforded by a suspended subchassis.

Aesthetics look very classy, thanks to the two-part plinth which has a slimline, real wood 'picture frame' around the plinth proper. This isn't simply screwed on, but is fixed using an expanding collar arrangement which holds everything tight without putting the frame under tension.

Set-up is very simple, requiring just the removal of a cardboard main bearing protector and some tape securing the tonearm. Add the glass platter, felt mat, and the tonearm counterweight and you're away – provided there's a cartridge fitted. The £619 price tag here excludes the cost of a cartridge, although Rega has an extensive range of moving magnet models at different price points, and its dealers will happily supply



"This is fundamentally a fine all-rounder which does justice to whatever musical diet you choose to put it on."

and fit one as required.

Operationally all is very straightforward: just switch on, position the arm, and drop the cue lever, and then reverse the process at end of side. Without using the cue, I do find the finger-lift on the RB arms rides rather close to the disc surface for my (admittedly large) forefinger. Both 33.3 and 45rpm speeds are available here, but the changeover involves lifting off the platter and manually shifting the O-ring drive belt from one pulley to the other.

SOUND QUALITY

Auditioned with a Dynavector 10X IV fitted, the Planar 25 has a smooth, almost silky sound quality which seemed to get the best out of the cartridge. The bottom end is nicely dry and well controlled, while the midband sounds superb, with a wide dynamic range and fine overall coherence.

The P25 always seems to sound unflustered and well in control, although it does 'read' the 'sound' of its support furniture to an audible degree, and moving it

from a chipboard-surfaced wall shelf to a glass-topped Mana stand added some welcome extra life and vitality.

In my system, the P25 was well able to see off a CD player (from the same manufacturer) of broadly similar price, but ultimately the sound it delivers is a bit matter-of-fact, a little lacking in weight, dynamic vitality and immediacy. Music is always informative and easy on the ear, but it doesn't quite drag one in to the experience with the urgency of some of its rivals.

That said, the overall balance is satisfyingly natural – favouring the midband, to be sure, but with both top and bottom sitting nicely in proportion. It does perhaps favour the more delicate forms of music, such as acoustic and classical,

over the sort of bass-rich material delivered by modern dance tracks, but this is fundamentally a fine all-rounder which does justice to whatever musical diet you choose to put it on.

CONCLUSIONS

Aesthetics play a big part in choosing hi-fi equipment, and the P25's slim, elegant and beautifully finished 'picture frame' approach certainly has a strong claim to the title Most Gorgeous Looking Turntable in this test. Happily, it sounds rather good too, with a silky smooth midband coherence which is fair compensation for a mild lack of bandwidth and dynamic range. Very warmly recommended as a practical, foolproof turntable that should slot comfortably into any system.

PMe

**HI FI CHOICE
BEST BUY**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £619 (exc.cart)

Great looking turntable has a silky smooth sound with exceptional midband coherence. Practical, foolproof, and should suit any system well.

■ **LIFETIME GUARANTEE AGAINST MANUFACTURING DEFECTS**

✉ Rega Research Ltd., 119 Park Street, Westcliffe on Sea, Essex SSO 7PD

☎ (01702) 333071

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Cartridge supplied?	No
■ Suspended subchassis?	No
■ Manual/electronic speed change?	Manual
■ Dimensions (HxWxD):	
lid down	12.5x45x36cm/lid up 41x45x43cm
■ Speeds:	33.3, 45 rpm

THORENS TD146 VI

THORENS TD146 VI

Visit Our Website: www.hifichoice.co.uk

Thorens can trace its roots back to the nineteenth century, when the company was still involved in mechanical music making, as a manufacturer of music boxes in the era before any form of recording was possible. In the modern era, its transcription turntables were a professional benchmark during the 1960s, while the introduction of the TD150 at the end of that decade helped to revolutionise turntable design.

There's still debate over whether it was Thorens or US company AR that introduced the suspended subchassis approach to turntable design. The two appeared at roughly the same time, but the Thorens was much more visible in Britain, and subsequently had a profound impact on turntable developments here.

The TD 150 and its 160 successor set a stereo-type which is still clearly visible in this £550 TD146 semi-automatic turntable/arm combo, which has itself been around long enough to reach Mk VI status.

Among Thorens' extensive and rather complex model line-up, the same turntable is also available without the automatic lift/stop mechanism as the TD166 VI AT95E, which features the same Thorens TP50 tonearm along with an Audio Technica AT95E cartridge and sells for a significantly cheaper £370. Another version, designated TD166 VI Rega (fitted with the latter's RB250 tonearm but no cartridge) sells for £400, and received a Best Buy rating way back in *HFC* 103.

It's very much the archetypal suspended subchassis belt-drive design, floating the main bearing, platter and arm separately on undamped springs, and therefore affording a good measure of isolation from any vibration generated in the motor, plinth and cover.

The most notable feature must be the massive (2.7kg) zinc alloy outer platter, which ensures very high rotational inertia and speed stability.

However, this is quite a compact turntable, the rear of the platter riding very close to the dust cover, and is very demurely styled,



"Once mastered, the semi-auto operation worked happily, and will be a blessing for those who find springy subchassis scary."

all in black apart from the legends (in a very odd mixture of typefaces) and the polished silver platter edge. The two operating levers (one remotely mechanically changing the speed) are readily accessible either side of the platter, if rather 'clunky' in operation (necessary to charge the springs used to trigger the stop/auto-lift operations). A transformer-plug supplies low voltage power to the unit, and our sample came with a heavy, ribbed rubber mat, although felt is a option.

You get a lot of little bits with this turntable, and some of mine must have got lost en route, so I still don't know how the dust cover hinges work. The dense and inscrutable instruction manual covers 20 multi-lingual A5 pages. There are few diagrams, even fewer jokes, and rather a lot of dingy photographs.

Unfortunately, you have to plough through most of it – taking short-cuts (in the best reviewing

tradition) leads to confusion! There seems to be no easy way to adjust the subchassis springs here (not that it should be necessary). Cartridge fitting is facilitated by a removable headshell arrangement, though this inevitably compromises the structural integrity of the arm to a degree. Once mastered, the semi-auto operation worked perfectly happily, and will be a blessing for those who find springy subchassis scary.

SOUND QUALITY

The 146 VI has a lovely big, generous sound, on the rich side of neutrality and a little laid-back through the voice band, but with a tinkly, slightly detached top end. The turntable has a fine dynamic range, especially through the bass region, but the character here seemed a bit 'fat' and 'bonky'.

Our sample came supplied with a heavily ribbed rubber mat, but Thorens does offer a felt mat option, so out of interest I substituted one of the examples used by another brand. This brought an immediate improvement, cleaning

up and clarifying the whole bass region, which felt-supported is as good or better than any other in this test group.

Further up the band things are less happy, and the sound lacks the tidiness, sweetness and coherence of some of its rivals. The midband is inclined to get a bit congested on complex material, while the presence is a bit laid back. Dynamics lack 'bite' and leading edges are softened, so that consonants are poorly defined, while the treble proper is a bit scrappy and detached.

CONCLUSIONS

The bottom line here is that this semi-auto variation on Thorens' TD 146/166 theme puts more than £190 on the price of the basic manual version (which uses essentially the same ingredients). Furthermore, on the evidence gathered in this group test, the fitted TP50 tonearm is a significant limiting factor, and the £400 TD166 VI, which is fitted with a Rega arm (Best Buy way back in *HFC* 103), should outperform it comfortably. If the semi-auto feature is a major priority, the TD146 VI is probably one of the best around, but also serves to show the compromises inherent in automatic operation. Note also that the felt mat option is likely to improve on the supplied ribbed rubber mat. **PM**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£550 (exc. cart)

☐ **Tonearm is not quite up to the turntable's potential, and this semi-auto version is much pricier than the manual TD166 VI.**

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

☒ Portfolio Marketing, PO Box 88, Hedge End, Hants SO32 2XN
☎ (01489) 795519

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Cartridge supplied?	No
■ Suspended subchassis	Yes
■ Manual or electronic speed change?	Manual
■ Dimensions (WxHxD):	lid down: 43x15x34cm/lid up: n/a
■ Speeds:	33.3, 45rpm

VPI HW 19 Junior

VPI is an American company which operates out of New Jersey on the East coast, and is probably best known in Britain for its highly regarded record cleaning machines, popular with true vinyl fanatics (and arguably all the more relevant today when so much vinyl is only available secondhand). The company also makes some seriously upmarket turntables such as the TNT series, so I was quite surprised to discover there was a more modestly priced HW series of three models, and that the HW 19 Junior was inexpensive enough to fit into our group test.

It's an interesting turntable in a number of ways, most obviously and unusually because it's upgradable. This Junior version costs £550 alone, or £650 when supplied with the Rega RB300 tonearm (a good deal since the arm normally retails for £174). The upgrade path involves two fairly large steps. The first, which converts an HW 19 Junior into an HW 19 MkIII, costs £495 extra, and involves substantial changes to the suspension system and platter. The next stage, from MkIII to Mk IV costs a further £550, and is focused on the main bearing, but includes further improvement in the platter inertia and support, and suspension modifications.

All the HW 19s feature the same motor and plinth, the latter made from solid hardwood and supplied in black oak or oak as standard. Walnut is available for an extra £40, while piano gloss black carries a £150 premium.

In both size and weight this turntable dwarfs the others in this test. Indeed, it's so large it might be tricky finding suitable support furniture. Quite why it needs to be so big eludes me, but perhaps that's the American way. The main plinth is a solid hardwood 'picture frame', with the corners filled in to provide mounting for the motor and for the four Sorbothane pucks which provide the suspension.

The 'subchassis' here is bigger than most turntables, an inch-thick slab of wood composite upon which the RB300 tonearm and a substantial main bearing are



"The whole thing is commendably free from 'nasties', which adds up to a relaxing and involving total experience."

mounted. The platter is a thick acrylic disc, weighing some 7lbs and driven around its periphery by a round-section pyrothane belt, while the motor itself – which requires the belt to be manually moved between pulleys for speed change – is hidden beneath a simple, easily removable cover. A disc-clamping system closely mechanically couples the disc to the platter, and a substantial clear acrylic dust cover has spring-loaded hinges which are held loosely in place.

Set-up is perfectly straightforward, thanks to a wordy but well written step-by-step manual and the basic simplicity of the turntable itself. Screw feet at the corners can be used to level the whole thing, and the only real precaution is to make sure that a

small gap is maintained all round between subchassis and plinth. I must admit I find the whole disc-clamping thing a bit tedious, but I guess its use is optional, and you can make up your own mind whether to adopt the ritual.

SOUND QUALITY

This model delivers a big, generous sound with a decent dynamic range and good overall tonal balance. Initially, when it was placed on the metal frame of a wall bracket (it was too large to sit on the shelf proper), the sound was marred by noticeable 'thickening' and emphasis in the upper bass.

Interestingly, when I then moved the turntable onto a large, heavy wooden cabinet with a 40mm thick top surface, the bottom end sounded altogether

cleaner, less lumpy and with less overhang. But I still wouldn't describe it as the best bass around. There's some loss of precision and weight on the more complex dance beats, a slight blurring of textures and some added warmth, but it's adequate enough and doesn't get in the way. Interestingly, too, on this hefty platform, the turntable proved impressively immune from footfall shock.

The RB300 tonearm as usual takes very good care of the mid and high frequencies, bringing its pleasing coherence to bear on the voice band, and reflecting the wide dynamic range through this region. The whole thing hangs together pretty well musically and is commendably free from 'nasties', which adds up to a relaxing and involving total experience.

CONCLUSIONS

An impressively neutral and capable performer, the HW 19 Junior's most unusual and interesting feature is probably its two-stage upgradability. Noteworthy, too, is the sheer size of this player, which looks rather handsome in its way, but might be rather bulky for typical UK hi-fi furniture – and certainly seems to benefit from similarly hunky support. An interesting option that's well worth checking out.

PME

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £650 (exc. cart)

■ A notably large and handsome turntable with a good sound quality and considerable upgrade potential.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Cherished Record Company, PO Box 21, Liskeard PL14 5YP
☎ (01579) 363603

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Cartridge supplied?	No
■ Suspended subchassis?	Yes
■ Manual or electronic speed change?	Manual
■ Dimensions (WxHxD):	
lid down 54x18.5x40cm/lid up 54x52x48cm	
■ Speeds:	33.3, 45rpm



CONCLUSIONS

TURNTABLES

Taking the overview across our seven-strong collection of turntables, each adopts its own recipe to combine a number of ingredients and achieve an end result. All of those featured here use belt drive for the platter, but four use some form of subchassis isolation, whereas three are solid plinth designs.

There are metal, glass, acrylic and MDF platters; felt is the popular mat choice, but two have no mat at all, while just one (optionally) uses the more traditional rubber version.

If any one common factor links the better sounding examples here, however, it's that the four models fitted with Rega-sourced

RB-series tonearms seemed to stand out a little ahead of their rivals. While an excellent tonearm can't rescue the performance of a poor quality turntable, it certainly makes the best of a half decent

forgive the limitations towards the frequency extremes.

I made some attempts to compare each turntable against a CD reference, and by and large the vinyl-spinners stacked up very

well against their digital equivalent. Only the automatic Dual player seemed to fall significantly short overall, and even the humble NAD seemed to capture as much of the spirit of the music as

the CD player, even though the latter was sonically rather more accomplished and confident. Moving up towards the more expensive turntables, the superior temporal coherence and 'flow' of the vinyl medium steadily asserted itself over the clinical clarity of CD replay.

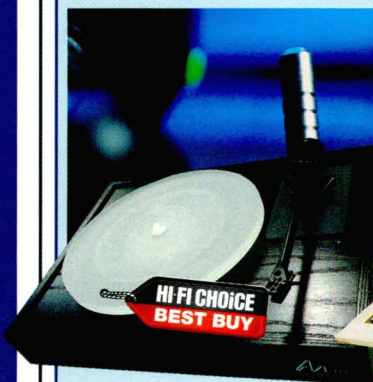
The trickiest factors to bear in mind with turntables are the variations introduced by support furniture, which seem impossible to pin down to universal, simple rules. Whatever surface supports the turntable, will influence the sound to a significant degree, so don't be frightened to try out a number of different options in search of the best results.

"I attempted to compare each turntable against a CD reference, and by and large the vinyl-spinners stacked up very well."

one. NAD's budget 533 model has obvious limitations compared with some of its rivals at twice or thrice the price, but its RB-type arm does such a decent job through the midband, it's easy to

well against their digital equivalent. Only the automatic Dual player seemed to fall significantly short overall, and even the humble NAD seemed to capture as much of the spirit of the music as

BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDED



AUDIO NOTE AN-TT1/ARM1
£594 (excl. cart)

A glimpse of the true turntable high end at a relatively affordable price, the TT1's vivacious and exciting performance might be a bit too up-front for easy-listeners, but there's no denying that it's one of the best communicators around.



REGA Planar 25 £619 (excl. cart)

Good looks and simple practicality combined with Rega's fine reputation for reliability and longevity all help lift this model into the Best Buy ranks. Sonically it may fall short of other designs in some respects, but its silky smoothness shows a mastery of the delicate art of compromise.



NAD 533 £220 (inc. cart)

NAD's variation of the Rega Planar 2 theme has an MDF rather than glass platter, and comes complete with cartridge. It's not a tremendously high achiever, sonically speaking, but it does keep the musical faith with a fine midband that's always entertaining and informative.



VPI HW 19 Junior/RB300
£650 (excl. cart)

This large, hefty turntable has a beautifully judged balance with fine dynamic range. A major plus is that when funds permit, it can be upgraded using conversion kits through two further stages of development.

TURNTABLES COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	AUDIO NOTE	DUAL	NAD	PRO-JECT	REGA	THORENS	VPI
MODEL	AN-TT1/ARM 1	CS455-1	533	CLASSIC CHERRY	PLANAR 25	TD146 VI	HW 19 JUNIOR
PRICE	£594 (exc. cart)	£220 (exc. cart)	£220 (inc. cart)	£594 (exc. cart)	£619 (exc. cart)	£550 (exc. cart)	£650 (exc. cart)
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	1 yr	1 yr	2 yr	1 yr	lifetime	1 yr	2 yr
CARTRIDGE SUPPLIED?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
MANUAL/ELEC. SPEED CHANGE?	Manual	Electronic	Manual	Manual	Manual	Manual	Manual
SPEEDS	33.3, 45rpm	33.3, 45, 78rpm	33.3, 45rpm	33.3, 45rpm	33.3, 45rpm	33.3, 45rpm	33.3, 45rpm

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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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01702 435255

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01895 465444

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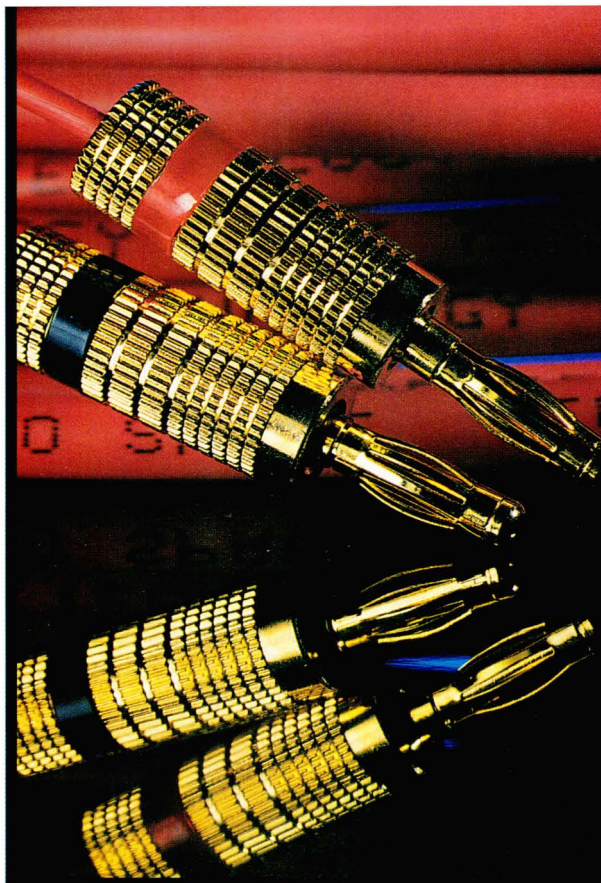


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Speaker Cables

Richard Black presents one of the most lavishly proportioned cable groups we've ever tackled.



This particularly large and widespread batch of cables provides, we hope, a good overview of the current state of the market. It's astonishing just how many cable manufacturers and brands

there are: granted, some are pretty small, but many have grown to become quite substantial concerns.

To be honest, quite a few are producing mostly 'me too' products which have little to differentiate them from other manufacturers' cables or from industry standards (79 strand figure-8 cable, as pioneered by QED, being a perfect example of the latter). But even discounting those, there's a bewildering array of cables available with almost every conceivable combination of geometry and materials.

Assuming you believe that cables make any difference at all (well, you are reading this!), there are good reasons to suppose that the differences between speaker cables may well be greater than those between interconnects. Most obviously, they're usually longer, typically between 3m and 10m each: we generally review standard 5m pairs. But the much greater voltage and current demands of speaker driving place greater stress on the cable and one might think this would show up differences relatively strongly.

Although that's a very simplified argument, I find it accords pretty much with experience, although interconnect differences can be quite pronounced. But the whole cable business is as yet lacking a really solid scientific basis, and it's hard to predict with much confidence what will happen in a given circumstance. As one can't stress too often, don't be afraid to use your ears - nothing else counts in the final analysis.

