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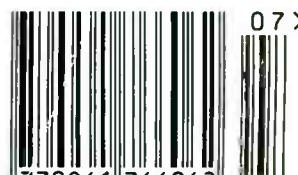
COMPETITION

DENON DVD-3000 DVD PLAYER,
CREEK OBH-12 PRE-AMP, OBH-8SE
PHONO STAGE AND T43 TUNER

CLASSIFIED ADS 6 PAGES OF BARGAIN HI-FI

World Radio History

ISSN 0961-7663



9 770961 766062

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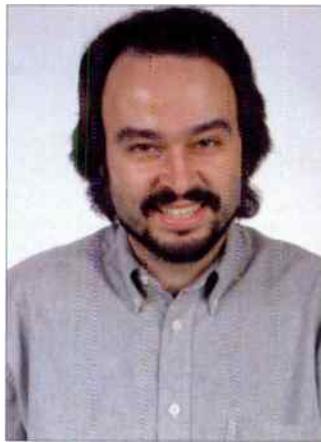
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CELESTION

Maybe it's luck, maybe it's the alignment of Jupiter and Mars; whatever the reason, this issue has been one of those rare months that brings together a couple of pieces of equipment which stand head and shoulders above the competition. Not only that, but these components sound as though they were made to work together.

As I mentioned in June's column, Panasonic's DVD-A350 CD and DVD player is one of a growing group that are ushering in 24-bit 96kHz capability and bridging the gap between single-format and multi-format replay machines. Most importantly for audiophiles though is the 'A350's fluid and musical way with CDs and 24/96 discs. It has an uncanny knack of laying open the emotional content of recordings, unlike most CD-only gear.

Panasonic's parent company, Matsushita, is a huge organisation with the finances to sustain major Research and Development budgets that lead to products like the 'A350. Vadis, manufacturer of the S15 output-transformerless valve amp, is a British operation right at the other end of the scale. And yet here too innovative design has borne fruit with one of the best valve amps we've heard.



JON MARKS

The £2350 S15's freedom from the constraints of an output transformer gives it a fantastically atmospheric, detailed and involving presentation. And in spite of yielding only 15watts when it's going hell for leather, into sensitive, 8ohm loudspeakers the Vadis sounds surprisingly powerful.

Sitting snugly between the Panasonic and Vadis is a small black box from another British company, Creek Audio. Their remote-controlled OBH-12 passive pre-amp made a bit of an impression on Leo Lam - its clarity and lack of coloration have earned it the status of a high-end bargain at £200.

All you need to complete this system is a pair of loudspeakers that will do justice to what precedes them. Jamo's Concert 8s fit the bill nicely.

In spite of their 4ohm load and preference for plentiful current, the Jamos and the S15 were a marriage made, if not in heaven, then at least nearby. Together they sung with a rare transparency and involvement.

Of course, to get the most from any system you have to feed it a diet of decent music. Audiophile pressings are a fine way to nourish your hi-fi, as we found with JVC's new series of XRCD (Extended Resolution) discs. The buffs at the Japan Victor Company have lavished extra care on the mastering and manufacturing process to make the signal chain as transparent as possible. This involved going through various combinations of equipment, connections and power supplies. The end product is a very clear, natural sound from CD with enjoyable extra welly in the bottom end compared to standard discs.

Play an audiophile recording like an XRCD through the system above and you could well be shocked at how convincing the music sounds. Which is good news for recorded-music lovers everywhere, as the cost of truly realistic reproduction keeps falling. Mind you, with the total bill for the DVD-A350, OBH-12, S15 and Jamos adding up to £4750, there's still plenty of scope for more budget advances!

HOW WE TEST THE PRODUCTS

- *Hi-Fi World* has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room. No other hi-fi magazine has the benefit of such facilities.
- *Hi-Fi World* has a dedicated in-house team of experienced listeners, and uses selected freelance professionals. We review thoroughly by extensive auditioning, rather than by quick-fire group listening tests.
- *Hi-Fi World's* engineering team designs a wide range of products in-house. No other hi-fi magazine is so expert and dedicated.



WORLD VERDICT



OUTSTANDING - Superb sound, something we'd use ourselves.



GOOD - Has strong merit. Well worth an audition.



ADEQUATE - Mediocre in several areas. May be worth auditioning.



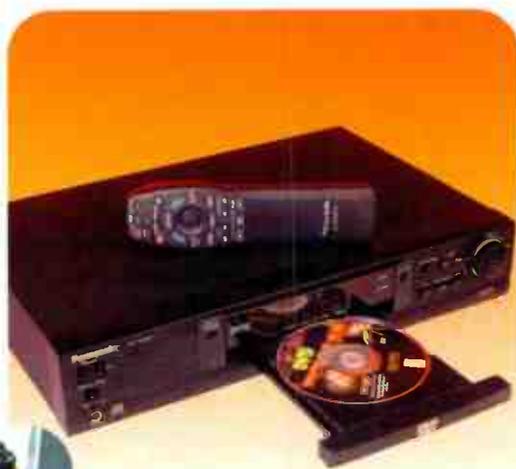
POOR - Seriously flawed. Not worth considering.

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Distributed by:
Marketforce Ltd, 245
Tottenham Court Road,
London, W1P 0AU
Tel: 0171 261 5555

Printed by:
Southernprint, Poole,
Dorset.
Tel: 01202 622226

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35 WATTS FROM UNISON RESEARCH

Two new amplifiers have been announced by the Italian company Unison Research. These are a valve pre and power

combination, known as the Feather One and Power 35, both styled in the matt black and Cherry wood that graces UR's components.



The Power 35 produces 35watts from a pair of EL34s working in push-pull to give what the importers UKD describe as a lush, liquid and transparent sound.

The Feather One pre-amplifier takes its power directly from the '35 and features, for the first time from Unison Research, remote control capability. It will relieve you of £890 with remote control and £795 without, while the Power 35 costs £1525.

UKD
23 Richings Way,
Iver,
Bucks. SL0 9DA
Tel: 01753 652669

TUNING IN TO AMPLIFICATION

To complement the DCD-1550AR CD player reviewed in this issue, Denon have now released a partnering integrated amplifier and FM/AM tuner. The PMA-1500 amplifier has a dual-mono layout with two transformers in the power supply that allows it to double its 70watts into 8ohms to 140watts with 4ohms. 'Ultra High Current' MOS devices are used in the output stage and hooked up to large bi-wire 'speaker terminals.

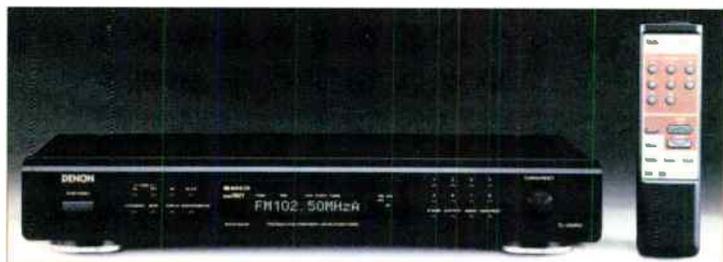
Record players are catered for with an on-board phono stage able to take both MM and MC cartridges. This 14kg amplifier even sports bass and treble tone controls, although these can be by-passed with the Source Direct switching facility.

For airwave listeners there is the TU-1500RD tuner. A tuning wheel allows easy manual scanning, while up to 40 stations can be preset in the memory. To enhance audio performance provision has been made to tailor the RF and IF stages' settings on each preset. For example, RF Attenuation can be selected to counter too strong a signal, while IF Bandwidth is adjustable to allow for the best sound when faced with weak and overlapping stations. The TU-1500RD also has full RDS and EON capability with text information scrolling across



a dot-matrix screen. The price of the tuner is £249.99 and the PMA-1500 amplifier £499.99.

Denon
Chiltern Hill,
Chalfont St Peter,
Gerrards Cross,
Bucks. SL9 9UG
Tel: 01753 888447



ON THE MOVE

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WWW BAJ

A new magazine aimed at the trade and public was announced at the recent April AGM of the British Federation of Audio (BFA). The magazine, to be called the British Audio Journal, will be disseminated on both the Internet, with up-to-date news available to all who log on, and additionally as a trade-only publication on old-fashioned paper.

The Journal will receive its official launch at this year's Renaissance show in September, while the web site should be accessible shortly before. The site can be found at britishaudiojournal.com, and e-mail enquiries can be addressed now to ian@britishaudiojournal.

British Audio Journal
Tel: 0181 949 9156

HELLO GOODBYE, LINN AMPLIFIERS

Linn's old stalwart power amp, the LK100, is being phased out after seven years' service, to be replaced with two new models to suit different applications.

First there is the £475 LK85, rated at 62watts/channel into 8 ohms and 85watts with 4ohm loads. Then there is the £750 LK140, providing 95watts and 140watts/channel into 8ohms and 4ohms respectively.

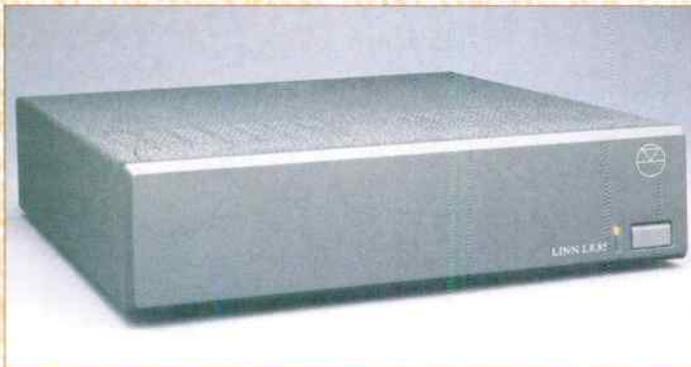
Both stereo amps are treated to the same style boxwork as their LK100 antecedent, although internal changes include the use of high-density surface-mount components.

Active electronic crossover boards are now being made

for the Linn range of loudspeakers (including the AV series). These can easily be fitted to the LK85 and LK140, and adjustment is simple thanks to the rotary tuning switch on the amps' back panels.

Automatic signal sensing allows for remote on/off switching, and protection circuitry will also shut down the amps when overdriven or overheated.

Linn Products
Floors Road,
Waterfoot,
Glasgow
G76 0EP
Tel: 0141 307 7777



BARE NAKED RADIO

If you count yourself a friend of the environment and like to make your commitment clear, you'll be pleased to know BayGen Power's Freeplay wind-up radio is now available with translucent casework. And if too much cranking leaves you tired, the see-through models offer stress relief in the form of a solar panel to power the radio while the sun shines.

Baygen, Tel: 0800 731 3052



SOUND IN SURREY

Micromega now have a new UK distributor, Surrey Sounds, who have been looking after the marque in this country since December last year. They can be contacted at:

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(group tested Feb'98 Hi-Fi World)

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GOING STRAIGHT

The Straight Wire machinery toils on to bring out yet another level of interconnect and loudspeaker cables. Level Four comprises four interconnects and six 'speaker cables. Three of the interconnects, the Solo, Virtuoso Gold and Virtuoso Platinum, feature "Certified Coated Silver/Copper"



conductors arranged co-axially. Prices run from £319.99 to £449.99 for 1m pairs. Those with more capacious wallets should look to the Crescendo, an ultra-low-resistance interconnect with an "advanced helix" design. Again, the copper is certified.

For 'speakers Straight Wire have the Waveguide at £1.75/m, Waveguide 3.0 at £2.99/m, Duo at £2.99/m, Rhythm bi-wire at £5.99/m, Quartet bi-wire at £7.99/m and the Stage bi-wire at £9.99/m.

For the passing of signals other than analogue, Straight Wire have announced five more video and three more digital cables. Prices range from £15.99 to £300 for 1 metre.

CSE
Centre Park Holdings,
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York YO5 8QF
Tel: 01423 359054

TDL BREAK THE ATOM

The Nucleus 3 is TDL's latest transducer arrival. This £199.95 'speaker stands on the floor, unlike its near relation, the Nucleus 2 monitor.

The two-way '3 relies on the same 130mm doped-paper cone and 19mm soft-dome tweeter as the '2, the drivers linked by a second-order bi-wire crossover at 3kHz. To the rear of the 20kg, 750mm tall enclosure lies a tapered reflex-loading port. Claimed response is



40Hz to 20kHz with an 89dB sensitivity.

Domestically compatible finishes available are Black Ash, Rosewood and Cherry. Inveterate tweakers will also enjoy the opportunity to mass-load the Nucleus 3s' lower chamber with sand or lead shot.

TDL Electronics
PO Box 98,
High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire
HP10 9SH
Tel: 01628 850111

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

DENON DVD-3000 DVD/CD PLAYER

Based on Panasonic's DVD-A350, which went down a storm last month, the £700 DVD-3000 boasts a different fascia and stiffer base-plate for improved sonics.

S.A.V. PLINTHS FOR GARRARD 301/401

Most Garrard plinths are a good bet as far as mass goes but lose out on looks. Hoping to combine the best of both worlds is S.A.V.'s new £200 plinth for

the famous Garrards and the classic Thorens TD124.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200 MONOBLOCKS

These massive power amps boast the same circuit topology as the mighty £2500 A1001 integrated but come in individual left and right cylindrical cases and cost a mere £1000.

ANTHEM PRE 1P PHONO STAGE

Sonic Frontiers' 'budget' brand

continues to grow apace with the addition of the £900 Pre 1P. This all-valve MM/MC phono stage uses two 6922s and two 12AT7s with separate regulation for each channel.

AUDIOVECTOR M1 SIGNATURE LOUDSPEAKERS

King of the stand mounters from Danish firm Audiovector is the £1450 M1 Signature. The list of goodies includes a bipolar tweeter and a mineral-loaded polypropylene mid/bass cone.

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This programme runs as a simple file in either Microsoft Excel™ or Lotus 123™ and allows the user to calculate cartridge tracking errors for different arm geometries. It is an essential tool for those wishing to build their own arms or to check the alignment of their current arm/cartridge combination. Errors are displayed both numerically and graphically allowing quick and easy optimisation of any arm geometry.

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At last, Audax's gold-dome, piezo-electric tweeter has made it into a British loudspeaker. Jon Marks meets Heybrook's Octets.

It's a hi-fi system's job to make the earth move musically when you listen to your favourite recordings, but it can't hope to do this without well-engineered loudspeaker drive units to move some air. Drivers come in a range of different flavours, each with its own appeal - electrostatic, panel, dome, cone, ribbon and ionic to name some of the better known. One *modus operandi* which was, until a few years ago, confined to PA gear is piezo electric.

What makes piezo electric an attractive driver proposition for tweeters is that the moving mass involved is minuscule compared to normal dome types, which means faster, cleaner transients and less distortion. The difficulty lies in wringing a flat enough response for hi-fi use from the piezo-electric element - the response curves for most cheap piezo tweeters looks like a cross-section through a mountain range thanks to resonances in their paper diaphragms. As regular readers will know, we have long championed Audax's HD-3P gold-dome piezo-electric tweeter because it succeeds here where others have failed.

Once Audax had come up with a workable design for the HD-3P, the next hurdle to overcome was the price, which has finally dropped to levels where manufacturers can afford to include it in loudspeakers costing less than £2000. Cue Heybrook and their new £1800 Octet floor standers.

THE TECHNOLOGY

Heybrook have done a lot of shopping at Audax - the French company also produce the Aerogel midrange and carbon-fibre bass units. Mike Jewitt, the designer, has these latter modified to his own specifications though. With the woofers, this means a new magnet assembly, voice coil, pole piece and spider. Only chassis, cone and surround of the original remain unchanged. On the tweeter crossover, again everything except the matching transformers has been

changed - the resistors are high-power metal films rather than wirewounds, and the capacitors are ICW polypropylenes. Only the midrange units are as standard, although these are hand picked to ensure close pair matching.

Where the two 6.5in. woofers fire back into the volume of the main cabinet (hewn from and braced with high-density particle board), the 5in. midrange is segregated in a dedicated ceramic enclosure. Minimising vibrational interaction here are the enclosure's decoupling rubber mounts, although the midrange itself is still bolted to the front baffle, as is the tweeter.

With the reflex-tuning port located on the front, the only break in the rear panel is for the BFA bi-wire terminals. Thankfully, Heybrook provide a pack of matching BFA connectors so you can modify your existing loudspeaker cables to fit. A brief peek inside revealed all the crossover components bar the tweeter's (which come on Audax's own PCB) hard-wired together and glued securely to the back of the binding tray.

Readying the Octets for action is as simple as screwing in the mini stands supplied and tightening the spikes. To put the Heybrooks' high-tech drivers to the test, we relied on the Panasonic DVD-A350 and Denon DVD-3000 DVD players as well as a Pink Triangle Litaural. Amplification consisted of Musical Fidelity's A1001 integrated and Vadis' S15 valve amp, with cabling from van den Hul, Pentacone, Kimber and Roksan.

SOUND QUALITY

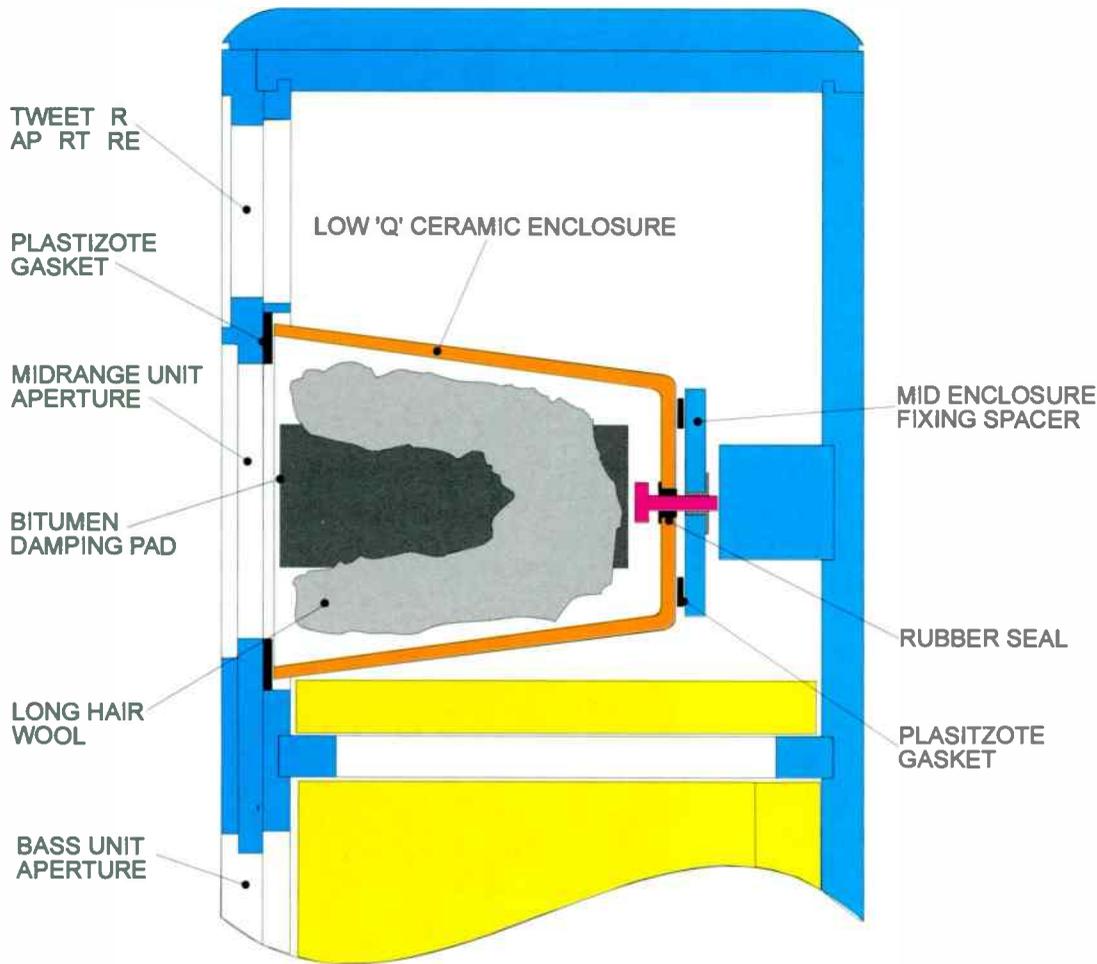
With Eric Bibb and Needed Times' Good Stuff supplying the signal and that Audax tweeter on treble duty,



THE SIGN OF EIGHT

upper frequencies had an audible lack of distortion. Compared to most moving-coil domes, the HD-3P had an unmatched purity, speed and tonal colour. This can

HEYBROOK OCTET CABINET



ACOUSTICALLY DE-COUPLED CERAMIC ENCLOSURE DETAIL

Heybrook Octet £1800

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Clemo Road,
Liskard,
Cornwall
PL14 3NH
Tel: 01579 342866

WORLD VERDICT



The Octets are smooth, sweet and easy-going but prefer simple acoustic music to Rock.

Measured Performance see p111

take a while to get used to - as Mike Jewitt observed, when they hear the Audax for the first time, many listeners comment that the treble output is too low. Measure the Octets though, and you'll find a very even response that shows no droop in high frequencies. This 'lack of volume' as a result of low distortion affects some amps too - relatively large amounts of odd-order distortion produce a louder perceived sound.

Moving down the driver array and staying with Eric Bibb and Co highlighted a 'cuppy' coloration on vocals, especially on sparser tracks like 'Saucer And Cup'. A number of other CDs where subtle detail and acoustic cues have been captured for posterity confirmed that Aerogel midrange wasn't delivering in these respects, where it normally does so well.

Thus began a series of conversations with Heybrook as to altering the damping of the midrange enclosure. Interim experiments included reducing the amount of wool, removing it altogether, and fixing Deflex panels to the rear of the enclosure. Finally, Mike settled on a 6in. by 7in. pad of inch-thick polyester wadding, as well as 0.25mH of inductance instead of 0.35mH in the crossover, which added sparkle and offered better integration between midrange and tweeter. From a measurement point of view this might not have been ideal, but it brought the required spaciousness and detail. A few extra colorations on acoustic guitar (where some notes were emphasised) was the small price to pay for this step forward.

The bottom octaves benefited

from the midrange changes too, with double-bass enjoying new speed and focus where before it had been slightly sluggish. This instrument gave the Heybrooks a chance to show how low they could go, with an attractively weighty rendition. Only on more densely orchestrated tracks (on this CD and Stravinsky's Firebird) did a little muddle and transient smearing set in.

The revamped Octets were happiest relaying music like Oscar Castro-Neves' Tropical Heart, the acoustic guitar and light percussion of this Latin XRCD from JVC rich in tonal colour and harmonics. Sound staging, which is particularly vivid on XRCDs, had the depth and width necessary to construct a three-dimensional depiction of the venue and musicians, although the Heybrooks couldn't equal the self-effacing clarity of the Jamo Concert 8s. With imaging, the latter also managed tighter focus and more accurate location, but you'd expect a stand mounter to win out here.

The gentle softening of leading edges and box thrum on bass notes gives these floor standers a mellow balance which doesn't really gel with up-beat, high-energy Dance and Rock tracks. The Chemical Brothers, Sound Garden and DJ Cher all had their characteristic drive, pace and slam diluted and transmuted into something more musically relaxed and less invigorating.

If you're a fan of the mellifluous who listens to the laid-back side of neutral and doesn't crave absolute clarity, the Octets could well fill your loudspeaker prescription. Tilt your taste towards detail, dynamics and true transparency though, and they're less likely to hit the target next to offerings like Jamo's fractionally pricier Concert 11 floor standers at £2000●

DIGITAL VERY DESIRABLE



The best of today's CD players should beware, think you Mark II now's competitor in Panasonic's £200 DVD-A350 DVD player is here, and it's adding a new sound.

The Chinese have a curse reserved for those who have committed particularly heinous offences - "May you live in interesting times." While I've only ever heard this phrase levelled at traffic wardens in the past, "interesting times" are certainly what the world of hi-fi is going through at present. Luckily for audiophiles, this happens to be much more of a blessing than a curse.

DVD, variously known as Digital Video Disc or Digital Versatile Disc, was, as the name implies, originally intended purely for home cineastes. Groups like the Association for the Renaissance of Audio though have been pushing for DVD's adoption as the music carrier for one potential successor to CD, 24-bit resolution 96kHz-sampled Pulse Code Modulation recordings.

The result is a slew of machines like Panasonic's DVD-A350, which will play 24-bit/96kHz audio discs alongside normal CDs and DVD Videos. So why is this "a blessing"? Because the sort of technology that allows you to replay entire films from a small slab of polycarbonate can do some impressive things for sound quality.

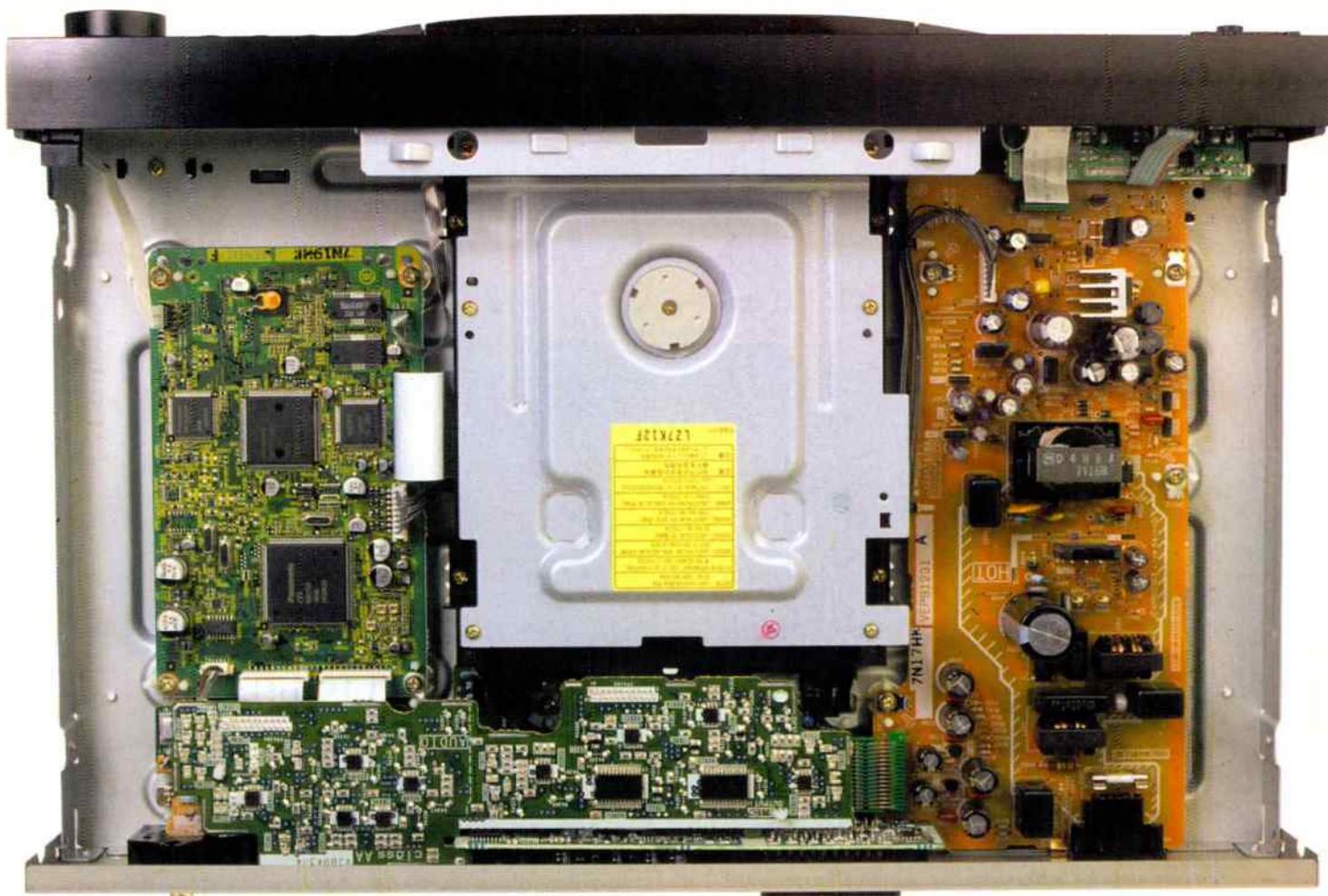
TECHNOLOGY

"Integrated circuit" doesn't really do the Panasonic's constituent parts justice - there are some very, very Large Scale Integrated (LSI) chips on the eight PCBs. The biggest of these sits towards the back of the decoder board MN67750 (who needs acronyms when you've numbers like that?) is basically Video Central, including as it does an MPEG2 video decoder, video DAC, MPEG2 and Dolby Digital surround decoders. Then there's MN102L25Z2F, a system Control IC, and AN8825NFHQ which deals with laser tracking and focus. Doing DAC duty are three Burr-Brown PCM 1716Es, which produce surround, centre, subwoofer and front (also stereo) channels. These are surrounded by hair-thin PCB tracks and some of the smallest S-M caps and resistors around.

Not many S-M components are renowned for their sonic attributes, so Panasonic have added a sprinkling of audio-grade caps, including Elna Cerafines.

SOUND QUALITY

Playing John Lee Hooker's Boom Boom, the DVD-A350



To the right of the sturdy transport is the main power supply board, to the left and rear the various audio and video processing circuits.

had more low-down, dirty grunt than a subterranean pig farm on slop-out day. I've gotten out of the habit of listening to this album on CD as most of the 44.1kHz machinery which has passed through our listening room has made a rather feeble stab at the bass drive and raw, sandpapery lyrics that make up the John Lee Hooker experience. Without these two items in place, the Blues starts to sound more like the lifeless tunes wafting across the aisles in your local supermarket; it lacks life, emotion. The DVD-A350 by contrast made music, not mush, of JLH. This was living, breathing, grizzly heartache underpinned by bass with real smack and speed. This was, in short, not what you'd normally expect from CD.

Benefits accrue for lovers of slightly more electronic persuasions too. Again, another disc not to have tweaked my lobes for many a moon is 'Setting Sun' by the Chemical Brothers. The reasons for my abstinence here are the same as above, plus ropy production which ties most CD players in knots. This time it was a case of, "Pass me something dodgy to imbibe and tie me to the sofa for safety." Feeding a Musical Fidelity A1001 integrated and Origin Live Sovereign/Jamo Concert 8 loudspeakers, the Panasonic doled out massive slabs of taut, deep and fast bass that propelled this number along with manic haste.

This control and speed are what differentiate the DVD-A350 from most CD-only players. It holds the music in a tight enough grip to give it all the support it needs without squashing the vitality out of it. Compare

the Pink Triangle Litaural and Meridian 508.24, for example. Both are fine CD-only spinners, but both sound dynamically sluggish and blurred next to the Panasonic. They're less musical as well. Where the PT, and to a slightly lesser extent the 508.24, score is in lush tonal colour and a marginally smoother midrange.

The sign of a truly competent all-round component is weeding the best out of any recordings. Well, as you might have predicted, the Panasonic does that too. Reference Recordings' HDCD encoding of Stravinsky's Firebird was beautifully open and involving with the help of a Ringmat Statmat.

The DVD-A350 isn't perfect - strings could, at times, sound a touch metallic and bright, as could flute, but these small transgressions pale into insignificance beside the fact that this player is so enjoyable to listen to. There was a plethora of musical expressions which normally get lost on their way through a DAC which the Panasonic gave the kid-glove treatment. This extended to sound staging too, although the boundaries here could have stretched further out in an ideal world.

As a reviewer you become accustomed to second-guessing your recordings - you know what will happen and when. It's a rare component that will play your favourite reviewing tunes and keep you on the edge of your seat all the way through, as the Panasonic does.

If you're a stickler for hole-picking, you could cite as negatives the 'A350's slight brightness (largely remediable by correct cable choice) and slow disc access time (caused by the dual-focus pick-up head).



There's also a remote as attractive as a wart-hog's backside and skimpy build. But for £700, a player as musical as this is a radical improvement on the vast majority of CD-only players.

To be frank, the DVD-A350's competitors come not in the form of CD-only players but rather other DVD/CD machines. With their smooth, quiet transports and advanced electronics, the best of these address a lot of the problems which hold CD replay back. And what makes equipment like the 'A350 such an enticing prospect is that it will not only handle any DVD Video discs you might buy, but it's ready for 24-bit 96kHz recordings too. Slip one of the new 24/96 discs into it and you'll find out just how much better than CD these can be.

DISC-O TIME!

With our treasured Classic Records 24/96 sampler supplying the digits, the Panasonic's output took a massive step forward. Musicality was still the order of the day, only much more so - rhythmically and expressively the 'A350 in 24/96 mode just leaves CD for dead. It was the same story in all other departments as well.

Dynamically, the higher sampling rate was much more natural - faster and less compressed. And it dug up a shedload more ambience and subtlety. The differences were highlighted when identical tracks on 24/96 and 16/44.1 were played side-by-side. Switching from the former to the latter squashed dynamics, discarded detail and flattened the acoustic.

SPIN DOCTOR

Surely, you might be thinking, one very good reason for buying a 24/96 DVD player is that you can use its digital output to feed compatible DACs, like DPA's SX512, in the future. I'm afraid your hopes will be left in tatters - the 'A350 has a sampling down-converter on its optical and SPDIF electrical co-ax outputs. This turns 96kHz into 48kHz. Digital transmitters and receivers that can handle the higher data rate are available though - Crystal for one offer suitable double-speed (96kHz being double DAT's 48kHz sampling rate) ICs.

The Panasonic is similarly unco-operative when it comes to CD-Recordable replay. While the standards set for CD-only players stipulate that they must be able to deal with Finalised CD-Rs and their lower reflectivity, the same isn't true for DVD. This looks like a missed opportunity, as CD-R is growing in popularity rapidly thanks to falling disc and recorder prices. Still, with pre-

recorded CDs, the 'A350 makes a fine transport.

With a Kimber DV-30 co-axial interconnect linking the Panasonic's digital output to the input on PT's Da Capo and Midiman's Flying Cow converters, sweet music was once more the result. However, it looks like the lion's share of the credit for the 'A350's performance as a single-box unit goes to the electronics. Capable though the Panasonic is as a transport (it's certainly the equal of many dedicated disc-spinners at around £1200) it lost a lot of the bass speed and slam it had shown with its own DAC. Treble and midrange were better, with a clean, solid and detailed sound. Overall though, it's probably advisable to stick to the Panasonic package rather than splicing in a different DAC.

WINNING STREAK

Panasonic's DVD-A350 is one of a growing number of multi-disc players which look likely to usurp CD-only machines. The best of solely-CD machines at about £2000 do have a greater tonal scope and are free from the slightly hard, metallic edge to the Panasonic's sound, but they lag in almost every other respect and cost three times as much. And of course, modified audiophile DVD players from smaller hi-fi manufacturers will be along soon, as will a much larger variety of 24/96 discs. Here's to a future so bright you'll have to wear shades!●



The dual-focus pick-up allows the DVD-A350 to read double-layer DVDs.

On the Panasonic's rear panel is a mix of sockets - phonos for audio and SPDIF digital outputs (as well as a Toslink), Scart for mixed audio and video and, finally, S-Video.

Panasonic DVD-A350
£699.99

Panasonic
Willoughby Road,
Bracknell,
Berks. RG12 4PF
Tel: 01344 862444

WORLD VERDICT



The 'A350 wipes out the CD-only competition at the price and threatens players at up to £2000, which better it only in tonal colour.

Measured Performance
see p111

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Valve amplifiers are normally coupled to the outside world through transformers. Vadis' S15 power amp is one of the few to go direct.

One thing you'll notice about any half-decent valve amp is that, when the time comes to move it from A to B, it has an annoying habit of re-arranging your vertebrae. What makes valve amps, particularly those of the single-ended variety, manoeuvre-unfriendly is the assortment of transformers that normally sprout from their top plate. On a stereo chassis, one in each channel steps down the power valves' high output impedance to match that of your loudspeakers, while one more deals with the mains. Oh, and don't forget the extra mass of the inductor in the power supply.

Vadis' S15 15watt power amp only hits two on the metal-lump count next to the customary four, and neither of these is an output transformer. Roger Davis, the S15's designer, opted instead for eight PL519 valves, four per side, in a topology (currently hush-hush due to patent

application) which gives a low enough output impedance for direct connection to a pair of loudspeakers.

There have been other transformer-free valve amps - Futterman, Croft and DCO designs spring to mind (see September 1991's reviews of the two latter amps) - but the technical difficulties involved have often meant it's a case of swings and roundabouts sonically.

What makes the S15 tick are two pairs of ECC85 double triodes and the aforementioned PL519s. The input stage (half of the first ECC85) provides most of the necessary voltage gain. Then comes a DC servo loop (shared between triode sections of the first and second ECC85s) which stabilises bias conditions and permits direct coupling to the output stage. The final ECC85 triode is configured as a cathode-follower to drive the PL519s, which operate in class A and are capacitor-

coupled to the 'speaker terminals.

One thing you'll discover as soon as you've finished leafing through the succinct manual which accompanies the Vadis is that this is not one of those amps you can simply switch on and forget about. It requires an anachronistic yet appealing hands-on approach from owners, who are called upon to nurture and care for it through careful adjustment of the PL519s' grid bias voltages. This is accomplished through the four recessed potentiometers on the front panel. Gentle tweaking here ensures that the needles on the four bias meters stay correctly centred and the output stage is working optimally, which makes a perceptible difference to the sound.

Before listening, the S15 benefits from a 20minute warm-up and then a spot of bias resetting. This is a routine you will find yourself going through every time you fire the Vadis up, but far from being

a chore, it's actually reassuring - you know your treasured amplifier is always in perfect shape. Correct biasing ensures a long valve life too, which is good news for your wallet, although PL519s can be had for around £20 a piece. If all this sounds like too much rigmarole, a more traditional valve amp might be the answer, but you'd miss out on the rewards that the Vadis brings.

How would you expect a signal that's side-stepping metres of cable and acres of steel laminations to sound? Clearer, more delicate, more immediate and more transparent? Two hours or so after switch-on, the S15 will be telling you it's exactly these areas where transformer-coupling runs out of steam.

As the manual states 8ohm loads are preferred, we chose the 4ohm Jamo Concert 8s and a dose of Soundgarden's thrashy A-Sides CD to drop the Vadis in at the deep end. Well, for an amp that's not supposed to be happy into low-impedance loads, the S15 dealt almost contemptuously with track after track of dense, Metalhead music that floors most thermionic contenders.

Bass was a touch light and loose around the edges but still superior to what any single-endeds and most push-pulls tease from the Jamos. On the other hand, tuning into the midrange and treble (not portions of the spectrum where this CD is famous for its purity) was a shock. What the Vadis does that leaves everything else at the price in its wake is resolve detail on a microscopic scale in the wholly natural manner that tends to distinguish the best of stratospherically expensive equipment from the merely mortal.

Peeling away the layers of electronic obfuscation from 'The Day I Tried To Live' and 'Burden In My Hand' uncovered sound stage depth in a recording that has never before stretched front-to-back perspectives beyond the pancake. Images filled our listening room in 3-D

without recourse to coloured glasses, and the unadulterated musicality of the Panasonic DVD-A350/S15/Concert 8s had me endlessly hitting the Repeat button.

Eric Bibb, John Lee Hooker, Stravinsky, Mahler, Janis Joplin, The Chemical Brothers - the S15 was truly egalitarian in its treatment of all. It has such clarity that it faded into the background as part of the system and relinquished centre stage to the music.

A couple of instruments illustrate the Vadis' skill with tonal colour. Cymbals suffer a pretty rough ride through a lot of amplification, their golden shimmer transmuted into harsh, brittle 'spit'. The S15 portrayed them with a

power, smoothness and harmonic richness the majority of hi-fi can only hint at.

Electric guitars, which generally come across as more processed than a tanker of mushy peas, had a character and range of expression I've rarely heard

outside a live performance where the musician (a friend) was plugged into valve gear and a custom-made horn PA.

Speaking of horns, the S15 would work a treat with Thomas Transducers' Virtuoso Golds (reviewed in May 1998), with their undemanding load and monstrous efficiency. This pairing could form the core of a superlative system headed up by Panasonic's DVD-A350 and Danish Audio Connect's CT1 stepped attenuator as a passive pre-amp. While this ensemble would tip the scales at a shade over £6500, you'd be hard pushed to better it with most alternatives at twice the price.