What certainly shouldn't count is manufacturers' sales literature, at least when it gets more technical than the diameter of a cable. Once again, reading brochures and Web sites in preparing these reviews, I was horrified by the amount of utter codswallop spouted by some of them (who shall remain nameless), quite irrespective of whether their cables are any good or not - at least one manufacturer whose cables I have praised consistently has gone into print with some breathtaking rubbish. And I can't recall a single technical article from any manufacturer which didn't make at least one basic mistake or oversight. Speculation is one thing, but scientific knowledge of the laws of electromagnetism is over a century old and one gets them either right or wrong.

Roughly, the cables here cover the gamut from 'first upgrade' level to pretty serious audiophile, corresponding to system values of, oh, a few hundred pounds to the price of a small house in Wales. It's easy to give flippant advice about relative cable and equipment costs, but I'd rather suggest that you visit your local dealer, get him to set up a system similar in range and attainments to yours, and swap cables until either you can barely discern differences any more or you run out of budget. That way you'll get some idea of what you're aiming at. There are a lot of very fine cables available for modest sums, and I hope you'll be pleasantly surprised!

How the tests were done

Each cable was tested with two amplifier systems, a pair of EAR519 monoblocks and a Harman/Kardon HK6500 integrated. For speakers, I used mainly ATC SCM20s, but original Quad ESLs gave (perhaps surprisingly) pretty similar results. Sources were a Rotel RCD971 CD player and a Pink Triangle/SME/Highphonic LP deck with Moth phono stage. I used a combination of quick-fire cable alternations (less than two minutes per cable) and

longer-term listening, with a relatively small selection of very familiar source material, including: **JOSÉ ANTONIO GUZMÁN:** *Ambrosio* (Sonora SACD 101) **MAHLER:** *Symphony No. 5* - Symphonica of London/Morris (Symphonica SYMR3/4) **THE SHOUT:** *Tall Stories* (pre-release demo) **IAN DURY:** *Warts'n'Audience* (Demon FIEND CD 777)

THE CAST LIST

Audioquest Slate	£15.00/m
Cable Talk Flat 2	£5.00/m
Chord Company Rumour 2	£10.00/m
Electrofluidics Monolith 2020	£45.00/m
Ixos Gamma 6003	£2.99/m
Kimber 8TC	£348.00 (5m pr)
Profigold Silverflex LC8258	£4.00/m
QED Genesis Silver Spiral	£30.00/m
Sonic Link AST75	£2.95/m
Straight Wire Duo	£3.00/m
Supra Ply 3.4/5	£7.95/m
Tara RSC Prime 500	£360.00 (5m pr)
TCI Python	£7.99/m
Townshend Isolda	£50.00/m
van den Hul Royal Jade	£10.99/m
Vivanco Prowire Out of Sight	£1.99/m

GLOSSARY

CAPACITANCE, RESISTANCE, INDUCTANCE:

Electrical parameters of a cable. Low resistance is good. Capacitance and inductance vary in roughly inverse proportion and their importance for sound quality is subject to debate. Some amplifiers will struggle if used with high capacitance cables.

FIGURE-8: The most common cable construction, with two identical conductors laid side-by-side to give a figure 8 cross-section. Spaced pair and twisted pair are variants on this.

BRAIDED, LITZ: Where several separately insulated conductors per 'leg' are twisted or plaited together.

SOLID-CORE: Includes multi-conductor cables where each strand is individually insulated from its neighbours.

BI-WIRING: Separate cable runs from power amp to treble and bass sections of speaker crossover - often beneficial, at a price!



HINTS & TIPS

CABLE MATCHING: cables are generally somewhat dependent on the equipment they connect. It's wise, if possible, to try out any cable with the actual kit it will be linking. Although manufacturers would, of course, like to sell you matched interconnects and speaker cables, there's no strong reason to buy both from any one make.

INTERFERENCE PICK-UP: This is generally assumed not to be a problem with speaker cables. However, it can occur very occasionally, and is best treated with a ferrite sleeve, clamped over both wires together (VERY important!) as near to the amplifier as possible. Even gold-plated plugs can oxidise slightly. Every few months, pull cables out and reinsert them, which cleans contact faces. Proprietary plug-cleaning and contact-enhancing solutions are available: on past experience, I treat these with caution.

CABLE BURN-IN: Some folks swear it's real. I side with those who argue that over a few hours or days your ears get accustomed to the defects of any equipment and filter them out.

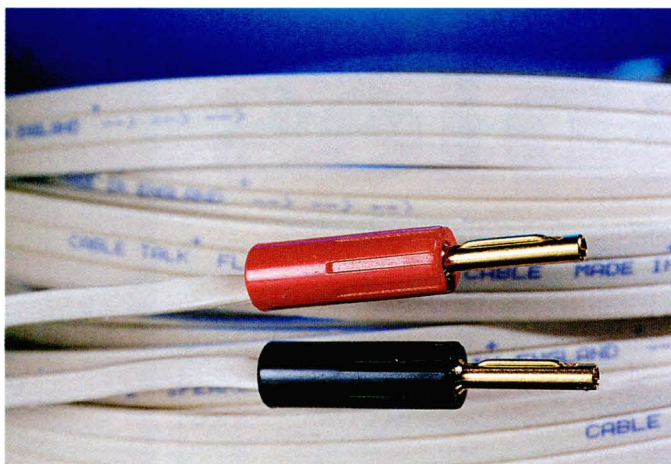
CABLE TALK Flat 2

Nothing particularly remarkable about this cable, at first sight. It's a basic spaced-pair, with stranded conductors embedded in a hard insulator. Because the conductors are made up of relatively thick strands it's not quite as flexible as it might be, and being a couple of millimetres thick it's not really suited to hiding under carpets: all the same, it should be reasonably easy to conceal and its neutral cream colour will help there.

Like the Vivanco cable in this batch, but in distinct contrast to the Electrofluidics and Townshend cables, all of which are also flat, the placement of two flat (-ish!) conductors side by side makes for low capacitance (good for twitchy amplifiers) and high inductance. Be aware of the important differences in construction if you specifically want a flat cable: stacking two flat conductors one on the other gives very different measured and – for most people's tastes – sonic performance.

SOUND QUALITY

Cable Talk makes quite a range of cables, of which this one wouldn't be my first choice on sonic grounds. Sure enough, its tonality is generally



"Tonality is generally pretty blameless, with a well balanced midrange and no undue emphasis or attenuation of treble."

pretty blameless, with a well balanced midrange and no undue emphasis or attenuation of the treble. Bass, however, is rather variable, tending to sound a little bloated and decidedly woolly when the music is concentrated in that region, but considerably less full when it's part of a broader sound spectrum.

This seems to be a common cable drawback and can be confusing in demos if one doesn't use the same tracks to compare different models. Take something like an electric bass solo and you'll find plenty of bass extension: add the rest of the band (particularly difficult stuff like a large drum kit) and the

bass suddenly becomes much harder to pick out.

Voices err on the side of dryness too, and large climaxes can become rather rough. Imaging is fair but not marvellous, with limited depth, and detail retrieval consistently leaves something to be desired.

CONCLUSION

Even if visual considerations dictate a flat cable, this is neither the most capable nor the most competitive version available. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £5.00/m

ⓘ Rather unexciting sound, with variable bass and dry voices.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

✉ Cable Talk, Unit J, Albany Park, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2PL

☎ (01276) 686717

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	Flat spaced pair
■ Conductor	Six nines copper
■ Dielectric	'Cimflex'

IXOS Gamma 6003

Ixos' Gamma Geometry is becoming a familiar feature now, and recent publicity about it has become rather clearer about what it aims to achieve. The basic idea is to criss-cross conductors in order to reduce pick-up of electromagnetic interference but without actually twisting them together. Hence the third core, which is a solid dielectric 'dummy' whose sole purpose is to hold the two conductor cores in appropriate alignment.

There's no denying that interference pick-up on speaker cables can be an issue (it doesn't affect speakers directly but gets inside the amp and upsets that end of the equation); but if there really is a unique advantage of Gamma Geometry over conventional twisted-pair cable, it's still not adequately explained by the Ixos literature.

Never mind, though: it's a practical and modestly-priced cable, and the review sample came fitted with some particularly clever proprietary banana plugs, complete with spring-loaded insulators to reduce the chance of accidents should a cable accidentally come adrift from the speaker terminals.



"One commendable area is the bass which, although not ultimately as extended as some, is at least highly consistent."

SOUND QUALITY

In a budget cable such as this it's probably unreasonable to expect perfection, but 'thinly spread and minor vices' is a good start. That's what Gamma 6003 manages and on the whole it is a capable performer. One particularly commendable area is the bass which, although not ultimately as extended as some, is at least highly consistent with

musical style and playback level, making its (mild) roll-off much easier to forget. Midrange and treble are a little dry but not seriously so, and detail is there if one goes a little way to meet it.

Transient-rich sounds such as percussion and vocals can just occasionally become slightly spitty, and climaxes suffer from the same thing, which somewhat lessens

impact; but by the standards of its peers this cable is good. Imaging is probably its weakest suit, but even that is no worse than moderate.

CONCLUSION

While not in the super-budget league, this cable offers a good deal for its relatively small premium over the very cheapest and warrants a Hi-Fi Choice Best Buy. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £2.99/m

ⓘ A little midrange dryness, but bass is among the best at this price, strong and consistent.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

✉ Path Group, Unit 2, Desborough Ind. Park, Desborough Park Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3BG

☎ (01494) 441736

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	'Gamma Geometry'
■ Conductor	Pure Crystal OFC
■ Dielectric	PVC

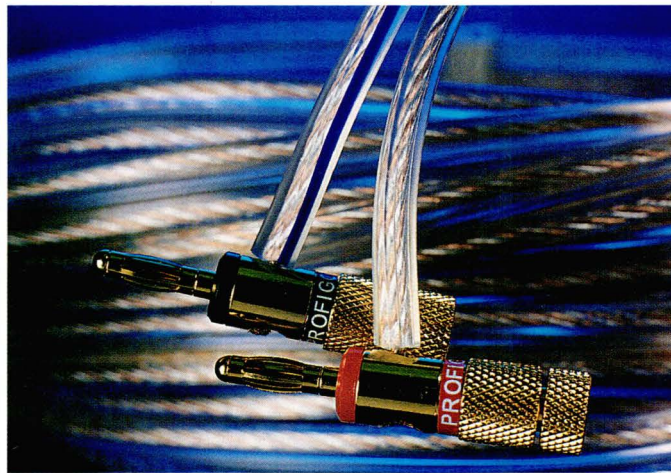
PROFIGOLD Silverflex LC8258

Profigold is the upmarket range from Bandridge, a major supplier of mostly very inexpensive cables, connectors and accessories. This cable is lifted above the run-of-the-mill chiefly on account of its use of silver-plated OFC conductors – as can be plainly seen through the transparent insulation, it mixes SPOFC with unplated copper for reasons that may well be aesthetic as much as sonic.

Making up its typical 2.5mm sq. cross-section is a large number of very thin strands, which in conjunction with the soft insulation makes it a very flexible cable. Of all the cables in this test, this was the only one supplied in a length substantially shorter than 5m – 3.7m, in fact – which may have given it a slight advantage on audition.

SOUND QUALITY

Although this cable does little badly wrong, it doesn't seem to achieve anything particularly noteworthy, either. Starting from the bottom, its bass is reasonably well extended but with a little of the lumpiness quite common in cables, making it rather music-dependent – as usual, best in simple musical textures.



“Bass is reasonably well extended but with a little of the lumpiness quite common in cables, making it rather music-dependent.”

In the lower midrange, male voices and lower orchestral instruments sound a touch dry and coarse, although detail is quite good throughout the lower octaves.

Female voices are, if anything, a little clearer than male, and higher instruments are quite well served with only a small degree of the

artificial sheen that can affect orchestral violins, and little if any roughness on saxophones and trumpets. In the extreme treble, there's a slight lack of air and bloom on transients, and in large-scale passages things can become a bit congested. Imaging is fairly good but depth is a bit 'either/or' - front or rear, but not

much in between. Treble detail is fair but requires some concentration if one is to hear all the inner voices in a dense mix.

CONCLUSION

It's all OK, and purchasers of this cable are unlikely to be horribly disappointed, but ultimately there's nothing to make it stand out from the crowd. In fact, there are cheaper types that arguably better it in most or all areas. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £4.00/m

▢ A pretty-looking cable that does little to offend but is let down by some congestion.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ BUK Ltd, 18 Deer Park Road, London SW19 3TU

☎ (020) 8543 3633

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	Figure-8
■ Conductor	Silver-plated OFC/plain OFC
■ Dielectric	PVC

PROWIRE Out of Sight

In all the years I've been reviewing hi-fi, I've handled few products more objectionable to the touch than this cable. But it's actually a bit unfair to whinge, because of all the cables here this one is the most clearly designed to 'fit and forget' under the carpet. To that end, it's sticky-backed, which is after all a fine idea, but in reviewing it the backing started to fall off and the sticky surface collected bits of my carpet. I only hope this didn't affect its performance too badly!

With two conductors of solid copper tape laid side by side, performance is essentially that of a conventional, medium-spaced, figure-8 cable, though the conductors are rather thin and resistance is on the high side.

The only aspect I found a real problem was the terminations supplied (available as an extra) which use 'Lucar'-style connectors to slide on to the cable. They're far too loose, and I would recommend abandoning them and simply screwing amp and speaker terminals down over bare ends – or get your friendly dealer to solder some banana plugs on for you.



“Of all the cables here this one is the most clearly designed to 'fit and forget' under the carpet.”

SOUND QUALITY

Despite the unpromising appearance, the sound of this cable is not at all bad, especially given its low price. Yes, the bass is a bit on the lumpy side and lacks real extension, but there's enough of it there to give a decent impression under most

circumstances. Similarly, the treble can be a little bit dry and even coarse at times, but it's nothing too serious.

There's some reasonable detail in evidence, tonality (bass apart) is certainly plausible and even imaging – often the quickest pass/fail

test of a cable – is quite good, making at least a brave stab at depth portrayal.

CONCLUSION

One might expect to find similar performance in a 'conventional' cable at a lower price, but as a special-purpose design this seems to justify the (small) premium. Most alternatives are a good deal dearer, and I think Recommendation is not out of order. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £1.99/m

▢ Special-purpose cable for laying under carpets etc. Fair sound across the board.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Vivanco UK Ltd, Maxted Court, Maxted Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7BY

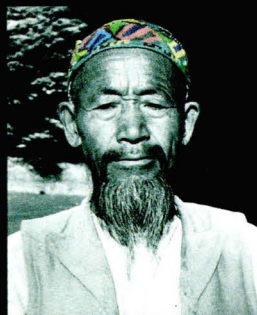
☎ (01442) 403020

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	Flat spaced pair
■ Conductor	High purity solid copper
■ Dielectric	PVC

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SONICLINK AST75

Another of SonicLink's 'AeroSpace Technology' cables, this one isn't quite the cheapest but still offers unusual materials at the price.

Designer Graham Nalty has strong ideas about the suitability of various materials for audio applications, and has chosen here to employ tin-plated copper rather than the more common plain or silver-plated variety, insulated with silicone rubber.

That's the 'aerospace' bit (silicone is stable to very high temperatures and withstands all kinds of harsh conditions well), but in audio terms the low dielectric loss factor of this insulation is probably more to the point.

The conductors are stranded and the softness of the insulation makes this cable easy to bend and lay, but because the conductors are apparently laid parallel and not twisted together, it bends in one plane more readily than in the other.

Theoretically, this construction might make for slightly worse interference pick-up too, although in practice it probably doesn't amount to much.

SOUND QUALITY

A distinctly bassy cable this one –



"It can make for quite an exciting sound, particularly when everything comes together in a big climax."

perhaps not ultimately accurate, but likely to be a good foil to the bass restrictions of many small speakers.

The word 'fruity' came to mind more than once when auditioning this cable, especially with naturally rich sounds such as bowed double bass and lower organ notes. It seemed to be less happy with the plucked double bass test, however, slightly losing the precision of pitch

which some of the dearer cables maintained.

Indeed, this cable seems full of contradictions throughout the audio range, and I don't think one could legitimately describe it as neutral. It can make for quite an exciting sound, particularly when everything comes together in a big climax, and the sound seems louder than with most other cables – that's usually a

sign of distortion of some kind, and indeed detail does suffer at the same time, but it's a compromise some listeners will choose to make. Treble is on the whole cleanly extended, imaging is fair to good, and tone on voices particularly is quite natural.

CONCLUSION

Although it's a bit of an oddity, this cable deserves Recommendation: suck it and see!

RB

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £2.95/m

Unusual materials and rather unusual performance too, strong on excitement and with plenty of bass.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Sonic Link, Derwent Business Centre, Clark Street, Derby, DE1 2BU

(01332) 674929

SPECIFICATIONS

Topology	Figure-8
Conductor	Tin-plated copper
Dielectric	Silicone rubber

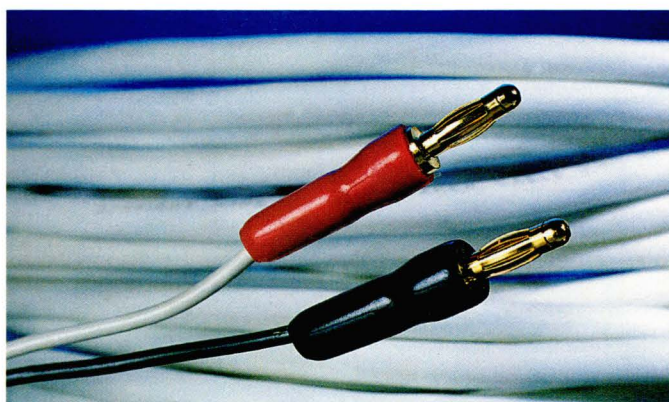
STRAIGHT WIRE Duo

Another one that could pass for mains cable in most lights, and this time the resemblance goes a bit further than just the jacket. The insulation is PVC, although Straight Wire uses a 'Military Specification' version of it – whatever that implies. The copper within, however, is oxygen-free and the cores are twisted tightly together for best interference rejection. The cable is a bit springy, but easy enough to handle. Straight Wire is one of a number of manufacturers to label its cable for direction – a contentious issue, but one that at worst can't do any harm.

SOUND QUALITY

This seems to be a cable with a preference for loud and lively music. It has a useful knack of remaining consistent in character right to the peak of a musical phrase, and even if that character is neither definitively detailed nor utterly neutral tonally, the consistency in itself is welcome because it avoids distracting the listener from the heart of the matter.

In fact, tonal balance is quite good for a budget cable: the main weakness is in the bass, which sounds



"The consistency in itself is welcome because it avoids distracting the listener from the heart of the matter."

oddly cavernous and hollow while lacking some true depth. There's a degree of undue prominence at times in the upper midrange which can make female voices sound a little shrill, but otherwise the frequencies are well balanced.

Detail is a little veiled, again most notably in the bass, which is not always so easy to follow.

Differentiation between instruments becomes easier the higher they are pitched, and the same is true of choral voices, with male choir a little mushy. Imaging is mostly good, with very fair depth too.

CONCLUSION

Once again, a performance that's OK as far as it goes, but doesn't

seem to offer any remarkable new insights – even taking the modest price into consideration. In fact, it's partly only a reflection of the generally good standard among this review group (in itself, representative of the market as a whole at present) that this cable attracts no greater plaudits. It remains true, though, that the best 'super-budget' cables can rival this level of performance.

RB

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £3.00/m

Not so subtle and lacking some detail, but sound is consistent with level and musical style.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

CSE, Unit 9, Centre Park Holdings, The Airfield, Tockwith, York, YO5 8QF

(01423) 359054

SPECIFICATIONS

Topology	Twisted pair
Conductor	Oxygen-free copper
Dielectric	'Mil-spec' PVC

AUDIOQUEST Slate

The look might be new for Audioquest, but this cable in fact bears a strong family resemblance, internally, to previous models. It uses Audioquest's proprietary 'Hyperlitz' construction, in which separately insulated solid-core conductors of different diameters are wound together in a long, hollow centred helix.