Well, after the plaudits come the pitfalls. Sonically the S15, matched with the right 'speakers (read sensitive and easy to drive, although the Jamos are one obvious exception) is hard to fault. That slight bass looseness remained across a range of transducers (Heybrook Octets, Ruark Epilogues, Mission 771s, Origin Live Sovereigns) and at times a tad more dynamic scale and weight would have been nice too. But this will act as a thorn in the side of Reggae, Rap and Classical organ lovers alone. (In this case, the 50watt M50 monoblocs would be worth investigation).

The main stumbling block is the way the amp looks at the moment - bulky, black and very home-made. This is soon to change, Roger Davis informs us. A second-generation chassis is being drawn up, one that is more aesthetically acceptable.

It's always a pleasant surprise to come across a new, and usually small, British hi-fi outfit producing genuinely innovative equipment. Although many such concerns fail to reach the sonic standards set by larger companies and fall by the wayside in the dog-eat-dog business of modern hi-fi, Vadis with their OTL technology could teach most valve amp manufacturers a thing or two ●

How would you expect a signal that's side-stepping metres of cable and acres of steel laminations to sound? Clearer, more delicate, more immediate and more transparent?

Vadis S15 £2350

Vadis
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Tel: 01505 504128

WORLD VERDICT



The S15's delicacy and clarity are impossible to beat for the money. Bass is not quite on a par with mid and treble, but still better than most.

Measured Performance see p111

*The alphabet according to
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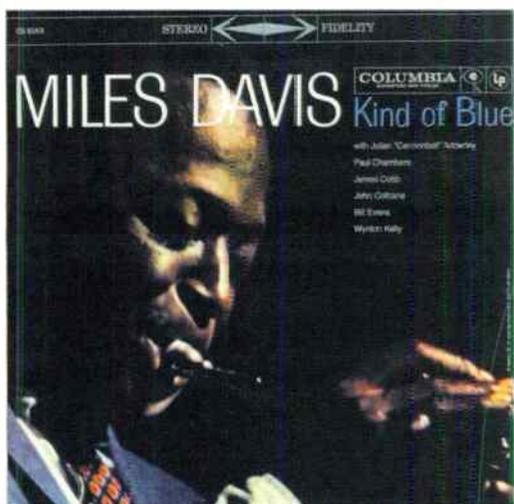
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World Radio History

A NEW REVOLUTION

David Price looks at the latest crop of audiophile vinyl releases.



MILES DAVIS

ABSOLUTE ANALOGUE 62066

KIND OF BLUE

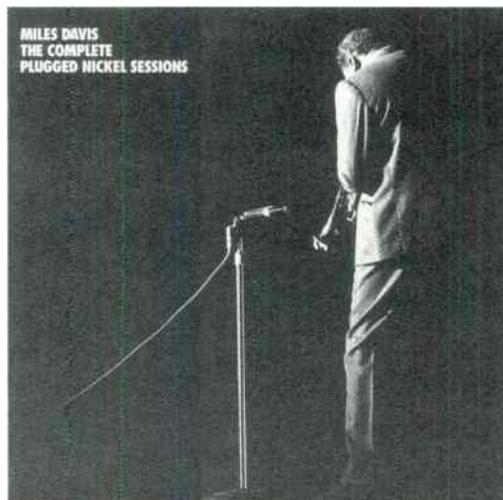


This British label's pressing of *Kind Of Blue* is notably cheaper than Classic's at £17.50, and not everyone will miss the latter's speed-corrected second disc. Pressing quality is as good as the more expensive US discs, although the reverse side of the sleeve doesn't quite replicate all the charming late-Fifties glory of the original Columbia LP.

Sound quality was good, being notably cleaner and more detailed than the original pressing, but it didn't quite match the strong bass and transparency of the Classic version. It also seemed rather topky, with a tendency to sound hard on ride cymbals and emphasise tape hiss. Still, this is unlikely to be a problem through an average well-balanced system. Overall, a high-value, no-nonsense, budget audiophile release.

This Classic Records reissue has caused quite a stir. The story goes that the studio recorder used at the 1959 recording session was running 1.25% slow, meaning that when the tape was played back at the correct 15in. per second, the pitch was slightly sharp. However, no one noticed and it went onto the Columbia LP we all know and love, at the wrong speed! This reissue contains both this version plus the correct speed cut on a second disc, backed up by a previously-unreleased take of 'Flamenco Sketches'.

Both use heavyweight virgin vinyl, and the gatefold sleeve is nicely made with additional sleeve notes. Sound quality is what you'd expect from Classic, bettering the already impressive original imprint by quite a margin. Vinyl noise and tape hiss are lower, bass deeper and more weighty, stereo separation better with sharper image location, and a slightly sweeter, cleaner treble. Although the limitations of the original recording mean it'll never equal the likes of the Mercury Living Presence releases, it's still a highly rewarding listen. A fabulous slice of vinyl, albeit a touch expensive at around £25.



MILES DAVIS
THE COMPLETE
PLUGGED NICKEL SESSIONS

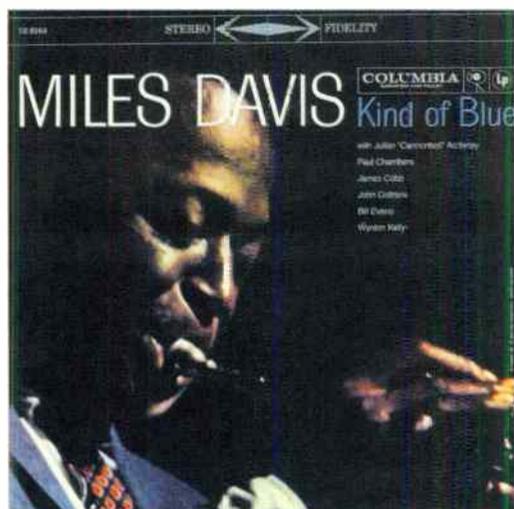
MOSAIC MQ10-158

THE COMPLETE PLUGGED



This lavish 10-LP box-set brings together previously-released material with hitherto-undiscovered tapes from Miles Davis' legendary Chicago Plugged Nickel sessions. At £150 it isn't cheap, but it's beautifully presented and includes a 12-page booklet featuring extensive notes and photos. The discs themselves are the customary 180gm audiophile vinyl with meticulously quiet surfaces and soft inner sleeves.

Lovingly remixed from the original analogue three-track masters, the sound quality is excellent - bright and open, yet warm and spacious. However, it's not quite as



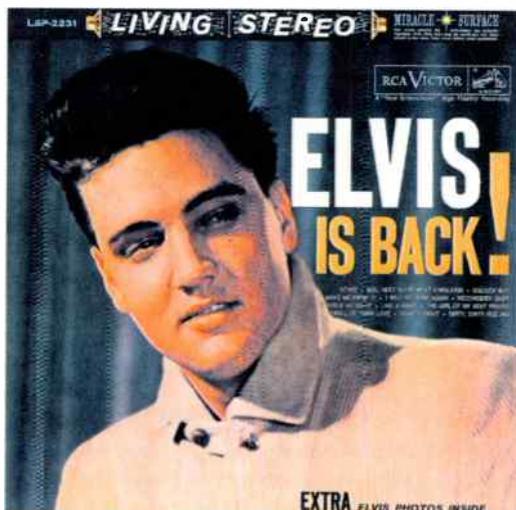
MILES DAVIS

CLASSIC RECORDS CS8163

KIND OF BLUE



effortlessly dynamic as some top-notch Jazz reissues, thanks to the tight groove spacing necessary to fit the long performances on a single side. Still, any Jazz buff would love this, and Miles aficionados would doubtless give their right arm for it. An exquisite, if expensive, collection.



ELVIS PRESLEY
DCC COMPACT CLASSICS LPZ-2037

ELVIS IS BACK!
🌐🌐🌐🌐

Fans of 'The King' will doubtless be in awe of this superb DCC imprint of his 1960 RCA Living Stereo release, *Elvis Is Back!* Using the original analogue masters of the Nashville Studio mixes, this album sounds fresher than most Nineties recordings. The pressing onto 180gm virgin vinyl is first class, and the quality of the laminated gatefold sleeve with its "extra Elvis photos inside" the best you'll find.

This is a consummately musical LP, with the shimmering highs and transparent midband you'd expect from DCC's premium-priced releases. The only downside is the slightly lightweight bass, probably due to the original studio equipment. A supreme example of the vinyl art then, made all the better by stunning sleeve repro work.

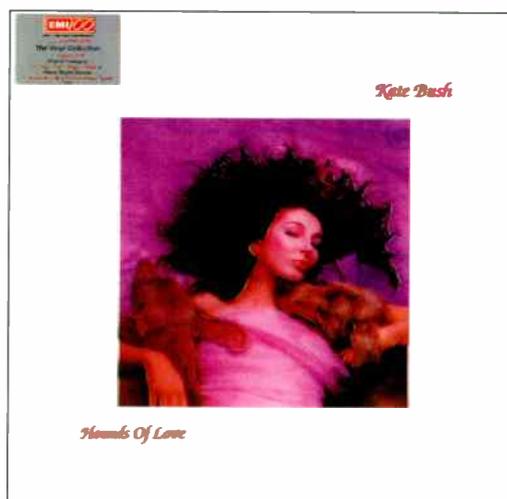


STRAVINSKY
CLASSIC RECORDS SR90226

THE FIREBIRD
🌐🌐🌐🌐

This 1960 Mercury Living Presence recording is proof positive (if we ever needed it) that it is possible to capture the power and dynamics of an orchestra without sophisticated microphone techniques, touch-up mics or multi-channel mixers. Just three microphones feeding a half-inch, three-track tape recorder recreate the LSO to stunning effect.

The Classic Records reissue boasts a startlingly deep and realistic sound stage, frightening, firecracker dynamics and a rich and full-bodied tone. It's a breathtaking example of analogue at its best. Again on fresh 180gm wax, pressing quality is high - extremely quiet apart from the inevitable hissing of the analogue masters. The sleeve is also good but can't match the Living Stereos in this respect. Still, this won't concern you after you've heard one of the most awesomely-recorded ballets around. Quite superb - mere words cannot do it justice!



KATE BUSH
EMI CENTENARY SERIES OC064 05503

HOUNDS OF LOVE
🌐🌐🌐🌐

The second series of EMI Centenary reissues continues the formula of 180gm virgin-vinyl discs, the original laminated sleeves, additions (ie, posters, postcards, etc) and polythene inner sleeves. But this time round, where applicable, the original analogue masters have been used.

EMI say the Centenary series has no audiophile pretensions - it's simply a "high-quality product" retailing at under £15. They needn't be so modest because this disc sounds superb - sweeter and warmer than the first series, with rich bass, open midband and silky highs. And it all comes over as mellifluously musical, unlike some of the more showy, 'in-your-face' audiophile pressings. The same applies to other titles in the series such as the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers* (complete with the original Andy Warhol zip sleeve), and John Lennon's *Imagine*. Fine sound, keen pricing and immaculate packaging make the new Centenary series the best value here. Let's hope EMI release a third batch soon!

Audiophile vinyl supplied by Vivante, tel: 0181 977 6600●

RESOLVER

First there were Gold CDs and HDCD discs.

Now Jon Marks looks at the new Extended Resolution CDs from JVC.

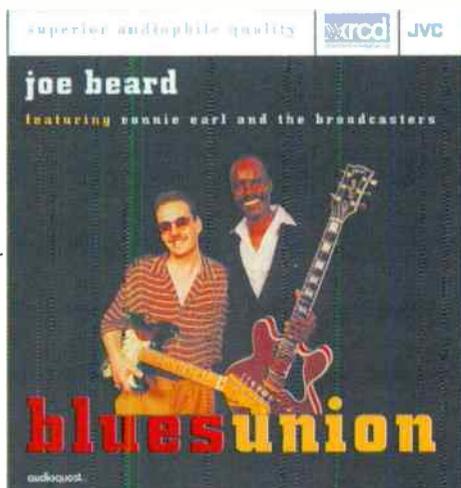
The Compact Disc has built up almost as many tweeky followers as the LP, with adherents joining one or all of the Green Pen brigade, the Disc Stabiliser gang or the Statmat ring. Attempting to optimise the replay chain is one direction to move in when you're after more from your music. Another is to leave the hardware and concentrate on the software, as various specialist manufacturers have (see the previous two pages for some well-known examples).

In JVC's earlier CD incarnations, analogue signals were converted to digital using the company's 20-bit K2 Super Coding. This ADC, with its 128-times oversampling, was claimed to yield a wide dynamic range and reduced harmonic distortion at low levels, where CD starts to become extremely non-linear. Now, the Japan Victor Company has decided to delve further into the production process in search of superior sound.

Stage one sees the K2 Super Coding ADC taking its input directly from the mastering console. The 20-bit data it outputs is then stored on a Sony PCM-9000 Magneto-Optical recorder in preference to the more customary U-matic 1630 tape, which is less robust. The MO disc then travels to JVC's manufacturing plant in Yokohama.

In the plant, the recording is fed through another K2 DAC to turn 20 bits into 16 prior to EFM (Eight-Fourteen Modulation) encoding. Finally, the EFM signal is reshaped before it reaches the laser which cuts the glass master. Identical PCM data can be represented by different EFM patterns selected by algorithms in the EFM coder, and these vary from model to model. Industry anecdotes point to the fact that, although the data in these EFM patterns is identical, their arrangement can affect sound quality.

Whenever the digital signal is transmitted from one component to another, stringent anti-jitter techniques and SDIF-2 interconnection are employed. Apparently, listening tests showed that these, and aluminium as the disc material, were the best options. Technologically, a lot of effort seems to have been put into



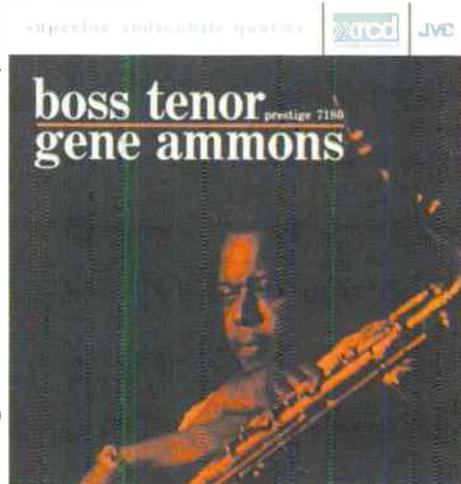
XRCD, but how does it sound? We found out with the following recordings. . .

JOE BEARD

JVCXR-0025-2

Like all the XRCD releases, this one is tastily presented in book form - the thick cardboard front and back covers protect a booklet which describes the workings of XRCD, as well as sleeve notes. The disc itself nestles in a cardboard pocket. This is possibly not the best choice of material - a polythene inner would be less likely to cause scratches.

Whirring inside a Panasonic DVD-A350, Denon DVD-3000 and Pink Triangle Litaural, Joe Beard, along with Ronnie Earl and The Broadcasters, was frighteningly clear and solid. Imaging and sound staging stood out for their precision and clarity, while the lower octaves had the sort of weight and smack CD so often fails to deliver. But the prime beneficiary of XRCD is musicality - numbers like 'Lay With Me Sometime' blasted along with real Blues power.

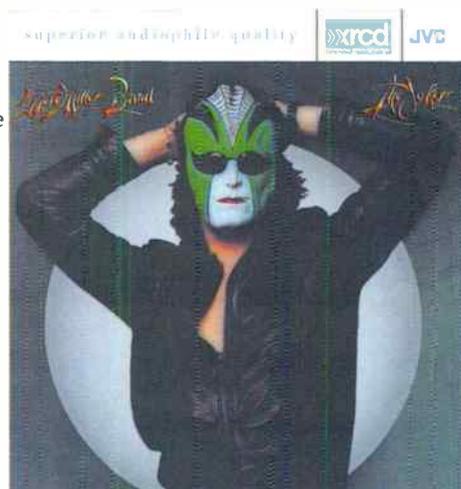


GENE AMMONS

JVCXR-0033-2

This transcription from the original 1960 master suffers a little from tape hiss, but this doesn't obstruct the creamy smoothness of Ammons' tenor saxophone. Low-level details like reverberation and decay are faithfully preserved, which endows cymbals with a delicacy missing from many CDs.

Natural expression and subtlety are once more where XRCD bears fruit. Double-bass had a taut pungency and speed that marked a change from the slight sense of artificiality present in more mundane pressings. If you're a fan of the smoky, small-venue atmosphere, Boss Tenor is one to track down.



STEVE MILLER BAND

JVC-0043-2

On the other hand, if Rock is the genre close to your heart, there's the Steve Miller Band.

The production balance of this album might be biased towards the high frequencies, but this XRCD's treble smoothness avoids any potential problems with harshness. Imaging is very precise, with the band members easy to picture within the acoustic on studio tracks, and there's an attractive rhythmic drive and dynamic scale too.

This may not be the greatest piece of sonic engineering, but the XRCD at least lets its good points shine●

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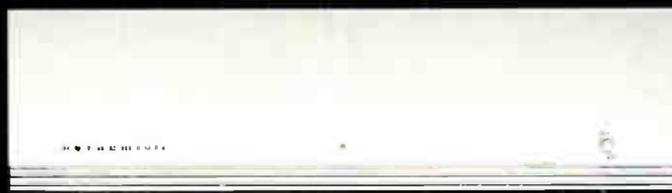
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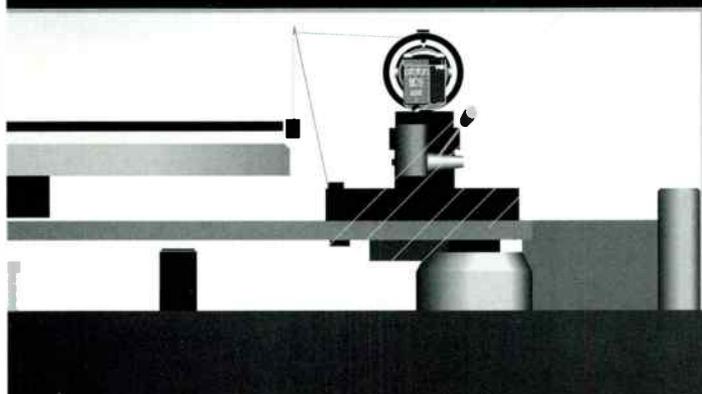


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ROUND AND AROUND

Andrew Harrison arms his turntable with Transfiguration's £1000 Spirit MC cartridge.

Although the man behind Transfiguration is one Seiji Yoshioka, the Spirit's comprehensive installation instructions betray an American rather than a Japanese audiophile influence, with such suggestions as "we respectfully suggest you gloat over your jewel-like new acquisition while the cartridge is still secured to its box. When you feel temporarily fulfilled, kindly refit the guard very carefully." Indeed. And on the thorny issue of needle longevity: "the stylus should provide at least 1000 hours - possibly much more - of transfiguringly splendid recreation of your favourite music". Incidentally, a stylus replacement can be undertaken by the manufacturers through replacing the entire cartridge with a reconditioned example for £485.

Sitting at the end of a tone-arm, the Spirit has the look of an alien space craft awaiting touchdown on Planet Vinyl. The unusual shape of the Spirit's body holds a unique generator assembly where two ring magnets surround the coil without the benefit of yokes. This form of construction, where yokeless magnets encircle the coil symmetrically, is claimed to overcome the problems of asymmetric and unfocused magnetic fields, which allegedly produce unnatural distortions and non-linear frequency response.

Whatever the advantages of this geometry may be, one thing's for sure: with its round body, this is one of the trickiest and fiddliest cartridges you would ever care to align in a tone-arm. Of course, as importer Martin Brewster of Audio Reference is quick to point out, lateral alignment of cartridge to headshell should be made with respect to the boron cantilever rather than the cartridge body anyway. However, I found the stylus guard invaluable here. Once it's fitted, the arm can be safely lowered onto the alignment protractor with the guard's sides superimposing on

the protractor's grid lines.

The manufacturer's specification gives frequency response as 10Hz to 20kHz +1.5dB, with extra bandwidth up to 40kHz +2dB. This attention to ultrasonics might squeeze extra information out of older, pre-CD recordings whose bandwidths extend to 25kHz or 30kHz, but modern, digitally-mastered LPs have no information imbedded in the groove beyond the 22kHz point. Output at 1kHz is given as 0.4mV, at 3.54cm/sec, a healthy figure borne out by a dynamic sound via the MC stage of a Linn Kairn pre-amp. For this review the 7.8gm Spirit was fitted to an LP12 Lingo with LVII Ittok.

The flipside of the tricky installation is that, once correctly aligned, the Spirit is a truly natural and honest cartridge. With live recordings like Roger Waters' Berlin Wall concert, the electric atmosphere was underscored by the precision of the performances, the instrumental playing in turn rendered musical and believable by this cartridge as it locked on to the groove from start to finish.

Sinead O'Connor's vocal overdub on 'Mother' was held rock steady as acoustic drums punched out the rhythm, and accordion and backing vocals from The Band filled out the harmony. The voices in the chorus were especially free from any intermodulation or beating effects, which can trip up some MCs.

The Spirit passed a similar test in the choral opening to Tchaikovsky's 1812 on Deutsche Gramophon. Here, the lush choral contribution made a tangible opening to the ensuing spectacular. With the Spirit at the front end, each line was clearly and effortlessly delineated.

As a final confirmation that this cartridge enjoys a little drama, Beethoven's Wellington's Victory was given an outing with von Karajan on baton detail. The ping-pong stereo as the two sides of the orchestra made battle was something to behold, the muskets,



cannons and other assorted armaments almost infusing the room with the smell of gun powder.

Where the Spirit did miss out though was on the last degree of detailing where the top-end Ortofonos excel. Despite the advertised treble extension, the Transfiguration was not overly revealing and lacked a little airiness - I suspect its tortoise is in the tuning area. Another chink in its armour was located in the bass regions. While speed was impressive, it missed out on the bottom-end welly of a Linn Arkiv or Troika. What it shared with these cartridges is the facility, after careful set-up, to leave the record player to play the records.

And "careful set-up" really is the phrase that pays - if you're satisfied with the sound inside an hour you're very lucky. The Spirit (like many a cartridge, but more so) responds favourably to patient adjustment vis à vis tracking weight and VTA. In the LP12 it gave the best results with the arm minutely raised at the pillar end and a tracking force of between 2.0gm and 2.1gm.

Transfiguration's Spirit is a cartridge to put on any shortlist of pick-ups in the hallowed £1000 price bracket. Its mild shortcomings hold it back from the top spot, but do look out for a revised version soon, which will wear the sober jacket of a straight-sided body.

Transfiguration Spirit
£1000

Audio Reference
Unit 8,
Enterprise Park,
Skyfield Industrial Estate,
Guildford,
Surrey GU1 1R8
Tel: 01483 575344

WORLD VERDICT



The Spirit is a balanced all-rounder that misses out only on the last ounce of detail and bass weight.

Measured Performance
see p111

Vadis

DIRECT OUTPUT

VALVE POWER AMPLIFIERS

The superior musical and sonic qualities of valve power amplifiers are now well established, and many music lovers and professional users have converted (reverted?) from transistor to valve amplification. Currently popular units, from traditional Williamson-based ultra-linear class B designs, to very expensive "high-end" single ended triode amplifiers, depend on a transformer to match the high anode resistance of the output valves to the low impedance of the loudspeaker.



The **Vadis** direct output stage achieves the required low output impedance without a matching transformer, using readily available valves, and giving a very wide bandwidth with low distortion at full power. The clarity and accuracy of reproduction is exceptional, with a lifelike sound stage clearly defined both spatially and musically. Each amplifier is hand built to order, and fully tested before delivery. In addition to traditional black, alternative colour finishes are available on request.

Vadis is a new company, designing and building high quality valve amplifiers in Scotland.

Vadis AMPLIFIERS

Kirkland, 32 Head Street, Beith, Ayrshire KA15 2EU. Tel: 01505 504128

Whatever the company's previous successes, producing an £800 integrated amplifier is one very bold move for Arcam. Doubly so, when adding the matching 10P power amp for bi-amping takes the overall price up to a very un-Arcam £1400. Despite Arcam's undoubted technical and marketing expertise, there's some tough opposition to be faced out there.

At this price you'll find all the highly respectable and established British companies. Linn, Meridian, Naim, Audiolab, Quad and Exposure were, until now, rarely mentioned in the same breath as Arcam. If the Alpha 10 Integrated has a target then it is very much in the mould of an Audiolab, Linn or Meridian - well engineered but perhaps trading off ultimate sonics for a broad range of features and ease of use.

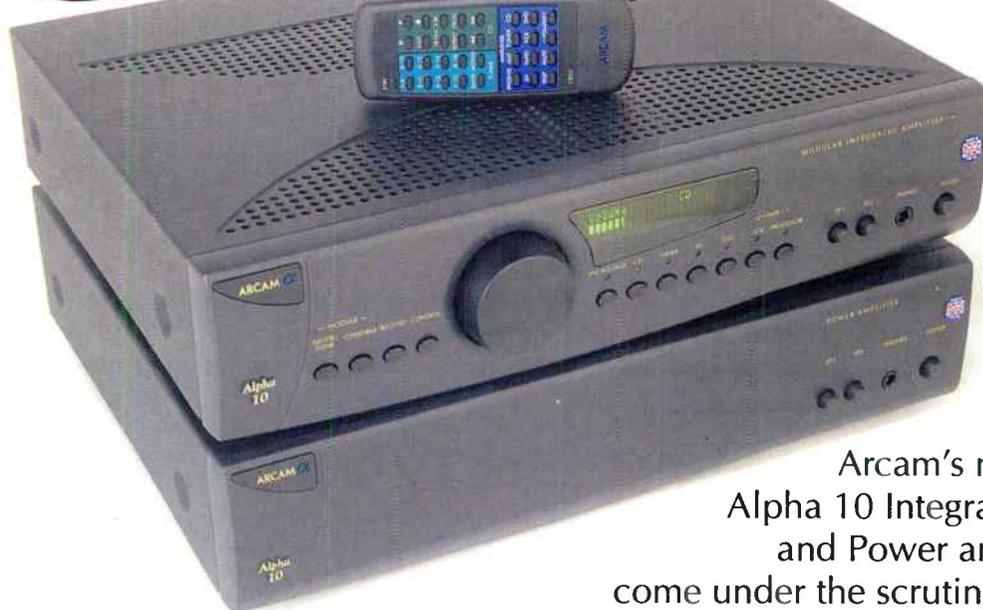
The Arcam certainly fulfils this last brief handsomely. Full remote control, seven inputs, two sets of 'speaker outputs and a separate Record selector are just the start. A first for a stereo amp from Arcam is an extinguishable, dot-matrix display. At the moment this simply provides volume and source information. In the future Arcam promise this will front information from the optional multi-room and Dolby Digital (or DTS) processor modules.

Lifting the bonnet is a slight disappointment - there's a huge toroidal transformer, Aerovox capacitors and some damping pads here and there, but no overtly audiophile parts. If it sounds good, then this can certainly be forgiven. One thing that can't is the distinctly average finish. The thin, plastic, tear-drop front panel may look slick on the £260 Alpha 7 but is tired and tacky on a product approaching a grand.

To judge the effect of adding a 10P power amp, I drafted in a pair of bi-wireable Mission 752 Freedom loudspeakers. The Arcam was fronted with a Roksan Xerxes X turntable and the listening tests began with the new album Tin Planet from Space.

'The Unluckiest Man In The World', was the first track to benefit from the Arcam's 100watt punch. Just as you'd expect, the sound was

GRADE ALPHA?



Arcam's new Alpha 10 Integrated and Power amps come under the scrutiny of Dominic Todd.

powerful and expansive. Vocals leapt forward into the room without the balance becoming too forceful. Although treble detail was good, cymbals and high-pitch vocals provoked a certain splashiness, and sibilance ruled out matching the Alpha 10 Integrated with bright 'speakers.

If the treble response wasn't up to Arcam's best, the opposite was true of the bass - exceptionally deep, yet fast and natural. Although the smooth sweetness of a similarly-priced valve amp was missing, the 10 remained cohesive and in control of the music. Adding the 10P power amp made for a big improvement. The treble response was leaner and more detailed, and the bass became even deeper and quicker.

I returned to the Integrated alone for 'The Lark Ascending' by Vaughan Williams. The orchestra was rather veiled and solo violin wasn't as expressive as it can be through other amps of this price. Timbre and timing were both fine, but the presentation had me sitting at the back of the auditorium rather than in the front row. Adding the 10P had the bass line grumbling suitably when required, yet once the bass died the piece lost its appeal, with the effect being rather stilted and disjointed.

Turning to something a little more up-beat ('Fast Food' by Richard

Thompson) appeared to suit the Arcams better. Curiously, the bass drum and mandolin were extremely well resolved while backing vocals weren't quite as clearly defined as they should have been. Sound staging was a strong point, with every instrument given plenty of space within a cohesive acoustic. In spite of this, somehow the Arcams still failed to really involve, as many amps at the price can.

The Alpha 10 Integrated runs the risk of trying to be all things to all audiophiles, and almost gets away with it. The features and upgradability aspects are excellent. Certain areas of the sound impress too - it has a meaty power delivery that will have little trouble driving most 'speakers. The sound staging is above average, and vocals are well projected from the rest of the mix, but it seems Arcam were so preoccupied with the sheer control and 'grip' of the '10 that they didn't spend quite enough time on the subtler aspects of music. Adding the 10P greatly improves things, but then so it should for an amp combination costing £1400.

If sound quality isn't the ultimate criterion, the Alpha 10 Integrated and Power have much to offer as a fine centre for a complete home entertainment system. But the dedicated audiophile should look elsewhere●

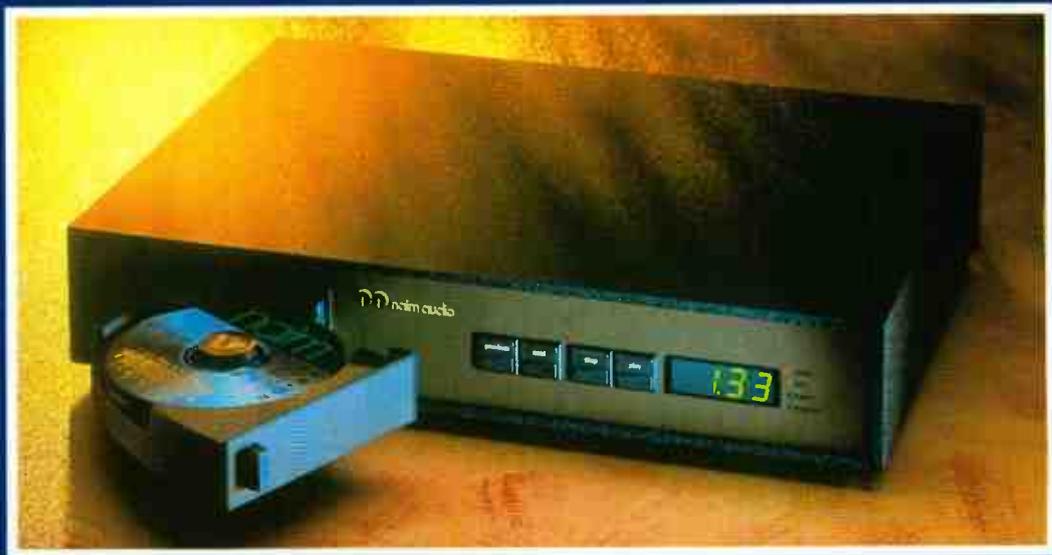
Arcam Alpha 10
Integrated £799.90
Arcam Alpha 10 Power
£599.90

Arcam
Pembroke Avenue,
Denny Ind. Centre,
Waterbeach,
Cams. CB5 9PB
Tel: 01223 203203

WORLD VERDICT



Both the Alpha 10 Integrated and Power lag behind the best of the competition, and build is flimsy.



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CARBONED CASTLE

The Castle Severn 2's price may have increased with their revision, but Andrew Harrison listens to a whole new loudspeaker.

Following on from the success of the Castle Avon, reviewed here in December 1996, Castle have modified their Severn with the magic ingredient of carbon fibre, and in the process have decided to change more than just a driver.

Gone is the front reflex port, replaced with one that fires downwards. In this arrangement, a large tube vents through an angled internal brace at the bottom of the cabinet, the cabinet supported above the plinth on 6mm plastic spacers. This provides an omnidirectional output of low frequencies. Volume has increased too, from 17 litres to 22 litres. Finally, the crossover has undergone modification to accommodate the new driver, including three polypropylene capacitors alongside ferrite and air-cored inductors.

All these details add up to a rather different 'speaker from the original Severn, which in itself had a modest and unassuming signature. Having heard both versions previously in retail and domestic environments, I was happy to seize the chance to hear the revised Severn 2 under more critical conditions.

The audition began badly when the review sample started performing below par sonically. Treble was rolled off to the point where it was plain dull, and a low-midrange coloration further spoiled the picture. These first Severn 2s in their beautiful Yew veneer were duly replaced by some Mahogany examples. A couple of running-in days later they were set up for some earnest listening.

"That's more like it," was my first thought on hearing the sweet and open sound of the Minnesota Orchestra's version of Stravinsky's Firebird. With the Severns well away from walls, the opening bass notes filled the room with a profound depth of stage. There was still a hint of boxiness in the low mid but not enough to destroy the stereo illusion of an orchestra in the room.

Despite being played on a non-HDCD Meridian 508.24, this HDCD

disc was smooth and natural enough for the Severn 2s to disappear in the musical performance. What brought attention to their presence again was an edge to the tweeter on certain strings and brass. Castle's loudspeakers have suffered like this for a few years now - why they don't produce a smoother tweeter is a mystery.

As the Stravinsky work unfolded I had that devilish urge to raise the volume; something about the dynamics of the piece through the Severn 2s suggested they could take the power, and they dutifully obliged, excepting an end-stop crack when confronted by the timpani in the climactic conclusion.

This ending was also marginally marred by the glassiness at the top end, a pedantic quibble perhaps but the main detraction from an otherwise sterling performance.

Source-swapping to the Denon DVD-3000 I sampled the Garbage track 'Stupid Girl'. The Severns surprised me here with a keen sense of timing unfettered by their occasionally soft bass. Remembering that the Severns reward the effort of bi-wiring, the crossover links were whipped out and - behold! - an extra half-octave of bass plus a wider sound stage ensued. The smearing of hi-hat cymbals also became less evident, although conversely the timing seemed a little less certain, a little less metronomic.

Slight concern over the Castles' ability to convey vocals prompted a few choice songs from Tori Amos and Sneaker Pimps, and indeed it was evident that such vocalists were sited marginally further back in the



mix than usual. What also started to niggle was an apparent loss of detailing at the highest frequencies.

I placed Classic Records' 24/96 sampler in the Denon and found myself once again almost overwhelmed by how good the über-format sounded. Now the Severns really were disappearing, leaving behind a glimpse of musical reality as a Trad Jazz band stomped along with great fucidity. The ambient presence at the top end was the striking trademark here, although it did highlight that grainy tweeter.

The original Severn with its smaller injection-moulded driver was last priced at £539 in standard finish, making the £579 tag on the Severn 2s look like good value for money. They combine excellent imaging and sound staging with a civilised control. And bass depth is in another league when set against their antecedent. The sole blot on the copy book is that tweeter.

Castle Severn 2 £579.90

Castle Acoustics
Park Mill,
Shortbank Road,
North Yorkshire
BD23 2TT
Tel: 01756 795333

WORLD VERDICT



Apart from some hardness to the tweeter, the Severn 2s are accomplished all-rounders.

Measured Performance
see p111

DENON DVD/CD PLAYER AND CREEK COMPONENTS WORTH £1400 TO BE WON

This month's four prizes are the Denon DVD-3000 DVD/CD player, Creek OBH-8SE phono stage and OBH-2 PSU, Creek OBH-12 passive pre-amp and Creek T43 tuner.

Denon's £700 DVD-3000 DVD/CD player may be aimed more at fans of home cinema than pure hi-fi, but as we've discovered here at Hi-Fi World, it punches well above its price when it comes to sound quality (read next

Creek's OBH-12 passive pre-amp and Vadis' S15 output transformerless valve power amp, the DVD-3000 proved itself equal to any of the musical challenges set it.

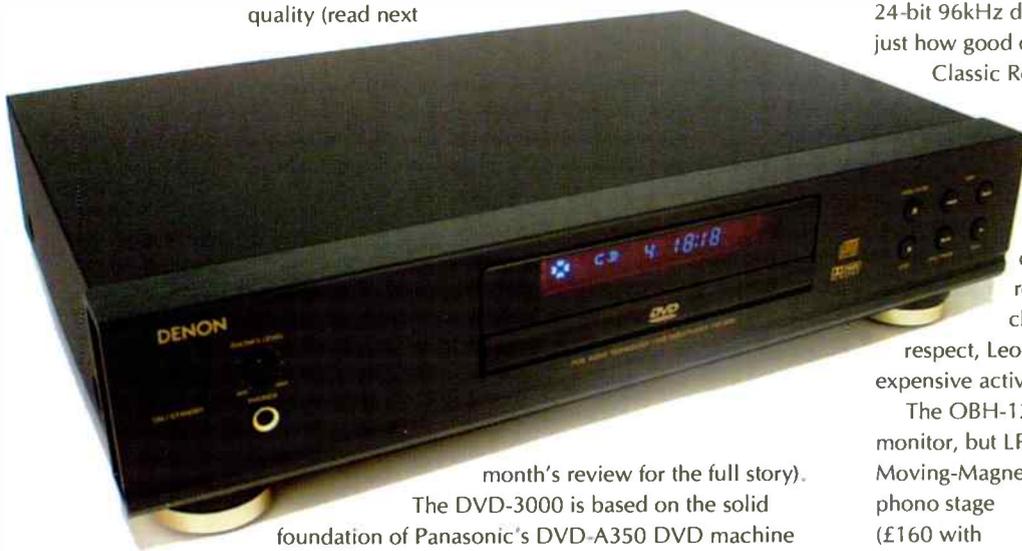
For CD replay alone the Denon pays its way. Slip a 24-bit 96kHz disc into its drawer though and you'll realise just how good digits can sound. With new releases from Classic Records, the DVD-3000 produced a high-end performance most CD-only players can merely dream about.

Analogue signals of this calibre deserve a transparent pre-amp to preserve their integrity, which is where Creek's OBH-12 comes in. This £200 passive pre-amp with remote control imposes little of its own character on what passes through it. In this

respect, Leo Lam found it outstripped many much more expensive active pre-amps.

The OBH-12 will take two line inputs and a tape monitor, but LP lovers will have to turn to the OBH-8SE Moving-Magnet phono stage (£160 with OBH-2 PSU) for music dug from the groove.

This small black box left David Price in no doubt as to its competence back in November



month's review for the full story).

The DVD-3000 is based on the solid foundation of Panasonic's DVD-A350 DVD machine (reviewed on p15 of this very issue). Where it differs is in its revamped fascia (which lacks the 'A350's jog wheel) and a stiffer baseplate. However, the shared digital innards allow it to handle DVD videos as well as CDs, which it does like the Panasonic - very well indeed.

The Denon has all the speed, power and musicality that most CD players lack. Partnered with Jamo's Concert 8 loudspeakers (which don't suffer poor sources gladly),





1997: "The way it combined real smoothness and refinement with genuine musicality and tunefulness was a joy." Its grip and control were at least partly due to the OBH-2 power supply, a regulated, higher-spec version of the standard OBH-1 outboard PSU.

Those who prefer a diet of ether may turn to Creek's £400 T43 tuner, which covers LW as well as MW and FM. The Radio Data System might not be provided, but plenty of vitality is. Ketan Bharadia felt it was this natural vibrancy that lifted the Creek above its competitors, whether the aerial was picking up the compressed Pop of a commercial station or Radio 3's more accomplished transmissions.

If you'd like the chance to win one of these four prizes, just answer the questions opposite and complete the tie-breaker. These can be sent in on the entry form (which may be photocopied) or simply written on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope. Please make sure your entry reaches the address below no later than July 7th.

Denon/Creek Competition
 Hi-Fi World Magazine,
 64 Castellain Road,
 Maida Vale,
 London W9 1EX



Don't forget to include your name, address and telephone number so that we can contact the winner promptly.