The mix of conductor sizes has its own name, 'Spread Spectrum', which Audioquest uses here to refer to the way different frequencies prefer to travel down different conductor sizes, due to the much-discussed 'skin effect'. In fact the argument is absolutely correct, as I verified experimentally in preparing this review, but that still doesn't explain its ultimate relevance to cable audibility.

Conveniently, this cable can be used for bi-wiring by splitting the eight separate conductors between bass and treble – although the cable is normally supplied pre-terminated in either single or bi-wire form. Like many other solid-core cables it's a bit stiff but it seems slightly easier to manage than previous AQ offerings.

SOUND QUALITY

Not at all bad, this one. It offers a



"Across a wide range of music it is gratifyingly easy to hear what is going on and to follow all the lines."

nically rounded performance overall, with secure bass, natural-toned midrange and open, extended treble. Such limitations as it has are minor: when there is a need for really deep bass (subtle bass drum, low piano and the like) it falls just slightly short of the best. It also has a touch of dryness across the spectrum, which on occasion affects

voices, percussion and other transient-rich sounds. Imaging is wide and precise laterally, but lacks the last word in depth, with the back row of an orchestra being brought slightly forward.

However, the extent of all these drawbacks is such that they never really intrude in extended listening, and across a wide range of music it

is gratifyingly easy to hear what is going on and to follow all the lines. Be it lively or laid back, no musical style fazes Slate.

CONCLUSION

Capacitance of this cable is on the high side of average, but will not upset any save the fussiest of amps. Widely compatible otherwise and one of the best from the brand I've heard to date, it certainly deserves Recommendation. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £15.00/m

Capable across the board, with just the smallest degree of dryness, but very listenable.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

Goldring Products Ltd, 8 Greyfriars Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP32 7DX

(01284) 701101

SPECIFICATIONS

Topology	'Hyperlitz'
Conductor	Long grain copper
Dielectric	PVC

CHORD COMPANY Rumour II

On the face of it, the price of this cable seems quite high – at first glance you might think you're handling a piece of 3A mains flex. But the money has gone into materials – in fact, the conductors are of silver-plated copper insulated in PTFE and sheathed overall in a fairly soft jacket.

For all that, it's clear from the size of the conductors that there's not all that much copper in there and indeed, resistance is on the high side. As with most measured cable parameters, that's of slightly unpredictable importance in practice, but very long runs (10m or over) might result in small but audible tonal balance changes.

At least the modest size makes this cable easy to handle, and with a little encouragement it will lie flat. Apart from the resistance, its electrical characteristics are very middle-of-the-road, and it will not upset amps other than those specifically requiring very-high-inductance cables.

SOUND QUALITY

Rumour offered a strange mix of strengths and weaknesses. It seems to like voices, and on one of my



"At first glance you might think you're handling a piece of 3A mains flex. But the money has gone into materials."

standard operatic excerpts it gave particularly good reproduction of male chorus. Solo voices seemed a little more forward than usual but had good body and tone. In the lower reaches, however, its bass was extended but subjectively not very consistent, seeming to favour certain notes, and was also at times rather indistinct. This had a predictably

weakening effect on energetically rhythmic music and rock fared less well than string quartets, for instance.

At the other end of the spectrum, naturally bright sounds like trumpet and cymbals were rather lacklustre, without sounding actually dull, and there was some lack of ambience on well-recorded acoustic material.

Imaging was good laterally but less good front-to-back, with a tendency for everything – front and rear sounds – to seem rather too forward. For all that, long-term listening is pleasant enough and the sound never irritates.

CONCLUSION

In the end it's hard to find an area where this cable really shines and the price seems a little high for the standard of performance. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £10.00/m

Performance is listenable enough but fails to excel in any area.

TEN YEAR GUARANTEE

The Chord Company, 30a Sarum Business Park, Portway, Salisbury, Wilts, SP4 6EA

(01722) 331674

SPECIFICATIONS

Topology	Figure-8
Conductor	Silver-plated copper
Dielectric	PTFE

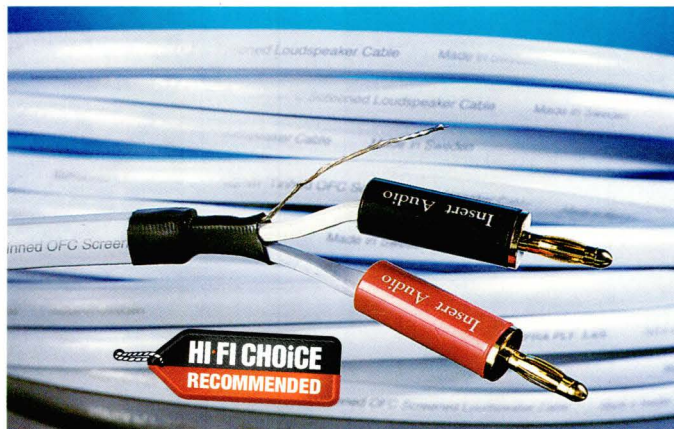
SUPRA PLY 3.4/S

Supra Ply has been around for a little while, but this is a new version, the /S designation referring to the addition of a braided screen over the basic Ply 3.4 construction. Supra's catalogue refers to the requirement for low inductance in a speaker cable and points out the practical disadvantages of constructions such as Litz (multiple conductors braided together) and tape.

Hence this compromise solution consisting of two rectangular cross-section conductors, each made up of stranded, tin-plated copper and insulated in high quality PVC, which are then laid up so as to give a roughly square overall cross-section, with higher capacitance and lower inductance than conventional figure-8 cable.

The addition of the screen is intended to reduce pick-up of electromagnetic interference, the idea being to connect the screen to the amplifier chassis. However, I have doubts about whether the thin tail that Supra provides is the ideal way to do this, especially when it will usually have to be extended to reach any suitable earthing point.

In addition, connecting the screen substantially increases the cable's



"It's nearly impossible to be sure what sonic effect – if any – is due to screening and what to the capacitance."

capacitance and so it's nearly impossible to be sure what sonic effect – if any – is due to screening and what to the capacitance.

SOUND QUALITY

Having already tested basic Ply 3.4 (HFC 183) I spent most of the time with the screen connected. It does make a difference, but a small one,

and I find my comments largely mirror those for the original cable.

Principally, the screen gives a small increase in perceived detail, but it doesn't alter the basic character of the cable, which is rich in the bass and generally neutral. There's just a little roughness on high treble sounds, but it has a pleasing ability to hold everything neatly together

right up to climaxes. Voices are reasonably clear and easy to follow, and imaging is good. As with many cables, bass detail suffers somewhat in complex music, but the effect is quite slight.

CONCLUSION

The screen may be something of a red herring, but the sound of this cable is good in all areas and it deserves Recommendation. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £7.95/m

ⓘ A touch of treble roughness and a very slight lack of bass detail in busy music are the only real flaws in this otherwise fine cable.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

✉ Glaive Ltd, Unit 7, Wren Industrial Estate, Coldred Road, Maidstone, ME15 9YT
☎ (01622) 664070

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology Close-spaced figure-8
■ Conductor Tin-plated copper
■ Dielectric 'Ion-free PVC'

TCI Python

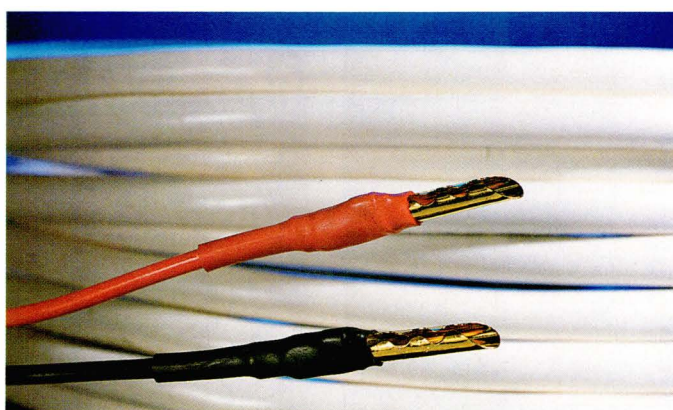
Like the Viper interconnect (HFC 200) from the same company, Python is a pretty basic construction for which no outrageous claims are made. It employs good quality materials – silver-plated copper conductors in PTFE dielectric – and twists the conductors together under an overall jacket of what appears to be PVC. Fairly typical stuff, with ditto electrical characteristics which won't upset amplifiers.

The review sample came with unusually long 'tails' brought out of the jacket for easy connection: as a tip for tweekers, I'd suggest twisting these together as far towards the plugs as circumstances permit, since the additional inductance caused by spacing them widely apart over even a few inches can exceed the inductance of a metre of cable. With a moderate overall diameter, this cable is rather stiff and hard to hide.

SOUND QUALITY

If it doesn't quite repeat the success of Viper, Python still makes a decent enough showing. It has no serious weaknesses, although in terms of detail it is not the best at its price.

Tonally it is balanced and well



"It is balanced and well extended, especially into the bass, which plumbs almost to the full depth available."

extended, especially into the bass, which plumbs almost to the full depth available and is marred only occasionally by a slight hollowness which however doesn't significantly spoil the overall effect. Voices sometimes sound a little dry, and in choral music it was rather hard to separate the individual lines. By some quirk, voices also seemed to emanate

from a point further forward in the image than with most other cables.

High percussion sounds lose a little of their delicacy, but on the whole the treble is quite open and extended, and it hangs together pretty well in busy passages, making for unrestricted climaxes and a good dramatic sweep. Strongly rhythmic music is fairly energetic, but

perhaps due to that bass hollowness already noted isn't quite as driving as it can be at best.

CONCLUSION

Another cable which does its stuff well enough but is, in the Victorian phrase, no better than it ought to be. With overall standards as high as they are, it's possible to do better for less. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £7.99/m

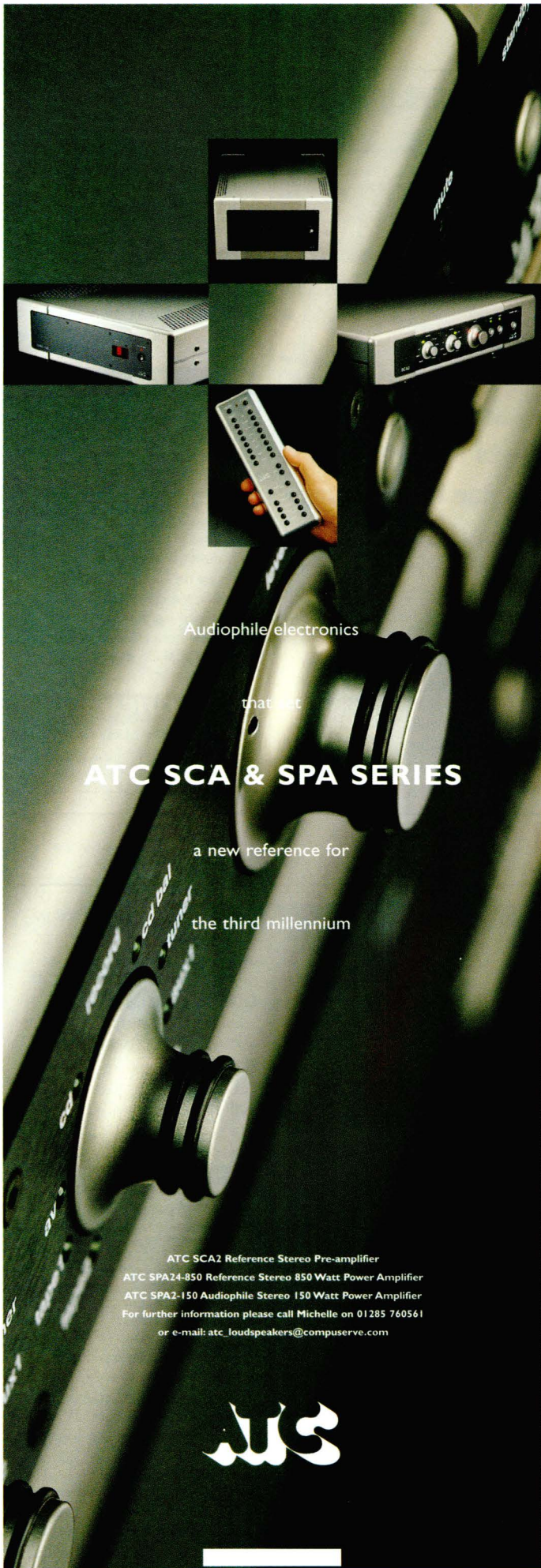
ⓘ No single major sin, but detail is not outstanding and rhythm isn't always completely solid.

THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ True Colour Industries, Unit A103, Portview Trade Centre, 310 Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 1RX
☎ (07710) 196949

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology Twisted pair
■ Conductor Silver-plated copper
■ Dielectric PTFE



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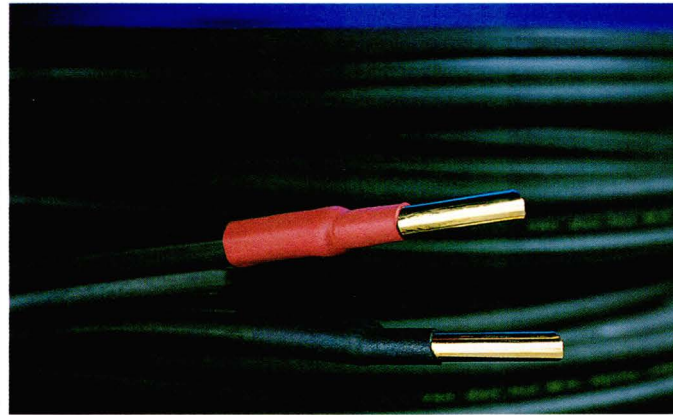
van den Hul Royal Jade

This may look like just another spaced-pair cable, but that's hardly the case. In fact vdH cables are among the most distinctive on the market technologically, due to their thoughtful designer, Mr van den Hul himself.

Like SonicLink's Graham Nalty, Mr v has his own views on what materials are suitable for cable and why, and his conclusion is that metal is not ideal.

He has pioneered the use of carbon fibre in cables, overcoming its significant drawback of high resistance either by brute force (enormous cross-section, at rather enormous expense) in his top cables, or by cunning in 'hybrid' cables such as this, where a layer of Linear Structured Carbon is laid over conventional silver-plated copper in order to at least partially alleviate copper's supposed ills.

The insulation is also a van den Hul proprietary formulation, 'Hulliflex', about which I can't tell you much more than that it doesn't contain halogen and is 'greener' than PVC. It also has considerably better electrical properties than PVC, and vdH makes great claims for its chemical stability.



"The three most important factors in determining cable sound are geometry, conductor material and insulator material."

SOUND QUALITY

Most cable designers will agree that the three most important factors in determining cable sound are geometry, conductor material and insulator material: what they won't agree on is their order of importance.

I'm going to stick my neck out and plump for geometry first, not least because with all the unique materials in this cable, it seems to me to

have the main characteristics of spaced pairs generally. Chief among those is the all too common cable dryness that affects most of the spectrum but is generally most obvious on voices and subtle, high-frequency sounds.

Bass has a distinct tendency towards woolliness, too, making it rather hard to follow, and detail in most kinds of music is seldom better

than fair, with the sound somewhat squashed together spatially. Tonality is at least pretty neutral, and dynamics are on the whole unconstrained – although the dryness can add some artificial 'loudness' in very dense music.

CONCLUSION

A lot of innovation has gone into this cable and I feel rotten about disliking it – but try van den Hul's interconnects, which seem to be far more successful! **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £10.99/m

📖 Lots of technology, but sound suffers from dryness and woolly bass.

■ LIFETIME GUARANTEE

✉ van den Hul UK, Unit 12, Imex House, 6 Wadsworth Road, Perivale Middx UB6 7JJ
☎ (020) 8997 4280

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	Spaced pair
■ Conductor	SPOFC/carbon
■ Dielectric	'Hulliflex'

ELECTROFLUIDICS Monolith 2020

Any resemblance between this cable and models from Goertz (see *HFC* 168, for example) is more than skin deep, although there are in fact a few minor detail differences. Basically, two flat copper foils are laid on top of each other with only a thin layer of insulation between, the result being a cable of exceptionally high capacitance and low inductance.

In radio frequency terms, this results in a characteristic impedance roughly equal to the nominal impedance of loudspeakers (eight Ohms), but even though such considerations don't strictly apply at audio frequencies it's still possible to prove that such a mix of parameters gives the lowest frequency-dependent losses. Does this really matter, when the losses in other cables are still so small? The jury's still out.

What's certain is that the high capacitance can cause problems with some amps, notably Naim, Exposure and NVA, all of which come with warnings about cables such as this. Electrofluidics seems pretty well-informed about potential problem models, so contact the company if in doubt.



"It has beautifully extended, solid and clean bass, very natural and detailed midrange and effortless treble."

SOUND QUALITY

With all the combinations of amps and speakers I tried, this was one of the most successful cables. It has beautifully extended, solid and clean bass, very natural and detailed midrange and effortless treble. Its sound is similar to that of Townshend Isolda (also in this group), which it resembles in construction, but I felt that there was a

small but consistent preference for the bass on the part of this cable, with just a hint of constriction in the treble.

One of my invariable tests for bass stability in cables involves subtle plucked double bass under voices and a few other instruments, and Monolith gave the fattest sound here – fat, but without losing solidity or pitch certainty. On the other

hand, percussion seemed a tiny bit less clean and climaxes less detailed than with the Isolda. But this is nit-picking: no other cables in the group came close in either department.

CONCLUSION

An exceptionally capable cable that will inject real dynamics, three dimensionality and bass into any system. Recommended. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £45.00/m

📖 Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best cables available all round.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Electrofluidics, 2 Clifton Terrace, Wivenhoe, Colchester CO7 9DZ
☎ (01206) 823136

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	Flat close-spaced pair
■ Conductor	Five nines solid copper
■ Dielectric	Polyester

KIMBER 8TC

Much like the 4TC (HFC 168), this one, just with twice the number of conductors. Obviously that's going to lower resistance, but it also lowers inductance and raises capacitance, making snap judgements about the importance of resistance *per se* very dodgy (nor will its performance be quite the same as that of two bits of 4TC in parallel).

It's normally supplied in pre-terminated lengths, but adventurous coves could have no end of fun rigging the changes with the various bi-wiring options offered by the eight conductors per 'leg'. Like Audioquest, Kimber uses a mixture of wire gauges, but here the conductors are stranded and it's the individual strands that vary. The weaving technique used makes for a cable that handles well, and this is altogether a very practical design.

SOUND QUALITY

Having waxed lyrical about the virtues of Kimber's less costly cables in the past, I'm not going to buck the trend with this one. Having a couple of lengths of 4TC on hand I couldn't resist the comparison and indeed this one does offer more of pretty



"Indeed this one does offer more of pretty much everything, while retaining the (Kimber) family sound."

much everything, while retaining the family sound. In fact it's quite hard to find anything critical to say about it.

Having heard the ultimate in bass that can be extracted via the Electrofluidics and Townshend cables, I found Kimber's just slightly lacking, but the difference is slight and hardly more than a question of

taste in most instances. There's certainly an excellent sense of solidity to the bass and it's very easy to follow; nor does it waver in the presence of busy midrange and treble. Across the band, detail and neutrality are first-class and treble is very well extended and open.

Imaging is good, too, with some

of the best depiction of depth I've heard, and instrumental placing is well defined. The sound remains clean up to the highest levels and is also very dynamic when it needs to be, making for exciting rock and dance music.