COMPETITION ENTRY QUESTIONS

- 1) What discs will the Denon DVD-3000 play?
 A. 7in. singles B. LPs C. DVDs and CDs D. Frisbees
- 2) How much does the OBH-12 passive pre-amp cost?
 A. £150 B. £200 C. £650 D. £75
- 3) How many line-level signals can be fed into the OBH-12?
 A. 1 B. 6 C. 2 D. 12
- 4) What kind of cartridges will the OBH-BSE work with?
 A. Moving Magnet B. Moving Coil C. Eight-track D. Stain Gauge
- 5) How many wavebands can the Creek T43 tuner receive?
 A. 1 B. 2 C. 3 D. 9

TIE-BREAKER (obligatory)

Complete the following in less than 30 words

The Denon's a winner on CD replay,
 And 24/96-ready for this format on the way,
 Creek score too, with the T43,
 And the OBH 2,8 and 12 will never lessen your glee,

Please list your order of prize preference:

- 1) _____ 2) _____
 3) _____ 4) _____

COMPETITION WINNERS

MAY ISSUE COMPETITION

In May we had the Sony CDP-X3000ES CD player, Soundcraft Absolute 4P active loudspeakers, Elemental Audio Monoplith platform and the Etalon Preampli pre-amp to give away. The lucky winners are: Christopher Woodhall (Sony CDP-X3000ES), Phil Gates (Etalon Preampli), Nigel Green (Absolute 4Ps) and Nick Whetstone (Elemental Audio Monoplith).

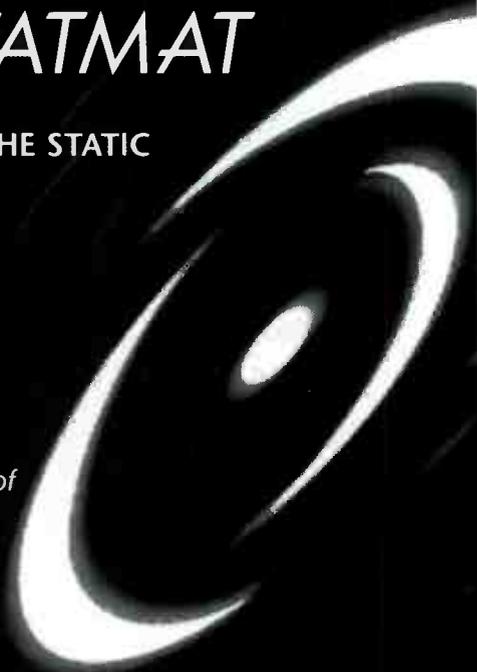
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Christopher Breunig
(Hi-Fi News & Record Review, Nov.1997)

"...it definitely worked. What I heard was impressive...The sound isn't just smoother, sweeter or sharper. Rather the music itself seems to change, becoming rhythmically more cohesive and altogether more purposeful and coherent."

Jimmy Hughes (Hi-Fi Choice, Dec. 1997)

"...What happens to the sound with Statmat? Digital becomes more like analog, that's what. The introductory press release offers a laundry list of sonic claims -all of them true, so far as I can hear...The Statmat provides "clearer ambience of recording venue". To my jaded ears, *this* is what the Statmat does -better than anything I've tried...Sorry to say -40 bucks, please- the Statmat improved the sound of every CD I played in every player I had, sometimes quite dramatically..."

Sam Tellig (Stereophile vol.20 n°12, Dec. 1997)

"The Statmat actually worked rather well...the biggest change is in the treble, which becomes clearer and more detailed while the rest of the sound gets more dynamic. The bass end firms up a tad too and the sense of rhythm improves...the sonic changes are well worth the money"

Ketan Bharadia and Jon Marks (Hi-Fi World, Jan. 1998)

Statmat can be obtained through good hi-fi retailers at £ 19.95. Also available on mail order with moneyback guarantee. UK p&p £ 1.95
Outside UK: total cost £25.00 incl. p&p

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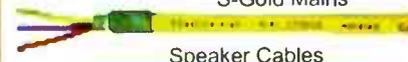
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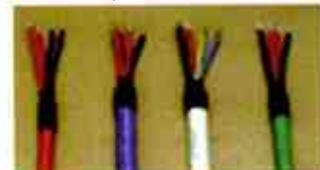
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The price of one-off Midi systems keeps falling, hence it's little wonder they've had an impact on the separates market. At a paltry price of around £300 or less, you can buy a handsome set of components with all the sources you could ever need. However, unless you go for the highly priced Teac or Onkyo systems, the sound is almost invariably congested and compressed. A budget separates system is the only way out for discerning music lovers with drained wallets.

Since Cambridge Audio was acquired by Audio Partnership (also owners of Gale) it has been turning out budget equipment at rock-bottom prices in an attempt to win the general public back from Midis. The A1 MkIII amplifier is a case in point. This, Cambridge's cheapest amplifier, comes in at a sliver below £100. Assembly overseas means a low price without wafer-thin metalwork. In fact, this amplifier is produced under the strict ISO9002 standard.

On the outside the Cambridge looks the business - there's a sturdy, full-size case and a comprehensive set of controls. The penny-paring is more obvious on the inside, where you'll find a potentiometer and selectors of the 'cheap and cheerful' variety and input buffer op-amps only one step up from classic but basic 741. The output is handled by a pair of bi-FET integrated circuits and the Cambridge claims a 30watt output. The large amount of vacant space on the circuit board undoubtedly lengthens the signal path.

The least edifying aspect of the Cambridge was the way its PCB had been populated. The rectifier diodes' long lead-outs were fully exposed and one resistor and capacitor were joined mid-air instead of both being soldered to the circuit board.

The A1 MkIII found itself nestling between the Denon DCD-1550R CD player (also reviewed in this issue) and my recent loudspeaker favourites, the Heybrook Heylettes. It was duly left running for a few days before the serious listening began.

The latest HDCD version of

TON UP



At only £100, can the Cambridge Audio A1 MkIII really deliver the amp goods? Leo Lam listens.

Trisha Yearwood's 'Songbook' had me scribbling down on my notepad: "not bad!" The long signal path and the untidy layout had suggested a dull, muffled reproduction lacking detail, but I couldn't have been more wrong - the Cambridge was expansive, rhythmic and unexpectedly detailed. Bass was deep and strong enough to put my long-term reference, the Aura VA80, into the 'bass-light' department. However, it must be stressed that the VA80 was far superior in most other areas.

The A1 MkIII was capable of a sound louder than its 30watt rating might lead you to believe, although vocals hardened up when the amp was really pushed. That said, the midrange was clear, articulate and fairly rich in tonal colour at normal listening levels. The general balance was slightly bass-heavy, but this is more of a pro than a con considering the small stand mounters most likely to appear at its output terminals.

If you're a fan of stadium-size musical presentation the Cambridge's sound staging is sure to

please. The trade-off here was with image precision - Trisha Yearwood's voice, though enjoyable, was diffused and there was no clear indication as to where it was coming from. However, this actually enhanced the orchestral music experience through small 'speakers'. For example, Albert's Cello Concerto (Sony SK57961) had commendable scale and plenty of power in the double-bass. One of the amp's colorations was a honk in the low treble, but this by no means hindered my listening pleasure.

Because it took a rather relaxed view of replaying music, the A1 MkIII is a very relaxed, comfortable performer. Transients had their crisp leading edges rounded off, which would also cure the brightness of a lot of the budget front-end ancillaries it will partner.

Cambridge's A1 MkIII certainly doesn't represent the ultimate in state-of-the-art sound reproduction, but it does go beyond what stalwarts like the NAD 310 have achieved to set a new basis upon which other truly budget amplifiers must be judged. At the price it's a bargain!

**Cambridge
Audio A1 MkIII
integrated amplifier
£99.95**

**Audio Partnership
Gallery Court,
Hankey Place,
London SE1 4BB
Tel: 0500 333500**

WORLD VERDICT



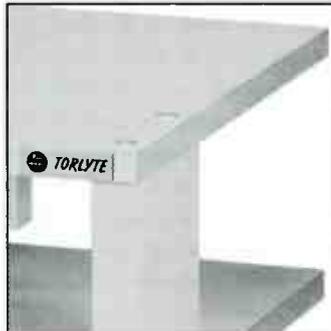
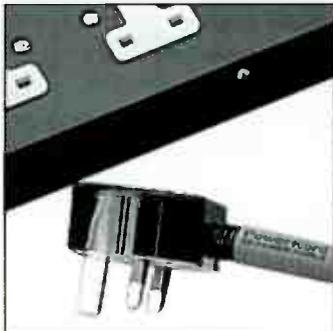
Involving and finely detailed, the Cambridge pushes forward the boundaries for inexpensive amps.

**Measured Performance
see p111**

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PASSIVE IMPRESSIVE

Should you go active or passive when it comes to pre-amps?

Leo Lam leans to the latter with Creek's OBH-12.

Every now and again, on a blue-moon basis, a piece of hi-fi comes along which possesses virtues that lift it well above the masses. A lot of equipment these days is competently designed and executed, but that's not enough to gain it classic status. In order to beat the crowd, a component needs to be very special indeed, like Creek's £200 OBH-12.

Pre-amplifiers, rather than consisting of merely a source selector and volume control, used to be the first stage of gain to step up source signals of around 200mV-400mV. However, with CD players putting out around 2V, this gain is no longer essential for driving power amplifiers to their maximum output. A simple, passive volume potentiometer is all that is really required in most cases now.

The Creek OBH-12 contains one such potentiometer. Designer Mike Creek also decided to add arm-chair convenience with remote control as standard. So, for your £200, you get a little box that weighs less than a pint glass and a wall-adaptor power supply which drives the motorised potentiometer, indicator LEDs and remote control.

The 20kilohm potentiometer inside the Creek is manufactured by Soundwell, not a name familiar to many audiophiles brought up on Alps, Bourns and Noble. Mind you, I could only measure a respectable maximum of 2.5% difference between the left and right channels' resistances at low volumes with my sample, so in terms of matching this is a quality device. On top of the pot, the OBH-12 provides two line inputs, a tape loop and one pair of pre-out sockets.

Unless you're a DIYer who has already fallen under the spell of the Danish Audio Connect CT1 stepped attenuator, or the Audio Synthesis

Passion, you're likely to be shocked by the transparency this tiny box can offer. £200 for a passive volume control in a box that topples over while you change cables looks expensive at first glance, but this Creek has taken five months to develop, and the design was optimised down to the smallest detail.

Alex Nikitin, Chief Engineer at Creek, proudly proclaimed that, "even the track width on the circuit board for the signal has been optimised". The two separate ground planes for the remote control and the grounding post of the pot are DC coupled to eliminate any ground loops which can pick up radio-frequencies. And the microcontroller with its clock circuits (which can induce modulation through the ground plane) has been programmed to 'sleep' when no function is called for from the remote control.

A brief demo with the Roksan Caspian amplifier, which has separate pre/power sections, showed what outstanding clarity the OBH-12 has. Using the Creek in place of the active, op-amp buffered pre-amp section in the Caspian was a revelation. Detail improved by a huge amount and tiny musical nuances were brought to the fore. Recordings were obviously 'less processed', only the Caspian imposing its signature on the signal - to all intents and purposes the Creek disappeared sonically.

A partnership with the Musical Fidelity X-A50 monoblocs proved equally persuasive. Any tweaks I made to my system were clearly audible: even changing the position of the Ensemble TopCones under my Teac T1 transport had an impact. In the world of coloration and

distortion, the nothingness and purity of the OBH-12 was refreshing.

The Creek's transparency is easily on a par with active pre-amps at more than five times its £200 price. You'd expect this though, because passive components do not suffer from the limitations of their active counterparts, like slew-rate limiting and non-linearity. A lack of AC coupling capacitors in the signal path helps too. Of course, the caveat is that the output stage of your source components must provide a decent voltage into potentially highly-capacitive cable. Therefore, Goertz interconnects and the Holfi Xara CD player (a paltry 1.25V output) should be avoided.

The only disappointment concerns the general build quality. The paint on the casework can be very easily scratched and I could even see some bubbles in the paintwork. And the Pre Out socket was so loosely mounted that I was worried about damaging it when I hooked up some cables with tightly fitting plugs. The hole left in the fascia for the remote control's sensor is a bit of an eyesore, too.

Sonically, the OBH-12 is great. Even if you're buying on the most shoe-string of budgets you can expect a truly high-end experience from this passive pre. However, for 200 hard-earned notes, the finish should really be considerably better.



Creek OBH-12 £200

Creek Audio
2 Bellevue Road,
Friern Barnet,
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Tel: 0181 361 4133

WORLD VERDICT



Only poor cosmetics mar the Creek. Sonically it's a gem.

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OBH-12
Remote Control Passive Pre-amp

WHAT HI-FI? Apr 1998



Creek OBH-12 ...could be the most elegant, not to mention the most purist preamplifier solution.

The Creek OBH-12 enables you to sit back and turn the volume up and down, select the input to your amplifier, have a remote mute facility as well as providing tape monitoring, without the need to get up to press any buttons or adjust any knobs on your amplifier -

"...something that isn't possible with any other passive unit out there (yet)." (Audio Video Shopper, USA, Feb 97)

OBH-12 UK Price: £199



OBH-11
Headphone Amplifier



The OBH-11 is a miniature audio amplifier, designed specifically to drive headphones (from 30 ohms to 300 ohms) from a line level source.

"The Creek OBH-11 makes the most of high-quality electronics and delivers clarity and weight that make any headphones perform to their utmost capabilities. If you are serious about personal listening, it's just the thing." (What Hi-Fi, Nov 97)

OBH-11 UK Price: £129



OBH-8, OBH-8SE & OBH-9
MM and MC phono pre-amplifiers

WORLD VERDICT



Smooth, yet truly musical, these are the best entry-level phono stages around at present.

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UK Prices: OBH-8 - £99
OBH-8SE - £160
OBH-9 - £130



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The Corner G.R.F. by Octave Audio Woodworking is without doubt the ultimate enclosure for the Tannoy Monitor Silver, Red, and Gold series, and the perfect partner for valve amplification both vintage and modern.



For more details and demonstrations contact:

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* The Corner GRF is available as an unloaded enclosure only.

LUCKY SEVEN

As you slide down the loudspeaker spending scale towards the budget end, you inevitably discover that features like tri or bi-wiring disappear, advanced cone materials are replaced by paper and rounded cabinet edges (which sharpen imaging) become right angles. Until now that is. With the manufacturing muscle they've built up over the past 20 years, Mission have been able to cram technology and construction customarily reserved for more expensive loudspeakers into the £170 771.

The binding posts remain single-wire only, but the two drivers are a 5in. mid/bass with an Aerogel cone and polished phase plug as well as a viscous-laminated fabric-dome tweeter. The enclosure's rear panel bears the usual reflex port - it's around the front that things get interesting.

The 771s' baffle is a 38mm chunk of MDF routed front and back. Complex cut-outs like this allow flush mounting of the mid/bass and tweeter, and contoured edges for enhanced imaging. Paring away the MDF behind the Aerogel cone also reduces resonances, as holes in thick panels act like short pipes.

For the icing on the cake, take a look at the tweeter. Moulded into its face plate are four leaf springs to isolate it from the vibration pumped out by its partner. Similar systems have previously been used by Roksan in the Darius and Naim in the DBL. So the 771s are winners on paper; would it be the same story on top of open-frame stands?

Upstream of the Missions were the Musical Fidelity A1001, Vadis S15 and Audio Analogue Puccini SE. Standing in as sources were Denon's DVD-3000 DVD player (more of which next month) and Pink Triangle's Litaural, wired with Purist Audio Design's Elementa interconnect. Loudspeaker cables were Pentacone's Plain Soft Copper and The Chord Company's Odyssey.

Most 'speakers have at least one strong trait which you can quickly pick up on, and the 771s' is a smooth, sweet treble. Nancy Bryan's Lay Me Down XRCD had a purity to its upper registers which is conspicuously absent from the cheap and often rough sounding



An Aerogel mid/bass and a suspended silk-dome tweeter for £170? Mission have pulled out the stops with their 771.

domes on the bulk of sub-£200 loudspeakers. And this smoothness didn't sap any of the power from percussion, which remained crisp and focused, or strings, the bugbear of lesser drivers.

Stravinsky's Firebird Suite can be quite a tiring listen through some budget boxes. The Missions, three feet in from the walls, weren't provoked by strings into harshness, and that Aerogel cone had a midrange we've come to know and love.

As you'd expect from such a small enclosure, imaging was as sharp as the proverbial pin. Orchestral sections stayed put even on crescendos thanks to unerringly solid location. Knitting images together into a whole was a sound stage with depth to match width, where copious low-level detail filled out the shape of the acoustic.

Of course, the penalty to pay for a tiny box is limited bass. Considering the volume in which the mid/bass driver has to operate, the 771s do remarkably well in terms of quantity and quality. If you're a fan of orchestral music played at highish volumes though, you'll find the cones hitting their end-stops when faced with timpani, for example. Iain Simcock, at the keyboard of the Koenig organ in the

chapel of the Good Shepherd in Angers, France, occasionally ran into similar problems of extension. The 771s had sufficient bass to make Bach's Prelude and Fugue (BWV541) a satisfying experience, but the longer pipes kept a low musical profile. Where the Missions take the laurels for midrange and treble finesse, the Tannoy Mercury m2s win out for their deeper bass.

Where these 'speakers really thrived was with Blues recordings - Buddy Guy, John Lee Hooker and Eric Bibb and Needed Time. The clarity, rhythm and emotion in discs like these flowed through the 771s without obstruction. This kind of performance comes from the mix of the Missions' abilities - spacious sound staging, clear, precise imaging, dynamic speed and realistic tonal colour.

Judged solely on technological and material grounds the 771s are easily the best loudspeakers under £200. Add the criteria of sound, however, and Tannoy's m2s close in. They're not far behind in areas like transparency and smoothness, and they pull ahead in the bass weight and slam stakes. And don't forget that they cost £30 less. As always, find out which one of these front runners most suits your system with a demonstration ●

Mission 771 £169.90

Mission
Stonehill,
Huntingdon,
Cambs. PE18 6ED
Tel: 01480 451777

WORLD VERDICT



Superb stand mounters of real refinement and musicality. Just a touch bass light though.

Measured Performance
see p111

Letter of the Month

The writer of the 'Letter of the Month' wins a free subscription to Hi-Fi World as well as a Top Prize every other month

LOUD AND PROUD

Current hi-fi equipment reviews seem to favour systems with a 'warm and rich' sound. Multivendor equipment is purposefully combined to try and obtain this quality that is not always provided by combining equipment from the same manufacturer. It has been said that this sound is a result of a slightly enhanced (but smooth) lower mid and bass response. It would seem that certain equipment mixes bring this much-liked attribute to the reproduced sound whether or not it was intended at the recording studio.

Ironically the above qualities are usually appreciated best when listening

at low levels where human hearing starts to become less sensitive at the bass end. This characteristic is a well known empirical fact best appreciated graphically with the aid of the famous Fletcher and Munson equal loudness contour curves of yesteryear. These show the bass and treble lift required to obtain the same perceived loudness level as that of a given reference level, say at 1kHz.

For example, at a level of 60dB SPL, approximately +10dB of bass lift is required at 100Hz to produce the same subjective level as at 1kHz. At higher levels, eg 90dB to 100dB SPL, very little or no bass lift is needed - our hearing becomes 'flatter' at higher sound levels (see Reference Data For Radio Engineers, Howard and Sams.) This may account for the dissatisfaction many readers may have with their systems when playing at medium to low levels.

Amplifier designs of the late Fifties and Sixties invariably included a loudness control (LF Sensitivity Compensation may be a better description) in the form of a switch providing the varying levels of bass and lower-mid lift based on the Fletcher and Munson contours.

I am not sure that this facility, rarely seen these days, should continue to be dispensed with by purists who will accept nothing but a flat response at any level, arguing that equalisation will detract from smoothness due to phase response, etc. I go along with the latter

argument in the case of tone controls that affect the whole spectrum, but loudness compensation used in measured and controlled steps need not compromise matters (single-note-bass 'speakers and boomy rooms excluded!)

Could it be that some manufacturers already provide the required lift on the quiet to achieve favourable reviews? Perhaps their equipment does well since it is able to portray that warm sound usually associated with valve amps and vinyl, and not the 'cold, clinical' sound many systems are guilty of.

G. Evans
Lymington,
Hants.

The reason Fletcher/Munson compensation became discredited and fell out of use was that, subjectively, it produced fairly gross sounding results. As you say, at 60dB SPL (relatively quiet) around +10dB of bass boost at 100Hz is needed to produce equal loudness to a 1kHz tone. At 80dB-90dB SPL, or normal listening level, this drops to +5dB or so. These levels of boost are large and, as frequency goes down, the boost increases. You end up with bass heaviness, flapping loudspeaker cones and a power handling/thermal destruction scenario staring you in the face. Few people in practice find this a

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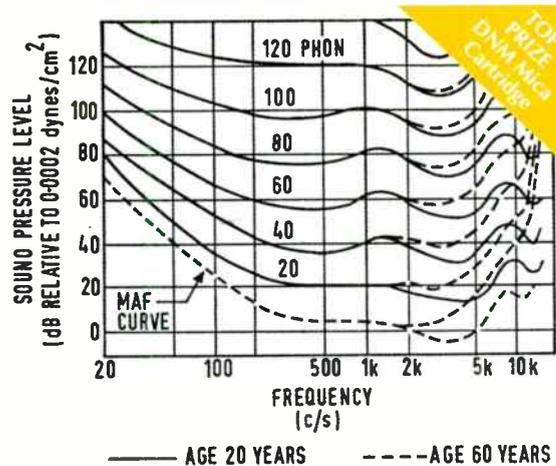
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very enlightened course toward high fidelity.

The bass warmth characteristics of some modern products are different in nature and degree. Amplifiers and CD players are relatively flat across the audio spectrum, varying their response at worst by less than 1dB. If CD players have an engineered response (few do) then we are talking +/-0.5dB.

Regular readers will know I favour some bass plateau boost in loudspeakers, like many other designers. But this amounts to no more than a few dB at most, otherwise



Equal loudness contours derived from work carried out by Robinson and Dadson. This work has produced results which differ to some extent from that done by Fletcher and Munson in 1933 on which Fig. 2.2 is based. One difference is that no 0 phon curve is included as the threshold of hearing has been found to be about 4 dB above 0.0002 dynes/sq. cm. The lowest curve refers to the minimum audible field. From Acoustics, by G. Mackenzie

the effect is excessive. Such boost suits CD more than vinyl too, another reason to go easy. Otherwise you end up with a 'speaker that suits one medium but not the other.

Whilst superficially it might appear that 'warming the sound' harks back to ideas of yesteryear, I feel the two are very tenuously connected. Boost levels are far lower in today's products. The idea is to tip the balance in favour of what most people find pleasurable. The only response shaper to produce a similar effect was Quad's tilt control, and I have to say that subjectively it could be both effective and useful. NK

"HAD WE BUT WORLD ENOUGH, AND TIME. . ."

Could you answer a query that's been niggling me and possibly a few other intellectually-challenged readers? Why do you provide only two lines to write a tie-breaker for your competition?

You ask us to complete a rhyme, and the obvious way to do this would be to compose a second verse, as the rhyming couplets provided appear to form a self-contained structure. The instructions dictate "less than 30 words", and, as your printed poetry always amounts to roughly 30 words, this would confirm my logic and indicate penning a supplementary four-line verse using an AABB rhyming pattern.

However, contradicting this are the two lines provided, meaning I have to write two lines to a line, as it were, which can't be write. . . er, I mean right. And anyway, to hand-write four lines as small as your print necessitates a monthly visit to an osteopath to unfurl my resultant claw of a hand.

Please could you explain what precisely you are looking for in your tie-breaker, because even in my smallest handwriting, I can only manage to fit 15 words in total on the two lines you provide. Is your "less than 30 words" clause aimed at those readers with access to nanomachines wielding atomic bios? What are these guidelines for?! Do you even care? Does anyone who answers the questions without the aid of a blindfold and a pin, and writes "less

than 30 words" plucked at random from a dictionary win, provided they are first from the postbag?

Do you actually read through the tie-breakers of the hundreds/thousands (delete as applicable) of hopeful readers who succeed each month "in the event of more than one entrant submitting all-correct answers", as you suggest in competition Rule and Condition [2]?

How exactly is the winner "picked from the tie-breaker by the Editor"? Is the criterion simply to have written one, in which case I can stop wasting time dutifully designing ditties and instead spend it sampling some spanking-new CDs, or do you compare them with all-correct answers? And if so, how many?

As with other magazines, a competition is an obvious selling point, and as such should be lucid in its execution. Although I hate tie-breakers, I welcome the inclusion of a small amount of skill to off-set my natural deficiency in luck, but the entry form presentation and palpable time constraints for judging tie-breakers every month while compiling the next issue confound me.

Poor Jon Marks - how does he find the time to edit? Does he employ a ghost-writer for his columns? Is the reason he looks so uncomfortable in his photo on page three that he's trapped where he stands by a mountain of urine-soaked competition entries, having been unable to move for days? Yours Confused and Bemused,

Anthony Peters
West Midlands



Andrew Harrison struggles gamely on through the piles of competition entries.

Questions, questions! Because we have had a couple of Doubting Thomases recently, wondering if we actually bother reading the tie-breakers, the time has come for an answer: yes we do! Every single one of the hundreds we normally receive is assiduously screened by the verse-weary Assistant Ed, who shortlists a select handful before leaving the final judgement to Mr Marks. He will then select the wittiest, cleverest entry.

As to the question of how to squeeze your entry into the space provided, what we have failed to spell out is that you can either



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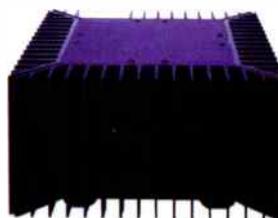
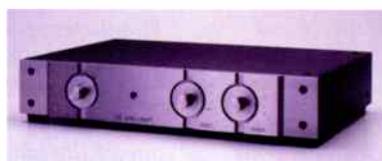
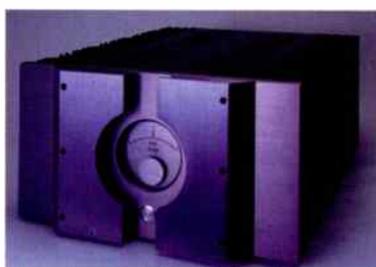
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photocopy the competition form or simply write the answers and tie-breaker alone on the back of a postcard. Our apologies for this.

As for Jon Marks' look of discomfort, this is merely due to his going through vinyl cold turkey caused by his Trio L-07D direct

drive being packaged away for a recent change of address.

To give you an idea of what we look for in a winning tie-breaker, here's the one from the Wilson Benesch competition in March: The consummate sound of this carbonized trio,

*Could summon a platter of hi-fi brio,
Nourish my system (underfed, oft-fettled)
In which I hope it Will soon Be neschled! AH*

Keep your hi-fi connections clean with a dose of DNM's Licon contact enhancer.

RIGHT TO REPLY

Dear Mr Marks, in your recent review of pre and power amplifiers the Linn Wakonda/LK100 came last. Your people informed us that the source products used were reference products frequently used in reviews and selected from time to time on an ad-hoc basis when you feel they are appropriate.

I also understand we have no right of reply or opportunity for manufacturer comment and there is no guarantee that, even if we do write, any comment made will be published and that, in any event, you reserve the right to edit such correspondence.

I am sure that, even if you are unaware of our views on the hierarchy of a system and the importance of the source, you will understand that, given a poor source, the better the pre and power amp and the downstream playback components, the more obvious any source defects will become.

If you accept this conjecture, then the Wakonda and LK100 were the best products in the review and I would relish the opportunity to point out to your readership that you may be getting things upside down, back to front and inside out, and that Linn owners, far from being disappointed by your unfair criticism of their products, should revel in this confirmation that they have purchased the best products in the category.

Given that we employ the most advanced surface mount technology, that our products measure better than any competition, that we have solid-state, distortion-free, non-wearing, non-microphonic switching that is immune from interference or degradation, and that our low-noise switching power supplies are the quietest power supplies ever made by our industry, your readers and our owners or prospective customers need to draw their own conclusions about the way this review has been structured and the criteria that were applied.

Noel Keywood and I both know that the essential pitch relationships for the

tune have to be captured by the source components in order to be reproduced faithfully, as no other downstream component can recreate them by artifice.

I would be grateful if you would publish this letter so that your readers can fully appreciate the technical background against which our products should be judged and decide for themselves the sources of the truth in this matter.

Ivor S. Tiefenbrun
Managing Director,
Linn.

(This letter has not been edited - JM)

*Dear Mr Tiefenbrun,
I am well aware of your views on "the hierarchy of a system and the importance of the source" and, indeed, agree with the "rubbish in, rubbish out" philosophy. However, your argument above revolves around, "given a poor source."*

As I was at great pains to explain to Brian Morris (Linn's Publicity Manager, through whom we arranged the delivery of the Wakonda/LK100), the sources used were not "poor". I agree that a pre/power combo cannot inject rhythm and timing into music where it is lacking in the output from the source. With respect to rhythm and timing though, the front-ends we used are amongst the best we have come across.

The Wakonda and LK100, far from relaying the rhythm and timing present in the source's signal, were the only pre and power in the group test not to do this. This being the case, I have to reaffirm our opinion of the Wakonda and LK100 as stated in the group test.

With respect to some of the other comments you make:

Whether the components you choose to build your hi-fi from are considered "advanced" or old-fashioned is irrelevant. If

"advanced" was the only route to success, how do you explain the fact that a well-engineered valve amp with 'pre-historic' paper-in-oil caps and carbon-film resistors can produce some of the best sounds in the opinion of many of our readers, who own such amps?

From measurements we have carried out on Linn products in the past I would dispute the claim that, "our products measure better than any competition". Some Linn products (like the Linto phono stage, which is exceptionally quiet) do indeed measure very well. Others don't.

The LK240 monoblocs (£1500/pair) were reviewed in August 1997. Power output was 112watts into 8ohms and their distortion 0.012%. By comparison, Quad's 707 stereo power amp (£800) puts out 136watts and 0.004% distortion.

In our group test the Wakonda and LK100 (£1550) yielded figures of 45watts into 8ohms with distortion of 0.005%. The least expensive combo (the Technics SU-C1000 and SE-A1000 at £650) measured 90watts and 0.004%.

With the changes of sources and cabling (both loudspeaker and interconnect) during the review of the Wakonda and LK100 we gave them a chance to do their best. Compared to the other pre/power amps in the group test, the Linns' best was neither particularly rhythmic nor involving in spite of these qualities being present in sources which have proved their worth in many reviews. Furthermore, we were told by Brian Morris that the units' sound quality would be checked on their return to the factory after the review. We have heard nothing more from you on this matter.

Jon Marks, Editor

e-mail

Visit our website at
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edit@hi-fiworld.co.uk

HI-FI DETOX

I am a hopeless hi-fi junkie and I hope you or your readers will be able to offer me some kind of maintenance prescription. A year ago I tried a cocktail of Cambridge Audio CD4 and A1MkIII with Mordaunt-Short MS10is, Atacama stands and decent interconnect and 'speaker cables. I added to this a Yamaha YST-SW80 subwoofer to give me a higher high.

When I scored this concoction from a shady, street-corner dealer, he assured me that I would be perfectly safe and wouldn't get hooked. How naive I was! Since then I have become more and more dependent on hi-fi, and I am now regularly taking large doses of that most powerful and dangerous of aural narcotics - tweaking!

I soon found that I needed something to beat that first rush of pleasure, so I turned to making stands for the sub, amp and CD player. I did this by gluing three heavy nails into each side of three heavy slabs (this is called "spiking" on the street). I kept the nails as short as possible so as to not adulterate the high. This heady mixture gave me a significantly better buzz and, for a while, I thought I had my habit under control. But I soon found I needed more.

I next discovered myself, while in the grips of cold turkey, in an electrical purveyor's establishment. He said I should try "rewiring", a stronger form of "spiking". He persuaded me to buy a few lengths of 1.5mm mains cable and a soldering iron which I would use to apply the cable in place of the lesser, "softer" cable. What a rush! This was fantastic and I was sure that I would not fall any deeper into the depths of audio despair, but it was not to be.

I was now becoming desperate, needing more and more just to feel normal. My wife was beginning to suspect something was wrong. Our money was disappearing, I was neglecting our children and I found myself unable to concentrate. My fingers

were covered in the familiar tell-tale marks of stereo abuse, soldering iron burns.

I was told that I should wean myself off my addiction by gradually reducing my intake. I tried, oh God how I tried. Taking the back off my sub and lining it with sound-deadening panels (which can be purchased in any town in the country from an automotive "pusher") just didn't satisfy my cravings. I needed something stronger, harder.

I was now hopeless and pathetic, only just human. I was living in a twilight world where the only thing that matters is your next tweak. I had fallen so low that I had even resorted to taking the fuses out of the plugs and soldering the power cable directly to the live pin. I have to be



One way to slake your DIY thirst - our 300B valve power amp kit.

honest, this is a high almost as strong as the first time, but it is a desperate, inhuman and selfish act. You must NOT try this stimulant, it should be illegal. At the very least you will find that you have invalidated your buildings' insurance and probably much worse.

Now I want to change, I want to become a productive member of society. But it is an uphill struggle and I need help. The only way for me to dry out is to try building valve amplifiers. This is such an expensive habit though. I have no doubt that I would have to turn to crime to finance my addiction.

You are my last hope. You seem to have your addictions under control, you are your own masters, so I am requesting your assistance. Can you tell me of any therapists that can supply me with a valve

amp kit at a low price that, I hope, will enable me to restore some kind of normality to my bleak existence? My wife, children and warranties have paid a very high price for my lack of will-power and they don't deserve that. I face a lonely, and probably institutionalised, future at the moment.

I promise this will be the last hit. I just need one more.

"mr sussex"

trubski@globalnet.co.uk

Beware, for the seductive glow and sweet sound of the thermions trapped within the hot bottle can be far, far more addictive than silicon laced with electrons. There is real danger here too. Meddling with the high voltages coursing through the veins of a valve amp can prove lethal.

Should you choose to tread the Path Of The Tube, there are characters who will happily provide you with what you crave. Maplin (tel: 01702 554000) sell a power device known as the Millennium 4-20 (20watts a side from a pair of EL34s) for around £210. The line and phono Newton pre-amp will enhance the euphoria at a cost of about £150.

As I'm sure your blood-shot eyes will have noticed, we ourselves have two pre-amp kits, KLP1 (line-level only) and KLPP1 (line and phono) with which to partner two power amps, K5881 (20watts pure class A) and 300B (28watts, also pure class A).

It's worth burning some midnight oil over our Supplements to make sure no potential providers slip through your net. And, as you say, for safety's sake you should NEVER remove the fuses from plugs and solder the mains leads in directly. JM

Experience another rush with a set of The Chord Company's Siren interconnects.

If you do not want your e-mail address published, please let us know.

IN A SPIN ABOUT VINYL

I would like to re-purchase some quality vinyl albums by Pink Floyd, the Doors and other artists from the '60s and '70s. I have seen advertisements in your magazine from dealers supplying EMI 180gm albums. Are these the best currently available, and how do they compare with the original pressings? I have a Rega Planar 3 turntable.

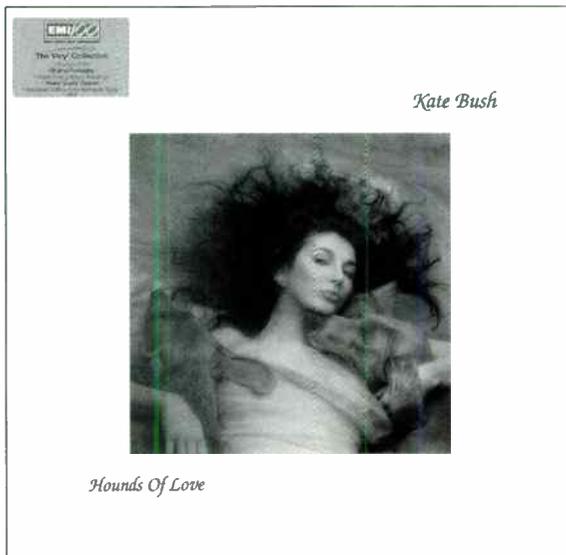
N. Mistry

EMI's recent vinyl reissues are great news for record collectors and music lovers. We've suddenly got the chance to buy classic albums on vinyl that most of us never thought we'd see again new. And they're super quality too, with fine vinyl and lovingly re-created cover artwork and inners. But what they're not is an exact sonic

facsimile of the original pressings. Although most use the analogue masters, modern disc-cutting

digital delay lines to drive the cutting head. This involves the signal passing through high-quality, 20-bit A-to-D and D-to-A converters, which has a subtle effect. While very clean and detailed, they lack the depth and warmth of the originals. The sound is still extremely impressive, and it isn't until you get into super-deck territory that you really notice.

If it's good music on new vinyl you want, I can heartily recommend the EMI Centenary series, but if sound is your absolute priority then you'll have to get mint originals or, better still, Japanese pressings or Mobile Fidelity imprints which are mega rare and no less expensive! DP



EMI's latest batch of Centenary LP reissues, like Kate Bush's Hounds Of Love, offers audiophile sound at sensible prices.

lathes - such as the Neumanns used at EMI's Abbey Road studios - use

Indulge your ears and your Planar 3 with an audiophile LP from Vivante.

RAVING

Why, when loudspeakers at raves can have sensitivity ratings in three figures, do hi-fi 'speakers on average struggle to reach 90dB?

I am aware that not everyone, including myself, wishes to listen to music at ear-bleeding volume levels, but surely it would make sense for 'speaker manufacturers to build 'speakers that require less power. If you don't have a few thousand pounds to spare on a pair of horns, a low-powered valve amp (of which there are hundreds) will struggle to achieve anything.

Could the technology applied to professional loudspeakers not be applied to domestic versions? I cannot see any disadvantage in high sensitivity - a powerful amp would produce less distortion for the same volume and an amp on a par with my Quad IIs might make some noise!

Brian Rose
rose.residence@mcmail.com

There's a number of factors which come into play here which together conspire to keep hi-fi driver sensitivity down. The first is that a lot of very high power PA systems are run actively with electronic

crossovers, whereas most domestic 'speakers use passive crossovers. So the PA rig has no capacitors and resistors between the amp and



Domestic drivers like this bass unit have thick, doped-paper cones that are heavier and better damped than those in most PA counterparts.

driver to soak up their share of the input signal.

Also playing a part is the cone mass of many hi-fi drivers. Most PA units are made of paper which is light (hence high efficiency) but

can often sound rough and very coloured. Domestic variants have heavier cones which possess better internal damping and produce a smoother, more evenly-balanced sound. Carbon fibre and Aerogel are bringing mass down though.

Cone mass (and surround stiffness) also affects resonant frequency. To get deep bass from a driver, you need a low resonant frequency. The majority of PA bass units have high resonant points and don't go particularly low. Besides, the amount of power it takes to get 30Hz at extreme volume levels is staggering, so most PA systems don't bother dipping much below 50Hz.

As far as tweeters go, again low-mass metal diaphragms help, but most PA tweeters have a pretty nasty sound that lacks finesse. However, where they score over most hi-fi versions is with their huge (and costly) magnet assemblies which raise sensitivity. JM

Learn about active and passive crossovers with John Linsley Hood's Audio Electronics book.

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CARTRIDGE CONUNDRUM

I recently acquired a VPI HW19 MkII turntable with a Syrinx PU3 tone-arm and an Audio Technica AT33ML MC cartridge. I have no information on either tone-arm or cartridge and domestic sources are of no help. I read in November 1997 that an AT33E MC was used to review a Densen phono stage. I would guess the cartridges are similar.

Presently the AT is tracking at 1.25gm. Is this the recommended figure? Helpful too would be the correct loading, as I need a compatible phono pre-amp. I have pressed my Creek OBH-8SE, whose gain is clearly inadequate, into service. As to phono pre-amps, I am thinking in terms of an Aragon 47K or a Henley HMC100, but I don't know if the latter is available in the US. What would you advise?

Michael Klewin
m-t-k@webtv.net

The AT33ML is a Micro Linear-stylused AT33E, a mid-Eighties design which has proved enduringly popular in Japan thanks to its sweet, detailed sound. Although unavailable in Britain, the ML is the second highest in AT's range of MCs, the AT33PTG (Prestige) taking over the mantle of top cartridge from the now-defunct ART-1. Loading is the standard 47kilohm, output 0.4mV and

recommended tracking force 1.5gm.