CONCLUSION

A very capable cable by any reckoning, practical and compatible with most amps. Expensive (price is for a 5m pair), admittedly, but I think not too much so for a Best Buy. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£348 (5m)

Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

Russ Andrews Turntable Accessories Ltd, Windermere Road, Staveley, Cumbria, WA8 9PL
☎ (01539) 823247

SPECIFICATIONS

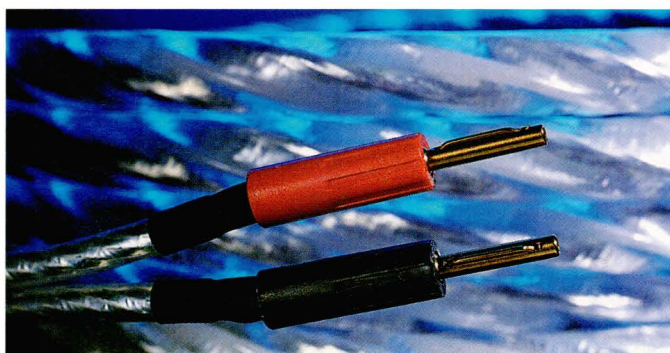
■ Topology	Braided
■ Conductor	High purity copper
■ Dielectric	PTFE

QED Genesis Silver Spiral

All credit to QED for managing to keep the ideas coming after nearly a quarter century of specialist cable making. This cable takes its name from the company's ambitiously-titled *Genesis Report*, a 20-page document (available from the QED Website) which runs through cable theory and hypothesis with commendably few of the usual errors and a good deal of common sense.

QED has also taken the trouble actually to measure the effects of some parameters more often the subject of vague hand-waving, including 'skin effect' (which, as I've suggested before in these pages, is of very limited practical relevance in most audio cables) and cable stranding.

That said, the final recommendations of the report are none too surprising, and basically suggest that a cable should have low resistance, low inductance and not so much capacitance as to upset amplifiers. One might perhaps wish that the company had found a more user-friendly way of implementing them than in this particular cable, which is unusually unwieldy.



"Bass is extended and clean, maintaining good weight when underpinning busy midrange and treble sounds."

SOUND QUALITY

The sound is certainly on the good side of average. In the main listening sequence, this cable directly followed the similarly priced Kimber offering, and I find that I made a couple of references to the relative lack of naturalness in the sound from the QED.

That's hardly damning, though, and generally everything is pretty much in place: bass is extended and

clean, maintaining good weight when underpinning busy midrange and treble sounds, while higher up there's consistently plausible tone on offer, just slightly compromised by a little dryness which increases with sound volume and complexity, making climaxes a tiny bit rough on occasion. Imaging is good in all directions, perhaps lacking the last word in depth precision, and detail is generally nicely judged too,

present without imposing itself over the music's tonal qualities.

CONCLUSION

In line with QED's thinking, resistance is low, inductance a little below average and capacitance still low enough to ensure wide compatibility. But this is an expensive cable and is up against stiff competition: it just misses the mark. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£30.00/m

Commendable bass, with a little dryness and mildly compromised imaging: good, but not the best at its price.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

QED Audio Products, Ridgeway House, Ridgeway Close, Lightwater, Surrey GU18 5XU
☎ (01276) 451166

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	Twisted pair
■ Conductor	Silver plated OFC
■ Dielectric	Low-density polythene

TARA RSC Prime 500

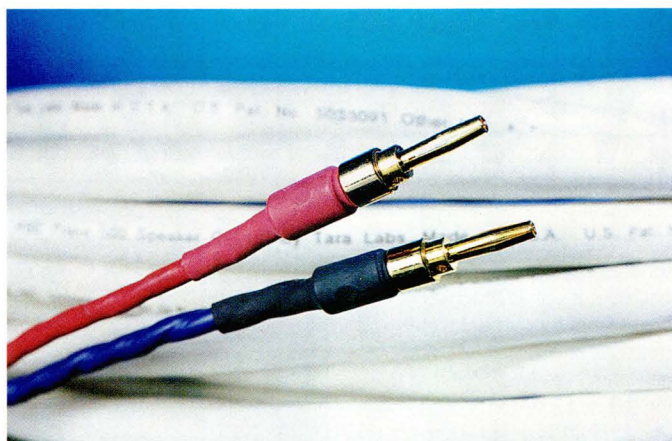
RSC stands for Rectangular Solid-Core, a self-explanatory Tara trademark construction which is claimed to give lower inductance and other frequency-dependent losses than round conductors.

Tara goes to great lengths in its technical literature (available on the company's Website) to explain how this comes about, and although the gist seems to make sense there's a bit of a leap in extending the results obtained with Tara's test jig to a cable such as this, in which the rectangular conductors are laid up into what appears essentially to be a conventional twisted pair. It certainly behaves like one electrically, with typical inductance and capacitance values and resistance that's surprisingly high given the cable's large overall diameter.

Insulation is apparently something that Tara calls 'Aero-PE™': it seems to have remarkably high dielectric loss for conventional polythene, but the company is very cagey about exactly what's in it.

SOUND QUALITY

A tuneful cable, this, with less inclination towards the driving rhythms of rock and rather more to dinner



"A tuneful cable this, with less inclination towards the driving rhythms of rock and rather more to dinner jazz."

jazz and late romantic symphonies. As such it's clearly going to be something of a matter of taste, but there are certainly areas where it puts in a good showing by any standards. It's particularly good with male vocals, which are always well rounded and lifelike, lacking nothing in expressiveness. It also does well on the plucked double bass test, where the

pitch is unusually easy to discern and the full-bodied tone on the instrument is welcome.

At times, though, bass becomes a bit much in volume, mostly when there's a lot of it in the music: it crosses the line between naturally full and overblown, and loses something in detail in the process. Detail further up the band is mostly good,

although perhaps not quite equal to the best, and in very busy passages the sound can become a little rough. Imaging is fair, with rather limited depth and a tendency at times to dump everything in the listener's lap.

CONCLUSION

A mixed blessing, but I can see it appealing strongly to some. In a word, mellifluous: if that's your main priority, it may suit. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £360 (5m)

More suited to melodious music than anything with bite and drive, with only moderate detail. Price is for a 5m pair.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

Sound Image UK Ltd, 52 Milton Road, London, SW14 8JR

(020) 8255 6868

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	Twisted pair
■ Conductor	Eight nines' Rectangular Solid Core
■ Dielectric	'Aero PE'

TOWNSHEND Isolda

Townshend's original Isolda was made up of six coaxial cables twisted together, but had the same design goal – to achieve a nominal characteristic impedance roughly equal to the eight Ohms of typical speakers. In audio terms, that means very high capacitance and very low inductance.

Max Townshend has produced measurements showing how this cable gives minimum loss into eight Ohm loads with pulse waveforms, but his explanation in terms of reflections within the cable (as certainly occurs at RF) is only one way of looking at it: calculations involving more conventional AF analysis come to the same conclusion.

The complication is that not all amplifiers can happily drive such a high cable capacitance, so Townshend has added a small inductor in series with the cable at the amplifier end, enhancing stability but, of course, losing most of the theoretical advantage of low inductance. This makes comparisons with other cables (including the Electrofluidics, particularly) the more intriguing. Because the cable consists of two solid copper tapes it



"Everything seems beautifully in place and there's that intangible 'rightness' to the sound that is very satisfying to listen to."

should be handled with care, but it seems reasonably tough.

SOUND QUALITY

That series inductor doesn't seem to do much (subjectively) because the sound is pretty close to Electrofluidics' Monolith, which doesn't feature it. If anything, Isolda has the edge in bass definition, being one of the very best cables I've yet heard in that department.

Nor is there anything wanting at higher frequencies, with detail, imaging and treble extension all absolutely first-rate.

Everything seems beautifully in place and there's that intangible 'rightness' to the sound that is very satisfying to listen to, in both the short and the long term. Nothing is taken away (that I can hear, in comparisons with other cables however short) and nothing is added either –

no brightness or the sort of 'artificial detail' that can be a result of dryness and attenuated bass.

CONCLUSION

This cable, which seems at present to be as good as it gets. And its inductor makes it compatible with the twitchiest of amps, it's a little on the dear side for a Best Buy: Recommended. **RB**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £50/m

TERMINATION £100

Superb sound all round, and amplifier compatibility enhanced by included stabilising inductor.

THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

Townshend Audio, 7 Bridge Road, Hampton Court, Surrey, KT8 9EU

(020) 8979 2155

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Topology	Flat close-spaced pair
■ Conductor	Solid high purity copper
■ Dielectric	Polyester

CONCLUSIONS

SPEAKER CABLES

As I said in the introduction, a wide spread of cable types and prices, if not quite such a wide spread of abilities: despite a few slightly sniffy comments along the way, I actually felt that the standard of this group was quite high seen in the light of all the cables I've tested over the years. At any rate, none of the cables seemed really disappointing and most of those that failed to win any formal recommendation did so more on the strength

This can be because minor tonal aberrations of each cancel each other out as much as because of fundamental electrical matches or mismatches, and although I've always felt that trying to build a system around balanced faults is deeply suspect, at a certain level it's almost unavoidable (unless you're Bill Gates or the Sultan of Brunei).

In a way, the weakest group here is the cheapest – of three recommendations, one is unique

“Trying to build a system around balanced faults is deeply suspect, but at a certain level it's almost unavoidable.”

of their competitors than because of any great faults of their own.

Of course, many of the ones I liked least will still find a place in someone's heart for reasons either of taste or of 'synergy'. I haven't mentioned the latter much because on the whole I've found that cable sound is surprisingly consistent between different systems (just another of the observations that make scientific explanation all the harder), but there's no denying that some speaker cables suit some systems better than others.

(Prowire) and one (SonicLink) is recommended for its unusualness, which could be seen as a mixed compliment. But the fact is that for two or three quid a metre it's hard to do anything very different.

In that case, why spend the extra? It's when the price rises to the £8/m ballpark that most brands find room to manoeuvre, and even so some of those are ultimately fairly ordinary. Then again, the best cables in this review are some of the best at any price. Give one or more of them a try if you love your music!

BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDED



KIMBER 8TC
This is more practical and cheaper than both Townshend and Electrofluidics. And it's a very safe bet in practically any system.



IXOS Gamma 6003
Probably the most capable of the cheaper cables here, with a decent balance of performance. Very flexible and practical, too!



AUDIOQUEST Slate
A good example of what a midrange cable should do – everything pretty well, some things very well.



ELECTROFLUIDICS Monolith 2020
This is extremely similar to the Townshend, and while treble may be a touch less clear, dynamics, imaging and timing are first class.



SONICLINK AST75
Not the most neutral cable here, but it's worth hearing for what it does differently, especially in the context of its price.



SUPRA PLY 3.4/S
The function of the screen may be open to question, but the basic sound is pleasingly rich in the bass, without being excessive.



TOWNSEND Isolda
On balance the most revealing and capable of the bunch. Bass is just devastating, treble splendidly extended and detail exemplary.



PROWIRE Out of Sight
This cable offers very decent sound that compares favourably with 'conventional' cables at, or only just below, the same price.

SPEAKER CABLE COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	AUDIOQUEST	CABLE TALK	CHORD COMPANY	ELECTROFLUIDICS	IXOS	KIMBER	PROFIGOLD	QED
MODEL	SLATE	FLAT 2	RUMOUR 2	MONOLITH 2020	GAMMA 6003	8TC	SILVERFLEX LC8258	GENESIS SILVER SPIRAL
PRICE	£15.00/m	£5.00/m	£10.00/m	£45.00/m	£2.99/m	£348 (5m pr)	£4.00/m	£30.00/m
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	Life	Life	10 yr	1 yr	Life	Life	1 yr	2 yr
TOPOLOGY	'Hyperlitz'	Flat-spaced pair	Figure-8	Flat close-spaced pair	'Gamma Geometry'	Braided	Figure-8	Twisted pair
CONDUCTOR	Long-grain copper	6 nines copper	Silver-plated copper	5 nines copper	Stranded copper	High purity copper	Silver-plated OFC	Silver-plated OFC
DIELECTRIC	PVC	'Cimiflex'	PTFE	Polyester	PVC	PTFE	PVC	Low-density polythene

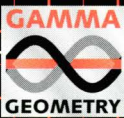
SPEAKER CABLE COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	SONICLINK	STRAIGHT WIRE	SUPRA	TARA LABS	TCI	TOWNSHEND	VAN DEN HUL	PROWIRE
MODEL	AST75	DUO	PLY 3.4/S	RSC PRIME 500	PYTHON	ISOLDA	ROYAL JADE	OUT OF SIGHT
PRICE	£2.95/m	£3.00/m	£7.95/m	£360.00 (5m pr)	£7.99/m	£50.00/m	£10.99/m	£1.99/m
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	2 yr	2 yr	Life	Life	3 yr	3 yr	Life	1 yr
TOPOLOGY	Figure-8	Twisted pair	Close-spaced figure-8	Twisted pair	Twisted pair	Flat close-spaced pair	Spaced pair	Flat spaced pair
CONDUCTOR	Tin-plated copper	Oxygen-free copper	Tin-plated copper	8 nines RSC	Silver-plated copper	High purity copper	Silver-plated OFC	High purity copper
DIELECTRIC	Silicone rubber	'Mil-spec PVC'	'lon-free PVC'	'Aero PE'	PTFE	Polyester	'Hulliflex'	PVC

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SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

A glittering prize: Monitor Audio's Bronze series of loudspeakers.



We Brits are well known for making speakers; real wood cabinets and a detailed musical performance are part of the traditional experience for which our transducers are famed. When one thinks of this heritage several companies spring to mind, some of them still in business, others sadly confined to the pages of hi-fi history.

Monitor Audio is one name that falls firmly into the first camp. Founded in 1972, the brand's painstaking approach to cabinet manufacturing led to a reputation for aesthetic beauty unrivalled in the world of speakers. A tremendous variety of woods were selected and imported to create sumptuous enclosures, attractive enough to look at home in even the most lavish living room.

In recent times, the company has been through considerable

change. Two years ago David Collins took the helm as Managing Director and began a restructuring process aimed at making Monitor Audio a more modern concern.

New loudspeakers arrived and new ranges were unveiled, but the company was determined to retain the core values for which it was renowned – beautiful wood cabinets and innovative metal drive units were essential to the brand's future as well as its past.

OPEN TO EVERYONE

In the year 2000 this philosophy remains, as evidenced by the wood-finished Silver Series and luxurious, long-standing Studio Series. However, the company now feels the time is right to add some speakers at an even more affordable price. The new Bronze Series breaks with convention by employing vinyl-wrapped cabinets

instead of the real wood variety, making savings that can be passed on to the consumer, although the company is keen to stress that aesthetic considerations are still a vital part of the Monitor Audio mix.

The line-up starts at £130 for the Bronze One, a two-way standmounter sporting a 14cm 'Metal Matrix Polymer' mid/bass drive unit and a 25mm 'gold' dome tweeter. The £180 Bronze Two is a larger standmounter with a 16.5cm main drive unit, and the £270 Bronze Three extends the design into floorstanding form. A matching centre speaker is also available at £150, in keeping with the company's philosophy that its speakers should be as applicable to multi-channel set-ups as they are to two-channel use.

And that's not all. As an adjunct to the Bronze Series, Monitor Audio has launched a subwoofer/

satellite combo called the Baby System. This consists of the Baby Satellite speaker, priced at £150 a pair, the Baby Centre at £100 and the matching ASW100 active subwoofer at £300. You can combine whichever configuration of speakers best suits your purpose – two-channel, five-channel or even seven-channel, with the provision of up to five sub-woofers. Here, flexibility is the key.

A GROWING CONCERN

The Monitor Audio of today is a company with expansion on its mind. Its complement of staff has grown from 27 to 63 over the past two years, and it now exports to more than 36 countries as far afield as Australia and Argentina. In July a new factory will be opened in Rayleigh, Essex; in September the company will exhibit at London's two premier hi-fi and technology events: Live 2000 and The Hi-Fi Show. A full line-up is promised for the perusal of visitors – with, perhaps, a surprise or two along the way.

So you see, the Monitor Audio of 2000 is a company with a rich history shaping up for a positive future. Traditional values remain – it is one of the few remaining British loudspeaker brands still manufacturing all its cabinets and drive units in-house.

Yet the company hopes that the changes it has made during the past two years will ensure it is better equipped to deal with the modern hi-fi market and the multiple speaker applications that consumers now demand. Watch this space.

Monitor Audio ☎ (01223) 242898
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Dealer Guide

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- Passlabs Aleph P Pre-Amp £2799
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- Cello Performance 11 Mono Amplifiers £9995
- Mark Levinson 332 200 wpc Power Amplifier £3995
- Mark Levinson ML29 Power Amplifier £1695
- Audionote P4 Monoblocks £3395
- Exposure 18 Stereo Amplifier £495
- Exposure 18 Stereo Power Amplifier NEW £720
- Luxman M2000 Power Amplifier £495
- Adcom GFA 5300 Power Amplifier £295
- Restek Challenger Integrated Amplifier £595

CD PLAYERS & TRANSPORTS

- Audio Research CDT1 CD Transport £1295
- Proceed PCD 3 CD Player £1595

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- Mark Levinson 30.6 Reference DAC
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- LFD DAC 3 £1595
- Sonic Frontiers SFD1 DAC £1195
- Vac Dac Valve Dac £895

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(£765) ex-demo £495
- Nakamichi RX 505 3 head auto reverse
cassette deck £695
- Mobile Fidelity Pines of Rome UHQ sealed Box £200
- Revox PR99 MK2 Tape Deck, trolley mounted £1495
- Sonic Frontiers Jitta Bug £295
- Vanden Hul CS122 Hybrid speaker cable
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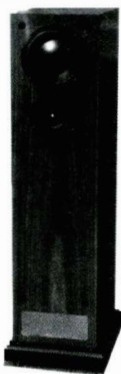
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S3TLM RIB	Metal IPL 6.5", A&R Ribbon	903x230x350	£389.25	£9.00
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- Sony ES74 £1.99
- TDK MD74 £1.35
- TDK MD80 £1.89
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- Samsung MD74 from 99p
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- Philips CDR74 £1.25
- TDK CDR-XG74 £1.45
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Classified

HOW TO USE THE BUYERS' GUIDE

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.