The Scottish-built Syrinx PU3 was produced in the early Eighties, and although a fine high-mass arm, was somewhat overshadowed by Linn's Ittok LVII. It should work well with the AT33ML, assuming

sound.

Second on my list would be a Michell Iso, which is still a great design but might be just a touch too analytical with your AT. The Densen DP-DRIVE/DP-02 is also very good, with loads of gain and



For sweet sounds from your MC without going over-budget, audition LFD's Mistral Phono stage.

it's still in good condition.

As far as head amps are concerned, the Creek OBH-8SE is designed for Moving Magnets, and is thus unsuitable for your MC. The cheapest option would be to trade in your OBH-8SE for an OBH-9 with OBH-2 power supply. This would give good, musical sound on a budget, but to get the best from your AT you really need something like LFD's Mistral Phono stage (£300). Although this has relatively low gain for MCs, it worked superbly with my AT33E, giving a wonderfully warm 'analogue'

very low noise, but is ultimately less involving than the LFD. I'm afraid we haven't reviewed the Aragon, so I can't comment.

I'd advise against the Henley - it's a good unit but really only gives its best with the Ortofon Rohmann for which it was designed. If any of the above aren't distributed in the US, I'm sure a quick fax or e-mail to the relevant company over here would secure you a US-voltage model shipped to your door. DP

Allow more of the music through your system with a bottle of DNM's Licon contact enhancer.

PROBLEMS WITH MY NADS

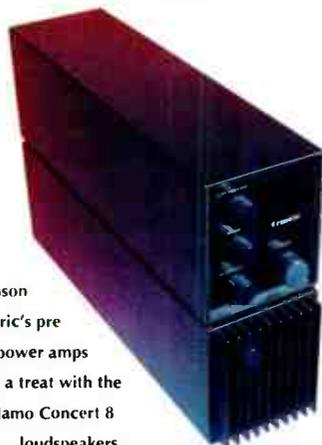
Please help. I am currently running a NAD 513 multi-CD player and NAD 713 Pro-Logic receiver, with XLO interconnects and cables, and I considered this a fairly good system. That is until I bought a pair of the gorgeous sounding Jamo Concert 8 loudspeakers (thanks for your reviews and ravings there - a great choice). Now, of course, they are far too good for the rest of my system. The receiver can drive them OK, but I fear it is not revealing the loudspeakers' potential.

I listen to well recorded Blues (eg, Doug Macleod), Classical and some mainstream (like Clapton). How much sound staging, detail and musicality am I missing out on with my components? With about £2000-£3000 to spend, can I get good sounding hi-fi from a digital Pro-Logic system and new CD player, or do I bite the bullet and run two separate systems. I don't use vinyl but

can appreciate the analogue sound so produced.

Although in my mid-40s, I guess I have really not appreciated true music quality until the last 12 months. Any info would be greatly appreciated.

Paul Griffiths
heather@nettrek.com.au



Crimson Electric's pre and power amps work a treat with the Jamo Concert 8 loudspeakers.

The only way to the Jamos justice is to partner them with some audiophile amplification and a similarly competent source. AV equipment rarely shares the same virtues as components built purely for sound reproduction, although the Panasonic DVD-A350 and Denon DVD-3000 DVD players are serendipitous exceptions. Both sell for around £700 over here and would make a fine front end in your system, especially as they will play your video DVDs too.

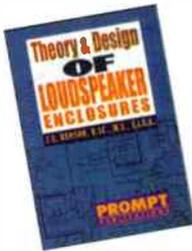
There's a couple of options as to amplifiers. One is the £600 Audio Analogue Puccini SE, which will let you hear a lot of what the Concert 8s are capable of, even if it won't unleash all their star qualities. Then, for £875, there's the Crimson Electric CS610C pre and CS620C power. JM

Hook up your Jamos with a set of DNM's Reson loudspeaker cable.

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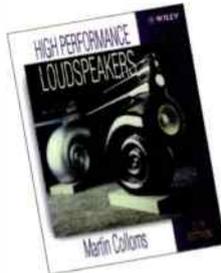
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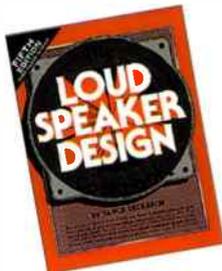
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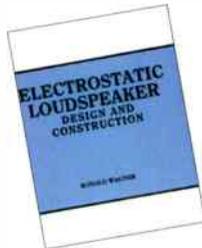
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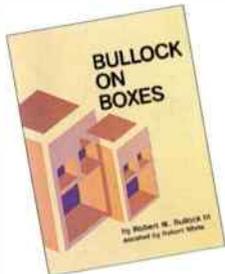
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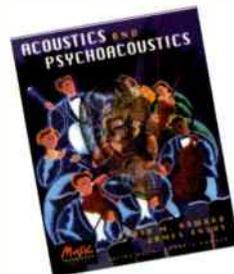
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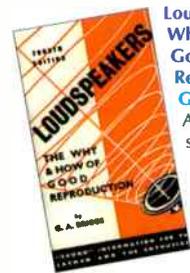
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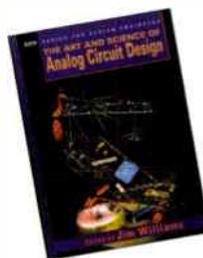
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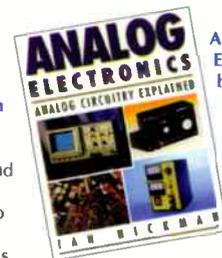
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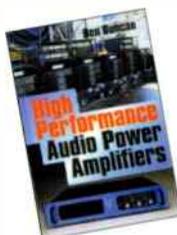
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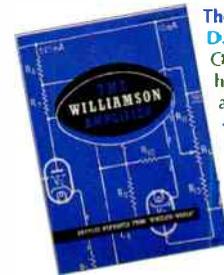
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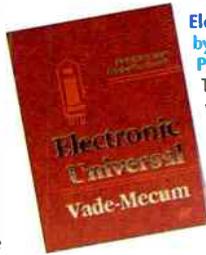
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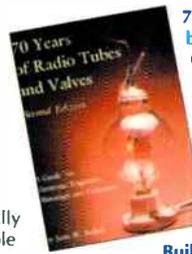
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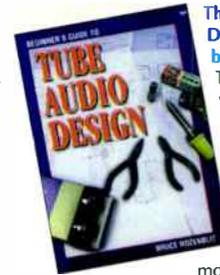
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BOXING CLEVER

Kenwood's £130 LS90UK monitors show they can turn their hand to 'speakers as well as separates. Jon Marks reports.

When the diminutive LS90UK two-ways first saw the light of day as they emerged from their box, we at World experienced a fleeting moment of déjà vu. It wasn't the fact that so many small budget loudspeakers have passed through our listening room, it was something more specific, something to do with their proportions more than just their size.

A cabinet as unusually deep as the Kenwoods' stands out in a market where every square millimetre of particle board has to justify its existence to the pin-stripes in the accounting department. So where had we seen them before? The answer came from Denmark and the 'speaker company Eltax, whose Liberty 3+ stand mounters (which look very much like a bigger brother to the Kenwoods) we reviewed back in January of this year. Eltax actually build the LS90UKs for Kenwood, although the design, including that extra-deep enclosure, is Kenwood's own.

The drivers, a soft-dome tweeter and a reflex-loaded 4in. mid/bass with a doped-paper cone and chunky magnet, sit in rebates (to aid imaging) and are shielded, so they can be used close to a television or computer monitor.

You're in for a bit of a surprise if you examine the crossover and expect to see the normal skinny inductors. Hardwired on a board on the rear panel is one very large and superbly-finished iron-core inductor and one air-core. The only other parts are two electrolytic capacitors and a 5watt wirewound resistor.

Having run the LS90UKs in for a couple of days, we perched them atop open-frame stands and drove them with the Musical Fidelity A1001 and Puccini SE integrateds fronted by Denon and Panasonic DVD players.

As our measurements had pointed out, the Kenwoods have a response lift across the midrange which, on paper, should project



vocals and strings well forward of the loudspeakers. So it turned out in practice as well, on discs like Tori Amos' Little Earthquakes.

The close-miking of her voice with its powerful sibilants causes many drivers problems, but the LS90UKs maintained a fair composure on this album. A slight 'fizziness' to Tori's voice near the top of its range made for marginally sharper 's' sounds than are really caught in the recording, but with a smooth amp and cabling this wasn't a problem.

Where the LS90UKs pulled ahead of almost all the competition (the Tannoy m2s alone are superior) was in sound staging. That deep cabinet made for an acoustic that stretched considerably further back than the norm at £130. This is because, before they come out through the mid/bass's cone, reflections from the rear wall of the cabinet have further to travel and are thus more heavily attenuated by the air and polyester damping inside the enclosure.

For maximum sound stage depth, the Kenwoods need to be well away from walls. The trade-off here is in bass level. For their volume, these loudspeakers have relatively dry bass, no doubt highlighted by the

midrange lift. Our measurements showed that there's the customary upper-bass peak and lower bass reaches down to 63Hz, a fine set of figures. But the weight implied here is only realised when you pump a decent amount of power into the voice coils.

Take Classical music as an example. While single timpanum strikes were solid, if a little rough around the edges, drum rolls sounded loose and rather distorted. Still, this sort of welly from a 4in. driver ain't bad, and a small, light cone makes for crisp, swift transients.

Matching sound staging as an LS90UK strength was imaging. With the 'speakers about five feet apart in our room, instruments and players were sharply focused. Don't try separating the 'speakers too far though - this stretches images and they start to blur.

The LS90UKs have strengths and weaknesses, as do all budget loudspeakers. They major on clarity and minor on bass weight. A tad more smoothness and tonal colour to the midrange and treble wouldn't go amiss either. Still, for £130 they are definitely worth considering to partner a warm, bassy CD or amp like Cambridge's A1 MkIII●

Kenwood LS90UK
£129.95

Kenwood
Dwight Road,
Watford,
Herts. WD1 8EB
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WORLD VERDICT



The LS90UKs have dry bass and limited tonal colour, but sound staging and imaging are excellent.

Measured Performance
see p111

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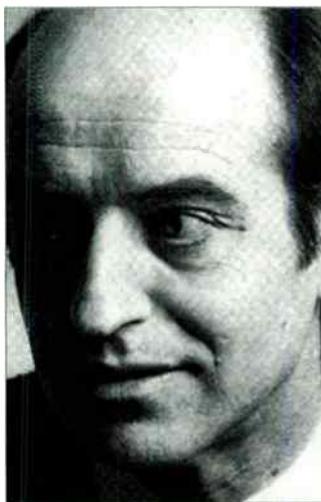
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Noel Keywood

We have just bought a digital camera, an Olympus Camedia 1400L. Looking at the pictures it produces in contrast to our usual medium-format transparencies, I see an interesting analogy to CD. And as music and images converge to become simple 'digital files' for storage, manipulation and transmission, the analogy might be a useful one.

The Olympus produces decent pictures, largely free from obvious problems. Much like CD though, it does have enough resolution, yet it doesn't also! The pictures are fine. They are starkly clear and in this respect identical to music from CD, which is clear but also stark - very right, but also wrong. CD is almost subliminally wrong, wrong in a way that is difficult to pin down. You know it's not right, even though it makes its case unequivocally: "Yes I am right, I am right!"

It is difficult to argue with digital and it has always been so. Let me say straight away that I am not anti-digital, so much as concerned about the surprising strengths of human cognition and its ability to spot a digital representation when it sees one, at least until digital improves. If we knew more about how to cater to our senses then digital representations, aural and visual, would be less obvious and again there are strong analogies to guide us or, I feel, to justify my suspicions about the problems with CD sound quality and audio perceptions in general.

So what is it about good digital pictures that is wrong? The clarity and

basic accuracy of the pictures are excellent. But are we seduced by this? Less so than we imagine I suspect. I believe the eye needs and expects to see and process detail. Fundamental accuracy is part of an engineer's basic value set, and all technology is handed to us by engineers. But boy, do engineers get it wrong at times. Let me quote you an example.

One of the basic specifications of CD was that it should have wide channel separation. But I have never found wide channel separation to offer any tangible

"Fundamental accuracy is part of an engineer's basic value set, and all technology is handed to us by engineers.

But boy, do engineers get it wrong at times."

benefits in terms of sound reproduction. Quite the reverse in fact, cartridges with around 15dB channel separation set up very strong central images, as you'd expect, and this is impressive, even if it is inaccurate. The human head physically imposes around 22dB level difference between our individual ears and it has long been speculated that stereo needs no more separation than this. My view is that at times it is better with considerably less.

Richard Brice has done more work on this with Francinstein (his CD-enhancing box of tricks) and feels, like me, that CD never needed extreme channel separation. That was, in essence, an

abstract criterion, one of the simple acts of faith that float around unchallenged in audio engineering. Engineers did do well to produce a coding scheme that could deliver infinite channel separation, but we didn't need it. The engineering was perfect; the conceptualisation was way out.

But back to our digital images. Accuracy of imaging is what you get with digital and, sure, it has to be there. All the people that designed the CCD imaging arrays should be congratulated. But the eye is neither fooled nor seduced by this. Hard symmetry strikes us as 'starkness'. In the same way, many never believed people would take to Le Corbusier and his form of architectural brutalism. It isn't a matter of taste or education - the eye needs to be engaged and entranced, it wants detail - in architecture 'decoration' - and the Victorians provided it in one way. Modern buildings are now providing it in others. You have to educate yourself not to accept detail in fact, and then you may decide you like a dirty, visually barren, shuttered-concrete face.

Digital images from our camera are of relatively low resolution and we can see the pixellation, especially on curves, such as the glint of light around the edge of a volume control. I'm fascinated to find, however, that if you ask Photoshop to interpolate between the pixels it does a spot-on job and the image loses much of its starkness. In fact the image softens to the eye, and it becomes more natural. Much the same occurs when increasing the sampling rate or word length of a digital music code. The music gets easier on the ear and is less stark.

With the benefit of hind sight I'm pleased and a little gratified that all the criticism 'flat earthers' threw at CD sound has, by and large, been proved correct. It is simple, stark, sharp in outline and apparently very correct. Yet the brain isn't fooled so easily. It is difficult to say why CD's images are also "not quite right" - they just are. Today we listen to a code scheme devised in 1980 - it is 18 years old. Time for a change I think, so digital music imaging can keep up with digital picture imaging. Because the latter isn't going to remain simple and stark for very long. Digital music coding needs to move on if it is to keep up with what is happening around us ●

DEFINITIVE AUDIO

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The April 98 edition of Hi-Fi Choice carries a review of a Definitive Audio starter system. This review illustrates in the most luminous and frank terms what you should expect from your specialist dealer. At Definitive Audio you will find all that is highest and best in serious audio, strong minded and independent advice, interesting and sometimes unusual products, and outstanding service.

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The hardest thing here is to express just how good this system is. Perhaps the easiest way is the most honest: I have heard far too many conventional systems that cost in excess of £40,000 which exhibit only fractional amounts of this cleverly matched outfit's musical dexterity. I have encountered few systems that sound as good as this one - at any price. It just goes to show that in hi-fi, the whole is much greater than the sum of the parts."

Alan Sircom. Hi-Fi Choice April 1998



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HEAVYWEIGHT BOXER

Denon's DCD-1550AR has the build of a costly CD player, but does it have the sound to match?

The sub-£500 CD player market has turned red-hot recently. With the introduction of new machines from Rega and Creek for example, even Marantz has had to lower the price of its chart-topping CD-63 KI-Signature to stave off the competition.

Denon's DCD-1015, which enjoyed nearly three years in the limelight, has finally been put out to digital pasture. Stepping in as its replacement is the DCD-1550AR. The price may be static at £350, but the look and build quality have certainly moved up a rung or two. The finely-brushed aluminium front panel looks classy for the money and the whole machine comes in at a far-from-biscuit-box 9kg.

Manufacture in Germany instead of Japan has allowed Denon to make a host of improvements to the '1550AR over its predecessor. A highly-rigid centre-mount transport has now been employed, one with a heavily-damped loading tray whose operating smoothness is a world away from most flimsy offerings. The DCD-1550AR is also Denon's humblest model to employ the proprietary pseudo-20-bit Alpha processing, backed up by a 20-bit DAC. As Sony have done in the CDP-X3000ES, Denon have lashed out on audio-grade capacitors and a transformer that wouldn't look out of place in a decent integrated amplifier. Although this feeds both digital and analogue sections, these do at least occupy separate PCBs to reduce interference.

From a feature point of view the '1550AR is no stripped-down lean machine. At the back, optical and electrical digital outputs cohabit alongside an extra variable analogue output. Unfortunately, volume adjustments are carried out in the digital domain, which doesn't do the sound any favours, especially at low

levels. The pitch control from the DCD-1015 has also been retained - apparently Denon see this as a useful feature for the classroom.

The Denon was left to warm up for a few days before joining a similarly-priced set-up of Aura's VA80 integrated (modified) and Heybrook's Heylette loudspeakers, all linked with Kimber cables.

the lower treble. This minor tonal aberration was only occasionally heard though, and never hampered the Denon's musicality.

Several Chopin pieces made the most of this player's excellent transient performance but the overdamped decay rendered the tonality rather thin - the piano went from a grand to an upright, albeit an



Once the '1550AR was settled, it showed it had a more vibrant and solid character than the '1015. The midrange was clean, dynamic and well-focused, as the Eagles' live 'Hotel California' ably demonstrated. Not only were vocals precisely located and attractively projected, the bass drum in the introduction of the song was weighty and controlled too. That said, in comparison to the pricier Marantz KI-Signature, the Denon did bypass subtler ambient information and curtail the decay of transients. These factors had a knock-on effect when it came to sound staging, which was broad but not particularly deep.

To its credit, the Denon attempted to squeeze a lot of detail from the recording and succeeded handsomely. Different acoustic guitars were easy to differentiate, each spotlighted by a slight brightness in

impressive upright. Apart from the lower treble though, the Denon had an even tonal balance that matches most genres.

Playing more upbeat and energetic tunes proved the DCD-1550AR could follow a rhythm without any trouble. The same was true of timing thanks to that transient speed. With less rounding-off of high frequencies the Denon produced a bolder, more aggressive sound than the KI-Signature on Rock.

Boosting the DCD-1550AR's performance with audiophile parts has put Denon back in the running with the CD competition under £500. While this player, with its generally dry presentation, isn't going to suit everyone's taste, it scores for its detail and tonal balance when partnered with warmer sounding amplifiers and 'speakers.

Denon DCD-1550AR
£349.99

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WORLD VERDICT



Construction is faultless for the price. Clean and precise, the Denon lacks only warmth and a little openness.

Measured Performance
see p111

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World Radio History

Unlike many tuners nowadays that have all the weight and feel of a biscuit tin whose contents have been gobbled, Roksan's Caspian boasts the construction of a quality integrated amplifier. This is down to the steel and alloy casework as a modern tuner doesn't actually require too much in the way of circuit boards or hefty power supplies. The parts those PCBs bear amount to a £595 FM-only tuner to segue stylistically with the rest of the Caspian range.

Tuning the Caspian is a reassuringly simple task. Touraj

Moghaddam, the designer, has deliberately gone for an analogue feel by omitting the usual rows of numbered buttons that allow station frequency entry or selection of a preset. Instead there are two knobs gracing the front panel - one labelled Channel to the left (which switches sequentially between the 50 presets) and one Tuning (which tunes in 10kHz steps across the 87.5MHz to 108MHz UK VHF band).

These controls work slickly, although the down side with Tuning is the sheer number of revolutions it takes to get from one end of the dial to the other. A useful feature to speed things up here is the autoscans, activated by giving the knob a sharp twist to either the left or right. This puts the microprocessor into hunting mode where it will lock on to any signal over 20dB/uV. Subsequent station storage is a simple matter of hitting Store, twisting Channel to select a vacant preset, and then pressing Store a second time.

The only other button to play with is Mode. Ordinarily this toggles between stereo and mono, essential for cleaning up those must-hear weak stations. However, if held for a second, Mode will also put the tuner into standby.

But the prize for Friendliest Function must go to the auto seek-and-store function. Switch on the tuner from cold with the main power switch whilst holding the Store

button and watch the Caspian go hunting for stations. Each station is then stored, not in the typical fashion of first available empty preset, but in slots counting back from the 50th preset. Any of these can then be relocated to a preferred position, if so desired.

The first question listening led me to ask was, am I getting older and more conservative or is Radio 2 becoming more youthful. The Beeb's No2 was actually playing Pop tunes on the right side of Easy Listening. The Police's 'Every Breath You Take' is not a track I know inside out, but it wouldn't have taken one of the bleached trio to tell me that a credible rendering was going on between the Jamo Concert 8s.

Tuning in to hits from yesteryear, this time on GLR, the unmistakable sound of the Bee Gees came flooding through to show a tight, tuneful bass guitar line. This was swiftly joined by Latin percussion spread across the sound stage. The top end was as crisp and clean as the Gibb brothers shirts, always a pleasure to hear when you consider the kind of compression the music has undergone before broadcast.

Classic FM on the other hand was considerably less well received, with female soprano suffering painfully edgy treble on crescendos. My fear of loud bits was justified in the Chopin piano sonata which followed, where distortion on firmly-

struck notes made for uncomfortable listening. Reference to a more familiar tuner, the Sony ST-SA3ES, absolved the Caspian of blame - the problem lay more in Classic FM's transmission.

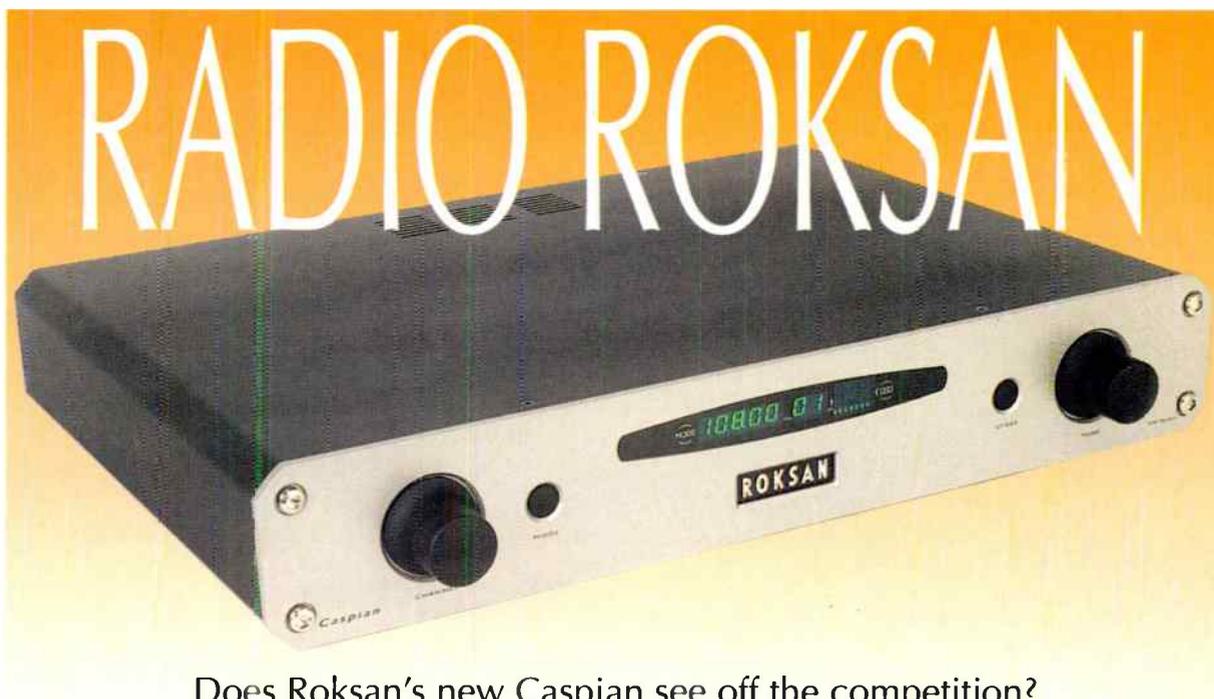
In my search for the spoken word experience I came across a current affairs programme on Radio 4 and a two-man discussion (one chap with a Midlands accent, the other a slight variation on the BBC's standard pronunciation). The Caspian's vocal articulation was good but not quite up to revealing from which town in their respective regions the voices originated.

A brief stroll along the airwaves of the commercial stations served only to prove how poor their heavily-compressed signals can sound through a revealing tuner. So I headed back to Radio 3 for an engaging Cabaret-style performance from Elizabeth Mansfield, her voice hanging sweetly in a spacious, detailed sound stage.

Roksan's Caspian tuner does all the right things, and does them rather well, but the price makes it a better bet for Caspian system owners than for the enthusiast who rates sound above looks. Creek's T43 tuner at £400, for instance, comes very close sonically and costs almost £200 less. If you seek that mix of looks and sound rare in hi-fi though, the Caspian is certainly one tuner to consider.

Roksan Caspian tuner
£595

Roksan
Stonehill,
Huntingdon,
Cambs. PE18 6ED
Tel: 01480 451777



Does Roksan's new Caspian see off the competition? Andrew Harrison goes paddling in the ether.

WORLD VERDICT



Styling and build are unquestionably impressive, but sound quality is not quite on the same level.

Measured Performance
see p111

The Caspian System by Roksan



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David Price

On hearing our esteemed publisher's Garrard 401 a few years back, I finally realised that belt drive turntables didn't have exclusive rights to high-end vinyl replay. With an SME 312 arm and Ortofon MC2000 cartridge, it was a real ear-opener: stable and detailed yet effortlessly musical. But the best bit was the bass. Muscular yet tuneful, it made music sound vivid at all times - in short, a very master tape-like sound.

By comparison, both my turntable at that time - a Michell GyroDec QC/RB300 - and the Sondek/Lingo/Ekos/Arkiv/Trampolin that Linn had kindly left with us, seemed a touch soft around the edges. Of course the belt drives had their strengths (the Gyro its imaging, the Sondek its rhythm), but I couldn't help feeling the Garrard was more fun. The experience sparked an abiding interest in turntable design, and led me on a voyage of discovery into the deepest recesses of analogue anachrophilia.

The answer came from where I least expected. Throughout my formative audiophile years, British hi-fi magazines repeatedly waxed lyrical over the evils of direct drive - a fiendish, musically unsatisfying system that only disco decks used. Having heard a number at friends' houses, I was apt to believe the mags. But then I heard a Technics SP-10 direct drive 'transcription' turntable.

At this point, I feel like one of those poor souls you see walking round with a sandwich board saying

'The End is Nigh'. I guess it's because celebrating direct drives rather goes against the grain, in this country at least. The problem was that in their heyday in the late 1970s, to keep noise down most DDs used low-torque motors. This meant light platters were needed, giving poor speed stability as the feedback system was constantly re-correcting the speed. By contrast, belt drives used rubber belts to absorb noise, allowing heavier platters for better speed stability.

In the early 1980s our hi-fi press went into overdrive to ram this point home to its readership. Such evangelical zeal, backed up by an almost universal love of a certain single-speed belt drive, made it all but impossible for decent examples of the DD breed to sell here. Instead we got the cheap stuff with poorly-aligned tone-arms and featherweight build.

"At this point, I feel like one of those poor souls you see walking round with a sandwich board saying 'The End is Nigh'."

A shame, because as I've recently found out, many high-end DDs were very special. When high-torque motors, heavy platters, quartz-locked servos and decent isolation from acoustic feedback are factored in, DD turntables become another proposition altogether. Indeed, I'm now beginning to think they're actually superior to the best belt drives.

I believe the latter can't handle dynamic wow as well as their DD brethren. This problem occurs when your stylus encounters a musical peak or 'transient' in the record groove, causing the platter to momentarily slow down. On a BD, the belt's elasticity decouples the motor from the platter, meaning it can't respond precisely enough when the platter slows on transients. By contrast, a DD's servo immediately calls up more grunt from the motor and restores speed almost instantaneously.

This explains why BDs generally

sound 'slower' than DDs. Bass is where this is most noticeable. Hear music live and you get razor sharp transients from bass drums and bass guitars - notes start and stop so fast it's like someone's playing a drum roll on your back. Good DDs seem to capture this lightning attack and decay better. In my own system my beloved belt driven Michell Orbe sounds fast, deep, powerful, solid and effortlessly musical. But change to my Pioneer PL600 (a high-end, quartz-lock DD) and the lows are just that little bit tighter. Such grip can only come from a gutsy motor driving the disc directly.

Ultimately the best place to drive a turntable's platter should be the rim (as it gives the most direct control of speed), but rim-drives are simply too noisy. Idler-wheel drives, as Noel's Garrard proves, are very much up to the job, but a high-tech DD with a quartz-lock servo with

feedback from a magnetic coating on the inner rim - a la Sony and Denon - is an even better compromise.

Proof of this comes from the fact that the better belt drive, the closer it sounds to a good direct drive. Remember when you first heard a Lingo LP12 after having used a Valhalla? The extra crispness and speed the Lingo brought made the Linn sound, dare I say it, more like a good DD! Likewise, rather than sounding shrill and uncouth, proper DDs approach the smoothness and sweetness of the best beltlers.

Anyway, I'm sure we can all agree that BD vs DD is a real can of worms. Many thought it had been emptied, but the resurgence of interest in classic turntables might just prove them wrong. As for me, I hope the debate gets going again, but would dearly wish for a speedier resolution than valves vs solid state, which, at 40 years and counting, is stretching things just a bit!●

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Meridian have gone all the 24-bit way with the revised 508 CD player. Andrew Harrison looks inside and out for the digital catch.

You may be forgiven for wondering why a 16-bit format like Compact Disc needs a 24-bit player. Why use a digital-to-analogue convertor that has many times more resolution than the information it is decoding? Well, the higher resolution DAC within the 508.24 should imbue the player with a better dynamic range and superior resolution of all-important low-level detail, areas where many 16-bit DACs need improvement.

Meridian's 24-bit convertor is based around the Crystal Semiconductors CS4390 IC that can now be found in a variety of players. While this will not instantly turn your CD collection into 24-bit master tapes, it can certainly smooth out many of the rough edges associated with CD. Since digital-to-analogue conversion is a question of number crunching, careful attention to getting the sums right really makes sense. As does adding a little dither noise in the right place, another technique Meridian exploit to increase low-level linearity.

These aren't the only reasons why this player has such a refined sound though. Look inside and you'll see a Philips 12.4 Pro mechanism under the control of Meridian's own servo system. The mechanism itself is mounted in the sliding drawer rather than being fixed within the case. Close the drawer and, unlike most CD machinery where the process is automatic, the player does nothing until you tell it to, whereupon it reads the disc's table of contents, a dot-matrix display informing the world of the usual time and track data. This can be switched off from the front panel or the table-top remote which Meridian are now supplying with the 508.

More evidence that Meridian have taken the design of this player seriously can be seen inside, with the judicious use of ferrite rings around high and low-voltage power



line cabling. These radio-frequency noise suppressers, along with the substantial heavy-gauge steel case, should make for an RF-quiet environment to nurture the cherished digits. And the case itself is effectively damped with a glass plate across the top and foam panels strategically applied within. The eagle-eyed may also spot the metallic green sheen of Nichicon Muse electrolytic capacitors in the class A output stage.

Initial auditioning was carried out with a World Audio 300B power amp and Epos ES22 floor standers, with the Vadis S15 and Musical Fidelity A1001 also drafted in. Early impressions proved this player would thankfully not inspire me to reach for the cotton wool. In fact, quite the opposite - I resorted to a variety of interconnects to tease extra detail from the 508.24. A few that worked well were the Ecosse Reference Optima, Sonic Link Black Rhodium and Kimber Silver. They all showed the Meridian's innately transparent and detailed presentation, which helped to uncover previously hidden sounds on albums I thought I knew - Garbage's 'Stroke Of Luck' yielded extra ambient background effects lurking deep in the mix. The grilling continued with many a torture track loaded to trip up the Meridian.

The Eberle string quartet, playing works by Gates and Bridge, prompted not only extended

listening but a higher volume setting than I would normally endure. The two violins had leanings towards shrillness but only when asked to do so by the nature of the instrument; in other words, what was reproduced was the realistic timbre of an acoustic instrument.

In a different listening room and system, the 508.24 operated in the company of Linn amplification and Kelly KT3 'speakers, but the components with which it truly sang were the MF A1001 and Jamo Concert 8s. The Concert 8s can be a little too disclosing with the wrong front-end or amplifier, but here was a system that blended beautifully. A little softness and loss of absolute pace in the bass was, for me, a small price to pay for the midrange clarity and treble civility on any disc played.

'Teardrop' from Massive Attack's Mezzanine was the final confirmation of the 508.24's pedigree. Deep, deep controlled bass, sublime vocals from Liz Frazer and the snappy rhythm track conspired to build the fabled sonic cathedral.

The final lingering impression Meridian's 508.24 CD player will leave with me is of a machine that could hold its head up in the company of an LP12, which an analogue buff may note is praise indeed. Bomb-proof construction and attractive looks make its hand even stronger.

Meridian 508.24
£1995

Meridian
Stonehill,
Huntingdon,
Cams. PE18 6ED
Tel: 01480 434334

WORLD VERDICT



The Meridian is one of the most capable and audition-worthy CD players around at its price.

Measured Performance
see p111

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VINTAGE VIRTUES

by Haden Boardman

Of all vintage valve amplifiers, the Quad II has to be the most famous and the most written about. It became so important to its maker that it actually changed the company's name! The Acoustical Manufacturing Company had been set up before World War II to build high-quality public address equipment. Post-war, this slowly turned to hi-fi, Acoustical launching their first domestic amplifier, the Quality Unit - Amplifier Domestic (or Quad for short) in 1948.

But the real tale begins with the launch of the MkII version in 1952. Here was an amplifier destined to remain in production for nearly 20 years, with almost 140,000 of the things made!

One thing that immediately strikes you about a Quad II compared to its early 1950s counterparts is its compact size. Everything is carefully engineered to fit within the confines of a tiny footprint of minimum volume. Inside the casework, the layout is very neat and tidy (something modern valve amplifier manufacturers should take note of). Under the two EF86 drive pentodes hides a small tag strip holding the majority of the signal

components. The output valve coupling capacitors are located on the base of the output valves, and the shared cathode resistor on the base of the choke.

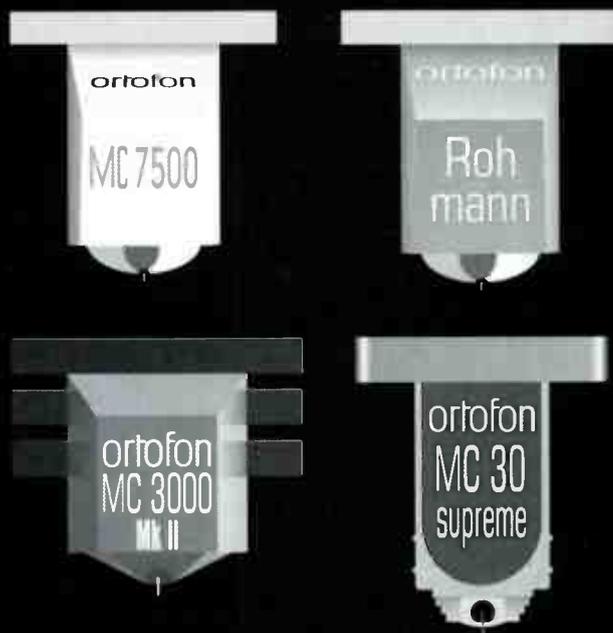
The power supply uses the aforementioned choke with a paper-in-oil capacitor block and a GZ32 rectifier (later a GZ34). Input is via a six-pin 'Jones' plug, and AC mains is fed in on a two-pin mains connector. At the other end of the case there are voltage adjustment taps for the primary of the mains transformer. This amp, in common with most vintage power amplifiers, has no power switch.

If you must modify the connectors and fit phono sockets, don't drill the chassis. Instead, remove the Jones plug carefully and fit a small piece of Veroboard in the hole and mount the phono socket on that. If you have the original matching pre-amp, then remove its plug and use that - it is a better audio connector than the phono socket. However, do be careful. The High and Low Tension power supplies for the pre-amp are also on the connector. The audio signal goes through the bottom pair of connectors, earth on the left, signal on the right.

The Quad II's exterior is painted in a 'slate grey' finish and carries a little perspex name tag with the unit's serial number. When looking to buy a pair of Quad IIs, try to

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The 22 pre-amp is powered through the umbilical chord which links it to the power amp.

get the closest matched serial numbers you can, and steer clear of all really early versions (unless you are a mad Quad collector!) made before serial number 8000 because they are near impossible to pair up.

The Quad II's Achilles heel is its mains transformer. The primary is run right up to its limit when powering the associated pre-amps and tuners. The matching Quad 22 stereo control unit scavenges power from just one poor old Quad II to enable it to be totally mono compatible, and if you have both the AM and FM tuners connected, then mains transformer failure is liable to occur.

Another thing to watch out for are modded Quad IIs. A few years ago, voltage doublers, valve regulators, EL34s and all kinds of other tweaks were thrust upon the amp. Unfortunately, they A) sound worse, and B) if they haven't already killed the mains transformer, they soon will!

Another point to look out for are original KT66 valves. These are very thin on the ground, and a pair of Quad IIs are always worth more when fitted with original GEC examples. Avoid like the plague any so-called direct Chinese replacements. GEC KT66s have a 0.9amp heater filament; some of the Chinese valves draw up to 1.8amps. This is guaranteed to fry the mains transformer. Fitting EL34s is a no-no for the same reason (1.5amp heater), as is the KT88. If you cannot find original KT66s, then fit 6L6s or 5881s, but make sure they only consume 0.9amp of filament current.

Originality is everything with a set of Quad IIs. If you have a pair which have never been touched, have all their original components, have never been damaged and still possess the original valves, then you can ask virtually what you want for them; certainly up to £500 would not be out of the question. If, on the other hand, they have been 'improved' with modern components, you will be lucky if a dealer offers you £100 for the set.

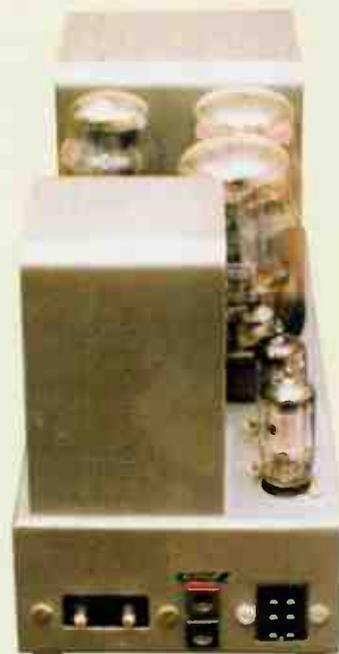
The Quad II's circuit is quite interesting. The amplifier has only two stages, hence it requires 1.4volts of input signal to produce its 12watt output, and so must be used with some kind of pre-amplifier. A quick mod for a little more gain is to use a 47ohm resistor instead of the 100ohm one located on the cathodes of both the EF86s. This results in a dramatic increase in sensitivity, with no real compromise in sound quality. You will still need to find 600millivolts (0.6volt), so a pre-amp is called for.

The output transformer is unusual in that it incorporates a cathode winding as well as the usual anode windings. This applies an 'out of phase' signal to the transformer and helps it produce triode-style impedance from two tetrodes, with the advantage of only needing the same drive voltage. The disadvantage is that the output valves are running quite a bit harder than the 12watt power rating would suggest.

If you were being cruel to a Quad II, you could point out that a Leak Stereo 20 has a larger output transformer, and to be honest, the basic 'guts' of the Leak are way better. But thanks to some clever trick with resistors within the transformer case, the Quad II gets away with it.

Sound-wise, the Quad is one of the finest amps from its period. It is clean, sweet and very load tolerant (the ideal partner for the Quad Electrostatic Loudspeaker). The original pre-amp works fairly well with CD sources and the tone controls are de-activated when the filter switch is in the 'Cancel' position. The phono stage though has too much hiss and hum for modern-day use, and to be honest, compared to a Leak Troughline, the Acoustical FM tuner is a bit of a disappointment.

It is very hard to describe the Quad sound - it is what the amp doesn't do that is more noticeable. When all original, it has a magic, open sound that very few amplifiers can compete with. On the flip side, the bass is a bit warm, and when driven into overload, it can bounce about all over the place. But then this is classic valve-amp behaviour. Because of this soft, bouncy limit, stick with efficient loudspeakers - Klipsch and Lowthers are ideal matches (Quad IIs with Klipsch La Scalas are awesome!), and don't forget a good pre-amp●



On the Quad II's rear panel are the mains input (left), 'speaker terminals (centre) and Jones connector (right).



The neatness of the Quad II's internals show just how well this amp was assembled.

The hi-fi separates market is shrinking. Despite the trend having slowed down substantially over the past few years, the fact remains that fewer and fewer people are buying hi-fi separates.

You might think that, as many national electrical retailers now stock real hi-fi, the trend would be reversed. However, the point is, whilst they stock the components most branches don't actually sell many. Anyone like myself who's tried to buy equipment from such an outlet will understand why. When I visited one shop I was greeted with an overwhelming sense of apathy from many of the salespeople. This is, perhaps, understandable - it would be far easier for them to sell an all-in-one box before moving swiftly on to the next customer.

This may be good news from the specialist retailer's view point, but many are still concerned about the dwindling market place, and are seeking to increase the size of the separates market. There are two ways of doing this. Either a new technology comes along and is supported by effective marketing (we've seen this with Compact Disc and, more recently, MiniDisc) or the same products are offered to a different audience.

The latter might not seem like a particularly tempting prospect since most of the bases are already covered. There are specialist magazines and even promotions within the national press to sell the idea of hi-fi. Most people who love music own a hi-fi separates system, and even those who don't are at least aware of them. So where's the room for expansion? One of the greatest potential avenues for growth lies in what many see as a great threat to both hi-fi and hi-fi retailing.

Computers or, to be more specific, the Internet, may have knocked separates as a spending priority, but it's a field that those within the industry ignore at their peril. Despite my admittedly limited computer experience, I can appreciate that as far as genuine high fidelity goes, the amplifiers and 'speakers provided with PCs are

hopelessly inadequate. This at least gives the manufacturers and retailers of budget equipment huge scope to woo those buyers wanting rather more sonically from their computer.

This scenario bears more than a passing resemblance to what happened with the audio visual market. Many people wanted better sound from their television and went for a set of inexpensive loudspeakers. From this starting point they then found their way into hi-fi separates. The upgrade future with Internet users looks far rosier.

I have only recently begun to venture out on to the Net and the impression I get is of a technology that, given time to mature, could have a profound effect on all aspects of the hi-fi and music software industry. It's already possible to download music over the World Wide Web and play it through a computer. The downside is that, even with reasonably high-speed ISDN telephone lines, the process is quite slow, which won't do your phone bill any favours.

Local cable companies are bringing the cost of calls down though.

Likewise I can envisage the service being both speeded up and improved in terms of accessibility. I must admit the idea of a vast juke box is quite appealing, even to a computer sceptic like myself. As current Net music sites continue to improve, the implications for the hi-fi and music industries could be immense. And if copyright is a law difficult to enforce now, imagine what a nightmare it might be trying to prevent surfers downloading information straight onto Recordable CD or MiniDisc.

Whatever the outcome, manufacturers of amplifiers and



Dominic Todd

'speakers have little to worry about. Those whose livelihoods depend on making source components and selling recordings have more cause for concern.

Over the course of extended browsing on the net I was also struck by the opportunity it offers to radically change the face of hi-fi retailing as we know it. Shopping via computer has been mooted for many years but it is only now

"It's already possible to download music over the World Wide Web and play it through a computer."

becoming a reality. A couple of this country's larger hi-fi retailers offer the chance to order hi-fi via the Net. At the moment it's a fairly primitive process, but there are signs of progress - you can view one chain's stores using virtual reality!

Of course, in some respects nothing has changed. There have always been people who've used their telephone to order hi-fi. And there will always be people who want to go into a shop, talk to a real person and, most importantly, listen to the hi-fi itself. So I don't think the Internet spells the end for the hi-fi industry, but to ignore it completely would be foolish in the extreme ●

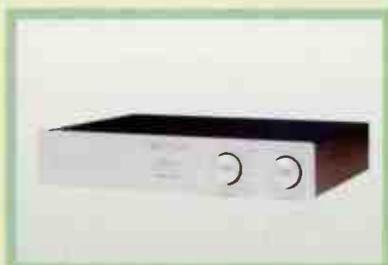
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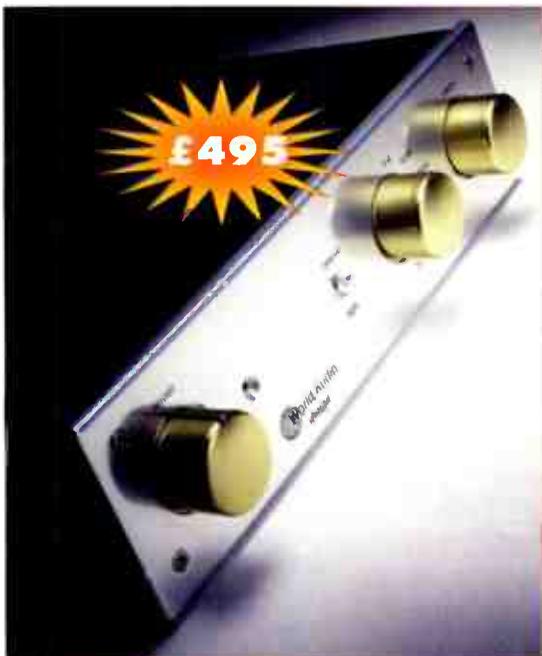
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NEW!



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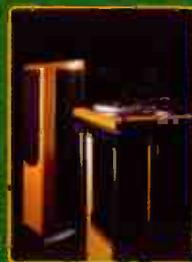
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DIAMOND V



How far have Wharfedale's tiny Diamond loudspeakers come in a decade? Andrew Harrison finds out.

When Wharfedale celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1982, a new baby monitor loudspeaker was born to the world. The appropriately-named Diamond was a budget box measuring just 24cm tall and 19cm wide and deep. A 20mm soft-dome tweeter and dinky polymer mid/bass unit were enlisted for driver duties: the result was a low-sensitivity stand mounter that soon captured the hearts and minds of both reviewers and the buying public with its all-round playability. When Wharfedale announced, 16 years later, the latest variant to carry the prized gemstone badge, we decided it was high time to see how the new Diamond 7.2 sounded against a pair of their direct ancestors of the early Eighties.

Knowing how hi-fi technology, and especially loudspeaker design, has moved on in the last decade and a half, the object in having two pairs of Diamonds was to hear how much the marque's least expensive have

improved over the years. What we didn't expect was to be shown how voicing and sonic styling have been adapted to suit fashions, or how good the original concept really was.

Unable to

secure a suitable pair of Mark Is, a pair of 1987-vintage Mark IIIs were kindly lent to us by Wharfedale, and these differ substantially only in the type of tweeter used. The Diamonds were in fact labelled as 'Programme 30D' which we understand are the commercial installation version of the Mark III.

The 12mm-chipboard cabinet was wrapped in the then-ubiquitous black vinyl, with a token lump of BAF wadding inside and a simple two-way crossover PCB (glued to one side wall) with lead-outs to single-wired spring clips on the back panel. The main driver was the most remarkable component. A pressed-steel frame supports a cone that measure just 100mm or 4in. across. Even with a rear-facing port it seems surprising, not that the 'speaker can carry a bass tune, but that it can reproduce anything at all below 200Hz!

Our latest Diamond 7.2 was finished with luxurious Oak-veneer side panels, through which are bolted moulded, black plastic front and rear panels. The front baffle is streamlined such that there are no hard edges, or even mounting screws. The 120mm driver has a bulbous phase plug in the centre of its plastic cone, while a fabric-dome tweeter sits above in conventional two-way styling. Overall it has the look of a modern, well-built bookshelf 'speaker. On the rear, in marked contrast to our III's spring terminals, were solid gold-plated bi-wire binding posts. A reflex port sits, like the IIIs, behind the tweeter on the rear baffle.

Small 'speakers like the Diamonds typically work best with their low-frequency output augmented by proximity to the wall. This was duly tried but found to colour the sound somewhat, so with the muscular Musical Fidelity A1001 putting the watts up them they were brought forward on Linn Kan II stands with plenty of toe-in.

Golden oldie - the mid/bass from the MkIIIs.



S DIAMOND



The resulting picture was very effective - in no time the early Diamonds' unpretentious and humble character was making itself known. No real attempt at reproducing low bass was made (nor expected) but I found myself nonetheless drawn into the music, held by the spell of a thoroughly involving 'speaker. Ignoring its obvious faults became unusually easy, and instead I was drawn into recordings by its seductive honesty.

Massive Attack's 'Teardrop' on CD features sampled vinyl surface noise which was far more evident than usual, reminding me how unforgiving mini-monitors can be of poor sources like budget turntables. But the overriding feeling with these Diamonds is of music playing. Sure, you can hear grain in the treble when things thicken up mix-wise, and they get shouty on vocal peaks, but they still communicate music in the process. Take Garbage's 'Temptation Waits' for example, a real foot-tapping piece of power Pop that really Rocks in spite of obvious hardness and compression in chorus peaks, You still get insight into the music and end up wanting more.

The contemporary Diamonds offered an altogether different presentation, showing how over 10 years of development have upset the apple cart. Fulsome bass gave an attention-grabbing sound that jumped out to impress. However, after that initial shock of hearing a modern-sounding 'speaker has subsided, you may wonder what happened to music. The bass presence is flattering, particularly with today's Dance-oriented recordings, but it's a definite case of quantity over quality, as if the upper bass is overwhelming the midrange. Where the old Diamonds drew attention to vocals and solo instruments, milking them as best they could, the new kids hardly seemed to bother as it

showed off its bass warmth.

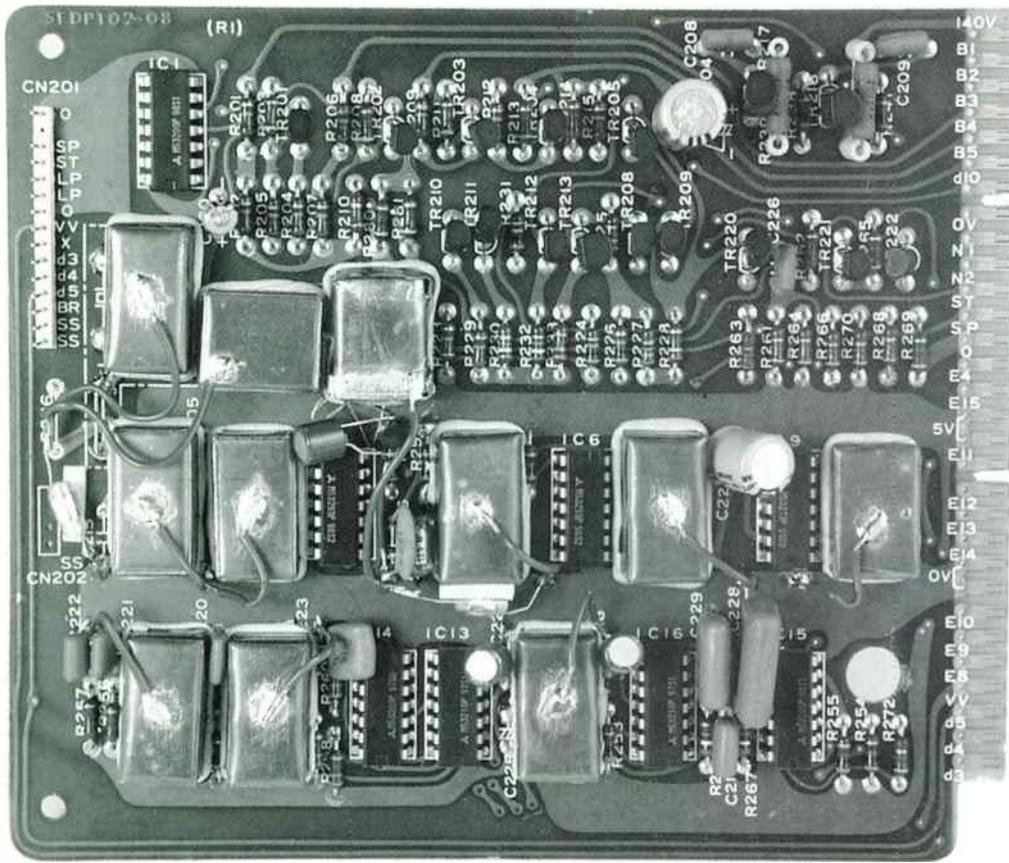
Tori Amos' 'Precious Things' has a sprinkling of drums that on the Ills were shown as open and rhythmic - there was a sense of a real drummer behind the kit at the back of the-stage. With the 7.2s it could have been a drum machine. They had more bass weight, yes, but leading edges sounded rather synthetic and one step removed from reality. Considering its need for meaty basslines, some sequenced Dance from DJ Quicksilver was piped through the new 7.2s, but the result wasn't particularly involving and our feet remained uninspired.

These more modern Diamonds will find favour with many people, I'm sure, as the all-important first impression grabs attention and should do so successfully in the High Street. Their elders show that, while Wharfedale were not inclined to exactly walk the Flat Earth, they did have a 'speaker that excelled at Tunes and at a very affordable price. As ever, like the Kans of this month's Olde Worlde page, they of course needed impeccable ancillaries to prevent aural disgrace, unlike their more amp-friendly modern successors which should partner a wider range of kit. But as we found, newer doesn't necessarily mean better●

The mid/bass driver from the 7.2s.



CANNED GOODS



Jon Marks finds out how a little copper shielding can go a long way.

Two of the most widely known initials in the musical arena are CD. But while every house in this green and pleasant land could tell you 'C' is for Compact and 'D' Disc, the three letters 'R', 'F' and 'I' might furrow a few brows. However, Radio Frequency Interference is increasingly recognised as a major influence on how a lot of hi-fi equipment sounds.

Manufacturers like DPA have long been aware of the detrimental affect RFI can have on sound quality and use surface-mount parts, mains filters and aluminium casework in an attempt to alleviate the problem. This may stop a lot of outside RFI getting into your hi-fi, but, especially where digital systems are concerned, it doesn't offer much protection from RFI created within.

Having received a number of readers' letters on the subject of screening cans, we decided to investigate with some help from Kopperae (tel: 07970 654356), suppliers of copper sheet (cost £1 and up depending on size) and tin snips (£3.95) for the cutting thereof. A package of sheet copper duly arrived a couple of days later and we set out screen making in two test beds, a Technics SP-10MkII direct-drive motor unit and a Pioneer PD-91 CD player.

As you can see from the picture, the main target in the Technics was the oscillator section, where the output of a quartz crystal is stepped down to provide the drive signal to the motor. There's a whole range of Radio Frequencies polluting this board, as no shielding of any kind is fitted as standard. The first countermeasure is to begin making up screens to fit above and below problem ICs.

Measure the length, width and height (from the surface of the PCB) of the IC you want to screen, and then add 2mm or 3mm to each to provide some clearance. Once you have the dimensions, draw out a plan of the screen, with the four sides joined to the top. This can then be cut as a single piece of copper and the sides folded over to form a box with a top but no bottom. This obviates the need for soldering together separate bits of copper, which is very fiddly.

Now test-fit the screen over the IC to confirm it fits without touching the chip itself and potentially shorting out its pins. Next, cut a short length of thin cable which will ground the screen at the nearest available ground point. Solder the cable to the screen. In most cases, with copper between 0.5mm and 1mm thick, this will take a 20watt soldering iron as a minimum. And remember, the copper takes a while to cool down, so don't burn your fingers as you go to pick it up.

To make sure the screen doesn't short any PCB tracks, stick insulation tape on the four sides and fold it in under the screen. To attach the screen to the PCB, we turned to the

audiophile's faithful friend, Blu Tack. A narrow bead around the bottom edge of the screen will hold it in place - in the Technics none of the screens have fallen off after six months. If you're worried about them dropping off though, cover the outside with insulation tape.

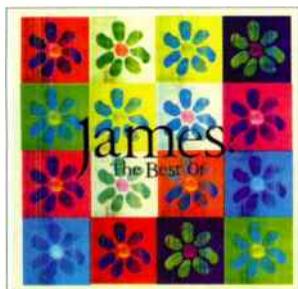
The final step is to connect the screens to a ground point. The best way to do this is through a capacitor soldered to the cable coming from the screen. We tried a range of values, from 4.7uF down to 22pF and found that, in the Technics, 33pF or thereabouts gave the top sound. Tiny caps like this mean you can use polystyrenes, which sounded better than other types. Just make sure you connect the coloured end of the cap to the screen, or you won't get the full screening effect.

Unfortunately, making up the screens is quite a time-consuming task, although thinner copper sheet is faster to cut and bend. But the results are well worth it. With screens on the crystal and most of the frequency step-down ICs in its wake, the Technics sounded much more open, detailed and natural. It became more musically involving and three-dimensional too. The PD-91 showed similar gains, although there was already some shielding in place.

Protecting the analogue drive section in the Technics and the output stage in the Pioneer comes next, and it looks like these will be rich veins to mine from early experiments. And Ken Ishiwata uses the same technique in his HDAM output modules in Marantz equipment. So if you're handy with a soldering iron and a pair of tin snips, try a touch of copper origami for cleaner sound! ●

ROCK & POP

by Jon Clarke & Stuart Lenz



JAMES
THE BEST OF JAMES

FONTANA JIM BEST01

James were once so laid back they achieved international success by simply sitting down. Since then, the Manchester band, fronted by handsome Tim Booth, have continually put out PR-free releases with the band firmly lurking in the shadows. This might explain why no one has heard of them for aeons.

Best Of James serves two purposes. First, it's a timely reminder that after 16 years they are still together, and second, that they have hardly changed. While other Manchester icons The Smiths (who they once supported), New Order (who they once understudied), The Happy Mondays and The Stone Roses have all since dried up, James appear to be going strong.

Last year's single, 'She's A Star', emerged after a two-year hiatus and was a decent little song, the kind that should have made James minor stars, even major league perhaps. It didn't of course, but then understatement is everything with James.

It is inconceivable to think of James as anything but

unconventional. However, with the likes of Eno on board as producer, conformity rather than left-field experimentation has tended to dominate. While adept at writing catchy Pop ditties verging on the rebellious, they can hardly be termed genuinely revolutionary.

Take 1985's early Factory single 'Hymn From A Village'. While other bands were pleading with listeners to ban animal testing or kick out the Tories, Tim Booth was saying simply: "Go and read a book, it's so much more worthwhile".

There are some fine numbers here. 'Come Home' seems an excellent way to start the album, capturing as it does the warm essence of the band. Together with crowd favourites 'Sit Down' and 'How Was It For You?' from their 1990 chart-topping album Gold Mother, they recall those care-free Madchester days.

By 1993's Laid, the band's sound had become insistently melodic, the songs full of imaginative hooks and three-part choruses, with Tim Booth adding his characteristic flourishes of camp melodrama to the vocals.

In short there are no bold steps into the unknown here and certainly no slippery falls into the vortex of Rock 'n' Roll excess. But while James' songs are refreshingly composed and upbeat, they can start to sound a bit similar. My advice is, sit down with a good book and put on something more worthwhile instead.



THE BLUETONES
**RETURN TO
LAST CHANCE
SALOON**

BLIVED 008

Carried along in the wake of the BritPop euphoria of two years ago, the Bluetones were heralded as the new Pop kings, mentioned in the same breath as the likes of Sleeper, Dodgy and Gene. Like their number-one selling debut, the boys from Hounslow were Expecting To Fly. But while their first release led to comparisons with early Stone Roses, here they have sadly produced an album not much better than the Manchester band's disappointing return.

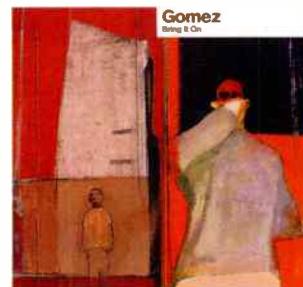
The opening shots are fired by 'Tone Blooze' and 'Unpainted Arizona', surging songs that drive harder than predecessors and show guitarist Adam Devlin perfecting his riffs.

The single 'Solomon Bites The Worm' rocks just as hard. However, many of the remaining tracks have a distinct riff-by-numbers style, with little difference from staple Reef or Ocean Colour Scene fare.

The saving grace on Return... is Mark Morris' vocals. He injects a certain

vulnerability and sensitivity into his singing, both of which are rather missing from the work of his colleagues.

If you thought the Bluetones were going to be the next great, white Rock act, you'll be disappointed. This is no great return despite containing some of the promise they showed two years ago. Return may not be their last chance, but they'd better pull their socks up.



GOMEZ
BRING IT ON

HUT 49

With a cowboy sound from the High Chaparral of Texas and a name that suggests they got there via the Rio Grande, it is a surprise to find that Gomez in fact herald from Southport. And quite a stir this little five-piece, whose average age is 22, are making at the moment - they're being touted as a new Space or Verve. This is due to one thing alone: originality. They are so darn chicken-pluckingly fresh and new that it is hard to ignore Bring It On.

Playing a part here is singer Ben Otterwell, who has that sort of lived-in, rasping voice which reminds you of Jim Morrison. In reality

ROCK & POP

though it is perhaps closer to Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder. Take the opening track, 'Get Miles'. This has to be one of the few tributes to the benefits of chain smoking.

The music is something else. Creedence Clearwater Revival, The Byrds, Tom Waits and Neil Young are all in the mix, plus a vast collection of Blues, Country, Rock, Psychedelia and assorted Americana. In short, this is a break from the norm.

Bring It On starts raucously but soon settles on a soft, lo-fi mood, particularly with 'Whippin' Piccadilly' and the amusing '78 Stone Wobble'. If you thought earlier references to cowboys were misconceived, the dreamy 'Tijuana Lady' is littered with señoritas, desperadoes and mariachis. By 'Here Comes The Breeze' slide guitars and the twang of the Southern states are in full force.

The second half delivers the whimsical 'Love Is Better Than A Warm Trombone' and the very catchy 'Free To Run', with its addictive hooks and a thumping piano line to rival Jerry Lee Lewis.

Bring It On reels nicely from pillar to post without really blowing your socks off. This is no bad thing as it achieves the greater ambition of reaching into your soul.

This bunch of Hill-billies might remain wilfully obscure and, not unlike the Titanic, disappear without a trace in no time at all. That is unless they are saved by a receptive audience which suddenly acquires a taste for finer Folk/Country/Rock crossovers.

Stranger things have happened, and it's awl goin' down over thar in those Southport Hills.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
**REBIRTH
OF THE COOL 7**
ISLAND CIDD 8065

That's What I Call Music ended its run somewhere around 36, but was clinically dead by its second outing. In contrast, the Rebirth Of The Cool, with the odd glitch here and there, has managed to provide an eager, streetwise public with a new bunch of sounds more or less once a year for the last seven years.

At first RBOTC7 sounds like it is drawing its pension and hobbling about on walking sticks. Not that it's necessarily an inferior product, but the territory is so familiar that one assumes it's nearing check-out time. However, on further airings it becomes apparent there is much of interest and, with the exception of Roni Size, whose excellent debut Repraent won the Mercury Music Prize last year, there are few well-known artists here.

And that's the point. The

objective in RBOTC is, and always has been, to engender as many of the current styles as possible and pick out something that stands out.

With Rebirth Of The Cool 7, however, we seem to be missing the two big, pre-millennial flavours, Big Beat and Speed Garage. That's not a bad thing, for DJ Patrick Forge and friends have instead assembled a compilation with more of a Jazz influence. Fans of Forge's Sunday evening show on Kiss where he serves alongside Giles Peterson will agree this is a sensible choice.

The result is a cross-section of tracks, each of which does a particular take on Jazz. There's the Jazz-infused Techno wizardry of Ian O'Brien's 'Monkey Jazz', the funky, Jazzy rhythms of the likes of New Sector Movements and the ruminations of Drum 'n' Bass worthies Spacer and Bill Riley, with their 'In At The Deep End'. Then there's Roni Size, who puts in a sterling performance with his delightful 'Ballet Dance'.

Much here is of note and the efforts of Abstract Truth and Blaze, the unsung heroes of the Garage generation, are sensational. The latter's 'My Beat' is seminal, mixing poetry and Afro-textures in a way that only Gil Scott Heron has achieved, rounded off with 120 bpm Drum 'n' Bass lines. Skitz/Roots Manuva with their deep and personable Rap production are also inspirational.

If the sheer variety of grooves, spiritual explorations and something called nuskool

Samba, for reasons best known to the artist, don't tickle the taste buds, then the up-to-date translations of Jazz classics by Milton Nascimento and Coltrane surely will.

Of course not everything will be to your taste - there are some real stinkers here - but which compilation can manage that? Tune in, burn out and wait for number eight.



JACKIE BROWN
THE SOUNDTRACK
MAVERICK MAV 9362-46841-2

Film soundtracks with a throwback to the Seventies are almost made to order these days. The long-haired, flarey-trouser and Afro days obviously put bums on seats and turned a few shekels for studio execs.

Well the Boogie Shoes are still on, in words conveyed by Bobby Womack's brilliant 'Across 110th Street', which opens this compilation. Like the film, the music on Jackie Brown has a sort of noir realism - gritty with no frills attached. A body count of four, low for Tarantino, necessitates low-voltage music, and that's what we get.

Replacing the spanking

ROCK & POP

RECORD OF THE MONTH

PULP
THIS IS Hardcore
 ISLAND CID 8066/524

Is Jarvis unwell? Has the media darling who lapped up all the attention which came in the wake of the group's last album *Different Class* now had his fill? It would seem so. Having waited over a decade for the penny to drop and fame to reach his Sheffield shores, he has had enough.

This *Is Hardcore*, Pulp's sixth long-playing effort, reflects his frustration with life and intrusive reporting, and marks a sea change from the mocking, witty and light-hearted albums that have gone before.

While *Different Class* was up-beat, *Hardcore* is socially serious and 'dark'. It may even be a little depraved. But then it deals with sexual psychosis and voyeurism, so it's bound to leave a salty after-taste in the back of one's throat.

The collection of songs on *This Is Hardcore* is mostly a sprawl of confession and guilt. The prescribed party drugs of Es and whizz have been replaced by the sit-at-

home drugs of choice. The Prozac-addled generation now have the media hyperbole of talkshows and sleaze to grapple with their senses.

The Aged', a tale of morality for all with the sensibly but decidedly un-hip line: "Help the aged/ One time they were just like you".

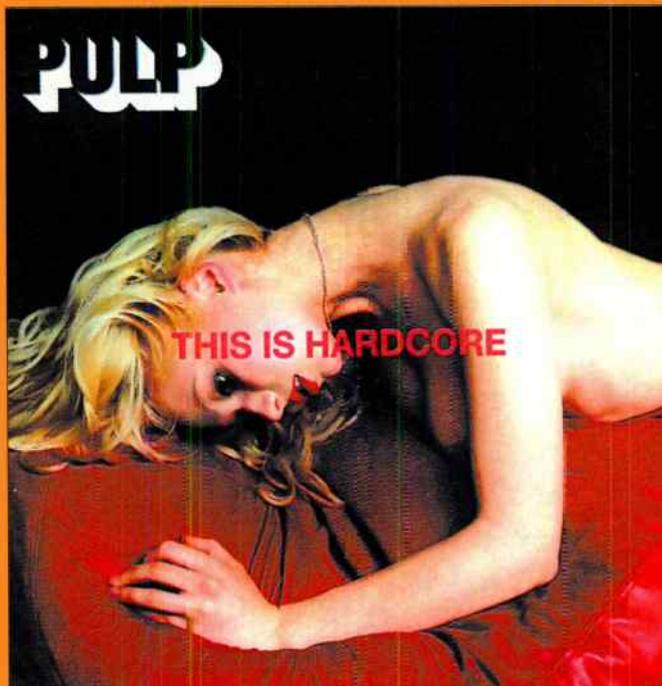
Next up Jarvis reveals his

watching by the bucketload over the last few months. It is a brave man indeed who goes naked for the listener, but Jarvis always does it with panache, without a care in the world.

Then there are the misfits and mutants. 'A Little Soul' cleverly mines a groove from Smokey Robinson's 'Tracks Of My Tears', while 'Party Hard' turns Jarvis into David Bowie, circa *Scary Monsters*. 'Glory Days' is a somewhat cynical take on a Bruce Springsteen number and mocks the idealism of the original song.

This *Is Hardcore* may not become the great, crashing commercial success expected of it, but it is bold and grown-up whereas *Different Class* was adolescent and excitable.

Sadly there are no 'Disco 2000's or 'Common People's here. Instead Pulp have gone to the heart of the matter. By bearing his soul and producing some deeper, more thoughtful lyrics, Jarvis and co have come out tops. Frankly, it's a darn impressive album, and if this is hardcore, then I'm happily an addict.



'The Fear' sums up the feeling perfectly and sets the pattern for the rest of the album. Its depressing drone soon yields to the loungey tedium of 'Dishes', the obvious focus of anyone's suburban fear. Then it's 'Help

foibles on the risky title track. Every bit as anthemic as the Verve's 'Bittersweet Symphony', it looks at the singer's fascination with pornography, a form of entertainment which he recently confessed to

thrash 'n' burn tunes to be found in *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, the soundtrack to *Jackie Brown* is distinctly mellow professional funk with a few smouldering smoochers thrown in - no beloved Link Wray in other words. The pedigree of these songs is undeniable though - Brothers Johnson do their 'Strawberry Letter 23', Bill Withers performs his superb 'Who Is He And What Is He To You?' and Randy

Crawford's 'Street Life' is about as universal as you can get.

The Delfonics' romantic confection, 'Didn't I Blow Your Mind This Time', shows off a lighter side to the Philly Gamble-Huff house-sound predominant in the '70s, but comes far closer to the harmonic reaches of Motown - a loved-up Soul treasure if ever there was one.

Tarantino has scored the music for himself, but there's an appreciative

audience out there. Still, occasionally it doesn't work. The inclusion of Johnny Cash's 'Tennessee Stud' is one example, and while this may get Rednecks crying into their Coors, it stands out here like a sore thumb. After all, *Jackie Brown* is about street hassle, not rodeo.

JB might not be as good a soundtrack as *Pulp Fiction*, and it comes nowhere near to equalling *Reservoir Dogs*, but it's still definitely worth a spin ●

DANCE & AMBIENT

by Sara Davis & Leon Palmer



VARIOUS ARTISTS
THE SOUND OF THE UNDERGROUND - IBIZA, MIXED BY DJ ALFREDO
 MASTER DANCE TONES
 SATU CD8236

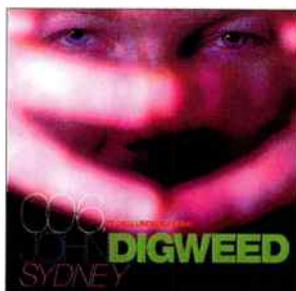
This summer is the 10th anniversary of the House music explosion on our shores and, strange as it might seem today, one of its major roots found fertile soil on an inconspicuous party island in the Mediterranean. The influence of Ibiza's Balearic beat on the new era of UK Dance music is well known, and DJ Alfredo is often credited with introducing it to Britain via DJs Danny Rampling and Paul Oakenfold. But don't expect too much nostalgia from DJ Alfredo's follow-up to the popular '95 compilation, Space.

The fresh and pure originality of 1988 Balearic has been enhanced with some of today's funkier House/Garage tracks. One taste of this former Ibiza resident's Amnesia club reveals a pleasing content of new and not-so-new numbers from the lighter end of the House spectrum.

There's not much room for innovation in the 4/4 world of

Garage. Mercifully, various labels like Irma, Nervous, FFRR, EMI et al have allowed some of their best efforts to grace this album. The massive 'I Thought It Was You' by Sex-O-Sonic is one of House music's finest responses to Disco and never fails to get the girls moving - if only in anger over the track's opening sample, a male voice repeating the words "Stupid, ugly bitch"! Shame to spoil such a dreamy tune but at least UK act Fire Island's 'Roach Motel' - deep and bass heavy and released on the US Strictly Rhythm label - is included to improve the stompability factor.

Call it Handbag, happy House, Garage, whatever, this collection won't give you an ear-bashing, just some fine, funky House and, thanks to the sunny influence of Ibiza, some nice memories too.



GLOBAL UNDERGROUND
MIXED BY JOHN DIGWEED
 BOXED GU006

We are heading deeper, deep into the dark and twisted underground, so far down we arrive in Sydney's Twilo club for John Digweed's monthly spot of jockeying. Yes, the lad

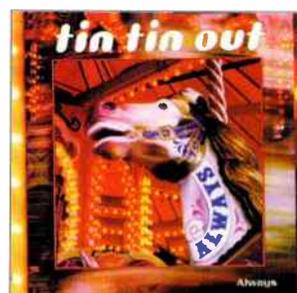
from Renaissance has had enough 'Northern Exposure' and has flown the nest for some rays down-under. By all accounts he probably deserves it.

After a brief spell learning the ropes in the early Nineties at London's Rage club as a bottom-of-the-bill apprentice, the young Digweed must have impressed someone because he was soon co-mixing the massive Renaissance albums. The huge critical and commercial success of Renaissance and the resultant tours with famed partner Sacha gave both their reputations a boost and the signature sound was born: deep and dancey, dark and trancey.

On this double-CD Digweed goes it alone, which means more tracks and more room for the DJ to develop and build, which is just as well as that's what he's best at. The first CD is the most accessible although it's still infused with deep and twisted House sounds from the likes of Danny Tenaglia, Heat Effect and the wonderfully up-beat Dubby House of Albion's 'Air', a memorably sweet tune. The international flavour of the album takes us on a journey from Hong Kong, through Japan, Berlin and the US and it's these rich pickings which bring the CD to life.

When Digweed goes experimental as he supposedly does on the second side you know that in reality nothing is left to chance, for while they might be unknown acetates, past experience means he'll have chosen some real eerie Trance

classics. Efforts from artists like Paul Van Dyk, Pablo Gargana, Deepsky and Crystal Method are welded together seamlessly as the hard and sinister side of the underground spreads the Digweed charm. If you remain still to this one you must have your head in the sand. I think we can safely say this lad has graduated a little higher up the bill now.



TIN TIN OUT
ALWAYS
 VIRGIN RECORDS

Having recently topped the charts with 'Here's Where The Story Ends', Tin Tin Out are back with a classic House album that showcases a selection of hits from the last few years. This really is a must-have chronology of Poppy House music, chock-full of favourites from the early part of the decade - Espiritu's vocals alone on 'Always Something There To Remind Me' are reason enough to get hold of it. 'The Feeling' featuring Sweet Too (another dancefloor classic from yesteryear) also warrants a re-listen. The brilliant Sundays' cover 'Here's Where . . .' is just the icing on

DANCE & AMBIENT

RECORD OF THE MONTH

DEEP DISH
JUNK SCIENCE
DECONSTRUCTION

Washington's Deep Dish first came to light in 1992 thanks to the quality of production on their remix work, in particular De'Lacy's 'Hideaway'. In '95 they signed to Deconstruction where they released less than a single every 12 months. 'Stranded', the Radio 1-powered single of late, was one which kept the Deep Dish sound alive and proved that quality beats beat quantity of beats. Now firmly positioned on the chillier side of cool, Ali and Sharam's new album Junk Science is eagerly awaited and well hyped, deservedly so.

It's no surprise that Junk Science is sleekly mixed and well produced, but style-wise Deep Dish have always been unpredictable, messing with hundreds of influences and staying open-minded to the end. Junk Science is an incredibly

tight array of Jazz, Funk, Rock vocals, Disco, Drum 'n' Bass and more, smoothed gently over a fine layer of slick House beats.



The album's sound is hard to pin down, but every track wields the Deep Dish slant; an infectious blend of uplifting chord-changes with echoing

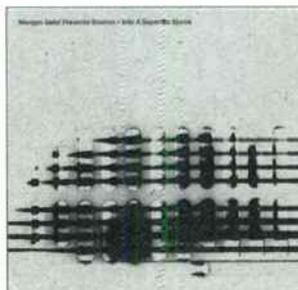
Disco notes undercut by an Emmanuel Top-type rhythm. The 13 tracks (including 'Stranded' and a reworking of the first single 'Stay Gold') vary wildly and are often to be found way out there somewhere, playing with ambient electric guitars or toying with gravelly vocals akin to Iggy Pop's. 'Morning Wood' for example, is a haunting dip into the guitar-sway of the Spiritualised ilk, which lulls you into an irresistible mellowness only to evolve into an up-beat Massive Attackesque tune complete with thumping beat.

Junk Science can be compared to kitchen object-inspired counterparts Jam 'n' Spoon, whose smoochy vocals and restless harmonies it sonically aspires to. But at the same time Ali and Sharam's deeply ingrained sense of humour and adventure rises to the surface every time. Junk Science is an instantly likeable album - catchy, yet laid-back, deep and very dishy.

the cake, illustrating Tin Tin Out's uncanny knack of spotting an unusual tune and making it huge.

The lesser known tracks on Always will not disappoint either. 'Dance With Me' is a bit D-ream but totally hummable. 'Strings For Yasmin' is a powerful violin melody with bongos and tribal samples much like Deep Forest. 'This Is For You' features the soulful vocals of Dawn Dawson over deep bass, whilst 'Dealers To The Dancefloor' is another high-energy Techno stomper.

All in all, there's not a bum track to be heard. This CD begs to be kept in the car this summer and played loudly in the sunshine.



MORGAN GEIST PRESENTS
ENVIRON
INTO A SEPARATE
SPACE
PHONO PHONOCD3

The clues in his name, his music, even the tasteful, brown, environment-friendly cardboard CD sleeve suggest this is another upstart from Germany or Holland, the

home of Eco Techno. In fact Morgan is New Jersey's brightest new talent to emerge from the US Techno/Dance scene formerly dominated by the big boys from Chicago and Detroit. Geist is coming out of their shadow by borrowing the deep and uplifting style of good old US House and Techno and combining it with the intelligence of European Ambient, which makes for an unusually quirky album.

First exposed to the UK with a debut album for Clear, Geist has recently completed a European tour. The continental slant to his latest release from Phono can be heard throughout. Blissfully minimalist, basic and raw,

Morgan certainly knows how to get the best out of his equipment, and before we wonder if a keyboard and a drum machine is enough to constitute a song, he brings back the catchy loop and we're off again.

On tracks like 'Frebis', loads of US phatness is phased into the more familiar Euro-style bleeps and samples. This occurs frequently on a production where the atmosphere and groove are always fighting for prominence. 'Intronic' shows off some Speedy Jay funkiness while the final track 'Intronic (Mondrian Remix)' allows the down-tempo and hypnotic vibes to gain the advantage. One for the chill-out room ●

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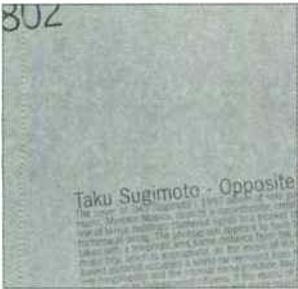
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JAZZ

by Simon Hopkins



TAKU SUGIMOTO
OPPOSITE
HATNOIR 802

By the standards of many of Japan's underground guitar players - Keiji Haino, KK Null, Kawabata - the 33-year-old Taku Sugimoto is notoriously unprolific. In the last decade his tentative, fleeting, resolutely minimalist improvising has been heard only on two albums, a couple of singles and as many compilation tracks. *Opposite* reveals why this is appropriate, for TS has a style clearly at odds with the rest of his Tokyo/Osaka noisenik compadres.

As Wire-editor Tony Herrington's sleeve notes point out, *Opposite's* music, "sounds like an attempt to reproduce on CD the kind of preternatural calm which descends on visitors to the Zen temples and public gardens" found at the heart of even Tokyo's busiest districts: an oasis of calm. But don't expect floaty, ambient guitar stuff. Sugimoto is far more in the improv tradition than that. That said, the asceticism of the solo guitar music here won't be to everyone's taste. TS's acoustic guitar is reminiscent of Derek Bailey's, all disconnected notes and sound incidents appearing against a blank canvas, yet far less

extrovert than the British improviser's. His electric playing is closer to the electric Jazz guitar of Jim Hall, Joe Diorio or Joe Pass (or, rather, is to that music what Loren Mazzacane Connors is to electric Blues).