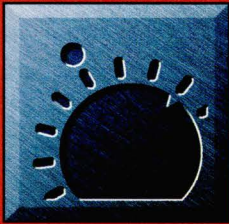
STEP 1 DISCOVER which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide, which starts on this page. The product listing is updated using manufacturers' data every other month, and aims to include every hi-fi component currently available in the UK. (But please fax us on (020) 7317 2686 with any 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 A3i	⊕	60W	200
Cambridge A500RC	⊕	50W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	⊕	30W	140
Denon PMA-350SE	⊕	50W	180
Denon PMA-55SE	⊕	50W	230
Denon PMA-100M	⊕	80W	240
Goodmans Delta 900A	⊕	100W	130
H/K HK630	⊕	40W	200
H/K HK3270	⊕	65W	250
JVC AX-A572BK	⊕	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
Pioneer A-105	⊕	30W	130
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
Sherwood AX-4050R	⊕	50W	150
Sherwood AX-7030R	⊕	95W	230
Sony TA-FE230	⊕	40W	100
Sony TA-FE330R	⊕	60W	130
Sony TA-FB730R	⊕	40W	200
Teac A-E2000	⊕	50W	180
Teac A-R600	⊕	90W	200
Technics SU-V300	⊕	25W	130
Technics SU-V500	⊕	30W	160
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	⊕	37W	200
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	495
Creek 4330	⊕	40W	279
Creek 4330R	⊕	40W	355
Creek 5250	⊕	50W	450
Cymbal CA1	⊕	40W	499
Denon PMA-735R	⊕	65W	300
Denon PMA-1500R	⊕	70W	500
Edmund Audio ES110	⊕	85W	400
EMF Audio Sequel	⊕	50W	450
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 KI Sig.	⊕	50W	400
Marantz SR5000	⊕	105W	500
Monno 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	⊕	60W	475
Shearpe 2.5	⊕	35W	499
Sony TA-FB920R	⊕	65W	300
Sony TA-FA30ES	⊕	70W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	⊕	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 MC1	⊕	30W	565
LFD Integrated 0	⊕	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	⊕	33W	600
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
Ania S2	⊕	12W	1,000
Audio Note Oto Line PP	⊕	12W	950
AVI S2000MI	⊕	100W	999
Copland CSAB	⊕	60W	899
Crede IMP702	⊕	70W	850
Crede 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
Meridian 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	799
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	5	24W	1,595
Aria Simply Four T	5	11W	1,650
ATC SJA2-150	4	150W	1,984
Audio Note Soro Line PP	5	20W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Line SE	4	12W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Phono SE	4	12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE	4	18W	1,699
Audio Valve Assistant-S 20	1	20W	1,250
BB Audio BB 30-60	6	30W	1,495
Beam-Echo SA-50	6	50W	1,950
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Copland CSA28	6	60W	1,249
Copland CTA402	6	35W	1,698
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CR Dev Athena	4	38W	1,499
CR Dev Remus V3	5	60W	1,989
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Credo LIM 703	5		1,249
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LFD Integrated 1	6	65W	1,099
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Marantz PM-17K1 Sig	6	60W	1,300
Meracur Infrare	6	60W	1,095
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Papworth MH-200	6	200W	1,200
Papworth MVH-200	6	200W	1,200
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Woodside ISA230 Disc	4	30W	1,249
YBA a Integre Line	5	50W	1,095
YBA a Integre DT Line	5	50W	1,395

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Adyton Opera	4	50W	2,595
AMP Flux System 2	5	50W	3,000
Arcam Alpha 10 DAVE	5	110W	2,500
Aria Simply 845	5	24W	3,195
Art Audio Integra	5	25W	2,400
Audio Note Meshu Line	5	9W	2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	6	26W	56,000
Audio Research CA50	5		3,399
Belcanto SET40	5	40W	4,450
Belcanto Orfeo 30S1	5	35W	4,500
Cary CAD-300SEI	4	15W	3,395
Conrad-Johnson CAV-50	5	50W	2,495
EAR V20	5	24W	2,495
Electrocompaniet EC-1	6	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm	5	18W	2,499
Gamma Rhythm Ref	4	20W	3,499
Gamma Moment	4	40W	19,999
Jadis DA30	5	30W	2,690
Jadis DA60	5	60W	4,483
Krell KAV300i	6	150W	2,495
Krell KAV300r	6		3,333
Krell KAV500i	6	250W	5,000
McIntosh MA6400E	5	100W	3,999
McIntosh MA6800E	5	150W	5,999
Meracur Onesta	4	75W	2,595
Musical Fidelity A1001	4	200W	2,500
Pioneer A-09	5	45W	4,000
Roksan Caspian DSP	4	130W	2,225
Rotel RSP-985/RPB-985	6	130W	2,295
Rowland Concentra	6	100W	5,500
Sonus Faber Musica	6		2,295
Sony TA-E9000ES	5	110W	2,300
T+A R1500R	6	135W	2,015
Tube Tech Unisis Sig. Int.	5	30W	2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	5	150W	6,900
Wavac MD811	5	15W	2,995
Wavac MD300B-ST	5	10W	5,575
Wavac MD300B-WT	5	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	6		400
Aria Simply Phono	5	Ph	500
Audio Analogue Bellini	5	Ph	495
Audio Note M Zero	5		299
AVC Pre 3	4		500
Beam-Echo PP-21	5	Ph	499

Bryston BP1	1	Ph	438
CR Dev Themis	1	Ph	349
Creek OBH-9	6		160
Creek P43/R	6		350
Creek P52	6		499
Crimson CS610C	6	Ph	450
Cyrus aEQ7	5	Ph	498
Densen DP-Drive/DP-02	6	Ph	350
DPA Enl'nement phono	5	Ph	275
EAR 834P	5	Ph	349
EAR 834L	5	Ph	449
EAR 834P/MC	5	Ph	499
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	5	Ph	495
Henley HMCS0	5		150
Henley HMC100	5		350
Hi Q Sound LCP2	5		149
LFD Mistral Linestage	5		449
LFD LSO Linestage	5		499
Lumley PP70	6		345
Lumley PP1	6		345
Magnum MP120	6		330
Magnum MP660	6		500
Magnum MP330	6		500
Monrio ADN-N	5	Ph	295
Monrio Asty L	5	Ph	500
Moth 30 Passive	4		149
Moth 30 Phono	4	Ph	249
Moth 30 Line stage	4		349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	4		120
Musical Fidelity X-LP	4	Ph	130
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	4	Ph	200
Musical Fidelity E20	7	Ph	400
NAD PP-1	6	Ph	40
NAD 114	6	Ph	270
NAD 116	6	Ph	430
Naim Prefix	6	Ph	360
Naim NAC92	6		485
Parasound P/HP-100	5	Ph	130
Parasound P/HP-850	6	Ph	400
Plinius Jarrah	6	Ph	450
QED Discsaver DS-1	6	Ph	35
Rega EOS	6	Ph	398
Rega Cursa	5	Ph	450
Roksan Artaxerxes 10	6	Ph	395
Rose RV-23	6	Ph	450
Rotel RQ970BX	6	Ph	130
Rotel RC971	6		150
Rotel RC972	6		225
Rotel RC972	6	Ph	430
Sunfire Phono	6	Ph	500
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	6	Ph	300
Technics SU-C1010	6	Ph	400
Thule Spirit PR100	5		400
Trilogy 905	5		375
Trilogy 904	5		375
Trilogy 900	5	Ph	499

£501 TO £2,000

Adyton Chorus	5		1,995
Alchemist Kraken Pre	6		549
Alchemist Forseti Pre	6		999
Alchemist Signature Pre	6		1,499
Aria Feather One	5		795
Aria Mystery Two	5		1,750
Aria Mystery One	5		1,750
Art Audio Vinyl One MM	6	Ph	916
Art Audio VPS Line	6	Ph	963
Art Audio Vinyl One MM/MC	6	Ph	1,307
Art Audio VPS Phono	5	Ph	1,460
Art Audio Conductor Phono MC	6	Ph	2,000
Audio Note M1 Line	6	Ph	550
Audio Note M1 RIAA	6	Ph	550
Audio Note M2 Line	6	Ph	999
Audio Note M2 RIAA	6	Ph	999
Audio Note Discovery	6	Ph	999
Audio Note M2RIAA	6	Ph	1,099
Audio Prism Mantissa	6	Ph	1,995
Audio Research LS8	6	Ph	1,449
Audio Research PH3	6	Ph	1,490
Audio Research LS9	6	Ph	1,949
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	1		595
Audio Synthesis Passion	1		695
Audio Synthesis Passion 8S	1		1,295
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	1		1,695
Audio Valve Eclipse	6		1,650
AVI S2000MP	6		949
AVI S2000MP+P	6	Ph	1,199
Beam-Echo SP-21	6	Ph	1,116
Bryston BP20	7	Ph	1,126
Bryston BP-25	7	Ph	1,326
Bryston BP-25P	7	Ph	1,592
Canary Audio CA-606	5		1,295
Canary Audio CA-601	4		1,595
Cary SLP-50 Mk II	5		1,185
Cary PH-301	5	Ph	1,695
Chord Phono	6	Ph	1,898
Chord CPA 1800	6	Ph	1,905
Concordant Exhilarant	6		900
Concordant Exquisite	6		1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL	5	Ph	995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	5	Ph	1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL	5	Ph	1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	5	Ph	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	5	Ph	1,990
Copland CSA303	5	Ph	1,099
Copland CTA301 MkII	4	Ph	1,249
CR Dev Carmenta	5		659
CR Dev Argento	5	Ph	699

Credo CMP004	7		1,246
Credo CPM005	7		1,876
Cyrus aCA7	7		798
Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	7	Ph	826
Densen Beat B-200	6	Ph	1,000
Densen DM-20	6	Ph	1,200
DNM 3 Start	6	Ph	1,000
DNM 3A Start	6	Ph	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre	6		795
Dynavector L200	6		995
Dynavector P100	6	Ph	1,495
Dynavector L100	6		1,995
ECA Vista S	6		760
ECA Vista HD	6		880
ECA Prisma	6	Ph	880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5	6		1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6	6		1,750
Exposure XIII	6		800
Exposure XIX	6		800
Exposure XVII	6	Ph	850
Exposure RC XXI	6		1,000
Gate PR101P	6		1,195
Golden Tube Audio SEP-2	6		990
Golden Tube Audio SEP-3	6		1,995
Graaf WFB Two	6	Ph	1,350
Graaf WFB One	6	Ph	1,750
Henley HMC200	6		600
Hi Q Sound MCB2	6	Ph	545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	6	Ph	645
Jadis DP12	6		1,590
Krell KAV250p	6		1,999
LFD MC1 Phonostage	6	Ph	949
LFD L51 Linestage	6		999
LFD MC2 Phonostage	6	Ph	1,499
LFD L52 Linestage	6		1,599
LFD LSB Linestage	6		1,999
Linn Wakonda	6		750
Linn Linto	6		850
Linn Kairn	6		1,400
Lumley LV1.5	6		895
Lumley LV1	6		1,150
Lumley PV1.5	6	Ph	1,700
Lumley PV1	6	Ph	1,700
Matisse Atom	6	Ph	1,700
McIntosh C712	6	Ph	1,000
Meracur Ingredi	6		1,999
Mendian 501	6		925
Meridian 562	6		695
Meridian 562V	6		765
Meridian 502	7		995
Meridian 502	7	Ph	1,295
Michell Delphini	6	Ph	895
Michell Orca	5	Ph	1,650
Muse Model 3	5	Ph	1,990
Musical Fidelity X-P100	5	Ph	800
Musical Fidelity F25	5	Ph	1,500
Myriad MP100	5	Ph	600
NAD S100	7		600
NAD 118	6		1,000
Naim NAC92R	5		650
Naim NAC72	5		745
Naim NAC102	5		1,000
Quad 99 Pre	6	Ph	800
Rega Hal	6	Ph	998
Roksan Artaxerxes X/DS1.5	6	Ph	1,150
Roksan ROK-L2.5	6	Ph	1,250
Rose RV-235	6	Ph	525
Rotel RC995	6	Ph	525
Shearman Phase 6 Pre	6		999
Shearman Phase 1 Pre Ref	6		1,499
Siemmel MC20	6	Ph	650
Siemmel MM20	6	Ph	650
Siemmel TU10	6	Ph	1,599
Siemmel TR20	6	Ph	1,599
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre 1P	6	Ph	899
Sonic Frontiers Phono 1	6	Ph	1,999
Sonographe SC26	6		995
Sugden Audition Pre	6		549
Sugden Masterclass Pre	6		1,995
Sumo Athena II Line	6		767
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS	6		987
Sumo Athena III	6		987
Sumo Artemis UP	6		1,595
Sunfire The Classic	6		1,630
T+A P1200R	7		965
TAG McLaren PA10	6	Ph	849
TAG McLaren PPA20	6	Ph	1,499
TAG McLaren PA20R	6	Ph	1,499
TAG McLaren DPA3R	6	Ph	1,695
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2	7		650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	7		900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4	7		900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 5	7		1,550
Thorens TTP-2000F	6	Ph	1,900
Thule Spirit PR150B	6		699
Trilogy 901	6		699
Trilogy 906	6		750
Trilogy 902	6	Ph	995
Tron Retro	6		1,595
Tube Tech Seer Line	6		1,500
Tube Tech Mac Phono	6	Ph	935
Tube Tech Prophet	6	Ph	1,150
van den Hul Pre-amp	6		1,970
Wilson Benesh Stage One	6	Ph	1,800
Woodside SC27 Line	6		995
Woodside SC26 Line	6		949
XTC PRE-1	6		1,557
YBA 3a Line	6		1,350

YBA 2a Line

OVER £2,000

Adyton Temper

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
Technics SE-A1010	100W	350

£50 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	589
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	1,899
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	12W	1,876
Creek AS25E	100W	999
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	50W	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 MF350	150W	685

Magnum MF660	125W	825
Magnum A500SE	200W	1,485
Magnum A50SE	200W	1,595
McIntosh MC7100	100W	1,999
Meracur Ciere	60W	1,095
Meridian 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	50W	1,950
Monrio Asty P	100W	950
Moth Stereo 60	22W	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	25W	549
Sugden A2 la Power	25W	649
Sumo Polaris III	164W	950
Sumo Model Five	60W	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	22W	1,895
Tube Tech Syrinx	45W	1,150
Tube Tech Unisis Sig. Pwr	30W	1,900
Woodside SA240	40W	1,199
Woodside MA100	100W	1,733
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
Aria Smart 845	24W	3,500
Aria 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	10,000	25W
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 Synthesis Desire Decade	200W	2,495
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
Adiulabor 500	250W	5,998
Beam-Echo DL7-35	30W	3,525
Belcanto SET40	40W	3,450

Belcanto Orfeo 305	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	40W	2,695
Canary Audio CA-301	22W	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	5W	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 JLI	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 PA3S	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	7,980
Jadis JA80	60W	9,580
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	8,994	
Krell FPB300	250W	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 338	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
Meracur Tentare	75W	2,245
Meracur Cantare	-W	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	200W	2,645
Papworth M200	200W	3,825
Plinius SA50/3	2,750	
Plinius SA100/3	3,450	
Plinius SA250/3	5,850	
Roksan ROK-M1.5	160W	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
Sugden Model Ten/M	240W	4,200
Sunfire Load Invariant	300W	2,280
Sunfire Signature	600W	2,600
T+A A3000	190W	2,850
TACT Millenium 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	6,400
Tron Type WE300B	8W	6,550
Tron Type PX25 Mono	8W	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 EC858	35W	21,750
Wavac HE 4304	15W	24,750
Wavac HE 833	100W	27,500
Wavac HE 805	45W	27,500
XTC POW-1	200W	2,500
YBA 2a HC Stereo</		

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Cambridge Studio Reference	40.00
Cambridge Silver Spirit 40	70.00
Cambridge Silver Spirit 60	100.00
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Cardas Audio Cardas Cross	360.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five C	530.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink Golden-5 C	600.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross	700.00
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ChordCo Cobra 2	55.00
ChordCo Siren	69.00
ChordCo Chameleon 2	90.00
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Clearaudio Sixstream	365.00
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DPA White Slink	75.00
DPA Black Slink	230.00
Ecosse Ref CA1	65.00
Ecosse Ref CS1	75.00
Ecosse Ref MA2	155.00
Ecosse Ref MS2	165.00
Ecosse Ref US1	550.00
Expressive Tech IC-1	700.00
Gamma Wow Balance	799.00
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Harmonix HS-101	265.00
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Henley HSP50	35.00
Henley HSP100	65.00
Henley HSP200	95.00
Henley HSP250	150.00
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Lieder Song	580.00
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Lieder Rijn	1,000.00
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Monster Interlink 100	11.00

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Precious Metals SS53	90.00
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Precious Metals SS103	160.00
Precious Metals SS104	190.00
Precious Metals SS200	220.00
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Precious Metals SS203	360.00
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QED Qunex 2	30.00
QED Qunex 4S	60.00
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Siltech FTM-3S	730.00
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Silver Tone Sci-Fi	95.00
SME S2LB-4	46.18
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SonicLink Silver pink	35.00
SonicLink Black	50.00
SonicLink Lilac	65.00
SonicLink Violet	85.00
SonicLink Maroon	125.00
SonicLink Blue Nickel	150.00
SonicLink Vermilion	195.00
SonicLink Red earth	300.00
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XLO Pro 102	129.00
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Kimber Illuminati DX-50	350.00
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van den Hul First	140.00
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van den Hul First Ultimate	180.00
XLO Pro 104	60.00
XLO Ultra 4	89.00
XLO Ref 2	180.00
XLO Sig 4.1	325.00
XLO Limited Ed'n	1,100.00



CABLES Digital Interconnects

KEY
 ☉ - Stranded construction.
 ● - Solid-core construction.
 Prices of interconnects are for a one metre terminated pair.

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Audioquest Optlink X	90.00
Audioquest Digital PRO	100.00
Audioquest Optlink Pro	150.00
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Audiosource Petros Blue Plus 5	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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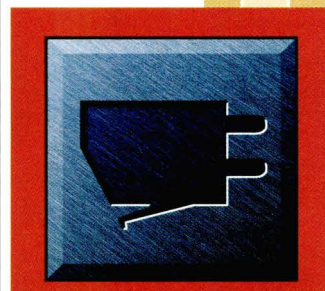
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Argento Copper Ref	65.00
Argento Silver	125.00
Argento Silver Ref	380.00
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Art Yam Church 5000	795.00
Audio Note AN-D	4.50
Audio Note AN-B	16.50
Audio Note AN-L	29.50
Audio Note AN-SP	150.00
Audio 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
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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
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Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five SC	59.00
Cardas Audio Cross SC	99.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five SC	109.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink Golden5 SC	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	789.00
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Ecosse Ref CS2.3	3.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.15	5.75
Ecosse Ref MS2.2	15.00
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Ecosse Ref MS2.15	30.00
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Gale XL105	1.00
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Lieder Straat	463.00
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Linn K400	10.00
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Monster XP Navajo	2.40
Monster Superflat Mini	2.75
Monster XP HP	3.70
Monster Original	4.40
Monster New Monster	5.50
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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
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Precious Metals SL32	7.50

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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
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SonicLink Black Rhodium 4	1,000.00
Straight Wire Rhythm	6.00
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Tara RSC Prime 1000	73.00
Tara RSC Ref Gen2	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
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van den Hul D352 HB	21.00
van den Hul Teatrack HB	25.99
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van den Hul Magnum HB	48.00
van den Hul The Wind HB	48.00
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

XLO CDA ER-12 THX	23.24
XLO Pro 1200	33.20
XLO Ultra 6	41.50
XLO Ultra 12	83.00
XLO Ref 2	216.00
XLO Sig 5.1	398.00
XLO Limited Ed'n	1,660.00



CARTRIDGES

KEY
MM - Moving-magnet type.
MC - Moving-coil type.

UP TO £100

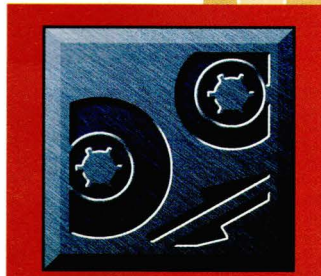
Audio Note IO1	MM	99
Audio Technica AT-91	MM	15
Audio Technica AT-95E	MM	20
Audio Technica AT-110E	MM	28
Audio Technica AT450E	MM	70
Audio Technica AT440ML	MM	70
Benz-Micro MC20EII	MC	70
Denon DL110	MC	70
Denon DL160	MC	70
Denon DL103	MC	100
Goldring Elan	MM	19
Goldring Elektra	MM	29
Goldring 1006	MM	59
Goldring 1012GX	MM	79
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Grado ZF3E+1	MM	48
Grado Prestige Black	MM	49
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Grado Prestige Blue	MM	69
Grado ZF1+	MM	83
Grado Prestige Red	MM	99
N'hain Tracer I	MM	98
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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	75
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	MC	70
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 TLZ-4-S	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	30
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 IO1LD	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9ML	MC	330
Audio Technica AT-33PTG	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 Alpha 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 DL504	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-Katora	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 8MZ	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'hain Tracer II	MM	310
N'hain Tracer III	MM	410
N'hain Tracer IV	MM	660
Ortofon MC15 Super II	MC	140
Ortofon 540	MM	140
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	MC	150
Ortofon MC25E	MC	200
Ortofon MC25FL	MC	250
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	MC	300
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	MC	450
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	MC	550
Ortofon MC2000II	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	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
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
Reson Rca	MM	250
Reson Aciore	MC	299
Reson Etile	MC	455
Reson Lexe	MC	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	MM	150
Roksan Shiraz	MC	990
Shure V15XMR	MC	295
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	120
Sumiko Blue Point Special	MC	250
Transfiguration Esprit	MC	950
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	950
Transfiguration Temper Supreme	MC	2,250
van den Hul DDT-II	MC	600
van den Hul MC-10	MC	750
van den Hul MC-One	MC	900
van den Hul MC-ONE Super	MC	1,050
van den Hul MC-Two	MC	1,200
van den Hul The Frog Low o/p	MC	1,500
van den Hul The Frog HO	MC	1,700
van den Hul Grasshopper IISLN	MC	2,000
van den Hul Grasshopper IIISLA	MC	2,000

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.