I should also point out that this is only the second release on the legendary Swiss Jazz and New Music label hatHUT's new Noir series (the other release so far is new work by the aforementioned Mazzacane Connors, of which I hope to bring you news next month). Hat have done so many great things in the past. In the contemporary Classical field their championing of such mavericks as Morton Feldman and John Cage is unparalleled, while their constant promotion of the most cutting-edge Jazz (see below) is similarly without comparison. It's great to see them embark on this new venture.



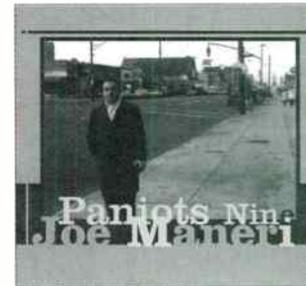
NOËL AKCHOTÉ/EUGENE CHADBOURNE/MARC RIBOT
LUST CORNER
WINTER AND
WINTER 910 019-2

Lust corner sees French guitarist Noël Akchoté - known, if at all, for his collaboration with Steve Arguelles and Benoit Delbecq

in trash-Jazz trio the Recyclers - join forces alternately with American plectrum-wielders Eugene Chadbourne (for over two decades infamous for his Thrash/Bebop/Hillbilly/Improv lunacy and for his awesome virtuosity) and Marc Ribot (NYC's most celebrated guitarist-sideman, a player enviably comfortable in seemingly any setting) for a series of inspired duets.

Over the last 20 years Chadbourne and Ribot have, between them, performed with some of the most outstanding figures in contemporary music: Bill Laswell, John Zorn, Arto Lindsay, Marianne Faithfull, Jello Biafra, Tom Waits et al, but here they defer to the session's leader. The pieces are largely Akchoté's own, although there's a healthy smattering of Ornette Coleman tunes. As nods to the great altoist and composer Coleman, the music takes in Hard Bop, Free Jazz, outrageous HM chording, scratchy C&W. It's all handled with equal amounts of skill and verve - and humour; you can almost hear these players grinning as they race through the material.

As with all Winter and Winter's Artist Edition series, *Lust Corner* is quite exquisitely packaged. Apart from the usual pleasing corrugated card sleeve in which the CD comes (more proof, as though it were needed, that the hideous industry-standard jewel box can be avoided) the package includes a booklet of photographs by the notorious documentor of Japanese erotica Nobuyoshi "Tokyo Lucky Hole" Araki. A bonus, if you like such things (as I do).



JOE MANERI
PATRIOTS NINE
AVANT 067

This extraordinary reissue on John Zorn's Avant label uncovers a genuine hidden gem. As *Patriot Nine's* cover notes expound, clarinetist Maneri is a monstrously overlooked Jazz musician who brought the influence of his early experience in playing microtonal Folk music in Jewish and Greek wedding bands to bear on his Bebop.

This synthesis, along with his early embracing of free improvisation and tape manipulation, brought him to the attention of Third Stream theoretician Gunter Schuller, who, in 1961, tried to get a Maneri LP released through Atlantic. The album never saw the light of day, but the sessions recorded for it are all here. While the actual quality of the recordings isn't fabulous, the musical content is awesome. The group (pianist Don Burns, bassist John Beal and drummer Pete Dolger) create real fire out of this avant-klezmer's odd time signatures and ferocious, ardent melodies.

It's completely appropriate for *Patriots Nine* to see the light of day on Avant. Zorn, along with a handful of fellow travellers including Don Byron

JAZZ

and Dave Douglas, has been attempting just such fusions of middle-Eastern Folk musics with Bebop in his on-going Masada project. It's also brave of him to reveal that someone was doing this with such artistic (if not public) success quite so long ago.



MATT MANERI QUINTET
ACCEPTANCE
HATOLOGY 512

30 years on and Joe's son Mat is making some great music himself. The 28-year-old violinist and violist has been cutting something of a swathe in contemporary Jazz over the past couple of years, not least in the company of his dad and notoriously oblique guitarist Joe Morris on the acclaimed ECM album *Three Men Walking*.

For this date as leader on Swiss label hatOLOGY - hat's contemporary Jazz imprint - he has assembled a quintet of like-minded Free-Boppers: the great bassist Ed Schuller; trombonist Gary Valente; electric guitarist John Dirac; and drummer Randy Peterson. They work their way through a set of Maneri's own pieces, plus a couple of standards (a sparse and luminous 'My Funny Valentine' and a sassy re-telling of Sonny Rollins'

'East Broadway Rundown').

Mat eschews the use of his trademark six-string violin, instead opting for viola, but his usual microtonal approach is still there, an approach engendered by years of listening to musics from beyond Jazz, and beyond the West generally, and of course, at least partly learned from his father's earliest experiments. It's an approach which illuminates all the music here, and to which everyone responds enthusiastically. Old man Joe joins in for one song - the Dirac-composed 'Acceptance' - and the sense of enthusiasm with which everyone responds is infectious. I harbour a suspicion that young Mat has a genuinely important career ahead of him.

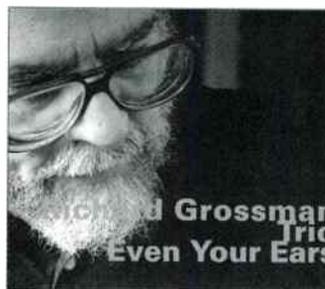


BURKHARD BEINS/MARTIN PFELEIDERER/PETER NIKLAS WILSON
YARBLES
HATOLOGY 510

Another hat CD, and not one which is quite as outstanding as the Grossman and Maneri discs, although it's more than worthy of mention. These three young German improvisers - drummer and percussionist Beins, soprano and tenor saxophonist Pfeleiderer and double-bassist

Wilson - are new names to me. Despite their youth, their CVs are already impressive, taking in Derek Bailey, Anthony Braxton, Marion Brown, Fred Frith, AMM's Keith Rowe, Barry Guy and Maggie Nichols.

In such company they have learned their lessons well, on the evidence of *Yarbles*. Each can play the ass out of his instrument, reaching beyond traditional playing techniques into a wider palette of instrumental colours. Their music is nothing startlingly new - it's the kind of introspective group improv that the Spontaneous Music Ensemble's Karyobin - among others - kicked off over 30 years ago. But for all that, there's a great deal of pleasure to be had here, from Pfeleiderer's highly-controlled, high-register squealing to Beins' almost insectoid scuttling. Expect to hear more of these musicians. It's reassuring that throughout Europe young musicians are still holding the torch for this kind of uncompromised, challenging work.



RICHARD GROSSMAN TRIO
EVEN YOUR EARS
HATOLOGY 515

This is another little gem from

hatOLOGY, although one not without sadness in its genesis. Pianist Richard Grossman sadly died in 1992. This CD, recorded in 1990 and shortly before his death two years later, reveals what a tragedy his untimely death was, and how unfortunate it is that he was rarely much more than a footnote in contemporary Jazz history.

Like Joe Maneri, Grossman paid his dues in the '50s, playing Bebop in Philadelphia, and was eventually drawn towards Free Jazz in Ornette Coleman's wake. But where Free for many pianists - Cecil Taylor, Paul Bley, Mal Waldron - often meant varying degrees of energy, cascading walls of notes, general musical acrobatics, Grossman's music was always far more impressionistic.

The sessions on *Even Your Ears* were performed as solos, duets and trios with two long-term West-Coast collaborators, double-bassist Ken Filiano and percussionist Alex Cline. The music is entirely improvised, yet it has an unmistakable sense of deep structure; its mood is more reminiscent of Japanese gagaku than of much improv - stately, austere, ritualistic, magical.

Taking their lead from Grossman's elliptical pianism, Cline (a greatly-overlooked musician himself) and Filiano use their instruments often unconventionally; Cline's bowed and scraped percussion sounds intriguingly electronic. Let's hope that more of Grossman's recordings surface over the next few years ●

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CLASSICAL

by Peter Herring

With the attention of much of the globe concentrated on events on the other side of the English Channel this month, we can bring you some of the more interesting scores from France. American and British, as well as French performers, obtain outstanding results in the music of Olivier Messiaen and Jehan Alain, while other contenders for honours come from Portugal and - surprisingly - Switzerland.



FRANK MARTIN
Mass for double choir/Passacaille for organ

ILDEBRANDO PIZZETTI
Messa di Requiem/De Profundis The Choir of Westminster Cathedral; James O'Donnell, Master of Music and organist
HYPERION CDA67017 (DDD/71.41)

"A matter between God and myself," was how the Swiss composer Frank Martin described his Mass for double choir, emphasising the point by refusing to permit a public performance of this most deeply personal expression of faith until 1963, some 40 years after its composition.

Finally hearing the work in this heartfelt and wholly committed performance by the Westminster Cathedral choir forcibly gives the lie to the notion of Martin as a composer of finely-crafted, engaging but often

emotionally detached music. In this, his only unaccompanied choral work, Martin soars to unexpected heights of intensity and rapture while retaining his typically firm grasp of structure and textual clarity. The Mass, without question, is one of the most accomplished flowerings of Martin's richly eclectic style, a potent amalgam of the Italian Renaissance, German Romanticism and French Impressionism, spiced with the twelve-note theories of Schoenberg and fortified by the composer's lifelong worship of J.S. Bach.

Despite its belated introduction into the choral repertoire, Martin's Mass has established itself as one of the major a cappella works of the century; and the bright, exultant Westminster voices, directed with his usual sure touch by James O'Donnell, do it full justice.

The second work here by Frank Martin finds O'Donnell in his alternative role as organist, giving a perceptive and imaginative account of the Passacaille, Martin's solitary composition for solo organ and an undisguised homage to his musical god, Bach. O'Donnell paces the work to perfection, sustaining the steadily ascending momentum while savouring the colours and harmonies that evolve from the

passacaille theme.

The inclusion of this organ solo proves to be an inspired piece of programming, not solely for its musical merits (which are considerable) but because the calm nobility of the Passacaille is an ideal lead into the world of Martin's Italian contemporary, Ildebrando Pizzetti.

Though Pizzetti belonged to the generation of Puccini and his contemporaries, he never shared their fondness for the lush and the sensual. Rather, he consciously reacted against this brand of Romanticism, seeking his models elsewhere, as is readily apparent from the finest of his choral compositions, the *Messa di Requiem* (Requiem Mass) of 1922.

Pizzetti takes his inspiration from Renaissance polyphony, from Venetian composers such as the Gabriellis and even from the plainchant of the Middle Ages. If not as consistently original or inventive as the Martin, Pizzetti's Requiem is nonetheless an alluring score. Its undeniable sincerity, as well as its often startling diversity, are supremely well conveyed by the Westminster singers, and by Hyperion's recording which throughout utilises the cathedral acoustic to advantage without sacrificing clarity or immediacy.



OLIVIER MESSIAEN
Poemes pour Mi*/Le Reveil des Oiseaux/Sept Haikai#
Françoise Pollet, soprano*; Pierre-Laurent Aimard#, Joella Jones#, pianos; The Cleveland Orchestra; conductor, Pierre Boulez
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 453 478-2 (DDD/72.04)

These three works, written between 1936 and 1962, find Messiaen at his most celebratory. In the earliest, *Poemes pour Mi*, he extols the sacrament of marriage, both the spiritual and the sensual. *Sept Haikai* pays homage to Japan, its ancient ceremonials, the colours of its landscape and its exotic birdlife. And in *Reveil des Oiseaux*, Messiaen glories in the birdsong of his native France, in all 38 species interwoven into a glittering tapestry of sound that was to become his first large-scale attempt at replicating an 'orchestral

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aviary'. What appears an unlikely basis for musical composition proves strangely captivating.

Modern recordings of these works, especially of the calibre of the artistic quality on display here, are very welcome. *Poemes pour Mi* has been available in its original version for piano and voice, but the orchestral version has been absent from the catalogue for some 20 years, which has been a real pity since it introduces many of the elements which were to become inseparable from Messiaen's distinctive and idiosyncratic orchestral style.

Messiaen had been married to the violinist Louise Justine Delbos (known to all as Claire, and to her husband simply as Mi) for some four years when he was impelled to express his happiness by setting nine of his own poems for soprano and piano, with an orchestral score being published the following year (1937). For Messiaen, a devout Catholic, such marriages as his were literally made in heaven, and this is reflected in the soaring, sumptuously ecstatic vocal writing.

The soloist here, the French soprano Françoise Pollet, brings both lyricism and dramatic fervour to the part, and in ideal measures. Her control is exemplary, as is the direction from Pierre Boulez whose association with Messiaen's music began over 50 years ago, as a pupil of the composer at the Paris Conservatoire for eight

significant months during 1944. The enthusiastic response Boulez obtains from his soloists, the pianists Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Joëla Jones, as well as Françoise Pollet, is matched by that of the Cleveland Orchestra which plays with flair and diamond-like precision. The recording is as vivid as the dazzling palette of colours which decorates every bar of this music.



MANUEL CARDOSO
Missa Miserere mihi Domine/Magnificat Secundi Toni Ensemble Vocal Européen; director, Philippe Herreweghe
HARMONIA MUNDI FRANCE
HMC901543 (DDD/52.10)

A growing interest in the choral polyphony of Renaissance Portugal has been evident from the recordings of, for example, Rebelo and Melgas by the Tallis Scholars on Collins Classics, of Duarte Lobo by the Tallis Scholars on Gimell, and the work of Owen Ree's superb ensemble A Cappella Portuguese for Hyperion. Here

the spotlight falls on another Portuguese master from the period, Manuel Cardoso, born in 1566 and for 61 years between 1589 and his death in 1650 a man who chose a secluded, isolated life in a Lisbon monastery.

Cardoso's six decades of isolation were to be mirrored in the cultural isolation of Portugal as a nation which, after its 'golden age' of the late Fifteenth and early Sixteenth centuries, came under the rule of the Spanish Habsburgs and was effectively cut off from contact with much of the rest of Europe.

At least the young Manuel Cardoso had the good fortune to be taught at the seminary of Évora where he was a pupil of Matheo de Aranda. The latter had made several extended visits to Italy and was able to acquaint his musically-gifted charge with the works of Palestrina. The fruits of that acquaintance are evident in Cardoso's five 'parody Masses' based on motets by Palestrina, but the *Missa Miserere mihi Domine*, recorded here, is founded on a much earlier principle of composition, the *cantus firmus*.

With this, a melodic figure - here taken from the antiphon for Compline, the last office of the liturgical day - is used to unify the sections of the Mass. Cardoso employs the technique to wonderful effect, with a rich contrapuntal mastery and much use of audacious harmonies and colourful word-painting.

Moreover, given the

subjugation of Portugal by Spain, Cardoso's inclusion of the motet *Non mortui qui sunt in Inferno* (They are not dead that are in Hell) between the *Benedictus* and the *Agnus Dei* may have been intended to send a veiled political message. The supplication of the suffering soul has a parallel with the expression of wounded national sentiment, and the dedication of the work to the Duke of Braganza, with whom hopes for a return to an independent Portugal resided, was surely no coincidence.

The voices of the Ensemble Vocal Européen are ideally suited to the sumptuously woven lines of Cardoso's polyphony. The performers are exceptionally clear and cleanly articulated, with sensitive direction from Philippe Herreweghe. The shaping is subtle but effective, and the Mass's heartfelt pleas for God's mercy are sung with true intensity. In contrast, the Ensemble ends with a spirited rendering of one of Cardoso's settings of the *Magnificat*, a jubilant celebration of the Annunciation.

Harmonia Mundi's recording faithfully captures the performances within the reverberant acoustic of the Abbey aux Dames de Saintes without allowing it to cloud or blur the vocal lines. It is an ideal introduction to Cardoso's highly distinctive style; like his Portuguese contemporaries, for so long forgotten, his music has the power to become unforgettable●

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RECORD OF THE MONTH

Complete organ works
Kevin Bowyer, organ
NIMBUS NI 5551/2 (2-CD SET) (DDD/146.03)

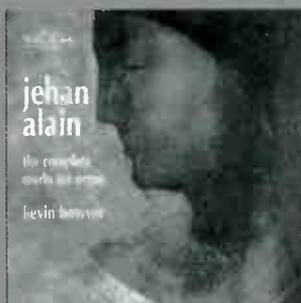
The appearance of some recordings in the release schedules excites more than usual anticipation and, for me, this two-disc set from Nimbus was one such.

I first encountered the music of Jehan Alain through a recording made by the organist Nicholas Kynaston at Buckfast Abbey in Devon. The rhythms and colours of pieces such as Litanies, the Two Dances to Agni Yavishtha (the Hindu god of fire) and the Two Fantaisies were quite unlike anything else I had encountered and I set about discovering more of this - for me - obscure French composer.

Unfortunately, tracking down further recordings, at least on this side of the Channel, was a task largely unrewarded until Erato recordings by the composer's sister, Marie-Claire Alain, began to appear. These will remain irreplaceable, of course, but a fresh view of this marvellously original music, as well as a more up-to-date recording, were long overdue, and Kevin Bowyer and Nimbus have at last provided both.

It is a sad fact that two generously-filled CDs will accommodate the surviving musical output of Jehan Alain. Like England's George Butterworth, here was a

composer whose immense promise was left unfulfilled by war. Born in St Germain-en-Laye near Paris in 1911, Jehan-Ariste Alain grew up in a house full of musical instruments. His father was



an organist, a pupil of Guilmant and Vierne, and pride-of-place in the sitting room went to a four-keyboard organ hand-built by Albert Alain. Here, his son would improvise, revelling in the rich tonal palette of the instrument, and by the age of 11 Jehan Alain was a competent enough player to stand in for the parish organist at the local church.

At the Paris Conservatoire, Alain studied with the likes of Paul Dukas and Roger Ducasse but found his composition exercises were utterly misunderstood by his examiners. Disillusioned, he quit the composition course, convinced that he would never be able to conform to its rigid strictures. Freed of these constraints, his talent blossomed in a series of strikingly original organ pieces, doubtless helped by studying with Marcel Dupré, himself an organist and notable improviser.

These works, composed between 1929 and 1939, mirror Alain's rapid development, from the early Postlude pour l'Office de Complies where he first rejects traditional rhythms, through to his enthusiastic absorption of exotic oriental and Arabic influences (Dances à Agni Yavishtha; Deux Fantaisies). He rediscovered a classical purity in the Variations sur Lucis Creator and in his set of variations on an elegant theme attributed to the sixteenth-century French composer Clément Janequin. Plainchant, and the ancient musical modes also played roles in shaping Alain's musical style, which reached its premature apotheosis in the Trois Danses, a triptych on themes of joy, death and struggle which was completed in April 1940, originally as a symphonic poem for orchestra.

It was this score which Jehan Alain, a dispatch rider in the French army, was carrying in his sidecar when he was shot and killed during the battle for Saumur in June 1940. The sheets of music were blown across the fields, to be washed away by the rain or made into paper aeroplanes by nearby children. Five days after Alain's death on June 20, 1940, France surrendered to the Nazi invaders.

The Trois Danses survive as Alain's musical testament because an organ transcription which he made

had fortunately reached his friend, Noëlie Pierront, who went on to give the first complete performance of the triptych at a memorial concert in the church of St Germain-des-Près in Paris during March 1940.

As in all of Jehan Alain's best music, structure and technique are always employed in the service of expression and feeling, for this is the music of a young man, one who was excited by the exotic, who enjoyed listening to jazz, and whose imagination combined an emotional intensity with profoundly meditative, even ethereal moods.

These facets of Alain's art come across fully in Kevin Bowyer's playing of the new Marcussen organ in the Chapel of St Augustine at Tonbridge School in Kent. This is a superb instrument, with a tonal range capable of realising Alain's most subtle colorations, and Bowyer clearly relishes playing this very individual and widely-contrasted music.

The recording is first-class, clean, focused (there is a tangible sense of an instrument at the end of a hall, not as in so many organ recordings merely a suggestion of one in a wash of over-reverberant sound) and seductively atmospheric. The plaudits, therefore, go to all concerned in this valuable project, but not least to Nimbus for having the vision and the enterprise to instigate it.

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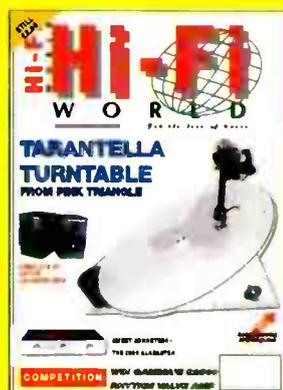
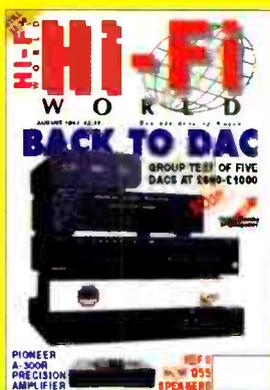
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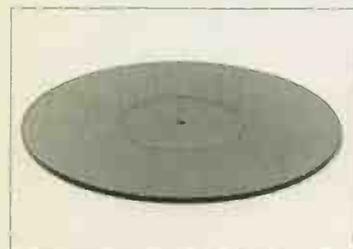
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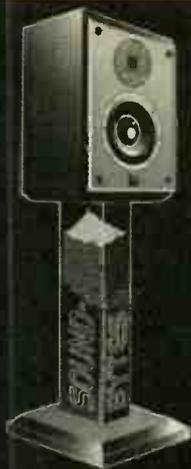
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Beard CA35 Valve Pre-Amp (Phono Stage) (vgs)	s/h	1000.00	450.00
Quad 44 Pre-Amp (grey) (vgs)	s/h	700.00	249.95
Quad 44 Are-Amp (brown) (g.c.)	s/h	700.00	249.95
Quad 66 Pre-Amp/remote control station (vgs)	s/h	879.00	449.95
Quad 306 Power Amp (g.c.)	s/h	400.00	229.95
Quad 306 Power Amp (mint as new)	s/h	400.00	249.95
Quad 33/303 Pre/Power Amp (several in stock)(g.c.)	s/h	-	169.95
Yamaha AX 390 remote int 2x40 watts (g.c.)	s/h	180.00	119.95
Kinshaw Overture int 2x45 watts (mint as new)	s/h	435.00	229.95
Aura Evolution YA100 int (vgs)	s/h	300.00	189.95
Pioneer A400 (original) int (vgs)	s/h	280.00	179.95
Deron PMA250 (2x30 watts) (mint)	s/h	180.00 to clear	79.95
Luxman Z 502 "Advance" direct coupled Pre-Amp(vgs)	s/h	-	149.95
Mission Cyrus II/PSX (late black steel)(g.c.)	s/h	550.00	329.95
NAD 1000 Pre-Amp (vgs)	s/h	200.00	79.95
NAD 304 int (g.c.)	s/h	230.00	149.95
Technics SU V450 int (vgs)	s/h	-	149.95
Chameleon Ruby Power Amp (2x200 watts 8Ω) (vgs)	s/h	1200.00	499.95
Rotel RB 870 BX Power Amp (vgs)(2x120 watts 8Ω) (g.c.)	s/h	250.00	149.95
Kenwood LM 208 Power Amp (vgs)	s/h	200.00	139.95
Onix OA21 (2x40 watts int) (g.c.)	s/h	-	109.95
Musical Fidelity Electra E200 Pre-Amp (mint as new)	s/h	600.00	449.95
Musical Fidelity Electra E300 Power Amp (mint as new)	s/h	600.00	449.00
Musical Fidelity 3 pre valve Pre-Amp (new)	-	-	199.95
Musical Fidelity XASO monobloc Power amps x2(new)	-	-	499.95
Myrrad M1120 remote int Amp/phono stage (mint as new)	s/h	700.00	499.99
Papworth Audio M100 valve monobloc Power Amps	s/h	3800.00	2250.00
2x100 watts 8Ω (mint as new)	s/h	3800.00	2250.95
MAF passive line controller (all gold phono/S line inputs)	s/h	-	59.95
Musical Fidelity XA1 int (new and exceptional)	-	-	479.99

Good Turntables/Arms/Cartridges/Phono Stages Always Wanted.....

LOUDSPEAKERS

Mission 753 floorstanders (black) (mint as new)	s/h	700.00	449.00
Mission 707/stands (black) (fair cond)	s/h	-	109.95
Mission 764i floor standers (black) (g.c.)	s/h	480.00	229.95
Mission 731i leading edge (black) mint as new	s/h	150.00	109.95
Mission 73C shielded centre speaker (black) (mint)	s/h	340.00	99.95
Jamo classic 6 floorstanders (rosewood) (mint)	s/h	340.00	189.95

TDL RTL3 floorstanders (rosewood) (g.c.)	s/h	400.00	249.95
TDL Near field monitors (small) rosewood (vgs)	s/h	95.00	79.95
Wharfedale Modus II (black) (mint as new)	s/h	200.00	149.95
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2 (black) (new)	s/h	140.00	129.95
Celestion SL65 (black) (fair cond)	s/h	400.00+	229.95

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Alphason Sonata Turntable in Rosewood with Xenon MCS Tonearm and Empire 900 II M.M. cartridge Complete with Atlas Power Supply....
This turntable package sounds superb. In mint condition/ original cartons /Manuals.

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Tannoy 636 floorstanders inc "heavy stands" (black)(vgs)	s/h	470.00	249.95
Tannoy 625 ALF 100 watts active sub (mint)	s/h	600.00	379.95
Nuark Talisman II (rosewood) (mint)	s/h	750.00	499.99
Nuark Templer I I (lightoak) (mint)	s/h	600.00	399.95
System 935 systemdec (mint as new)	s/h	400.00	299.95
Quad 77 10L (flew) (mint as new virtually unused)	s/h	600.00	499.95
Harman Kardon LS 0500 (Kevlar drivers) (black) (mint)	s/h	450.00	299.95
Lumley Reference 3 (light oak) (mint)	s/h	900.00	549.95
Naim Credo (ebony) floorstanders (g.c.)	s/h	1060.00	695.95
Castle 1515 (flew) (mint as new virtually unused)	s/h	270.00	199.00
Canon SB200 passive sub (vgs)/phono stage	s/h	200.00	119.00
Linn S110 surround speakers (mint)	s/h	295.00	195.00
Heybrook HB1 (walnut) inc Print Five Stands (g.c.)	s/h	280.00+	119.95
Griffin Omega 25+ (walnut) (vgs)	s/h	-	149.95
B&W DM 1600 (black) (good cond but no grills) Hence	s/h	380.00	149.95
RA Labs (Allison) Ref 4A (black) new ex-dem	s/h	170.00	149.95

CASSETTE DECKS/REEL TO REEL ETC.

Technics RS TR373 twin decks/auto rev etc (mint)	s/h	200.00+	139.95
Technics RS8K605 HK pro/DBX etc (g.c.)	s/h	-	119.95
Technics RS8K505 HK pro etc (g.c.)	s/h	-	129.95
NAD 6340 Playtronic etc (vgs)	s/h	200.00+	99.99
Nakamichi BX.125(g.c.)	s/h	400.00+	229.99
NAD 4130 digital tuner (g.c.)	s/h	200.00+	99.99
Musical Fidelity Electra E50 digital tuner (mint)	s/h	300.00	199.95
Yamaha TKS90 RDS digital tuner (mint as new)	s/h	180.00	139.95
Quad FM.4 tuner (brown) (mint)	s/h	424.00	249.95
Teac Y900X 3 head/DBX/Everything (g.c.)	s/h	loads	119.95
Arwa 3800 3 head/electronic bias etc (vgs)	s/h	loads	129.95
Sony RZ E3 portable mini-disc player (vgs)	s/h	250.00	124.95
Sony MDS 303 remote mini-disc recorder (vgs)	s/h	500.00	269.95
Arcam Delta 80 3 band digital tuner (vgs)	s/h	280.00	149.00

COMPACT DISC PLAYERS

Rotel RCD 945 AX remote (mint)	s/h	200.00+	149.95
Rotel RCD 965 BX remote (vgs)	s/h	300.00	169.95

Rotel RCD 965 BX remote (Trichord Clock 2 Mod) (g.c.)	s/h	450.00	229.95
Marantz CD 72 SE copper clad chassis etc (mint)	s/h	600.00	329.95
Marantz CD 75 remote/digital out etc (mint)	s/h	300.00	129.95
Marantz CD 67 remote (mint/as new)	s/h	270.00	189.95
Pioneer PD 9700 remote/digital out (mint)	s/h	400.00	229.95
Pioneer PDS 703 Legato remote (mint)	s/h	300.00+	169.95
Pioneer PDS 901 (stable platter) remote (vgs)	s/h	500.00	269.95
Pioneer PD 106 (mint)	s/h	130.00+	99.95
Myrrad MC 100 remote (mint/as new)	s/h	700.00	499.95
Mendian 208 CD/Preamp (vgs)	s/h	1550.00	795.95
Philips CD1 210 (Interactive CD Player) remote (mint)	s/h	400.00	159.95
Technics SL-PG 380A (vgs)	s/h	180.00+	99.95
Cambridge DacMagic II DAC (mint/as new)	s/h	200.00	129.95
DPA Little Bit One DAC (vgs)	s/h	300.00	119.95
Musical Fidelity X Act DAC (new)	-	-	129.95

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

Mordaunt Short Decoder One. Dolby Pro Logic processor	s/h	400.00	169.95
Built-in centre/rear amps (mint)	s/h	330.00	219.95
Technics SA GX 350 Dolby Pro Logic remote receiver (vgs)	s/h	700.00	299.95
Yamaha DSP E1000 Dolby Pro Logic remote processors (built-in centre/rear) (vgs)	s/h	80.00	69.95
Sennheiser HD 475 headphones (new)	s/h	150.00	99.95
Beyer DT 801 headphones (mint)	s/h	120.00	89.95
Vivanco IR 7100 infra red headphones (mint)	s/h	59.95	49.95
Vivanco SR 850 headphones (new)	s/h	120.00	59.95
Jamo Centre 50 (shielded centre speaker) (mint)	s/h	90.00	59.95
Jamo 220 Surround Speakers (rear) (mint)	s/h	49.95	29.95
Jamo mini surrounds (rear) (mint)	s/h	100.00	49.95
Quad equipment racks (2 in stock) (mint)	s/h	50.00+	24.99
Sound Organisation LS wall brackets (unused)	s/h	-	89.95
Target TT & equipment stand (g.c.)	-	-	29.95
Musical Fidelity X Cite (stand for X Series) (New)	s/h	500.00	269.95
Sony MDX 61 minidisc x6 car auto changer (unused) (mint)	s/h	450.00	349.95
Technics SD HD50 remote micro system (only weeks old) (mint)	s/h	-	40.00
Audio Quest Indigo Quartz bi-wire cables, 2x3 metres	s/h	-	30.00
2 pairs in stock + 2x2 metres	s/h	-	60.00
Linn K400 bi-wire terminated 2x3 metres	s/h	-	49.95
QED Quods Profile 8 terminated 2x6 metres	s/h	-	10.00
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Electrocompaniet EC4.6 line level pre-amp, remote control	£POA	N
Grado SR325 headphones	£199.00	N
Heybrook TT2/Linn Basik LVX	£150.00	U
Kinshaw Overture DAC	£199.00	N
Kinshaw Perception pre-amp	£350.00	U
Linn Kairn pre-amp	£700.00	U
Micromega Minium amp	£200.00	X
Micromega Minium speakers, black	£200.00	X
Pioneer A-400 amplifier	£165.00	U
QED Vector Reference pre-amp	£269.00	N
QED Digit Plus DAC	£150.00	U
Sanyo Plus N55 Noise reduction system	£300.00	U
SME 20/2 precision turntable	£POA	N
SME 20/2A as above with Series V arm	£POA	N
SME Series V pick-up arm	£POA	N
SME 3009 ser III carrying arm model CA1	£20.00	U
TDL Studio 1 loudspeakers, walnut	£450.00	U
TDL T-Line 2 loudspeakers, rosewood	£450.00	N

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NAKAMICHI ZXL1000 Tape Deck - B&W Serviced	£1895
B&W 801 Series II's	£1850
THIEL 2.2 Speakers (Morado)	£1995
AUDIONOTE P4 Monoblocks	£3395
REVOX B215S Cassette Deck	£995
LUXMAN C1000 Pre-Amp & M4000 Power Amp	£1495
SPICA SERVO Subwoofer	£295
VOYD Standard Turntable, MINT	£1495
MARK LEVINSON 35 Dac EX DEM	£5795
DENON TU - 260/260L Tuner	£85
MISSION 782 Loudspeakers with stands	£250
NAIM NAC 62 Pre-Amp with SNAPS PSU	£295
KEF 104 Loudspeakers	£450
DENON DRS - 610 Stereo Cassette Deck	£125
AUDIONOTE M2 Line Pre Amp	£599

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REVOX H6 Tuner	£495
MARK LEVINSON 36/37 CD Player	£5995
ARCAM Delta Black Box II DAC Boxed	£175
QUAD 66 CD Player	£295
MARK LEVINSON 380S Pre-Amplifier	£5495
LUXMAN T-14 Tuner (Lab Standard)	£550
STUDER A807 Pro. tape recorder MINT	£3750
MARK LEVINSON M1 Pre-amp with Phono	£895
HEYBROOK Quartets & stands Ex Dem (£840)	£595
AUDIO NOTE ANS7 Step-up Transformer	£3000
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ORACLE Premier MK III Turntable With PSU	£1995

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Rotel RCD930 AX CD Player	140	180
Marantz CD63MK2 KJ Signature CD player	349	500
Theta Data Basic Mk2 CD Transport	1,500	2,300
Wadia 15 DAC/digital preamp; bal/unbal; remote control, digital volume etc - connect DAC directly to power amp - the ultimate!	1,500	3,800

Amplifiers

Naim 102 remote preamp	850	1,080
Naim 180 poweramp	850	1,090
Alchemist Nemesis incl. Phono stage	550	750
Roksan Caspian R/C amplifier	595	700
Rotel 921 New Model	70	100
Marantz PM66 KI Signature	349	400

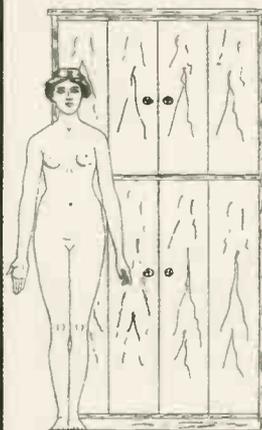
Loudspeakers

Rega Kyte (Black)	149	200
Naim Intro spkrs, latest	550	680
Naim SBL spkrs	1,500	2,030
ProAc Response 2.5s (Cherry, mint, cond)	2,100	2,700
Kef Q55	399	500
ProAc Tablette 50 (Light Oak, mint)	499	600
Ruark Icon (Cherry)	250	359
Roksan Rok 1 speakers. (Light Elder)	475	645

Headphones etc

Grado SR40	30	45
Grado SR60	50	80
Sennheisers HD 535	75	105
Sennheisers from £9.99 - please ask		
Nordost Blue Heaven 2.5m B/Wire	280	380
Custom Design Tri-stands, Ferran Red	59	85
Atacama SE24 Stanis	55	73
Musical Fidelity X-LP mm/mc Phono stage	100	130

RECORD STORAGE



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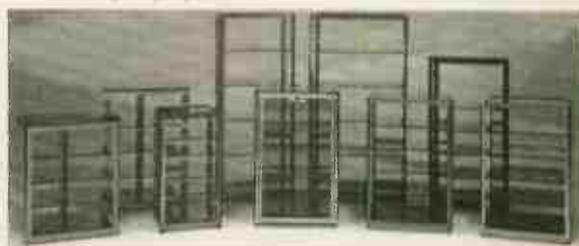
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Mid-Season Sale of Ex-Dem and Secondhand Equipment

Analysis Epsilon Ribbon Loudspeakers	(£3750)	Sale £2600
Audio Alchemy DAC 1.2	(£595)	Sale £375
Chord Electronics LS512A Loudspeakers (Ebony)	(£1679)	Sale £1200
Parasound P/LD 2000 Preamp	(£1495)	Sale £1095
VPI HPW 19 MkIII Piano Black Turntable	(£1800)	Sale £1150
Alon Petit Loudspeakers (walnut)	(£1087)	Sale £795
Alon 1 Loudspeakers (oak)	(£1616)	Sale £1200
Chord 800 Power Amp	(£2155)	Sale £1600
Michell Argo HR Pre-Amp	(£1339)	Sale £1050
Audio Alchemy Headphone Amp	(£249)	Sale £199
Beyer 531 Headphones	(£120)	Sale £85
Stax SR-84 Electret Headphones	(£259)	Sale £195
Questar QA2 Active Speakers/Stands/3M Kimer 4TC		£300 the lot
4M Set Nordost Red Dawn Speaker Cables (Terminated)	(£929)	Sale £750
Audio Silver Knight 300B Mono Blocks	(£2495)	Sale £1750
Roksan Xerxes (Piano Black) Tonearm	S/H	£1200
Audionote Meishu (phono m/m) amplifier	(s/h)	£2250
XTC Pre 1 pre amp - 3 weeks old	(s/h)	£800
Trichord Pulsar 1 DAC	(s/h)	£825
Meridian 200 CD transport	(s/h)	£400
Proac Studio 100 loudspeakers (cherry) 3 weeks old		£550
Technics SE-A1000 and SU-C1000 pre/power combo		£450
SD Acoustics SD3 loudspeakers	(ex dem)	£350
SD Acoustics Alexandra stands for above	(new)	£220
Foundation Designer '600' stands 21 inches tall		£210

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Audiolab	8000 CD	CD - Ex Dem but unused!	X	1	£1,000.00	£800.00
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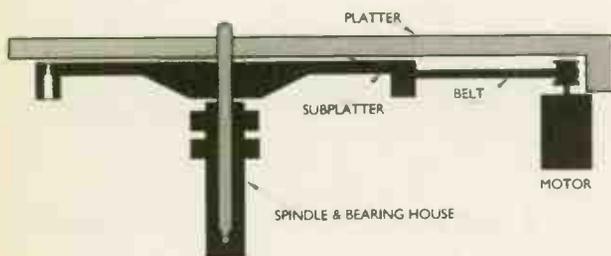
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HI-FI WORLD SUPPLEMENT NOV 97

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HI-FI NEWS SUPPLEMENT NOV 97

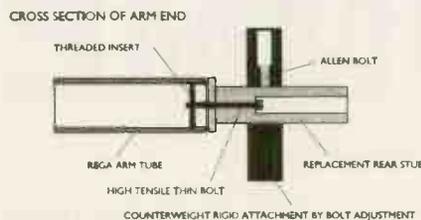


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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

CARTRIDGE

TRANSFIGURATION SPIRIT

The Transfiguration moving-coil cartridge possesses a flat frequency response, as our analysis shows. It has none of the generator losses, caused by rising impedance, common from higher-output moving-magnet types. It also avoids the peaking that can occur with moving coils, displaying a well-damped lift around 8kHz, enough to maintain clarity without introducing sharpness. The Transfiguration should sound accurate in its tonal balance as a result, and both brighter and more detailed than most MMs. The only downside was a stylus whose profile could well be improved a little. Tracing loss was -6dB at 20kHz on inner grooves, a poor figure by today's standards. Proprietary tips such as van den Huls and Geigers manage much better, losing no more

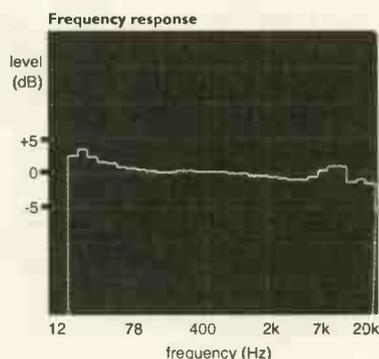
than 1dB-2dB or thereabouts. Tracking ability was high at low frequencies, where cantilever hinge compliance determines performance. In the midband, where (mechanically) resistive damping comes in, it dropped somewhat, to 16cms/sec. That's respectable, but not up with the best. Powerful vocals may occasionally cause spitch.

Distortion was very low on lateral modulation, but high on vertical modulation due to a high vertical tracking angle of 30degrees. This will slightly affect left and right images, but only with a little innocuous lightening of tone.

The Transfiguration measured well. It isn't perfect but it should give a good account of itself. NK

Tracking force 2gms
Weight 7.8gms
Vertical tracking angle 30degrees

Frequency response 20Hz-20kHz
Channel separation 26dB
Tracking ability (300Hz) lateral 63um vertical 45um
lateral (1kHz) 16cms/sec.
Distortion (45um) lateral 0.5% vertical 5.5%
Output (5cms/sec rms) 0.44mV



CD PLAYER

DENON DCD-1550AR

This player's processing system is radically different. It attempts to process digital such that the outcome exhibits analogue-like characteristics that are harmonious to the ear. Some traits border on the bizarre; there's no doubt the player will sound different. Often this sort of thing produces a 'love it/hate it' response.