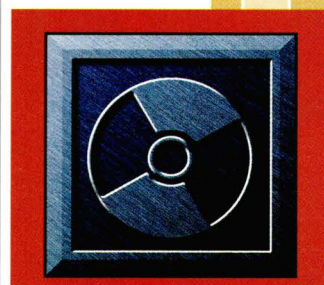
UP TO £200

Ariston WX-510		70
Denon DRM-550		160
Denon DRW-585		160
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-A26		200
Yamaha KX-393		130
Yamaha KX-W321		170
Yamaha KX-493		180

OVER £200

Denon DRM-650S		230
Denon DRM-740		270
Denon DRS-810		310
H/K TD420		250
JVC TD-V662BK		270
JVC TD-W718BK		300
NAD 613		230
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		470
Onkyo K 611		360
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		230

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.
 □□10 - 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	□□10	150
Cambridge CD4SE	□□10	200
Denon DCD-435		150
Denon DCD-655		180
Denon DCD-735		230
Eclipse CD101a		40
H/K HD720	□□10	200
H/K FL8350	□□10	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	□□10	250
Marantz CD-38		130
Marantz CC-38		200
Marantz CD-48	□□10	200
Marantz CD-57	□□10	230
Marantz CD-67II	□□10	250
NAD 522		170
NAD 510		200
NAD 524	□□10	250
NAD 523		250
NAD 512	□□10	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		120
Sherwood CD-4030R		180
Sherwood CDC680	□□10	180
Sherwood CDC6050R	□□10	180
Sony CDP-XE220		90
Sony CDP-XE330		100
Sony CDP-M305		120
Sony CDP-XE530		130
Sony CDP-CE335		160
Sony CDP-XB720E	□□10	200
Sony CDP-CX57		250
Synergy CDJ1210		120
Teac CDP-1120		100
Teac CD-P1820		130
Teac CD-P1440		200
Teac CD-P3450SE		200
Teac PD-D2400		200
Teac PD-H500i	□□10	240
Technics SL-PC390A	□□10	90
Technics SL-PC490A	□□10	100
Technics SL-PC590A	□□10	120
Technics SL-PD6	□□10	140
Technics SL-PD8	□□10	160
Technics SL-PS670D	□□10	200
Technics SL-PS770D	□□10	250
Yamaha CDX-393 II	□□10	130

Yamaha CDC-575	□□10	180
Yamaha CDX-493		180
Yamaha CDC-675	□□10	230

£251 TO £500

Arcam Alpha MCD	⇒	□□10	330
Arcam Alpha 7 SE		□□10	350
Arcam Alpha 8		□□10	450
Arcam Alpha 8SE		□□10	500
Cambridge CD6		□□10	300
Cyrus dAD1.5		□□10	399
Denon DCD-835		□□10	280
Denon DCM-260		300	
Denon DCD-1550AR	⇒	□□10	350
H/K HD740		□□10	300
H/K FL8550	⇒	□□10	300
H/K HD760		□□10	500
JVC XL-Z674BK		□□10	300
Kenwood DP-R7080	⇒	□□10	300
Kenwood DP-9090		□□10	300
Kenwood DP-5090		□□10	300
Kenwood DP-7090		□□10	400
Marantz CD-67SE MKII		□□10	300
Marantz CD6000 OSE		□□10	300
Marantz CC-870	⇒	□□10	400
Marantz CD-631IKI		□□10	400
Musical Fidelity E60		□□10	300
Musical Fidelity A2 CD		□□10	500
Musical Fidelity E624		□□10	500
Myryad T-10		□□10	400
NAD 513		290	
NAD C540	⇒	□□10	328
NAD 515	⇒	□□10	350
NAD 514	⇒	□□10	370
NAD 517		400	
Nakamichi MB10	⇒	□□10	399
Onkyo DX 7210		□□10	260
Onkyo C721		□□10	290
Onkyo DXC 320	⇒	□□10	380
Onkyo DX 7510		□□10	400
Onkyo CM 716	⇒	□□10	450
Parasound C/DP-1000		□□10	499
Pioneer PD-S707		□□10	300
Pioneer PD-F805	⇒	□□10	300
Pioneer PD-S705		□□10	300
Pioneer PD-F906	⇒	□□10	350
Pioneer PD-S904		□□10	400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision		□□10	460
Roksan Kandy		□□10	475
Rotel RCD-951		□□10	300
Rotel RCD-971		□□10	350
Sony CDP-XB930E		□□10	300
Sony CDP-CX350	⇒	□□10	350
Sony CDP-XA20ES		□□10	450
Sony CDP-X3000ES		□□10	500
Sony CDP-CX260	⇒	□□10	500
Synergy CDJ2010	⇒	□□10	300
Technics SL-MC7	⇒	□□10	500
Yamaha CDX-993	⇒	□□10	400

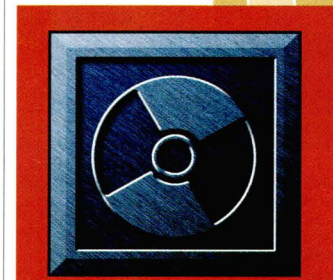
£501 TO £1,000

Acurus ACD11	□□10	899	
Alchemist Nexus	□□10	600	
Arcam Alpha 9	□□10	800	
Audio Analogue Paganini	□□10	750	
Audio Note CD1	□□10	599	
Audio Note AN-CD2	□□10	999	
Audiomeca Obsession	□□10	999	
AVI S2000MC 24 Ref	□□10	999	
Creek CD43	□□10	599	
Cyrus dAD3		598	
Cyrus dAD3 Q24		900	
Denon DCD-1650AR	□□10	700	
DPA Renaissance int CD	□□10	950	
Helios Model 3	□□10	700	
Helios Model 2	□□10	950	
Linn Mimik	□□10	875	
Linn Genki		995	
Magnum CD2020	□□10	595	
Marantz CD-17	□□10	800	
Monrio Asty PL	□□10	695	
Monrio Privilege	□□10	995	
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	□□10	799	
Musical Fidelity A3 CD	□□10	800	
Myryad T-20	□□10	600	
Myryad MC100	□□10	800	
Pioneer PDS-06	□□10	550	
Primare D20	□□10	700	
Quad 99		600	
Roksan Caspian	□□10	895	
Rotel RCD-991	□□10	750	
Sony CDP-XA555ES	□□10	1,000	
Sugden Audition		649	
Talk Electronics Thunder 1		550	
Talk Electronics Thunder 2		700	
Talk Electronics Thunder 3		1,000	
Teac VRDS-8	□□10	600	
Teac VRDS-9	□□10	700	
Teac VRDS-25X	□□10	1,000	
Thule Spirit CD100	□□10	600	
Thule Spirit CD150B	□□10	699	
Trichord Genesis	□□10	569	
Trichord Digital Jukebox 25	⇒	□□10	619
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50	⇒	□□10	669
Trichord Digital J'box 100	⇒	□□10	719

Trichord Revelation	□□10	819
YBA Complete	□□10	649
YBA Special	□□10	695

OVER £1,000

Acoustic Precision Eikos	□□10	1,850	
Advantage CD15	□□10	3,995	
Alchemist Kraken CD		1,249	
Alchemist Forseti Int.		1,249	
Alchemist Forseti	□□10	1,995	
Arcam FMJ CD25	□□10	1,100	
Audio Research CD2	□□10	3,399	
Audiolabor 531	□□10	7,550	
Audiomeca Keops	□□10	1,500	
Audiomeca Talisman	□□10	2,150	
Audiomeca Talisman SE	□□10	2,300	
Balanced VK-D5	□□10	3,995	
Cary CD-301	□□10	2,350	
Classe CDP-3	□□10	1,395	
Conrad-Johnson DF-2		1,695	
Conrad-Johnson DV-2b		2,495	
Copland CDA-266		1,199	
Copland CDA277	□□10	1,649	
Copland CDA289	□□10	1,898	
Copland CDA288	□□10	1,999	
Cymbal CDP12	□□10	1,299	
Exposure CD Player	□□10	1,050	
Helios Model 1	□□10	1,250	
Helios Stargate	□□10	2,250	
Jadis Orchestra	□□10	1,345	
Krell KAV250cd	□□10	2,490	
Krell KAV300cd	□□10	3,599	
Krell KPS255	□□10	19,995	
Linn Ikemi		1,950	
Linn Sondek CD12	□□10	12,000	
Marantz CD-17KIS	□□10	1,100	
Marantz CD-7	□□10	3,500	
Levinson 39	□□10	4,995	
McIntosh MCD7009	□□10	3,699	
Meracuo Tanto	□□10	1,395	
Meracuo Imago Player	□□10	4,495	
Meridian 506	□□10	1,100	
Meridian 508	□□10	1,995	
Myryad MCD500	□□10	1,300	
NAD S500	□□10	1,100	
Naim CD3.5		1,050	
Naim CDX		2,200	
Naim NACDSII/XPS		5,625	
Oracle CD Player	□□10	9,499	
Pink Triangle Numeral	□□10	1,049	
Pink Triangle Litaural	□□10	2,200	
Primare D302	□□10	1,500	
Proceed CDP	□□10	3,395	
Resolution CD50	□□10	2,995	
Roksan Atessa-DP3P	□□10	1,495	
Shearman Phase 7	□□10	1,499	
Sherwood CD1	□□10	1,100	
Sonic Frontiers Anthem CD1	⇒	□□10	1,699
Sonic Frontiers SFCD-1	□□10	3,799	
Sony SCD-1	□□10	2,700	
T+A CD1210R	□□10	1,185	
T+A CD1220R	□□10	1,540	
TAG McLaren CD20R	□□10	1,250	
Theta Miles SE	□□10	2,390	
Tube Tech Fusion	□□10	1,100	
Tube Tech Fulcrum	□□10	2,800	
Wadia 860x	□□10	7,495	
XTC CDP-1	□□10	1,350	
YBA Integre a	□□10	1,095	
YBA CD3a	□□10	1,850	
YBA CD2a	□□10	2,950	
YBA CD1a	□□10	3,895	



CD TRANSPORTS

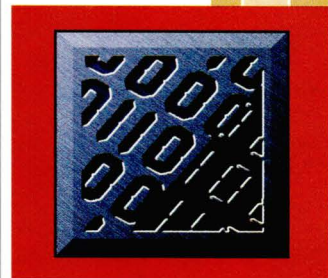
KEY

□□10 - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Alchemist Forseti Drive	□□10	1,100
Altis CDT III	□□10	4,995
Audio Note CDT Zero	□□10	399
Audio Synthesis Transcend Decade	□□10	3,295
Audiomeca Damnation	□□10	999
Audiomeca Damnation SE	□□10	1,100
Audiomeca Talisman	□□10	1,850
Audiomeca Talisman SE	□□10	1,999

Audiomeca Talisman DOB	2,250
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	775
Jadis J53	1,999
Jadis JDI	9,190
Linn Karik	1,850
Levinson 37	3,995
Levinson 31.5	9,295
Meracus 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 Attezza-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

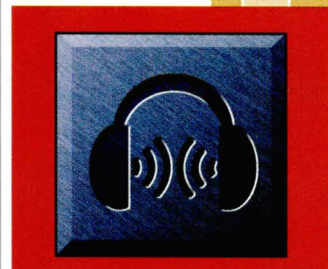


DIGITAL RECORDERS

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 MDXV500H	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-IA20ES	MD	500
Sony MDS-IA555ES	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		399
Yamaha MDX-595	MD	230
Yamaha CDR-S1000		400

Alchemist TS-D-1	300
Alchemist Forseti DAC	1,100
Altis Reference	4,995
Audio Note DAC Zero	369
Audio Note DAC1	675
Audio Note DAC2	1,099
Audio Note DAC3	1,750
Audio Research DAC5	2,335
Audio Research DAC3 MKII	3,999
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade	2,795
Audiomeca Elair	799
Audiomeca Ambrosia	1,850
Boulder 2020	21,000
Chord DSC900	1,850
Chord DSC1100	2,765
Chord DSC1500	4,800
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	1,990
dCS Elgar	8,500
DPA Little Bit 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	2,499
Jadis JS1	6,990
LFD DAC2	1,950
LFD DAC3	3,000
Linn Numerik	1,500
Levinson 360	4,395
Levinson 360S	6,895
Levinson 30.6	16,495
Meracus Auriga	1,295
Meracus Flagrare	2,495
Meridian 566	1,095
Monrio 18B2	795
Muse Model 2	2,190
Muse Model 2 Plus	2,500
Muse Model 2/96	3,000
Musical Fidelity X-ACT	200
Musical Fidelity X-24K	300
Musical Fidelity X-DAC	300
Onkyo DX 7310	330
Resolution D92	1,500
Roksan Attezza-DA2	535
Sonic Frontiers Processor 3	5,999
Sumo Theorem II	945
Sumo Theorem IIB	1,155
TAG McLaren DAC20	1,249
Teac D-T1	500
Theta Chroma 396 Std	799
Theta Pro Geny	1,099
Theta Pro Prime Ila	1,699



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
Sony MDR-ED228LP	D	18
Sony MDR-G52LP	D	20
Sony MDR-E848LP/MP	D	20
Sony MDR-ED238ML	D	22
Sony MDR-C56V	D	25
Sony MDR-G62LP	D	25
Sony MDR-C59G	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 K222IR	D	100
AKG K401	D	120
AKG K501	D	150
AKG K333IR	D	150
AKG K444IR	D	180
AKG K290S	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 Ovaf'n	D	150
Sennheiser HD25-13	D	160
Sennheiser HD25	D	160
Sennheiser HD 580 Precision	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/HB	D	65
Stanton DJ Pro 1000	D	95
Stanton DJ Pro 1001	D	150
Stax SR-001	D	280
Stax SR-Lambda Nova C	E	370
Stax 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
4 - Number of shelves.

Awik Furniture A4	4	350
Alphason SM17	1	49
Alphason VSM17	1	85
Alphason GSM17	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
Arcici Air Head 1	1	275
Arcici Air Head TNT	1	725
Arcici Suspende 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 Isochelf	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	3	130
Deadrock 705	3	130
Deadrock 704	4	250
Elemental Isotube X1	1	169

H I - F I P R I C E G U I D E

Sony SS-176E	200
Tangent Monitor 9	150
Tangent Monitor 11	180
Tannoy Mercury M2	140
Tannoy Saturn S6C	200
Tannoy Revolution R1	200
TDL Nucleus 3	200
Technics SB-CS95	150
Technics SB-M20	200
TLC Maestro 705	159
W'dale Valdis 300	150
W'dale Diamond 7.3	150
W'dale Modus Music Two	200
W'dale Diamond 7.2 Ann'y	200
W'dale Valdis 400	200
Yamaha NS-45E	200
Yamaha NS-100	200

£201 TO £300

Acoustic Energy Aegis 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
Bluroom 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 23i	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 SX-SW10	300
KEF Coda 9	299
KEF Model 705	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 M3 II	220
Polk RT5	250
Polk RT7	300
Polk M5	300
Promenade SP1	299
Rega Aria	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 1305	289
TLC Voyager 350	289
W'dale Modus Music Four	230
W'dale Valdis 500	300
Yamaha NS-200	300
ZYP A1	229
ZYP A2S	299

£301 TO £500

Acoustic Energy AE105SE	350
Acoustic Energy AE109	350
Acoustic Energy Aegis 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 DM305	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 HB4/2000	500
Indigo One	350
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 2SE	500
M-A Monitor 4	500
M-A 700 PMC	500
Mordaunt-Short MS207	400
Mordaunt-Short MS208	400
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 TB1S	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 S6L CR	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

£501 TO £800

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/B	799
Audiovector M1	799
Audiovector C2	799
AVI Biggatron	799
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 2SE	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	500
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 Keilidh Passive	750
Magnat Vintage 710	399
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
Naim 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 TB1SM	517
Prof Monitor Co TB1	529
Prof Monitor Co TB1M	576
Prof Monitor Co XB1	640
Promenade SP4	650
Roksan ROKone 1	595
Roksan Ojan 3	795
Royd The Sorcerer	595
Royd Abbot	695
Ruark Templar II	559
Ruark Sceptre	599
Ruark Talsman II	799
Ruark Prologue One	799
Shinpy Polans	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

£801 TO £1,500

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 SCM10	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 OA-52.2	1,500
Castle Inversion 50	875
Castle Harlech	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-Quebe	1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-Quebe 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

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 SMC-G 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 S1000	999
Polk LS70	1,200
Polk RTE1000	1,300
Polk RT20p	1,500
ProAc Tablette 2000 Sig	899
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
Audiocrest M3	1,899
Audiocrest 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

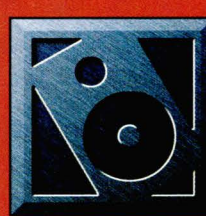
BKS Audio Hybrid 128	2,549
Bose 901 VI	1,650
Boston Lynfield 300L	2,000
Castle Inversion 100	1,975
Celestion A3	2,399
Celestion Kingston	2,500
Chario Academy 2	1,649
Chario Academy Mill'm 2	2,100
Credo SPB 003	1,820
Credo SPB 009	2,453
Cura CA-30	1,799
Dali Grand Coupe	2,500
Def Tech BP2004	1,700
Def Tech BP2002	2,400
Diapason Adamantes III	1,995
Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,894
Dynaudio Craft	2,598
Dynaudio Contour 3.0	2,930
ECA Servo A2	2,450
ELS Res'ch Vision	2,800
Epos ES30	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 Kaber Passive	2,000
Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,640
L Voice Aud'm Avator	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	2,038
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 IB1	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 benches Orator	2,900
Zingali Overture 25	1,975

OVER £3,000

Acoustic Energy AE5	7,995
Alon Lotus SE	3,500
Alon V Mk II	5,495
Alon Adriana	8,900
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	15,595
ATC SCM300ASL	17,731
Audio Note AN-ESE 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
Audiocrest 5X	3,999
Audiocrest 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	19,700
AVI Gravitron	4,250
B&W Nautilus 803	4,000
B&W Silver Signature	5,500
B&W Nautilus 801	6,000
B&W Nautilus 802	8,500
B&W Nautilus	35,000
Bandor Bandoline	3,290
Beauhorn Virtuoso Bronze	3,325
Beauhorn Virtuoso Gold	3,395
Beauhorn Virtuoso Reference	3,799
Beauhorn 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 Oriel	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 Avator 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 Ilz	4,555
Martin-Logan Re-Quest Z	5,875
Mendian 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	3,999
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	32,600
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 Guameri Homage	5,795
Sonus Faber 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	6,600
Tannoy Canterbury 15 TW	7,720
Tannoy Westminster Royal	14,920
TDL Ref. Standard-m	6,000
Titan Goliatth 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 benches Actor	3,900
Wilson benches ACT1	6,900
Wilson benches Act 2	8,900
Wilson benches 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 A65	800
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D	200
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D	250
Chario Syntar Bass	299
Chario Hipar 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 SW33A	899
JM Lab SW Utopia	2,200
JPW Subwoofer	130
JPW SW400	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	THX	2,499
Kenwood SW500	Ⓐ	250
Kenwood SW501	Ⓐ	349
Linn AV150	Ⓐ	2,850
L Voice RW24	Ⓐ	11,500
Magnat Vector Sub 30P	Ⓐ	149
Magnat Vector Sub 30A	Ⓐ	299
Magnat Omega 300	Ⓐ	429
Meridian 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)	THX	800
M&K MX-70	Ⓐ	900
M&K MX-150 (THX)	THX	1,500
M&K MX-700	Ⓐ	1,595
M&K MX-200	Ⓐ	1,800
M&K MX-350THX	THX	1,995
M&K MX-5000 (THX)	THX	2,900
Mission 75as	Ⓐ	548
M-A ASW110	Ⓐ	500
M-A ASW210	Ⓐ	700
Mus Tec PMS 45	Ⓐ	500
Mus Tec Tercel	Ⓐ	700
Muse Model 22	Ⓐ	1,890
Muse Model 18	Ⓐ	3,790
Neal Gravitas	Ⓐ	1,095
Paradigm PDR10	Ⓐ	250
Paradigm Servo 15A	Ⓐ	800
Polk PSW50	Ⓐ	350
Polk PSW150	Ⓐ	500
Polk PSW500	Ⓐ	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
Ruarik Log-Rhythm	Ⓐ	750
Sequence FW1 20	Ⓐ	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
W'dale Modus Sub Bass	Ⓐ	180
Wilson Audio Puppy S.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

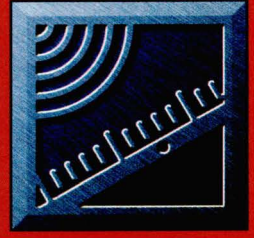


TONEARMS

KEY
⊙ - Pivoted.
- Parallel tracking.

Air Tangent IC	#	4,600
Air Tangent 10B	#	8,600
Air Tangent Reference	#	14,000

Audio Note AN-ARM 1	⊙	169
Audio Note AN-0s	⊙	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 Artemiz	⊙	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 benesch Act 0.5	⊙	795
Wilson benesch ACT2	⊙	1,350
Zeta AS	⊙	469
Zeta VDH	⊙	549



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
Symbol 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	120
Marantz ST-17	P60	600
McIntosh MR7084	P50	2,499
McIntosh MX118	P50	4,999
McIntosh MX130	P50	6,999

Meridian 504		695
Musical Fidelity E50		300
Myriad T-30	P29	400
Myriad MT100	P39	600
NAD 412	P24	190
NAD C440	P30	200
NAD 414RDS	RDS	250
NAD 710	P30	270
NAD 712	P24	330
Naim NAT03		615
Naim NAT02		1,130
Naim NAT01		1,780
Onkyo T 4210RDS	P30	180
Onkyo T 409	P30	230
Onkyo T 411RDS	P30	260
Pioneer F-204RDS	P30	140
Pioneer F-504RDS	P40	250
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	P40	300
Quad 99	P25	700
Quad 77FM	P25	700
Rega Radio	P24	298
Roksan Kandy	P50	375
Roksan Caspian	P50	695
Rotel RT-935AX	P20	160
Rotel RT940AX	P20	200
Sony ST-SE200	P30	100
Sony ST-SE300	P50	110
Sony ST-SE500	RDS	140
Sony ST-SB920	P30	180
Sony ST-SA3ES	P30	250
Sony ST-S3000	P30	250
T+A T1200R	P60	790
TAG McLaren T20	P39	1,099
Teac T-R400	P40	100
Teac T-R460	P30	120
Teac H-F500	P40	170
Technics ST-GT350L	P30	130
Technics ST-GT550L	P39	180
Technics ST-GT650L	P39	230
Technics ST-GT1000	P97	500
Thorens TRT-2000	P59	499
Thule Spirit TU100	P40	499
Yamaha TX-480L	P40	100
Yamaha TX-492RDS	P40	130
Yamaha TX-59 2RDS	P40	180
Yamaha RX-396RDS	P40	250
YBA Complete	P14	490



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 AT95/RB	⊙	370
Thorens TD-166 VI/UK/RB	⊙	400



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 RST	⊙	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 benesch Circle		795
Wilson benesch WB Turntable		1,775
Wilson benesch Full Circle	⊙	1,995

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<p>BRADFORD Clearstone Rawson Square, City Centre (Formerly Erics) TEL: 01274 309266</p>	<p>BOLTON P Clearstone Blackburn Road, City Centre (On The A66 Blackburn Road) TEL: 01204 531423</p>	<p>BIRMINGHAM Empire Superstore 21-22 Stephenson Street (Behind New St. Opp. Palladium Car Park) TEL: 0121 643 0972</p>

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E-mail: info@thomashheinitz.com www.thomashheinitz.com

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23a Regent Street
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Warwickshire CV32 5EJ

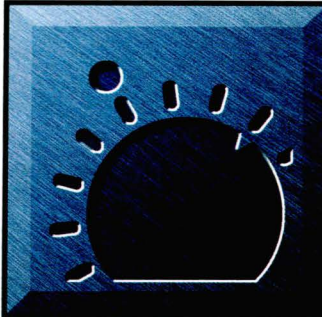
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Amplifiers

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.

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Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

LINE INPUTS
 MM PHONO INPUTS
 MC PHONO INPUTS
 REMOTE CONTROL
 HEADPHONE SOCKET
 POWER OUTPUT (W)
 RECEIVER
 FACTSBACK NO.
 ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Affordable Valve Co. EL34	650	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	4					40			202
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
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
Canary Audio CA-608	1,495	If you value the grand scheme of things and appreciate a bit of dynamic vigour this could be the amp for you	4					24			202
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 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 ESII 0	400	Honest but unexciting straight line amp from REL associate company	6					85		2635	192
Electrocompaniet ECI-3	1,000	Basically good, but too many rough edges to warrant recommendation	6					75	●		201
Graaf Venticinque	1,790	Smart and practical, but it just never seems to shine sonically	6					25			202
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, unobtrusive 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 WBT 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

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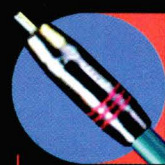
Amplifiers

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS
MC PHONO INPUTS
REMOTE CONTROL
HEADPHONE SOCKET
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PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
F Musical Fidelity E1	199	Richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special	6				30		2050	171
Musical Fidelity E11	299	Well built minimalist amp with a five year guarantee, but can sound congested when extended	6				60		2232	178
B 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
R Musical Fidelity X-A100R	999	Sings like a thoroughbred, but better with Mozart than Motörhead	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
F Myryad M1120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, although it can sound rather brittle	6			●	60		2152	175
B 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
B 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
B 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
R NAD 317	470	Build quality aside, the current improved version is a real powerhouse, but smooth and detailed too	6			●	80			196
R NAD S300	1,900	Substantial integrated with loads of power and no shortage of finesse, slightly bass-strong	5			●	100			189
R Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5				30		1748	154
R 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
Pathos Classic One	995	Unusual looks and even more unusual electronic design, but compromised musical potential	5			●	55			202
F 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
R Pioneer A-407R	230	Clean, consistent, finely detailed sound, good finish and (mainly) good build	5	●		●	45		2471	186
R Pioneer A-607R	300	Lively, articulate amp with plenty of drive and a hint of brightness	5	●		●	60		2633	192
B Pioneer A-300R Precision	400	Sophisticated variant of the A-300R. Not an obvious winner, but it slowly plys 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
R Præcisa Acustica Sonoro	1,800	It is not often that transistor amplifiers are made to sound so palpably valve-like	5			●	100		2547	189
B 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
B 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
B 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
R 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
B 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
R 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
R 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
B Sony TA-F3000ES	500	Champagne 'shoobox 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
F 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
R 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	Intiguing amplifier, with abundant detail but dynamically rather flat	6			●	55			196
R 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
R Token Audio K50	350	Stainless steel finish, others available. Sound is warm and attractive, though a little undynamic	5				50		2472	186
Tube Technology Unisis Sig	2,400	A very attractive product which combines many classic valve attributes to good effect	5	●			30			202
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
R 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
R 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
B Copland CTA-301MkII	1,249	Sweet sounding, but never gets bogged down in audio treading	4	●					1630	151



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CONTINUED

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B Creek P43R	350	Excellent sound, remote control operation and upgrade options from this fine value preamp	6							187	
R 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	
Densen Beat B-200	1,000	A versatile preamp with a high 'air-guitar' factor and Densen's characteristic styling	6	●	●					191	
F 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	
R 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	
POWER AMPLIFIERS											
Alch. Kraken APD8A 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	
F 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
Chord SPM-4000	8,500	Sound is as stylish as its appearance is bold. Probably one of the best amps you are likely to hear	1						410	202	
B Creek AS25E	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	
R ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1						50	1302	145
F Gamut D200	2,995	Single MOSFET pair per side gives tremendous resolution and timing (balanced only). Formerly Sirius	1						200	183	
F Levinson 334	5,495	A mailed fist in a velvet glove; refined, authoritative and transparent	1						125	195	
F LFD Mistral Power	449	Infectious upper band vitality, but LF dynamics lacking - likewise 'grip' and transparency	1						60	1930	165
F 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	199	
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	
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	
B Moth 30 Series Phono	249	Fine sound all round, in any kind of music, from this bargain phono stage	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 Discsaver 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	
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	

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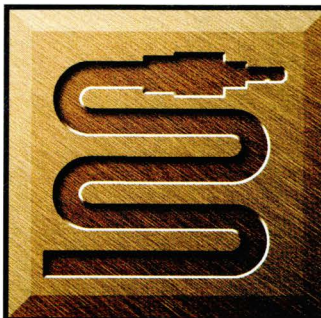
Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS MC PHONO INPUTS HEADPHONE CONTROL REMOTE CONTROL POWER OUTPUT (W) FACTSBACK RECEIVER ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	HEADPHONE CONTROL	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTSBACK RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
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
B 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									
B Arcam Alpha 10 DAVE/10P	2,500	Packed with a diversity of electronics that against engineering odds sounds extremely good	5				110		198
Cyrus AV5	1,000	Few processors are as adept with music. An effective multi-channel solution for music fans	4				N/A		201
B Denon AVR-3300	800	Not as powerful as Denon claims, but nonetheless capable of impressive high-fidelity multi-channel sound	4				75	●	198
B Marantz SR5000	500	Something of a rough diamond, but a powerful and entertaining package	5				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	5				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	4				140	●	198
Pioneer VSX-908RDS	1,000	A flexible heavyweight AV receiver whose sound is just a little too stodgy and lacking in crispness	4				80	●	198
B Roksan Caspian DSP	2,290	A potent combination offering the bare essentials of DD and dts decoding	4				130	●	198
B Rotel RSP-985/RPB-985 MkII	2,225	The hugely versatile processor is the weaker subjective link in this otherwise impressive combo	3				130	●	198
Sony TA-E9000ES/N9000ES	2,300	Big, gold, powerful and remarkably versatile but fails to cut the sonic mustard	5				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

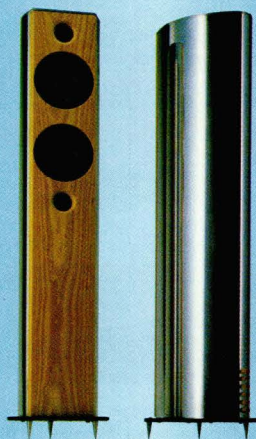
SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

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
B 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
B Audioquest Coral	99	Slightly forward imaging hardly detracts from its excellent tonal qualities and detail			●		●	●			200
B CableTalk Advanced 2	35	Slight roughness in loud music barely detracts from a well-balanced performance with good imaging			●		●	●		2166	176
B 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
B 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
B Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare			●		●	●			160
B 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
B 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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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
lxos Gamma 1002	39	Lumpy bass, grainy treble, and poor integration. Nice colour, though	●				●	●			2169 176
lxos 103	45	Even-handed and generous sound, bass has a well-rounded, bouncy quality			●		●	●		1692	131
lxos 102	60	A bit bright and undynamic, this cable is nevertheless a good all-rounder, whose faults are largely subtractive					●	●			160
lxos 1000	90	Nothing badly wrong, just a little bit bland and outshone by others at the price	●								200
lxos 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 climaxes	●				●	●			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
lxos 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 DigiTflex	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 XL 189	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
lxos 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, unsuitable 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-yer-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, too					●	●			133

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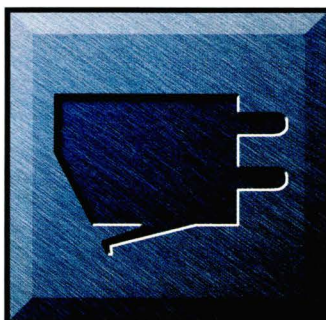
Cables

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
Ortofon 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	A few minor flaws but overall performance is very assured for this price	●				●	●			192
SonicLink S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●				●	●			168
SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 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	A good all-rounder with full tone, clear detail and natural ambience	●				●	●			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	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass					●	●	●		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 famed 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

Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS

REPLACEABLE STYLUS OUTPUT (mV) MASS (g) FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER MM MC

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	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
Clearaudio Signature	1,495	A great all-round performer with fine dynamic vitality and a seductive midband intimacy	●	0.55	11.5	2142	175
Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well	●	1.0	6		48
Denon DL160	90	Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'	●	0.1	6		43
Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life'. Is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail	●	0.1	6		103
Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether, and a bargain at the price	●				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	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●	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	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus	●	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 Clavis Da Capo	995	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard	●	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 51Q/P	38	For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality	●	3.0	5		85
Ortofon 520/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, but the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound	●	3.0	5		67

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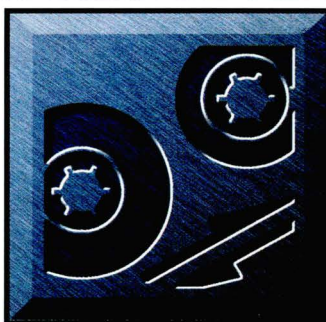
Cartridges

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

REPLACEABLE STYLUS
OUTPUT MASS (g)
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
R Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle – take it as it comes	●	3.3	4	103
B 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
B 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
B 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
R 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
R Rega Elys	85	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is more detailed, accurate and convincing	●	5.0	5	67
R 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
R Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but smoother and more civilised	●	6.5	5	91
B Sumiko 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
R 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
R van den Hul MC-10	750	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●	0.4	6	60
R 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
R van den Hul MC-Two	1,200	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal	●	0.4	6	72
R 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
R van den Hul G' hopper III/CLA	2,800	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available. It has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse	●	0.4	6	122
R Wilson benesch Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive	●	0.58	6	158
R Wilson benesch 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.
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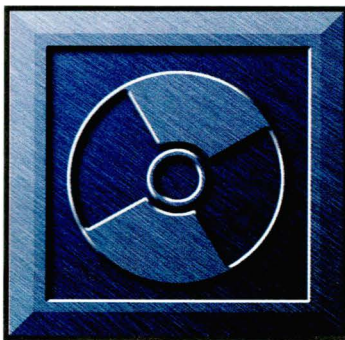
STATUS

Cassette Decks

SPECIFICATIONS

DOLBY C DOLBY S DOLBY HX PRO 3-HEAD TWIN DECK AUTO REVERSE ADJUSTABLE BIAS FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
B Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed deck. Astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1513	136
B Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin for those who want bells, whistles – and music	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1377	146
B 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
B Denon DRS-640	200	Draw-loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well-adjusted sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1591	140
R 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
B JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
B 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
R 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
R Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer-loading mini-size component with 3 heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146
R 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
R Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High-class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1385	146
R 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
B 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
B 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
R Yamaha KX-490	200	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158
R 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 OUT:** 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.
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B BEST BUY

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CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	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 cos ly player, which combines a delight ul 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 CD1S	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 a tractive 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	200	Beer-budget two-box sys em (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 7SE	350	Revamped star er 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 8SE	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	1,599	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us. A fine performer in a sympathetic sys em	●							MB		169
Balanced Audio Tech VK-D5	3,995	A valve-infused player with a big and engaging sound. Lacks a little subtlety	●							18bit		194
Cambridge Audio D100	120	Hard, clanky 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 D500	200	Clean and highly articulate player wears well in extended use	●							DS		202
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 sys em matching	●							DS		200
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 sof-edged budget player, and a good ameliorative for aggressive, edgy systems	●							MB		200
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
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
Harman/Kardon HK720	230	Sometimes aggressive and ill-disciplined player, but at least it's well built	●							1-bit		202
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
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 dear, wide aper ure lens on the music - and has CD Tex 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		155
Marantz CD5000	150	Well equipped budget player sounds thin and rough at times	●							1 bit		202
B Marantz CD6000 OSE	300	Equipped cons ructed, slightly emasculated sounding, but smooth and articulate	●							1bit		200
R Marantz CD-63 MkII Kl 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
R Mercus Tanto	1,395	Believable tonal colours and textures, refinement takes preference over dynamics - but it's not cheap	●							DS		169

CONTINUED

CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

- AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
- OPTICAL DIG OUT
- ST OPT DIG OUT
- BAL ANALOGUE OUT
- HEADPHONE OUT
- VARIABLE OUTPUT
- MULTI-DISC
- DAC TYPE
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE OUT	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
B Meridian 506	1,100	Revised 506 includes MSR remote and a new D/A 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
R 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
R NAD C520	170	Significantly improved entry level NAD is smooth and dynamic, if slightly dull	●							DS		202
R 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
R NAD Silverline S500	1,100	It sounds as good as it looks, which is notably refined and easy on the ear	●	●	●		●			MB		195
R Naim Audio CD3.5	1,000	Forward and explicit sound needs careful system matching								Hyb		188
R 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
R 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
R 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
R Roksan DP3P	1,495	Dramatic and compelling. Classical listeners should be ready to 'air conduct' when auditioning	●							BS	1896	163
R 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
R 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
R Sony CDP-XE330	100	Unrefined, but lively, detailed and highly affordable				●				Pulse		202
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
R 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
B 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
E 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
R Talk Electronics Thunder 3	1,000	Clean, fast, and availability of a complete upgrade path make this a good long term proposition								DS		195
R 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 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-25x	1,000	Excellent, individualistic player with bold, colourful sound, but test sample had iffy CD-R compatibility	●	●			●			MB		195
Technics SL-PG390	90	It's very cheap. Very, very cheap					●			MASH		202
Technics SL-PG480A	130	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unsubtle, slightly harsh top end								1bit		159
R 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
R 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
F 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
R 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 Attessa 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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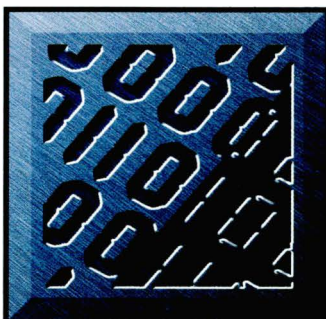
CD/DVD Players

SPECIFICATIONS

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
DAC TYPE
MULTI-DISC
OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS
ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
PORTABLE
ADC TYPE
DAC TYPE
OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS
ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
ST OPT DIG OUT
BAL OPT DIG OUT
HEADPHONE OUT
VARIABLE OUTPUT
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS										
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 Atessa ATT-DA2/D55	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
JVC XV-D701	500	Good video player, but rather undeveloped musically - CD Text is neat, though	●	●								DS	198
JVC XV-515GD	300	Musically soft as a baby's bottom, and as surprising as yesterday's news	●	●									202
Kenwood DVF-9010	1000	DVD player with brilliant picture and clean, lively sound	●	●									24/96 190
NAD T-550	500	Soft-centred but likeable player in the classic NAD mould	●	●								DS	202
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-525	399	Lean, clean and lively sound quality. CD-R and 24/96 compatible, too	●	●								MB	202
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
Sony DVP-S325	330	Bare bones DVD with workmanlike sound, although it can sound 'loud'	●	●									202
Sharp DV-760	500	Reasonable picture, but sonically brings new meaning to the term rough and ready.	●	●								DS	202
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 SD-3109	380	Defocused and soft-edged, this is more attractive for its picture than its sound quality.	●	●								N/A	202
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 converter (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