Frequency response, as determined from a convoluted pulse, starts to roll down at a low 8.3kHz (-1dB). It measures flat with a traditional sweep test signal, which most testers use, but this is not a very good representation of music. A pulse is, and in keeping with what it reveals, Denon's players are warm sounding.

The other surprise with this model is its inaccuracy in reproducing levels. It reproduces a -30dB tone at -38dB. What this does is expand the upper-most linear and hence usable part of the machine's dynamic range, effectively losing the lower, least linear part. So we can say the DCD-1550AR concentrates on the

music, which rarely falls below -30dB these days, and lessens the rubbish. It's all a bit 'artistic' I'd say, but 16-bit CD code is so poor subjectively that just about anything is justified in my view, whilst we have to suffer it. I noticed that the harmonic structure was analogue-like on both channels too.

This is very much a player to be auditioned. It's bold of Denon to do what they have done. It's also a fitting indictment of poor digital that it has to be so heavily modified to become more palatable to the human senses. NK

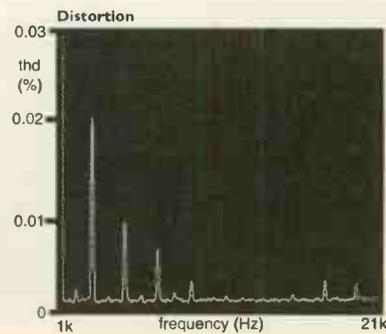
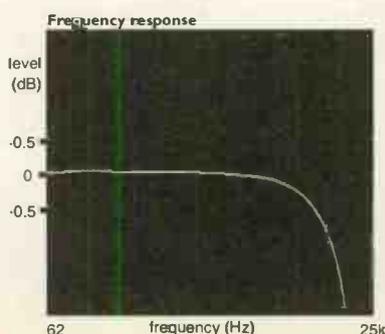
Frequency response 4Hz-8.3kHz

Distortion (dB)
-6dB 0.007 0.014
-30dB 0.1 0.11
-60dB 0.4 0.4
-90dB 37 32
-90dB dithered 6 10

Separation (dB) left right
1kHz 102 103
20kHz 99 94

Noise with emphasis -102dB -99dB

Dynamic range 110dB
Output 2.1V



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August 1997 - Hi-Fi News & Record Review



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± 0.001% Dimensions:
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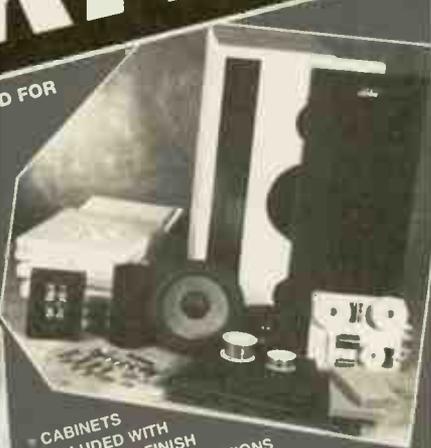
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"...plays middle frequencies quite spectacularly. ...high and low frequencies come across with equal aplomb. ...fine dynamics ..."

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MERIDIAN 508.24

Meridian pride themselves on digital engineering and the 508.24, like earlier players, turns in a 'perfect' set of results. It has negligible distortion at normal music levels (0dB down to -40dB or so), distortion rising below this level but staying close to achievable minima. Both channels were identical too, so there is consistency in this performance.

Frequency response is nicely flat, as our convolved impulse analysis shows. There's just a slight downward trend toward high frequencies, enough I believe to ensure the sound isn't too bright or glassy. Channel separation was very high and noise very low, although the player seemed not to be muting at digital zero since de-emphasis did reduce noise. However, all this is somewhat academic since normal hiss in itself is not a problem with a CD's 16-bit code. Anything below

-80dB is inaudible and the Meridian 508 measured -112dB without de-emphasis.

Output was high at 2.54V, which puts the player into contention in comparative demonstrations.

The Meridian 508.24 measured very well. It is capably engineered in every area. NK

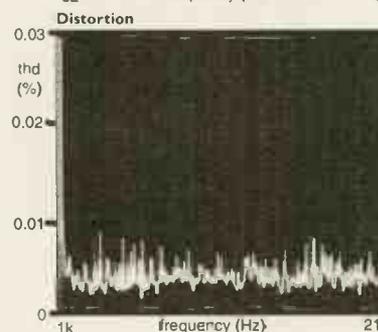
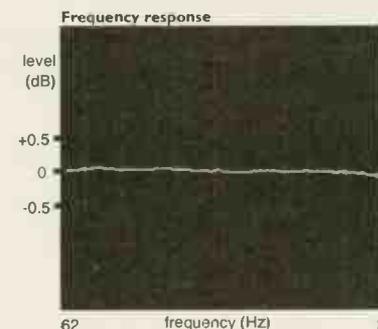
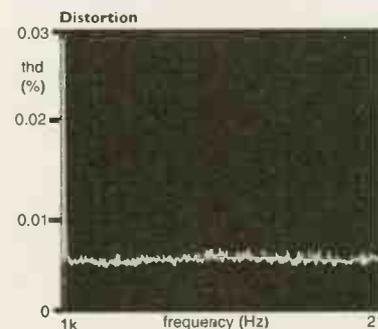
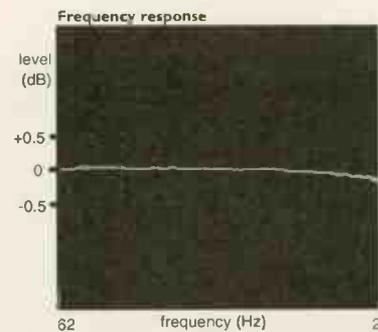
Frequency response 4Hz-21kHz

Distortion (dB)	left	right
-6dB	0.005	0.005
-30dB	0.006	0.006
-60dB	0.5	0.5
-90dB	29	29
-90dB dithered	15	15

Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	118	119
20kHz	107	106

Noise	-112dB
with emphasis	-116dB

Dynamic range 108dB
Output 2.54V



PANASONIC DVD-A350

The Panasonic DVD-A350 possesses a very flat frequency response, as our analysis shows, the limits being a healthy 21.1kHz at the top end and 4Hz down at subsonic frequencies. It should sound tonally well balanced.

Distortion was on the low side for CD; there were no problems here. At high levels a minimal 0.004% was generated and as level decreased distortion increased, as in any digital system. However, the figures remained good, being a low 0.02% at -30dB and 0.4% at -60dB. The latter is very good and primarily responsible for a dynamic range value of 110dB.

With wide channel separation, low noise and normal output the

DVD-A350 measured well all round. NK

Frequency response 4Hz-21.1kHz

Distortion (%)	left	right
-6dB	0.004	0.004
-30dB	0.02	0.022
-60dB	0.41	0.04
-90dB	33	32
-90dB dithered	6	6

Separation (dB)	left	right
1kHz	101	101
20kHz	97	97

Noise	-98dB
with emphasis	-99dB

Dynamic range 110dB
Output 2.2V

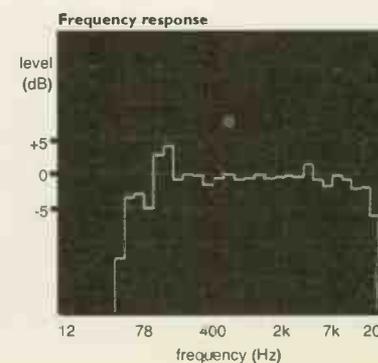
LOUDSPEAKERS

HEYBROOK OCTET

The Octets possesses a flat frequency response, but then its Audax drivers are capable of giving such a result providing the background engineering is right. The solitary peak at 4kHz is almost certainly caused by a reflection from the rear wall of the midrange chamber. Narrow-band phase effects are not necessarily very

audible though; the ear is more sensitive to energy than level, and there's little energy in this sort of thing. Judgement can only be made by listening. Using wool to suppress such a reflection can be a mistake, because it just changes the nature of the problem.

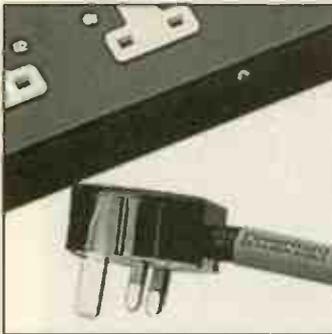
Bass peaks up around 150Hz, a peculiar effect for a large



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loudspeaker such as this. A corresponding dip in the impedance curve shows the Octet draws more energy at this frequency, so it is engineered in. Bass output below this extends down to 60Hz and is then augmented by port output at a low 30Hz.

KENWOOD LS90UK

This loudspeaker peaks up a little from 2kHz to 6kHz which made it sound a little fierce during testing. Upper treble rolls off slowly, our response analysis shows, but the ear will be engaged by the peak rather than this aspect of performance. The Kenwood will sound detailed, that's for sure, if perhaps a little aggressive. It is likely to image well too, cabinet permitting.

Bass output peaks at 150Hz before rolling off slowly. With output only 3dB down at 63Hz this little cabinet should be able to produce

MISSION 771

The little Mission 771 measures fairly flat down to 80Hz. There's some bass peaking around 130Hz to give zest and apparent speed to bass. This emphasises hand drums and such like. The port outputs at 60Hz to give some lower bass. Overall the Mission's frequency response is well integrated and, although it possesses a slight crossover dip, this will not be audible in the usual way, so detailing should be good. Upper treble rolls off too, so it is unlikely the tweeter will be sharp sounding. The lone peak in the midband is almost certainly phase addition caused by an internal reflection from

CASTLE SEVERN II

The Castles show signs of midrange forwardness. They have a broadband peak around 6kHz, wide enough to highlight energy in a recording. This will push vocals forward a bit and give a sense of strong detailing.

Bass output extends down smoothly to 55Hz before the port kicks in at 45Hz. Overall, the Castle has a reasonably flat frequency response trace but with some trends that will give it character.

Castle seem to have decided to compete with Mission in terms of ensuring their loudspeaker is an easy

The impedance curve is fairly gentle in its slopes, so there is little reactance and energy storage. But overall impedance is high across the midband, making sensitivity a normal 87dB.

The Octet is a good all-rounder in measured terms. NK

some bass weight. The port is tuned to a low value of 40Hz but I wonder whether this is a little too low; only listening tests can tell.

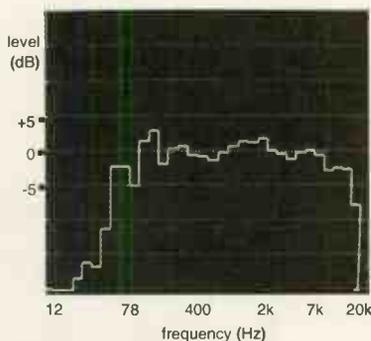
The impedance curve veers around wildly, hitting a low of 4ohms, set by the DCR. There's a lot of reactance in there, which stores energy. In my experience this makes matching a more variable process. Sensitivity was on the low side at 85dB so this speaker will need 50watts-60watts or so.

The LS90UK is not flawed, but it has rough edges. I see no strong points. NK

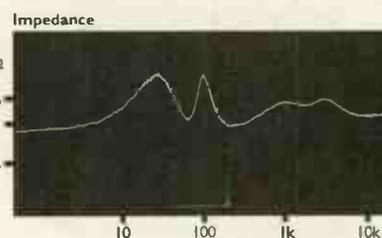
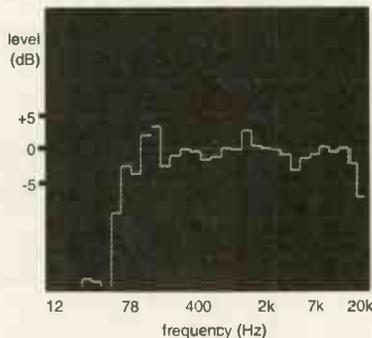
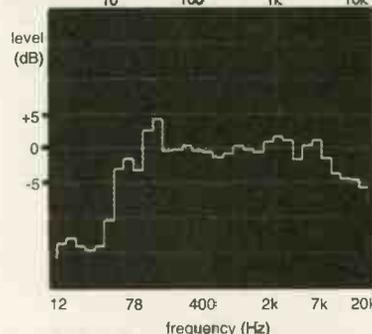
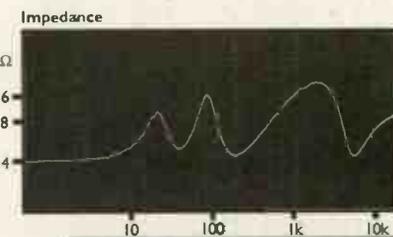
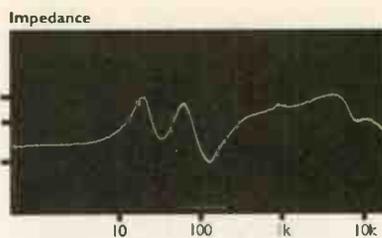
the back of the cabinet. Some coloration is likely. Otherwise, I'd expect a balanced sound.

Mission have engineered into the new 771 an impressively flat impedance curve. It hovers between 8ohms-9ohms. Bass peaks lift the overall figure up to 10.5ohms. This makes the 'speaker a very easy load, but it also affects sensitivity, which comes out a low 84dB. The 771s are likely to need a well-specified 60watts from an amplifier just so enough volts can be applied to drive them, but they'll get the best out of any amp.

These small 'speakers measure well all round, except for needing power. NK

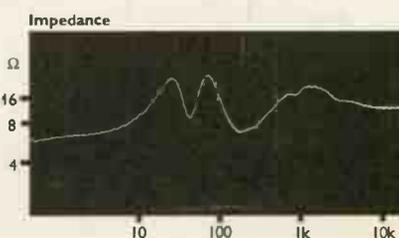


load that will consistently get the best from all amplifiers. It is all resistive from 200Hz up to 20kHz, albeit with a high overall value of 11ohms, no less. This limits current and therefore power draw; the



Severns will give amplifiers a very easy time. This property also results in average sensitivity of 87dB from a nominal watt. Amplifiers of up to 60watts should be sufficient.

The Severn 2s measure well all round but are likely to show slight some bass and treble emphasis to increase zest. NK



AMPLIFIERS

CAMBRIDGE A1 MKIII

This little amplifier proved interesting. It has a tailored frequency response - a high-pass filter peaks bass by +1.5dB at 25Hz but rolls off subsonics. This gives any amp a sense of profound bass power. High-frequency output has been rolled off above 20kHz, another deliberate design decision, and one that usually results in easy sounding, sometimes 'warm' treble.

Another distinctive feature was the use of an input buffer stage before the volume control. It overloaded at 3V, which is a bit low

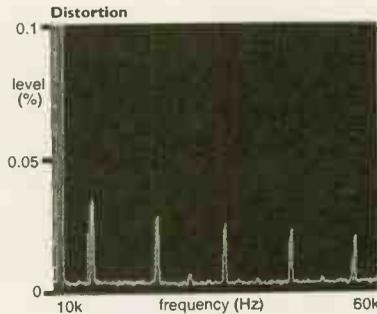
but generally adequate, since few sources produce more than this.

Distortion was low at all frequencies and output levels. Sensitivity proved high and noise low.

The little Cambridge A1 MkIII is genuinely different and well thought out. I'd expect it to give a good account of itself. NK

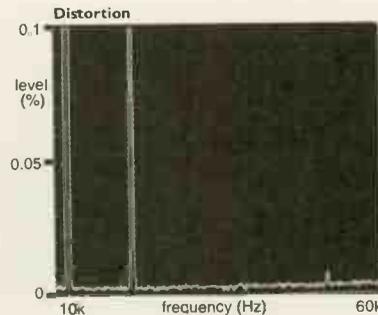
Power	28watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	85Hz-23kHz
Separation	55dB

Noise	-90dB
Distortion	0.005%
Sensitivity	150mV
DC offset	1mV/2.2mV



amplifier works very well. NK

Power	18watts
Frequency response	5Hz-150kHz
Separation	98dB
Hum	0.3mV/0.7mV
Noise	-105dB
Distortion	0.35%
Sensitivity	600mV



VADIS S15

This is an interesting valve amplifier. In my experience, so-called "direct coupled" valve amplifiers create as many problems as they solve. but this one strikes an interesting balance - in few areas did it look weak. Power output is limited at 18watts and it does not like low-impedance loads, so loudspeakers with high sensitivity and a high-ish impedance are required.

This amplifier's strengths are considerable. It has a wide power bandwidth of 5Hz-150kHz - there's no transformer core saturation at low frequencies and no distributed capacitance at high frequencies.

Often, distortion from amplifiers like this is horrendous. Again the

Vadis offers an interesting result. The absolute values look much the same as usual: 0.35% at 1watt and 1.2% at full output. However, the distortion was second harmonic only and performance at 10kHz was absolutely the same as that at 1kHz, not something that can be achieved with transformers.

Sensitivity was low at 600mV so a pre-amp with gain is needed. Hiss was very low at -105dB and hum also low at 0.5mV per channel.

I wonder whether the Vadis uses much feedback. PL519s - designed for 1950s TV line-output stages - are not the most linear valve going, but they are low impedance and have a reputation for being robust and reliable. But irrespective, this power

TUNER

ROKSAN CASPIAN

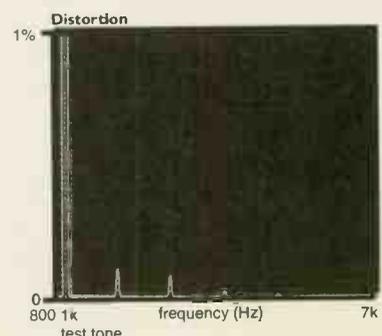
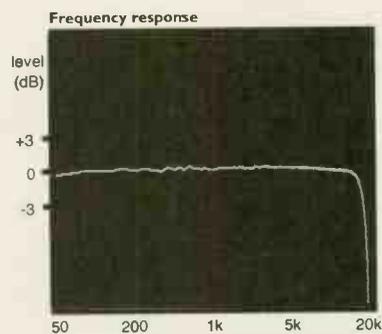
The Roksan measured well in all areas, displaying a flat audio frequency response (see the analysis), low distortion and excellent channel separation, even at high frequencies. It is quieter than most current designs, turning in a low -75dB hiss figure on stereo, providing a signal of 0.25mV or more is available from the aerial. This is in fact a relatively weak signal; most tuners - even the best - need four times as much, so the Roksan will be quiet even with a mediocre aerial - an impressive result. Users with crummy aerials will notice this.

High overall sensitivity and good selectivity make the unit a capable performer in RF terms. The signal

strength meter segments light from 10uV up 500uV, a useful range in view of the low maximum quieting level of the design.

It looks as if this tuner uses a high-quality, modern VHF/FM stereo chipset and RF front-end, well packaged with good metering. It turns in a fine set of results a cut above the rest. NK

Frequency response	3Hz-13.4kHz
Stereo separation	50dB
Distortion (50% mod.)	0.1%
Hiss (CCIR)	-75dB
Signal for minimum hiss	0.25mV
Selectivity (at 0.4MHz)	75dB
Sensitivity	
mono	3uV
stereo	25uV
signal strength meter:	
	10, 60, 160, 500uV



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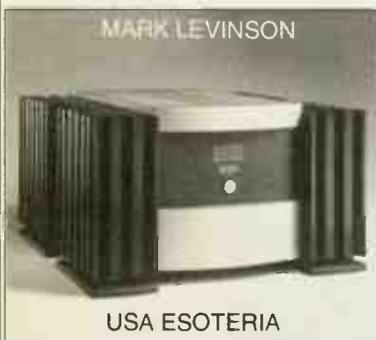
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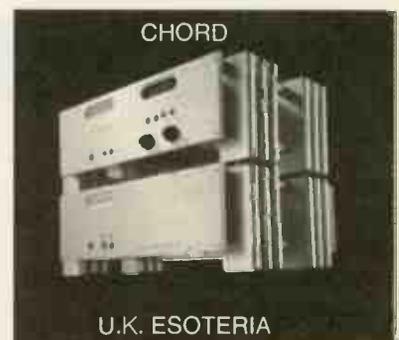
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World favourites guide

COMPACT DISC PLAYERS

QUAD 67 second-hand

One of Quad's best products for a long time, the 67 is warmer and smoother than most, yet is highly musical and revealing.

KENWOOD DP-3080/II £180

Has great clarity and presence for the price. Not quite as naturally expressive as the CD4SE though.

CAMBRIDGE CD4SE £200

A touch soft in the treble but outstanding in every other aspect.

ARCAM ALPHA 7 £320

This British built player is extremely good value. Upfront, punchy nature suits Techno and Rock.

MARANTZ CD-63MKII KI-S £400

Similar to the CD-63SE but more powerful bass and an all-round smoother sound.

PHILIPS CDR 870 RECORDER £500

Replay quality is on a par with £250 machines but analogue and digital recordings on CD-R and CD-RW are outstanding.

ROKSAN CASPIAN £895

The Caspian has a smooth, even sound with some of the clearest treble in the business. Very engaging, dynamic character.

MERIDIAN 506 20-BIT £1100

Very detailed and revealing player. More cerebral than visceral though.

DENON DCD-S10 £1300

A warm, atmospheric and smooth performer that never fails to involve.

MARANTZ CD-17 KI-S £1300

The Marantz excels in all areas. Without doubt this is one of the most involving CD players on the planet. Build quality is also exemplary.

PINK TRIANGLE LITAURAL £2100

Possesses the same lush tonal colour as the Da Capo but is superior in every other way.

MCINTOSH CDM7009 £2635

A thoroughly inspiring machine. One of the most musical CD players around; sweet, open and detailed.

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

TEAC VDRS-TI £550

Not as substantially built as its chunky looks suggest, the TI is nevertheless a good entry-level transport with a warm, expansive sound.

AUDIOLAB 8000CDM £1300

Beautifully built and finished, the CDM is packed with sensible features and performs reliably, day-in day-out.

TEAC P-30 £2500

Cheap it isn't, but then it sounds like a million digital dollars. Nothing short of superb.

CD CONVERTORS

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-DAC £300

A bargain for normal CDs and even better with HDCDs.

ASSEMBLAGE DAC-2 £400 (KIT)

Takes little building to produce a clean, clear sound. HDCD filter included.

MARSTON SILHOUETTE £795

With Crystal Semiconductors' 18-bit DAC the Marston produces clean-cut images and a transparent sound stage. Very rhythmic too.

PINK TRIANGLE DA CAPO £1450+

Offers a choice of filter modules, all up there with the best. The Da Capo is impressive in many respects, but is long in the tooth now.

DPA 1024 £6000

Proof positive that today's CDs needn't sound CD-like! Uses an in-house discrete convertor, and DPA haven't skimped on the build either!

TURNTABLES

GARRARD 401 second-hand

In a decent plinth with an arm of SME 309 calibre, the 401 has a highly authoritative overall sound with the most solid, expressive bass in the business. Very musical, but treble isn't up to modern standards.

THORENS TD124 second-hand

One of Thorens' best-ever turntables. Needs a modern plinth to give of its best. Duly installed, it's good enough to face off the Garrard 401, swapping some of its bass power for a more delicate, incisive treble.

ORIGIN LIVE STANDARD £145 (KIT)

Fine in standard form with AC motor, frighteningly good with a DC motor and battery PSU.

SYSTEMDEK IIX900/RB250 £330

A fine all rounder and easy to upgrade too. Has more depth and breadth than Rega Planar 3.

PINK TRIANGLE TARANTELLA £575

Not only does the Tarantella have more style than a catwalk full of models, it also combines PT's usual clarity with real authority. The biz.

VPI HW 19 JUNIOR/RB300 £599

With its control and grip on music the Junior never fails to engage. Set-up is a piece of cake and there's a whole range of upgrades on offer too.

MICHELL GYRODEC £800

Stunning looks, build and fine sound. Standard PSU has detailed, architectural, if undynamic sound. With QC PSU, scale and insight kill the competition.

PRO-JECT 6.1SA £999

The Pro-ject places the listener in the best seat in the control room. Outrageous dynamics and a punchy, seriously deep bass. Comes with Sumiko arm and Ortofon MC30 Supreme.

ROKSAN XERXES X £1295

DSU or XPS 3.5 power supply £150/170 extra. Excellent pitch stability from a new Swiss motor and outboard power supply. Very tight bass, fine dynamics and revealing clarity.

MICHELL ORBE £1950

The Darth Vader of analogue, the Orbe builds on the strengths of the Gyrodec. An ultra-tuneful, expansive sound.

SME MODEL 20 £2495

Including the excellent SME V tonearm, the Model 20 is possibly the last great turntable, unless you've got £11,000 for the Model 30, that is.

TONE-ARMS

LINN ITTOK S/H

This early heavyweight arm benefits from fine engineering. Good dynamics and grip.

REGA RB300 £130

Supremely capable at the price, but not quite humankind's salvation as has been suggested. Detailed, tight, rhythmic sound but tonally rather grey and cold-sounding.

SME 3009SII £375

This Paleolithic device doesn't bother with frequency extremes or detail, but its legendary serviceability makes it a cult in Japan. Oh death, where is thy sting?

SME309 £570

A down-market version of the IV and V with aluminium armtube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision.

SME V £1235

A masterpiece of precision engineering with a cohesive, ultra-transparent sound.

CARTRIDGES

ORTOFON VMS-2E £10

Warm, full-bodied, punchy and fast. Not to be sniffed at for a tenner. Can be upgraded with a better stylus at a later date.

GOLDRING 1012GX £60

An accomplished MM with a solid bass, slightly forward midband and clean transients. £20 buys the faster, more dynamic 1022GX.

World favourites guide

DNM MICA £185

Bettors Goldring's 1042 and costs only £135 on trade-in. An assured, detailed and transparent MM.

ORTOFON SUPREMES £225-£450

The MC10, MC20 and MC30 Supremes all offer superb sound and value for money, with a rich, smooth and musical performance.

ORTOFON MC2000 £650

We came across this one in an SME IV on a Garrard 401; it duly gave one of the best results we've ever heard.

ORTOFON ROHMANN £1000

In a way it's MC2000 meets MC7500 with the tonal strengths and dynamo sound Ortofon put into their moving-coil cartridges.

LYRA LYDIAN £649

A truly musical, sophisticated device that makes most other MCs sound frigid.

VAN DEN HUL MC-10 £840

Fluid bass, finely etched treble and highly tuneful in between. The MC-10 is honey, pure and simple.

ORTOFON MC7500 £2000

Conclusive proof that there's hope for humankind. CD lovers would die if they heard it.

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

MISSION CYRUS I/II S/H

Both versions give a detailed, articulate and dynamic sound but can sound lean.

DENON PMA-250SE £160

It might not have bags of grunt but the Denon can sound very natural and open.

ROTEL RA-970BX £250

With its smooth and powerful sound, the Rotel sings a seductive song with all types of music.

PIONEER A-300R PRECISION £299

This is the cooking A-300 tweaked with special components and it shows. Rhythm and detail are first-class and the phono stage isn't far behind.

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI SE £595

This superbly made Italian integrated has a lucidity and control which leave the competition at up to £1000 standing. Sound stage depth is unequalled.

SUGDEN A21a £640

Class A transistor amp. Rich, crisp, deep, tight sound and it images well too. Wonderful.

ROKSAN CASPIAN £695

Smooth, warm integrated with remote control that works happily into most 'speakers.

SONETEER ALABASTER £995

Builds on the strengths of the Campion with ample control, colour and drive.

UNISON SIMPLY 2 £995

This single-ended valve amplifier is smooth, sweet and open. An extremely musical performer.

UNISON SIMPLY 4 £1495

Sonically similar to the Simply 2, but with more power and control.

McINTOSH MA6800 £3735

The MA6800 not so much plays music as takes control of it, with effortless bass drive and a three-dimensional sound stage.

PHONO STAGES

QED DISCSAVER £35

A true bargain that offers a cohesive, musical sound but avoid using it in thin sounding systems.

ROTEL RQ-970BX £130

Superb value entry-level phono stage with audiophile quality components and clear sound.

LFD MISTRAL PHONO STAGE £300

The Mistral has a warmth and involvement that make many more expensive phono stages sound overpriced.

MICHELL ISO/HERA £530

Open, spacious and 3-D sound. Not for fans of warmth though.

AUDIO INNOVATIONS P2 £749

Fantastic bass and super insight make this one of the best phono stages around. One for vinyl lovers.

ROKSAN ARTAXERXES X £950

With the Atessa PSU the Artaxerxes X MM/MC stage still shines. Its fortes are great stage depth, neutrality and tonal colour. Musical too.

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

AUDIOLAB 8000C £520

Versatile with superb phono input. Can sound sterile, but latest version is much improved.

AUDIOLAB 8000Q £995

Excellent line-level only pre-amp, greatly improves on 8000C with a more fluid, musical sound and greater grip. Remote control.

XTC PRE-1 £1000

Almost valve-like in its smoothness, the line-level Pre-1 is a warm and seductively clear.

CHORD CPA1800 £1800

Clarity, insight and control are second to none - an addictive mixture.

MARANTZ MODEL 7 PRE-AMP £3500

A '60s reissue, the Marantz pre-amp still sounds superb. Has a great phono stage.

POWER AMPLIFIERS

QUAD II second-hand

Classic valve monoblock with many thousands still in use. Archetypal warm, smooth valve sound, although not the last word in detail or dynamics.

LEAK STEREO 20 second-hand

The Stereo 20 can sound impressively up-to-date, although power and detail are ultimately limited.

ARCAM ALPHA 9 £400

With 70watts on tap, the 9P will drive most loudspeakers with a spacious and detailed sound. Good bass drive too.

MISSION CYRUS POWER £450

This power amplifier is a real honey. Rich and smooth, but with a firm grip; a fine blend of properties.

SUGDEN AU41P £530

Extremely competitive at the price with 100W of unusually smooth, full-bodied sound.

NAIM NAP180 £900

Partnered with a NAC82, this has classic Naim control, making for a superbly rhythmic presentation. A touch lean for some tastes.

MICHELL ALECTO STEREO £1300

A refined transistor amplifier with valve-like transparency and a full, warm, easy-going sound. The £1800 Alecto monoblocks have rare lucidity and three dimensional realism.

CHORD SPM 400 £1400

There's a sense of effortless power to the Chord that gives music scale and presence.

XTC POW-1 £2000

Like the SPM 400 but loads more power on tap. Will drive just about anything.

CHORD SPM 1200 £2995

As smooth and composed as the Pre-1, the POW-1 has bags of power and refinement.

MARANTZ MODEL 9 £8000

Authentic reproduction monoblocs still more than cut the sonic mustard. The sound combines grunt with great tonal colour and expressiveness.

World favourites guide

TUNERS

LEAK TROUGHLINE second-hand

Our favourite way of listening to the wireless. A deliciously mellifluous sound will have you junking your transistor radio in seconds.

NAD 412 £190

The 412 is remarkably musical and natural sounding. Rich sound and full bass are a rarity.

SONY ST-SA3ES £250

Beguiling RDS tuner for sonically discerning button lovers. Good ergonomics and sensitive too.

MISSION CYRUS FM7 £300

Clear and lucid sound puts it up with the best regardless of price. Superb build too.

ROTEL RT990BX £500

High quality Michi-based tuner with a sophisticated, forward sound with great imaging and soundstage. Sensible facilities and remote control.

NAIM NAT03 £500

The NAT03's warm, atmospheric sound is further proof of Naim's proficiency with tuners.

FANFARE FT-1 £1350

In its native US the FT-1 is no mere tuner but a 'broadcast monitor' no less, a task at which it acquires itself well, with a clear and powerful sound.

NAIM NAT01 £1380

This is the best solid-state tuner available bar none. For better radio, go and live in the studio.

CASSETTE DECKS

AIWA AD-S750 £150

Sonically a very decent machine. For the price there's nothing better. Comes fitted with Dolby B, C and S.

KENWOOD KX-3080 £160

A simple deck, but high quality head and transport give an unusually high level of performance at this price. Not to be missed.

YAMAHA KX-580SE £250

The 'Special Edition' tag is more than a marketing gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby S.

AIWA AD-S950 £300

A stable transport, superb head and Dolby S make the AD-S950 an excellent all rounder.

PIONEER CT-S740S £430

A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, with first rate sound on playback and recording.

NAKAMICHI DR2 £600

Where serious cassette decks start. The DR2 pushes recordings to the limit, remaining unflustered at all times.

NAKAMICHI DR1 £850

Better still than the DR2, with manual head azimuth adjustment to boot.

NAKAMICHI CR7 £1500

Kills every other cassette deck and stamps on their graves.

LOUDSPEAKERS

TANNOY MERCURY m2 £140

A true audiophile bargain which embarrasses many more expensive boxes.

KEF Q15 £199

These stand mounters offer impressive bass and excellent clarity but need a powerful amplifier to perform at their considerable best.

MISSION 732 £200

Characteristically fast, punchy Mission sound. Very well balanced tonally.

B&W DM 602 £300

Deep and strong bass, pure, projected and uncoloured midrange. Treble quality a little metallic, but imaging precise. A lively, enjoyable sound.

REL Q-BASS £350

Few subwoofers match the Q-Bass at the price. The tuning controls can be a bit of a fiddle, but once set up the rest is pleasure.

CASTLE EDEN £450

Impressively vice-free 'speakers that offer great transparency and involvement. Unbeatable at the price.

EPOS ES12 £495

Strong, punchy bass is allied to detailed and articulate midrange and treble. Above all, these 'speakers are thoroughly musical.

REL STRATA £500

The Strata subwoofer is not a toy. It offers superb, true hi-fi bass depth and power, and opens up sound stage depth in particular.

HARBETH HL-P3ES £799

A fine example of good loudspeaker engineering. The top of the mini-monitor league.

HARBETH HL-K6 £975

Clean, musical and classy - Harbeth have done themselves proud again.

KEF REFERENCE SERIES ONE £995

The KEFs combine pin-point imagery and detail with a smooth and polite balance. Good, agile bass too.

JAMO CONCERT 8 £1500

With their inch-thick cabinets and fabulous drive units, the Concert 8s are the most transparent stand mounters around. They don't suffer poor sources gladly though.

EPOS ES25 £1505

Epos' best. Combines near-uncoloured tonality with characteristic fireworks in the rhythm department. Superb by any other name.

SPENDOR SP7/1 £1970

This big Spendor floorstander is very appealing thanks to its open, lucid sound and valve-friendly load.

TANNOY AMS8 £2700

Bold sounding professional active monitor with solid bass, clearly focused midrange and delicious treble. Built-in amplification.

QUAD ESL 63 £2860

A reference against which all other loudspeakers are judged, the '63s have superb imaging qualities and genuine transparency. Earlier ESL model is a fine second-hand buy.

KEF REFERENCE SERIES FOUR £3099

Superb bass and near-electrostatic sound staging make these involving loudspeakers a reference to others. Need a strong amplifier though.

JBL S2600 £3500

Smooth, detailed and spacious with great dynamics and fine imaging. Capable of producing a superb performance when used in a big room.

TANNOY WESTMINSTER ROYAL £10,000

An incredibly dynamic, detailed full-range horn design with a rich sound. Its high sensitivity predisposes it to valve amplification.

MINI DISCS

SONY MDS-JE500 £300

An impressive overall sound quality and unmatched convenience and editing facilities make this budget MiniDisc player an excellent buy.

KENWOOD DM-7090 £500

Both replay and recording quality are superb through this Kenwood. Nakamichi owners should start getting worried - at last there's competition.

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PS Audio Model 2 power amp.Mint.Boxed	£ 195
Shearne Phase 3 pwr amp Ex dem Mint.Boxed	£ 395
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Musical Fidelity E200 pre-amp Ex Dem.Mint	£ 395
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Audiolab 8800A integrated amp.Mint.Boxed	£ 275
Linn Intek Intergrated amplifier.Mint.Boxed	£ 225
Sugden A48 intergrated amplifier	£ 125
Richard Allen Class A intergrated amplifier	£ 150
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Rogers cadet 3 Valve intergrated amplifier	£ 125
Leak Stereo 20 power amplifier serviced	£ 350
Leak TL25+ in Bronze Mono	£ 250
Audio Innovations First Audio amplifier	£ 595
Audio Innovations v8000 2 box pre-amplifier	£ 250
Quad 303 power amp.Like new.Boxed	£ 150
BEAD p35 Valve power amplifier.boxed	£ 495
Lumley M75 Valve power amps 2 Monos	£ 999
Audio innovations s200 power amplifier	£ 275
Quad 33 pre-amplifier.good condition	£ 75
Quad 303 power amplifier.good condition	£ 125
Quad 405/1 amplifier.good condition	£ 175
Quad 306 amplifier.excellent condition.	£ 200
Sugden p51 power amplifier	£ 150
Sugden c51 pre-amplifier	£ 100
Dnm 2A pre-amplifier and power supply	£ 300
Dnm 2A pre-amplifier and 2 power supplies	£ 400
Beard C35 pre-amplifier.Boxed	£ 450
Jeff Rowland model one amplifier.Amazing	£1500

TURNTABLES

Garrard 301s/401s.price Varies on condition	£ POA	Thorens 124.Variou prices and condition	£ POA
Transcriptors Saturn Turntable.C/w arm/cart	£ 195	STD 305M turntable with Mayware arm.	£ 125

SPEAKERS

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Keswick Audio Volante in cherry Mint.Boxed.	£ 395	Origin Live Conquerors.Rosewood.	£ 595
Kef 101/2 in rosewood.Mint Boxed	£ 295	Triangle Titus Black.Ex demo.Mint/boxed	£ 299
Spica Angelus.Cost £1600.Sell for	£ 400	Rogers L.S1 speakers.Mint. Boxed	£ 75
Castle Winchester Oak finish Mint Boxed	£ 995	Tannoy Eatons Excellent condition.	£ 195
Mordaunt short MS600 speakers Using Decca Kelly ribbon tweeters Excellent condition	£ 275		

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Sme 3009 tone arms Various From	£ 60	Quad FM1 tuner.LW.MW.SW.	£ 40
Tannoy 12i silver speaker & X-over.mono	£ 350	Leak Troughline 3 stereo tuner.Non worker	£ 60
Cambridge DACMAGIC MK2.Mint. Boxed	£ 100	Pioneer PD-S 703 Cd player Mint Boxed	£ 150
Yamaha KX580 SE cassette Deck.Mint.BXD	£ 150	SME S/2080 Plinth.301/3009 cut-out.	£ 50

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VALVES



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Border Patrol

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'In every instance the Border Patrol effect was nothing short of a transformation. Bass solidified, imaging became significantly more three-dimensional and substantial, and the power supplied amp made the regular version sound, quite literally, a mess.'

'With the Border Patrol back on the music regained its composure: instruments not only sounded more natural and realistic, but seemed much more musically coherent. In many respects it was like taking the good things about transistor amps and adding them to the natural strengths of valves - a remarkable blend.'

...Jason Kennedy Hi-Fi Choice April 97

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GAMMA ACOUSTICS

"This amplifier possessed a seductive vitality, a marvellous sense of communication with the heart of the music. Vocals were most communicative, subtle dynamic contrasts were portrayed very well, and the music bounced along with a fine sense of rhythm. This amplifier was seriously transparent, showing great clarity, fine stereo depth and very fine presentation of space and ambience in the sound stage."
"It sounded quick, direct, uncomplicated, with an ability to resolve subtle textures in instrumental scoring. Taken overall, the sound quality score (on my usual subjective listening test scale) was an impressive 23 points.

Martin Colloms

HI FI NEWS / RR March 97

The Rhythm presentation as a whole could be described as clean and powerful, in an appealing natural way."... "Whether it was the string quartets of Ravel or Debussy, Alanis Morissette or Joni Mitchell being fed into the Rhythm, what emerged always impressed with its natural, easy power and control. For those in search of an alternative to the 300B, one which couples the organic feel of valve amplification with a rather un-valve-like ear-opening bass extension and control, the rhythm is definitely worth audition."

Jon Marx

HiFi World July 1996

WORLD VERDICT
Partnered with sensible speakers of good bass depth, the Rhythm is capable of impressive performance.