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS
PORTABLE
ADC TYPE
DAC TYPE
FORMAT

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS										
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	MB	BS	N	●	●						184
Denon DMD-1300	500	Sound sometimes lacks integration but tonal balance is good and it handles loud music with panache	MD	BS	BS		●						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	MD	BS	BS		●	●					191
Kenwood DM-9090	550	Slight sibilance and image vagueness do not detract from excellent balance and solid bass	MD	BS	BS			●	●				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	MD	BS	BS			●	●				191
Onkyo MD-121	450	Mid-sized deck that sounds slightly coloured at times, though immediate and lively	MD	BS	BS			●					2195 177
Pioneer MJ-D707	250	A handy set of features for the price, though sound is not outstanding	MD	BS	BS		●	●					191
Sharp MD-R1 MKII	200	It's cheap: sound is not outrageously bettered by rather pricier competition. A bit thin on features though	MD	BS	BS		●	●					191
Sharp MDR3H	300	Nifty machine combining a 3-disc CD changer with a MD recorder. Sound on both is rather below par, though	BS	BS	N		●	●					184
Sharp MD-R2	300	Budget recorder that loses little or nothing in comparisons with much more expensive models - highly capable	MD	BS	BS		●	●					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	BS	BS	N	●	●						184
Sony MDS-JA20ES	500	Sound quality about as good as it gets with MD to date, and a very comprehensive features set too	MD	BS	BS		●	●					191
Sony MDS-JA555ES	650	Probably the best MD deck to date, with consistently less quality loss over a wide range of programme. Lots of features	MD	BS	BS		●	●					194
Yamaha MDX-793	300	Nice machine to use and has some useful features, but sound quality a little wanting	MD	BS	BS		●	●					191
CD RECORDERS													
Marantz DR700	600	Dearer than Philips and Traxdata equivalents, with apparently only a smarter front panel to show for it	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●					191
Philips CDR-880	499	Capable of making perfect copies of CD digital, and very acceptable copies of anything analogue too	BS	BS	N		●	●					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	BS	BS	N	●	●						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	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●					171
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000	The first domestic CD-R deck - excellent sound quality	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●					1652 152
Traxdata Traxaudio 900	499	Identical to Philips and Marantz models: it makes bit-perfect copies of CDs and has perfectly acceptable replay	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●					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.
- **CIRCUMAURAL:** 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 fixed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback section of our Archive page.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *H-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Headphones

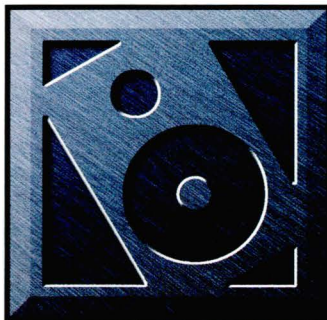
SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS: **B** BEST BUY, **R** RECOMMENDED, **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

TYPE: SUPRA-AURAL, CIRCUMAURAL, OPEN BACK, CLOSED BACK

MASS (g), IMPEDANCE (Ω), 3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR, FACTSBACK NO., ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TYPE	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		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 musical 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	I/R		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		280	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	I/R		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		226	I/R		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 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

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
B	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	2,500	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
B	B&W DM302	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45	●	●	1778	156
B	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	550	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
B	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-her-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-her-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
B	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
B	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
B	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
B	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	Pricy, 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	Pricy but effective bi-polar surround speaker, with unusually high sensitivity	23,37,15		94	4	120	●			198
R	Definitive Technology BP2004	1,700	Pricy 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
B	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
B	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 pricy 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 pricy, 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) CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	CLOSE TO WALL	FREE SPACE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Energy eXL 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 2i	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 Cornet 195	350	Loads of bass, should have plenty of yoof-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		87	8	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		92	5	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	17,5,51,31		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 LX90	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 Keilidh 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	29,113,32	●	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
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	Cutely styled, cleverly 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
Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy – smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	●	88	6	25	●	●	1352	143

CONTINUED

Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
CLOSE TO WALL
FREE SPACE (C2)
BASS FROM (HZ)
IMPEDANCE (Ω)
SENSITIVITY (db/W)
FLOORSTANDER
SIZE WxHxD (CM)

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS								
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	20,41,50	●	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	87,22,55		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	27,37,56	●	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'r'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	Classy 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
TAG McLaren F1	15,000	Oddball aesthetics with accurate, unflappable, controlled and a consistent sonic neutrality	40,127,48	●	87.5	8	25	●		202
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 mX5	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
Wharfedale 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

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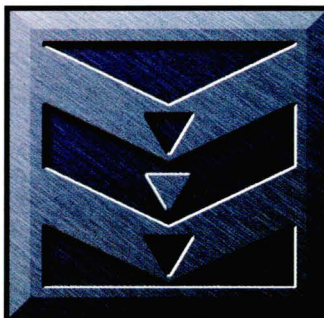
Loudspeakers

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	FLOORSTANDER	BASS FROM (HZ)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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 firm than music oriented	50,42,43							●	2247 179
B&W ASW1000	499	(Active) Very competently engineered all round, and goes (unnecessarily) very loud	54,47,48		A	20				●	2248 179
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
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
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
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

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (dB/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (HZ) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER



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 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

Stands & Supports

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS										
Aavik 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
Atacama Europa	240	Stylish, expandable modular design with agreeable full-bodied sound – great value	67	48.6			4	Wood		195
Audiophile Furniture Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43			4	MDF		193
Avid Isoshelf	1,100	An enthusiasts equipment support stand free from coloration if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48			5	MDF		193
Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1,199	Blockbusting size and build. Super sound quality	92	45,49			●	4	Marb	181
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
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
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
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
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
Optimum Int 2000 OPT1660	349	Glitzy style isn't reflected in sound, which is wholesome	82	60,52			5	Glass		181
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
Quadraspire Q4	250	Easy to live with, tonally neutral	54	40,49			4	MDF	1633	151
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
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
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
Standesign Design 4	190	An all-in-one support at a budget price with good sonic performance	88.5	50.8			●	4	Glass	193
Target B5	175	Free of colorations, fine grip and good value	81	49,36			●	5	Wood	1633 151
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
Wilson Benesch Asside	590	Sounds even better than it looks. And it looks wonderful	72	37,50			4	Wood		181
SPEAKER STANDS										
Alphason Akros II	65	A well-specified budget stand but the sound is as subtle as a house party	60,45	16.5	●					202
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
Apollo A4/6	82	A pretty and robust design that sonically fails to stand out from the crowd	51,40,51	18	●					202
Atacama Nexus 6	50	An excellent all round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain	60,50	14.5,18	●					202
Atacama BD21	55	Good looking and good value, but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17	●					159
Atacama R724	150	Atacama uses its market strength to deliver a superbly appointed product at a very reasonable price	60	15,17	●	●				189
Atacama SE24	70	Stands out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of its performance	61	19,17	●	●			1373	146
Custom Design R/S300 MkII	100	A solid stand improving on the original with better focus and detail	61,56,51	16.5,18	●					202
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
JPW HS1	120	A purposeful stand, a touch dry-sounding but particularly strong with bass. Great for rock and dance music	61	19,21	●					189
Mana Sound Base	175	The Sound Base plinth simply improves the sound of every speaker placed on it	8	29,32						202
Mission Stance	100	Detailed and open but needs a firm foundation to give its best	60	19,15	●					202
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
Partington Dreadnought Ult.	299	Super heavyweight stand that is an open window to the speaker placed on it	63	20.5,23.5	●					202
RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	349	Pricey carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A						159
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
Sonus Systems Excel	110	Strong performance when filled with sand but design flaws let it down	65.45	20,22.5	●					202
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
Sound Organisation Z522	89	Easy going and likeable performer straight out of the box	59	16,17	●					202

SPECIFICATIONS

HEIGHT TOP PLATE SIZE (cm) FILLABLE WELDED NUMBER OF SHELVES SHELF TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

CONTINUED

Stands & Supports

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS



PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TOP PLATE SIZE HEIGHT	FILLABLE WELDED SHELF TYPE	NUMBER OF SHELVES	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Sound Style Select	95	OK but not as good as its cheaper brother the Z522	59	16,17	●		202
Stands Unique HP	220	Real wood disguises high-performance tuned technology	59	22,23	●		159
Target HM60	106	A solid and well-built stand laid-back to the point of coma	40-70	16,5,19	●		202
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
Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works well with decent floorstanders as well as standmounted speakers	4	38,48	●		202



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.
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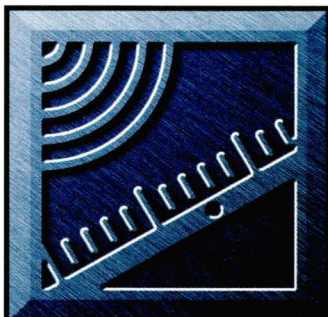
Tonearms

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS



PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE LENGTH	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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
Moth/ 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

- 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.
- **SIGNAL STRENGTH METER:** Indicates strength of signal from aerial – useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation.
- **ROTARY TUNING KNOB:** Experience has shown that this analogue throwback is ergonomically far superior to the red control handset supplied.
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Tuners

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS



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 T45	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 an' d 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
Myriad T-30	400	Attractive product that produces attractive sounds too: capable of very musical performance with a good aerial	FM	29				●		193
Myriad 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 NAT01	1,730	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM						1254	142

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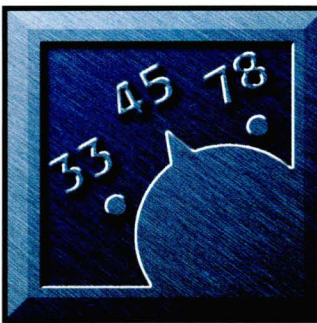
Tuners

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS PRESETS REMOTE CONTROL SIG. STRENGTH METER ROT. TUNING METER FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	FM,M	40	●	●	●	1949	166
Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance; slightly disappointing sound	FM,M	40	●	●	●		184
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	50	●	●	●		184
Roksan Caspian	595	Neat fascia with great ergonomics, but sound is not really any better than models at half the price	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●		193
Sony ST-SE500	140	A lot of features for the money, but sound lacks detail and has some coloration	FM,M	20	●	●	●	1950	166
Rotel RT-935AX	160	Good ergonomics and sound quality at a realistic price, but limited features and RF selectivity	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	1810	157
Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to perform at its best	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●		184
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	●	●	●	1254	142
Technics ST-GT350L	130	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	DAB,FM,M	97	●	●	●		199
Technics ST-GT1000	500	Handy tuner that combines DAB, FM and AM in one unit and substantially lowers the price bar for DAB entry	FM,M	59	●	●	●	1810	157
Thorens TR12000	499	Not exactly neutral sounding, but nonetheless makes listening fun							



Turtables

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 rhythmic 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:** Spring 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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Turtables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUAL AUTO SEMI-AUTO SPEEDS SUSP. SUBCHASSIS SUPPLIED WITH ARM EXTERNAL PSU SUPPLIED WITH CART. FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NO.

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSP. SUBCHASSIS	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	EXTERNAL PSU	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 V/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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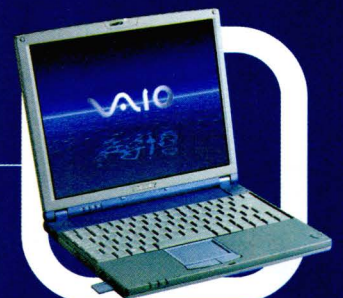
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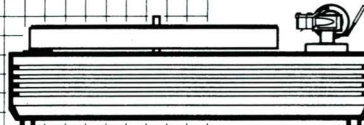
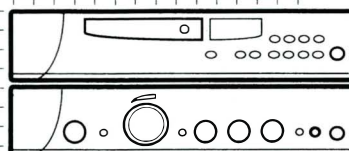
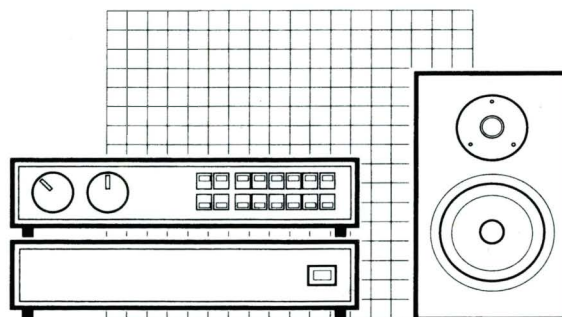
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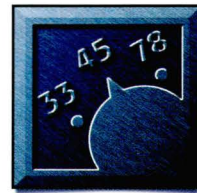
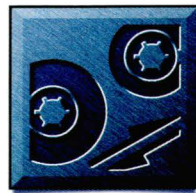
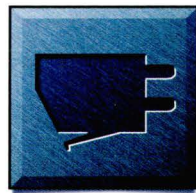
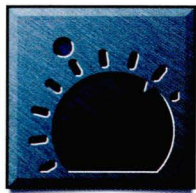
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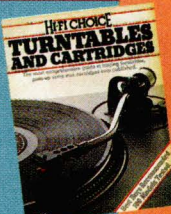
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JIMMY HUGHES

Jimmy's love of vinyl never died – it just hid in a battered Peter Frampton LP sleeve for a bit. Now it's back.

LP can be maddening, irritating, frustrating things – sounding glorious one minute and terrible the next. Compared with the robustness, simplicity and consistency of CD, LPs need careful handling for their full potential to be realised. Speaking as someone who runs LP and CD side by side, I sometimes wonder if it's worth all the extra effort needed to coax top performance from vinyl – it'd be far easier to switch solely to CD.

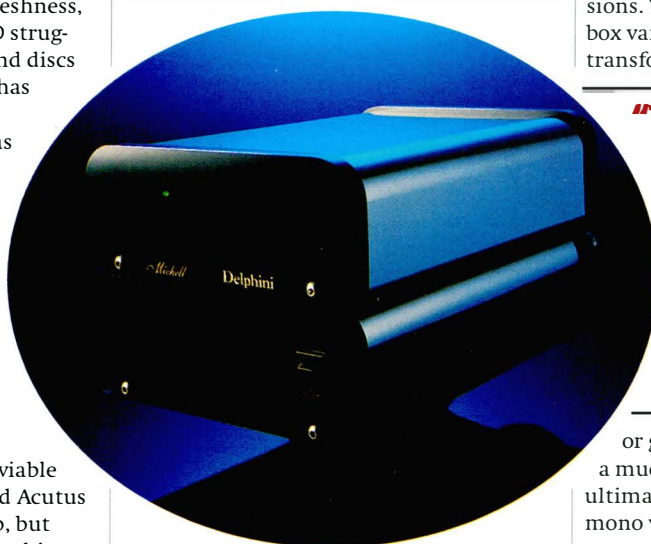
Yet there's no denying that LP reproduction at its best has an openness, freshness, ease, and unforced nature that CD struggles to emulate. True, as players and discs have improved over the years, CD has got better. And at its best it's very, very good. But analogue LP still has the edge when it comes to creating holographic soundstaging that suggests three dimensions.

Moreover, you never quite know how good an LP actually is; even records you've had for years and thought you knew backwards can be transformed at a stroke by improvements to turntables, arms, cartridges, and phono stages.

Some months back I had the enviable task of reviewing the fabulous Avid Acutus turntable – I know; it's a tough job, but someone's got to do it. But initially things didn't go too well. I should've been in Audio Nirvana, but first impressions were rather mixed. Using my regular Audiolab 8000PPA phono stage, the sound was super clean, bright, and incredibly lucid; dare I say it, more like CD than CD. Very impressive, but almost too up-front and chromium-plated in its unyielding brilliance.

The Audiolab's been my phono stage since the mid '90s, and I prize its neutrality and lucidity. It's an exceptionally revealing component – your turntable/arm/cartridge needs to be first-rate, and your LPs spotlessly clean. The 8000PPA is capable of very sharply delineated, articulate reproduction that makes lesser phono stages sound soft-focused. So I've learned to accept its incredible fussiness even if (sometimes) something less razor-sharp would be easier on the ear.

Alas, the Audiolab/Acutus combo went too far down the path of analysis and detail – unless you like a lean, bright, up-front presentation. That's where the Michell Delphini two-box phono stage came in. Substituting the Delphini had the effect of maintaining the Audiolab's incredible fine detail and lucidity, while (miraculously) minimising its clinical brightness and hyper-sensitivity to faults. The Delphini seemed every bit as revealing, but not at the expense of warmth or smoothness.



Tonally, it added richness and colour to the Audiolab's steely 'etched' palette, sounding sweeter and more natural, yet with no loss of focus or dynamics. Delphini cymbals had shimmer and weight, with a ripe golden timbre that sounded more believable and realistic than the Audiolab's icily brilliant portrayal, yet there was no lack of attack or impact.

In other words, the Delphini had that highly desirable combination of opposite attributes; clarity and detail on the one hand, smoothness and warmth on the other. It's at once highly revealing, yet forgiving. Naturally, it doesn't hide faults and blemishes. Yet, by making the most of what's right with a given LP, it subjectively minimises the things that might be wrong – the good magically outweighs the bad.

The Delphini seemed to pull the music into sharp focus without making things sound stiff and regimented. Rhythmically, it's fluid and lively, with good pace and sharp dynamics. It offers exceptional mid-band clarity, while sounding smooth and extended at bass and treble extremes. The presentation is extremely clear and effortless. When paired with an outstanding turntable like the Avid Acutus, the combination of relaxed ease and biting clarity was at times remarkable. CD, eat your heart out!

Technically, the Delphini is very impressive. Passive EQ is used, while the output stage is described as a composite FET current feedback design. The regulators in the power supply are claimed to be very special low noise ultra-wide bandwidth devices that contribute in no small measure to the outstanding sonic performance produced.

The Delphini is available in three versions. You can start with the basic single-box variant at £495, powered by a simple transformer-in-a-mains-plug power supply,

“The Delphini has that desirable combination of attributes: clarity and detail on one hand, smoothness and warmth on the other.”

or go for the two-box version which has a much beefier transformer for £895. The ultimate Delphini is the four-box dual mono version costing about £1,850. Pretty expensive, but the good news is you can start with the basic model and upgrade to either of the improved versions at some future time – helpful if you can't quite stretch to the ultimate in one hit.

I sampled the two-box version; costly, but not too outrageously priced given the high standard of performance. To ensure optimum matching with a wide range of cartridges, it's possible to alter things like gain and loading. So you can precisely tailor the Delphini to the cartridge being used. Hum is nonexistent (although, like most phono stages, the Delphini is sensitive to stray fields), while background hiss is extremely low. MC cartridges with as little as 100µV output voltage can be used without too severe a noise penalty, while high output types are also catered for. Turntable lovers should investigate forthwith, if not sooner!

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE ...

SPEAK AS WE FIND

Yes, it's that time of year again when we gather the cream of the speaker crop in the £500 to £1,500 price bracket. Prepare to be amazed as the likes of Audio Note, Castle, Dynaudio, Mission, OMC, ProAc, Ruark and JMLabs are driven to the extreme by Paul Messenger and Paul Miller.

MULTI-PLAYER STOCK SHOCK!

Not enough room to store all your CDs and your kit? Why not join that doyen of domestic storage Alvin Gold as he puts his entire disc collection into half a dozen CD and DVD multiplayers and finds out which of them has the strongest hi-fi hand.

TAKING IT A BIT PERSONALLY

After months of nagging, the staff of Choice have finally succeeded in wangling a personal stereo Super Test – and just in time for the summer holidays, which is nice. Tape, CD and MiniDisc are all on trial. On sale from Thursday 15 June.



WE KNOW ABOUT BASS



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