WHAT HI*FI? says

sound	★★★★★
facilities	★★★★★
build	★★★★★
verdict	★★★★★

Dan Houston

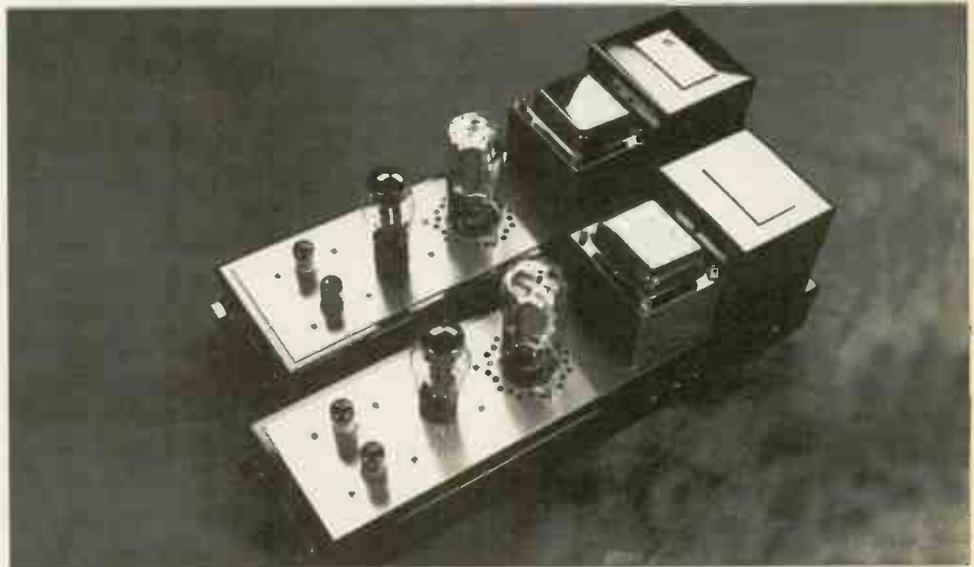
WHAT HI*FI May 1997

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Mana sounds table	£300	£160
Torlyte stand "one of the best ever made"		£160
EPOCH Reference V black ex demo as new	£2999	£1650
Lumley Stereo 40 Power Amp S/H Mint	£1000	£380
Trichord Pulsar DAC and Transport Ex-demo as new (Mint)	£2119	£1600
Genesis	£569	£479
GEMINI line integrated S. Ended BARGAIN Last one!	£699	£350
RHYTHM 211/VT4C phono Ex-Demo Marked	£2499	£999
RHYTHM LINE Ex review/as new	£2499	£1499
AEON MK1 MONOBLOCKS 20 Watt S.E. Si construction Ex-review new marked - to clear	£4999	£2499
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S/hand and ex-demo clearance items - June '98

	Was	Now
Arcam Delta 70.2 CD Player	699	249
Audio Innovations Second Audio Mono's	3299	1299
Audio Research D400 Poweramplifier	5800	2300
Castle Acoustics Isis	249	179
Castle Acoustics Tay	349	269
Deva 600 Integrated	999	699
Deva 250 Integrated	399	299
Dpa Enlightenment DAC	825	499
Dpa Enlightenment Drive	725	399
Dpa Reinassance CD Player	950	695
Linn Majik 1 Phono Amplifier	850	450
Magnaplanar SMG 1C Oak	895	350
Marantz MA500 Monoblocks	499	269
Micromega Stage 1 CD Player	549	299
Monitor Audio 352 Rosewood Speakers	299	149
Musical Fidelity MA50 Monoblocks	800	349
Naim Audio Naxo 3/6 X-Over (New Style)	650	349
QLN Model One Black Ash Loudspeakers	800	399
Quad 33/303/FM3	n/a	250
Rega EXS Stereo Poweramp	598	425
Rega Hal Pre Amp mm/mc Remote	998	695
Roksan Caspian Integrated	695	550
Roksan Caspian Power Amplifier	599	475
Roksan Xerxes Blk/XPS II/RB300/OC9	1599	750
Roksan XPS 3.5/DSU Power Supply	320	249
Rotel RB970 BX Stereo Power Amplifier	225	175
Rotel RC 970 BX Pre Amp (New)	175	129
Rotel RCD 965 BX Discrete CD Player	399	229
Sony CDP 790 CD Player	199	99
Sugden Symetra Mono Class A (1 Pair)	1650	950
Tascam 688 Midi Studio (Flight Cased)	2500	799
TDL RTL 3 Rosewood Loudspeakers	399	275
Teac P500 Transport	600	375
VPI TNT Mk 2.5 (New Parts Fitted)	3995	2599
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Nagra PLP Valve Preamplifier: uses a battery & fully rechargeable power supply thus making it one of the quietest phono stages around in the vinyl domain: £6995.00

Pass Labs Aleph 3 Power Amplifier: a pure class A 30 watts per channel into 8 ohms won the Stereophile amplifier of the year gives a new dimension to realistically priced high ends: £1995.00

Audio Analogue Pagannini CD Player: Stunning sound and looks from this Italian Amplifier manufacturer. Utilising 24-bit technology, CEC mechanism. A must at £695.00 (We think)

Basis 2000 Series Turntables: A new range from the USA's leading turntable specialist. Prices start at £2000.00 including the Basic Rega RB300 with fully adjustable VTA

Unison Research: 300b smart monos producing 24-watt triple single ended Triode power. An open window into what truly is possible with valves today: £4250.00

Michell Engineering: New Orca Pre amps and redesigned Alecto stereo/mono power amps. Transparency from the UK's leading Turntable manufacturer. Prices on application

AudioNote: The new CD3 CD player will be here in early May. Many of the CD2 features are included, but with a better valve section on the output stage, and incorporating the new black gate capacitors on the power supply. Price: £1599.00 Upgrades are available to existing CD2 owners at £600 plus carriage

Also available the affordable CD1 from Audio Note at an astonishing £599, it utilises a Delta Sigma D/A Conversion system and an all important ECC 82 valve in the audio output stage

Diapason Karis Loudspeaker: The most beautiful mini monitor ever seen here, made from Italian walnut then highly polished and lacquered. Must be heard and seen. Price: £1250.00

Recommended Vinyl

Art Pepper meets the Rhythm section - AP HQ 180grm	£21.95
Arthur Louis (featuring Eric Clapton) - Knockin' on Heaven's Door	£11.95
Average White Band - AWB MFSL 200grm	£19.99
Bert Kaempfert - Master Recordings. Polydor 180grm	£21.95
Bob Dylan - Time Out of Mind 120grm double	£14.99
Boston - Boston MFSL 200 grm	£19.95
Buddy Guy - I Was Walking Through the Woods MCA 180grm	£21.95
Cannonball Adderley - Something Else 180grm	£15.90
Cassandra Wilson - New Moon Daughter	£19.95
Cat Stevens - Izitiso MFSL 200grm	£19.99
Dave Brubeck - Time Out 180grm.	£21.95
Dave Mason - Alone together MCA Heavy Vinyl 180grm	£24.95
Deep Purple - Made in Japan Limited Edition	£17.95
Dexter Gordon - Go 180grm	£15.90
Dizzy Gillespie - Reunion big band MPS 180grm	£19.95
Doc & Merle Watson - Pickin the Blues AP HQ180grm	£21.95
Eagles - Hell Freezes Over	£17.90
Eagles - Hotel California DCC 180grm	£21.95
ELP - Trilogy MFSL 200grm.	£19.95
Elvis - 24 Karat Hits DCC 180grm Double	£34.95
Elvis is Back - DCC 180 grm	£21.95
EMI - EMI 100 Years 180 grm (All titles stocked)	£14.90
EMI - Jazz Classics 180 grm	£15.90
Fleetwood Mac - Rumours 180 grm	£15.90
Frampton Comes Alive MFSL 200 grm Double	£34.95
Hank Mobley - Soul Station 180 grm	£15.90
Herbie Hancock - Blow Up 180 grm	£15.90
Horace Parlan - On the Spur of the Moment. Blue Note 180grm	£19.95
Ike Quebec - Soul Samba. Blue Note 180grm	£19.95
Janis Ian - Revenge	£9.95
Janis Ian - Breaking Silence 180grm	£24.95
Jimi Hendrix - Band of Gypsies	£12.95
Jimi Hendrix - R.U. Experienced	£17.95
Jimi Hendrix - Axis bold as love 180grm	£21.95
Jimi Hendrix - First Rays of the New Rising Sun 180grm	£24.95
Joan Armatrading - Same 180grm	£19.95
John lee Hooker - The Real Folk Blues Alto 180grm	£19.95
John M Jarre - Oxygene 7-13 180grm	£15.95
John Mayall - The Blues Alone MFSL 200grm	£19.95
Joni Mitchell - Court & Spark DCC 180grm	£21.95
Lee Morgan - Sidewinder 180grm	£15.90
Linda Ronstadt - Greatest Hits DCC 180grm	£21.95
Louis Armstrong/Duke Ellington - Sessions 180grm	£19.95
Massenet - Le Cid/Last Sleep - L. Fremaux 180grm	£21.95
Miles Davis - Kind of Blue Double 180grm.	£38.00
Miles Davis - Tutu 180grm.	£15.90
Mobile Fidelity Titles - Special Offer 200grm	£19.99
Monty Alexander - Live at Montreux 180grm	£19.95
Moody Blues - Every Good Boy MFSL 200grm	£19.99
Nat king Cole - The Very Thought of You Dcc 180grm	£21.95
Nina Simone - Sings the Blues 180grm.	£19.95
Oscar Peterson - The lost tapes MPS180grm	£19.95
Patricia Barber - Café Blue 180grm	£21.95
Pink Floyd - EMI Cent 180grm Box Set	£99.95
Pink Floyd - EMI Cent 180grm Single Albums	£15.90
Queen Rocks - Best of Queen 180grm	£17.90
R.E.M. - Murmur MFSL 200grm	£19.95
Ravel - Rapsodie Espanole - Paray 180grm.	£21.95
Rick Wakeman - J.T.C.O.T.E. MFSL 200grm	£19.95
Ry Cooder - Paris Texas 180grm	£15.90
Saint Saens - Organ Symphony - L Fremaux 180grm	£21.95
Santana - 1st Album 180grm	£19.99
Santana - Abraxas 180grm	£21.95
Sarah McLachlan - Fumbling Towards/Freedom Sessions	£29.95
Sergio Mendes and Brasil - '66 180grm	£19.95
Sonny Clark - Cool Struttin' Blue Note 150grm	£19.95
Steve Miller - Greatest Hits DCC 180grm	£21.95
The Best of Roy Orbison - DCC 180grm double	£32.95
The Doors - DCC 180grm	£21.95
The Doors - Waiting for the Sun DCC 180grm	£21.95
The Doors - Strange Days DCC 180grm	£21.95
The Weavers - Reunion at Carnegie Hall AP HQ180grm	£21.95
Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers - She's the One	£11.90
U2 - Unforgettable Fire MFSL 200grm	£19.95
Van Morrison - Moondance 180grm	£15.90
Wayne Shorter - Speak No Evil 180grm	£15.90
Al DiMeola/J McLaughlin/P De Lucia - Friday Night in S F 180grm	£19.95

All these titles are available from stock mail order - a charge of £2.00 per consignment will be made.

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YES KAN DO

David Price looks at a great second-hand loudspeaker bargain,

Linn's diminutive Kan stand mounter.

Until 1980 the only mini-monitor worth having was the BBC LS3/5a. With its superb clarity it was great on Classical music, but like all BBC designs it just didn't boogie. A shame, because many Rock fans hankered after a mini 'speaker that could really kick, but they had thus far been denied. Linn responded with the Kan, so called because it "can do what other small speakers can't", in the words of the Glaswegian company's PR-speak.

With very similar (12in. by 7.5in. by 6.5in.) dimensions and the same ubiquitous KEF B110 Bextrene mid/bass unit, many people assumed the two would sound practically the same. This couldn't have been further from the truth - unlike the LS3/5a, the Kan used a superb Scanspeak tweeter and different crossovers and internal construction.

Because of their low 86dB sensitivity and 6ohm nominal impedance, Linn recommended Kans be used with nothing other than top Linn/Naim systems. Magazines preached that anything 'less' than a Naim NAP160 was tantamount to slaughter of the first-born child. Although this overstated the case, the Kan really didn't suffer fools gladly.

Rammed hard against rear walls and driven by the then rather soft and beguiling Sondek, the results gelled perfectly. The Naims' low-end grunt allied to the Sondek's smooth treble countered the Kans' characteristic forwardness and the music flooded forth. Particularly strong on rhythms, the Kans could stop-start faster than just about every other moving-coil 'speaker around, making for razor-sharp transients and a genuinely musical, foot-tapping sound.

The downside was the bass - erm, there wasn't any. Bass guitars disappeared from Pop songs, Jazz no longer had double-basses, while great church organs sounded more like Stylophones. Despite Linn's claimed 70Hz to 20kHz (+/-3dB), there was precious little action under 120Hz, truth be told. Still, you could partly get round this with careful siting, high-grade

sources with plenty of extension, and telling yourself you didn't like low frequencies anyway.

A couple of years later, Linn introduced the Kan II stand, a far more sturdy open-frame type with top spikes which gave the Kan a chance to work even more of its rhythmic magic. A series of 'speaker modifications followed, including a new tweeter.

However, most mods were subtle in effect, and only served to give the 'speaker added mystique - people spoke in terms of Kans having good vintages, like fine wines.

In 1989 the Kan II followed, with the biggest mods to date. Although the enclosure dimensions were retained, the II cabinetry was substantially reworked for extra stiffness. Front baffle thickness was increased, and it was welded into position with ultra-strong adhesives. The tweeter end of the baffle was raised for improved dispersion, while the crossover was redesigned and made bi-wireable.

The result was an altogether more civilised loudspeaker, with a more even frequency balance and fewer unwanted colorations. Kan purists were divided as to whether the 'II was better as it lacked some of the original's punch, but this was all very much a matter of personal taste. Ultimately the Kan II was a superior 'real world' design and even worked well with CD.



The very last Kan IIs featured Linn's Ku-Stone inserts, but they weren't around for long. By 1994 the cost of the drivers was getting too high to make the Kan a viable commercial proposition, and Linn introduced the Tukan instead. Although a nice little 'speaker, it's a far more middle-of-the-road design - it's lively and musical but without the steel of its funky predecessors.

The good news is that for the price of a cheap entry-level stand mounter you can get a good pair of Kans second-hand. Pay between £120 and £250 depending on age, condition and whether stands are included. Make sure they come with the original box, and, if Kan IIs, with the bi-wire link key too. Set them up close to the wall, use a rich sounding cartridge in your turntable - forget about Linns or Audio Technicas - and sit up and enjoy the action!●

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 **New in This Month**

	Choice Price	Original Retail Price
POWER AMPLIFIERS		
Jadis JA500	£7995	£21000
EAR 509 mk II (2 pairs available)	£1395	£2500
Audio Research VT 60	£1295	£2400
Audio Research Classic 60 (2 available)	£1495	£3600
Musical Fidelity F16	£2095	£2500
Boulder 102 AE	£2650	£3400
Linn Kairn pro (Brilliant psu)	£900	£1400
Conrad Johnson Prem 11a	£2395	£3500
Pioneer A400	£195	£300
Krell KSA 150	£2295	£4000
Naim NAP 250	£1295	£1700

	Choice Price	Original Retail Price
PRE AMPLIFIERS		
Audio Research Reference 1 mk II	£6500	£9000
Musical Fidelity F25	£1095	£1500
Musical Fidelity X-Tone + X-psu	£225	£320
Conrad Johnson PV12 (mm/mc)	£1995	£2590
Krell KRC	£3795	£6700
AVI 2000 pre/remote	£575	£900
CAT SL1 mkII Black/Silver	£4500	£6500
Exposure 11/12 mm/mc	£695	£1300
Naim NAC 72	£550	£750
Naim HiCAP	£495	£700

	Choice Price	Original Retail Price
SPEAKERS		
B & W 802 mk III (Black/Walnut)	£1895	£2800
Martin Logan Aeriis i	£1595	£2299
Acoustic Energy AE1	£595	£795
Acoustic Energy AE120	£365	£500
Acoustic Energy AE109	£260	£350
Ensemble PA1	£995	£2000
Klipsch La Scala	£1695	£2400

	Choice Price	Original Retail Price
Sonus Faber Electa Amators + Adj St/Wood Stands	£1795	£3700
TURNTABLES/ANALOGUE/VARIOUS		
Linn Arkiv	£695	£1000
Stax Lambda Sig + SRMT	£895	£1400
Clear Audio Sigma	£450	£600
LFD MC1 phono stage	£550	£950
Naim NAT 01 Tuner	£1295	£1700

	Choice Price	Original Retail Price
Linn LP12/Circus/ARO/Armageddon Klyde	£2200	£3200
VP1 TNT/ET2	£2000	£5000
C.D PLAYERS & DACS		
Theta Data basic	£1695	£2397
Linn Karik 3 (Brilliant)	£1250	£1895
Linn Numieric (Brilliant)	£995	£1500
C.A.L Tercet mk III	£895	£1700
Teac D10 dac	£495	£800
DPA Renaissance + the power	£795	£1100
Teac P10 transport	£850	£1600
Audio Alchemy DDE V1.0 + psu 1	£195	£300

Power Amplifiers

	Choice Price	Original Retail Price
Conrad Johnson MF 2300	£1895	£2990
Audio Research M300 monoblocks	£4995	£10000
Conrad Johnson Prem 8a	£7995	£16000
Boulder 500 AE	£3795	£5000
LFD PA1/LS1	£895	£1998
Musical Fidelity P180 & CRPS x 2	£795	£1600
Meridian 505 Monoblocks	£1195	£1590
Audio Research D240 mk II	£1795	£3500
Unison Research Smart 845	£2300	£3000
Audio Note P1 SE	£595	£950
Jadis JA 80 Monoblocks	£4995	£10000
Meridian 551 Integrated	£650	£900
Quad II's 2 x 2 monoblocks (special)	£600	£ -
Audio Research VT 150 se	£7995	£17000
Audion Golden Knights	£2495	£4000
LFD PA2/ LS1/ MC1	£1495	£3000
Audion Silver Knights (Gold)	£1495	£2250
Musical Fidelity P140	£250	£450

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Jadis Defy 7 mk III	£3750	£4790
Mark Levinson 20.5	£5995	£12000

Pre Amplifiers

Audio Research SP14	£1395	£3000
MC Cormack TLC-1	£595	£995
Tesseract Tala	£795	£1495
Conrad Johnson Prem 7B	£5995	£11000
McCormack Micro Line Drive	£395	£595
Jadis JP 80 mm	£4995	£8000
Audio Research LS3	£1195	£1900
Audio Research SP15 Rev A	£2495	£6000
Audio Research LS5 mk II	£3000	£5700
Audio Research SP11 mk II	£1795	£3500
Magnum P200	£995	£1895
Meridian 208 incl. Phono (C.D/ pre amp)	£495	£1500

Quality Speakers

ATC SCM 10 Black	£795	£1150
Alon IV mk II	£2000	£3500

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Monitor Audio 700 PMC	£450	£600
Proac Response 4	£7995	£12500
Royd Priors	£495	£950
Alon V mk II BIK	£2500	£5000
Wilson System 5.1	£10995	£17000
Wilson 3/2	£5995	£15000
Alon Lotus SE	£3000	£ -
Sonus Faber Extrema + Stands	£4250	£7000
Linn Kan	£250	£500
Linn Keilids	£395	£700
Alon Circe	£6500	£11000
ATC SCM 50 A Rosewood	£3995	£5500
Rel Stentor I	£750	£1800
Sonus Faber Sub woofer + X-over + power amp	£1495	£3200

CD Players & DACS

P.S. Audio Ultralink	£795	£2390
EAD 9000 Series III HDCD	£3250	£6000
Wadia 16	£4750	£7395
Mission Cyrus Discmaster (Transport)	£595	£1000
Krell SBP 64X	£3500	£9900
M C Cormack DAC-1	£695	£995
Wadia 22/26	P.O.A.	
Acuphase DP70	£2250	£4500
Acuphase DP90/91	£9950	£20000
Forsell Air Ref Transport mk II	£8995	£13800
Forsell Air Ref dac	£495	£900
Audio Alchemy Transport DDS 2	£11500	£24000
Mark Levinson 30.5/31	£395	£600
Teac T1	£1995	£3995
Meracus Transport	£495	£1500
Meridian 208 Pre/amp	£395	£1000
Marantz CD94	£595	£900
Pink Triangle Ordinal		

Turntables & Analogue

Piere Lurne J1/SL5	£1750	£4500
Basis Ovation	£3495	£4950
Piere Lurne JI/Sowther mk III	£1800	£4500
VPI TNT Wheaton III	£1995	£5000
Forsell Air Force One	£11995	£25000
Kinshaw Overture Phono	£250	£395
Linn LP12 Lingo/Cirkus/Akito	£1200	£2000
Ortofon MC 7500	£1295	£2250
Kiseki Purpleheart Sapphire	£495	£1200
Systemdek II XE 900/RB 250	£395	£650
Sequera Tuner (Original)	£4500	£ -
LP12/Ittok	£695	£1500
Quad FM3 Tuner	£225	£ -

Clearance Bargains

Audio Research D125 balanced power	£1595	£3500
Beard P35	£495	£1395
Chameleon Ruby Power Amp (200W)	£495	£1200
Alchemist Kraken x 2 Stereo & Pre-amp	£695	£1400
NVA A80 Monoblocks & P50 Pre-amp	£895	£1760
Audio Innovations S500 Integrated	£450	£999
Exposure IX professional power supply	£495	£1595
Exposure V Active x over	£295	£995
EAD 7000 Transport	£995	£2495

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PINK TRIANGLE Cardinal CD transport relocked £350. DaCapo DAC converter 20 bit filter £750. Mission 731LE speakers £50. Mission 75C centre speaker £100. Transparent Audio Music Link Plus speaker cable 5m pair £200. Tel: 01256 359 407 (Jul/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000 DAC £650 ono. Audiolab 8000C preamp £350. 2 x 1m AudioQuest Diamond 2 solid silver interconnects £360. New Monarchy 33B Dac/Preamp, Ltd Edition £750. New Monarchy 18B DAC/preamp £450. 2 x Monarchy SE100 monoblocks £700 each. NAD 5020 turntable £70. All in mint condition. Tel: 0141 884 3831 (Jul/I)

MARANTZ CD 80 £350. Deltec Big-Bit Dac, upgraded to 7350 advanced bitstream chip-set £350. Musical Fidelity The Pre-Amp 2A £80. 2 x pair of Audio Technica interconnects. Cost £140, wanting £70. Tel: 01302 310 029 (Jul/I)

AVI S2000 MP/MM pre amplifier & monoblocks (150w). Remote controlled, six inputs, inc MM/MC phono stage. 10 months old, can demonstrate, boxed, may split. (New) £2600 (Sell) £1700. No offers. Tel: 0151 348 0256 (Jul/I)

WANTED: LEAK 2075 speakers, any condition, drive units must be good. Thanks to Terry C. for all that info. Tel: 01453 764 734 or 0370 951 875 (Jul/I)

HARBETH BBC LS5/12As, 1 year old, walnut £1050. Harbeth HLP3 £325. Quad FM3 £50. QED Digit £50. Cheap Nakamichi cassette £75. Snell Type K £230 Tel: 01304 813 572 (Jul/I)
LOWTHER AUDITORIUM Acousta folded horn speakers

(81cms H x 24cms W x 48cms D) with 4 new PM2C drive units, 97dB sensitivity, rewired, teak finish £550. Tel: 0171 328 5001 after 6pm (Central London) (Jul/I)

EPOS ES30 (walnut) 3 months old, asking £1700. M.I.T. 330 interconnect 1.5m asking £180. M.I.T. MH750 plus speaker cable (8 foot pair), asking £400. Tel: 01296 437 314 evenings. (Aylesbury) (Jul/I)

MARK LEVINSON No.28 pre-amp (high gain phono) £1150. Audiomeca Mephisto and Audio Synthesis DAX (balanced Ultra-Analogue and other options) £2300 ono. Mirage M3Si's £2000 ono. Tel: John 0171 548 3678 (office), 01279 653 800 7-9pm (Jul/I)

NAIM NAC82 £1350. HiCap £400. NAP250 £950. All new style, mint and boxed. KEF 104/2 £500 boxed. Tel: 01638 743 316 (Jul/I)

MICROMEGA CD3.1, Duo transport + Clock 2 upgrade £650. Micromega Duo Pro 2 DAC £650. Superb combination (£3000 new), mint and boxed. Tel: 01638 743 316 (Jul/I)

AUDIO SYNTHESIS Transcend transport. One year old, cost £1400. Will accept £650. Tel: 01454 418 997 after 5.30pm (Jul)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS LI valve preamp and PI valve phono amp. Absolutely mint condition and excellent sound quality. Cost new £369 each, will sell for £165 each. Tel: 01475 675 969 (Jul/I)

MERIDIAN M20 Active speakers. Black ash with stands, Meridian Signal leads Excellent condition, original boxes. Cost £1250, for sale at £500. Tel: 01798 342 453 weekends (West Sussex) (Jul/I)
MERIDIAN 101 pre-amp for sale. £75 Tel: 01732 461 358 (Jul/I)

KRELL KSA100S Power amplifier, power, reliability and finesse for £2995. Comes complete with acoustic mass damper spiked feet. Tel: Jonathan 01453 885 032 (Jul/I)

AUDIONOTE ANS3 Silver wound moving coil step up transformer. Mint condition £1200. Tel: 01474 743 326 (Kent) (Jul/I)

DPA RENAISSANCE CD Player £575. 1 metre White Slink interconnect £45. Bought together £600. Tel: 01443 775 604 (Jul/I)

CASTLE HOWARD S2 light oak, 2 years old, immaculate condition £500. No offers please. Tel: 0976 241 713 (Blackburn) (Jul)

KEF 300B, pair £100. Kef T52, pair £30. Lux L2, int/amp £50. Gennex ALX5 (cabinets) £15. Goodmans DT3 (one) £15. QED turntable shelf, tubular frame, spiked Torylyte base £30. Rega RB300 (needs attention) £35. Tel: 01474 708 631 (Kent) (Jul/I)

SPENDOR SP2 Mk1, mint, boxed £300. Logic Datum arm £10. 2x6m lengths OFC Highest speaker cable £20. Tel: 01274 817 035 (Jul/I)

NAIM NAC82 £1300, Hi-Cap (x4) £390 each, Nap250 (x2) £850 each, Pre-fix £220, Amageddon £370, Nat02 (4 months old) £700, CDI £1100. All new style, all boxed, all vgc. Tel: 01761 415 040 (Somerset) (Jul/I)

KING OF KINGS Nakamichi 1000 ZXL cassette. An outstanding beast £4000 ono. Nakamichi Dragon, superb cassette machine £2500 ono. Naim X-Over 2.4 model £325 ono. Tel: 0181 886 8034 (Jul/I)

WANTED 'AUDIOPHILE' magazine November 1990. Tel: Harry 0181 664 7090 (Jul/I)

CROFT CHARISMA preamp, chrome front, upgraded by GT Audio. Superb sound, boxed as new £750. Croft Series 4S poweramp £550. Rega Planar 3, as new £175. Tel: 0181 203 2120 (Jul/I)

WORLD AUDIO Design KLS3 speakers, professionally built cabinets, cherry veneer, mint condition, superb sound, can be demonstrated. Too large for present room £500. Tel: 01252 870 861 (Yateley) (Jul/I)

SONY DTC750 DAT tape deck plus 80 tapes, vgc £325. Also Revox B77 1/2 track 3.75 & 7.5 ips with about 50 10.5 inch tapes, vgc £375. Tel: Alan 0116 241 9939 (Jul/I)

NAIM NAC82, 18 months old, as new, inc. phono boards £1400 ono. SWAP - DPA Enlightenment Trans/Dac for Audio Research SP9 MkII or MkIII. Acoustic Energy AE1's on dedicated stands £600. EAR 859 ex. cond., 2 years old, boxed, manuals £1000. Rotel RT 950 BX ex-dem tuner £160. Quad 77 int. amp, Carbon, boxed £400 ono. Audio Innovations 500 valve amp, boxed (£1000) £350. Tel: Jules 01792 280 061 (Jul/I)

MARANTZ CD63SE CD player, little used £170. Audioquest Quartz interconnects £45. Audioquest Video Z digital cable £25. Tel: 01293 786 453 evenings (near Gatwick Airport) (Jul)

LINN ACTIV System. Linn Isobarik speakers (inc stands). Three Linn LK280 poweramps. Linn Activ Crossover. Linn LK1 preamp (inc remote). All in excellent condition £2950. Tel: 01444 246 776 (Jul/I)

NAIM NAC82 £1200, HiCap £380, excellent condition, new type, boxed. Audiolab CDM and DAC, excellent condition, boxed, much reviewed, £1100. Prices include delivery. Tel: 01598 760 247 (Jul/I)

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ANTHEM INTEGRATED 1 AMP VALVE EX -DEM	1295	1036
AUDION SILVER NIGHT 300B MONOBLOCKS	2250	POA
AUDION BLACK SHADOWS 845 VALVE	4000	POA
JADIS JA80'S MONOBLOCKS	9912	3995
JBL L90'S SPEAKERS	1500	750
MISSION CYRUS DAD 7	899	400
ROGERS STUDIO 5 ROSEWOOD	800	450
RESTEK 610 POWER AMP NEW	900	595
CHARIO HYPER 4 EX-DEM	2000	899
BURMEISTER PHONO STAGE	-	350
ALCHEMIST FORSETI PRE+ POWER	2228	POA
ALCHEMIST KRAKEN ANNIVERSARY MK11	579	POA
AUDIO RESEARCH D250 MK11 SERVO	-	2250
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REL ACOUSTICS Q100E Sub bass system. Three months old, mint condition, still boxed, hardly used, unwanted gift. RRP £495, sell £275. Gladly demonstrate. Tel: 0421 665 406 (Jul)

MARTIN LOGANS CLS1 speakers, mint condition £1500. Fuller Sultan speakers, concrete stands, light oak finish £150. Musical Fidelity DAC £150. Sony integrated monster amp. 150wpc. Model No.700 ES, mint condition £200. Ferrograph S1 monitor speakers £200. Tel: 01342 850 306 (Jul)

QUAD 33/303/FM3 £250. Arcam Alpha 6 CD player £225. Both items in excellent condition, especially Quad amps for their age. WANTED: Jecklin Float electrostatic headphones. Tel: 01780 764 149 (Jul)

ROYD ABBOT Floor standing speakers, bi-wireable £300. Cable Talk Concert 2 speaker cable, approx 4m £20. NVA Soundpipes 1m interconnects £45. Tel: 01279 659 948 evenings (Bishops Stortford) (Jul)

MERIDIAN 501 Preamp c/w MSR, excellent condition, boxed £425 ovno. Audioquest Quartz 3, 0.5m £60. Tel: 01703 283 191 (Lundhurst, Hampshire) (Jul)

GARRARD 401, SME 3009 tone arm, Shure V-15 Type II, classical LPs and 78s. Vgc. Tel: 0171 435 6793 (Jul)

ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE109 Speakers, Marantz CD67 CD player. Denon PMA-250SE amplifier and TU-260L tuner, Musical Fidelity X10-D line balancer, Ixos 104 interconnects, Qudos speaker cable. As new £600. Tel: 01359 271 693 (Jul)

SELL OR EXCHANGE TDK E/E special position 10 inch tapes, Teac, Akai compatible. Bowers and Wilkins P.2 monitors (see April issue) tweeters replaced with Son Audax. Offers please. Tel: 01782 502 106 (Jul)

IMPULSE TAUS, Horn loaded, special finish, mint condition £1900. Plus pair of REL Q Bass £450 for both. Can demo. Buyer collects. Tel: 01732 461 561 (NW Kent) (Jul)

KEF 107/2 Black ash. Upgraded from Series 1 by KEF. Very good condition £1295. Albarray M408 50w monoblocks £275. Rappaport preamp, passive line, active phono, Sfernice pot £60. Tel: 0121 472 8746 (Birmingham) (Jul)

QUAD ELS 63s, 15 years old, teak brown, boxed, instructions, perfect condition, one careful owner £1100. Tel: 01642 822 066 (Jul)

ARC CLASSIC 30 amp £950. Audio Synthesis Passion all-Vishay passive preamp £300. The following in US 120 voltage, but stepdown transformer available: ARC LS2 preamp £950, Theta Data CD Transport £800, Sonic Frontiers Ultrajitterbug £300, California Audio Labs Sigma II (tube) DAC £400. All mint condition. boxes and manuals. Tel: 01865 558 075 or email: cyril888@aol.com (Jul)

LINN ISOBARIK Speakers, walnut, panelled stand model, with passive and Naim SNAXO (1 year old) active crossover, superb sound £1300. Also Naim NAP250, late old-style £670. All excellent condition with boxes. Tel: 01761 415 040 (Somerset) (Jul)

NAIM NAIT 3 with MM phono stage, mint, boxed £425 ovno. Tel: Richard 07970 862 187 (Jul)

MARANTZ CD63 Mk2 CD player and Cambridge DacMagic 2i with coax digital interconnect. Both boxed as new, excellent condition. Will consider split. £200 for the pair. Tel: 01705 476 294 (Portsmouth) (Jul)

JAMO CONCERT 8's, mahogany, 4 months old, absolutely mint condition, boxed £925 ovno. Tel: 01843 589 554 anytime (Thanet) (Jul)

TANNOY CHEVIOT Speakers 12" dual concentric £250. Marantz PM66SE amplifier, remote volume, mint £110. Ferrograph reel to reel valve tape recorder £75. Leak Varislope III valve preamp £25. Tel: 01708 525 175 (Jul)

PROAC SUPERTOWERS MkII, black ash, seven years old (cost £1200) Excellent condition, selling for £495 ono. (boxed with original receipt) Tel: 01727 766 601 (Jul)

MISSION CYRUS 1 amplifier, Marantz CD65 compact disc player, Linn Helix loudspeakers, Linn Basik turntable, Akito arm, Audio Technica cartridge, custom design stands, £600 ono. May split. Tel: 0116 275 0514 (Leicester) (Jul)

AUDIONOTE OTO Valve amp, Linn Mimik CD player, Sony Minidisc player, Quad 77-10L speakers, spare valves, minidiscs £2195. Tel: 0956 634 655 (Basingstoke) (Jul)

AUDIO RESEARCH LS2 MkII preamplifier, balanced and unbalanced outputs £1950. Pair EAR 549 200 watt monoblocks £3500. Audio Synthesis DAX Coax, Toslink and AT&T (ST) inputs £950. All mint, boxed, manuals. Tel: 01483 282 364 (Jul)

QUAD 306 £200, Leak Stereo 20 and Varislope III pre in bronze £450. They are all boxed with instructions. Fully serviced and in immaculate condition. Tel: 01487 824 418 evenings (Jul)

PROAC/AUDIOLAB, Response 2s speakers, black with high quality stands, superb sound, will gladly demo £950 ono. Audiolab DAC £400 both items in perfect condition. Tel: 0181 681 6849 (Jul)

TWO ELDERLY Vintage Leak Sandwich speakers, in one ownership since 1965, seeking new home for productive retirement. Offers to 0181 747 0498 or 0181 741 7272 (Aug)

MIT-750 Loudspeaker cable, 8ft, single wired £300. 4 pairs Cable Talk 0.5m interconnects, 4 pairs Monster M1000 interconnects. Tel: Michael 0171 937 7935 (Jul)

NAIM NAIT 3 Amplifier. 2 1/2 years old. Mint condition. Box and manual. Includes 2x4m Naim speaker cable and Chord interconnect. Can demonstrate. £350 the lot. Tel: 01889 575 655 (Staffordshire) (Jul)

MICHELL GYRODEC, Black/bronze, Rega arm, Dynavector cartridge, 3 years old, immaculate £700. Mission 751's, good condition £180. Cyrus III amplifier and power supply, immaculate £450, Audioquest speaker cable 2x1.5m £70. Target speaker stands £50. Tel: Andrew 01325 486 956 evenings (Darlington) (Jul)

KRELL KAV300i Integrated amplifier, mint condition, boxed. Reason for sale - upgrading. £1850. Tel: 01823 444 044 (Taunton) (Aug)

ROKSAN ROK DPI Transport and DAI DAC, very good condition, boxed £675 or straight swap for Ruark Crusader Mk2 in natural oak or black ash. Must be mint. Tel: 01904 763 157 (York) (Jul)

TANNOY LITTLE Gold Monitors with Atacama stands £695. Nakamichi LX5 3 head cassette deck £325. Conrad Johnson PV10AL pre-amp £745. Yamaha A100 power amps £195. All mint. WANTED: Rel Stadium/Stentor. Tel: 01203 770 902 (Jul)

NAGRA 4S Stereo recorder inc Optex carrying case, manual and test report £1000. Studer A807 professional recorder, vgc, £1200. Tel: 01794 388 981 (Winchester) (Jul)

NAIM NAIT II Integrated amplifier. Mint, boxed, can demonstrate. Only available due to upgrade. £270. Tel: 01494 864 516 (Jul)

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TL25+ (single) Black £150
Varislope (very early)
LWMW/SW £50
Troughline (very early) FM £60

Decca FFSS 78 Cartridge £60

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excellent condition with data
book £220
Garrard 301 £150
Shure M61-2 Stereo
Pre-Amp 22OV £20
Tannoy Hi-Gain 15 Amplifier £30
Rogers Cadet II Amp £80
Thorens TD 124 MKII + SME
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In our last advert we referred to the latest version of the AVI Neutron, now called the Nu-Neutron. We had only just received our first pair then and hadn't had time to really sit down and see just how good they were. The original Neutron was an amazing speaker for the size, but the new version must have set a new standard for speakers measuring only 10 1/2" high x 5 1/2" wide x 8" 1/2 deep, and even more so when the £500 price tag is added to the equation. Obviously the bass from such a small speaker is limited, and we are investigating sub-woofers to go with them and are certainly getting excellent results with the triangle Sat-3 (£650) and the Jamo SW600 (£500), though the latter is no longer available.

In many modern small rooms however the bass will be more than adequate, and should more bass be needed there is the larger floorstanding Positron. A lot of work has gone into both speakers and anyone who finds most of the speakers available to be harsh - particularly women - these should solve their problem.

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PROAC RESPONSE 1 SC (latest model), few months use, with Target 'R' Series stands (£1500) £795. Alchemist Odin power amp, 80w dual mono (£1100) £300. Boxed as new. Tel: 01992 626 138 (Jul/I)

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GAMMA ERA Pre-amp, silver wired phono stage £1000 (£2500). Gamma Space Reference power amp, silver wired, titanium 300Bs £2000 (£4000) Impulse H2 speakers £1000 (£2250). Tel: 01962 774 218 (Winchester) (Jul/I)

MERIDIAN 601 DSP pre-amp/602 CD Transport combination. Superb sound £950. Also Meridian 518 digital audio processor £550. Tel: 01483 569 814 (Guildford) (Jul/I)

WANTED FOR Spares 1970s vintage. Philips 22 RH 720 tuner/amp. Philips 22 RH 427 speakers. Tel: Syd 01744 731 525 (Jul/I)

B&W 801 Monitor loudspeakers. Rosewood finish, upgraded Russ Andrews crossovers (Ansar caps, Iron dust inductors, Kimber cable) bi-wired, Target stands, good condition. New living room forces sale. £1500. Tel: 0171 435 1716 (Jul/I)

AUDIONOTE DAC 1 with valve output stage. Dynamic liquid sound £485 (£675). Mint Marantz CD 52 II £40. Audioquest Z digital interconnect £35 (£60) One metre Nordost Blue Heaven interconnect £80 (£160). Tel: 01308 868 044 (Jul/I)

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HI-FI FOR Sale. Quad 66 Pre £460. Quad 66 Tuner £300. Yamaha DSP A2070 £650. Celestion SL6 S £150. Jamo Silhouette £150. NAD 214 Power-amp £200. Sony STJ72 FM Tuner £45. Quad ESL 57 £275. Target Twin Pillar Stands £50. Soundstyle Tripod XO58 £150. Tel: 01766 522 098 (Jul/I)

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SPENDOR SP2/3 Limited Edition speakers with professional bass/mid units and improved crossovers. Mint condition with boxes. Target HJ15/3 stands also included. £825 ovno. (cost £1200 new). Tel: 01703 738 935 (Southampton) (Jul/I)

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QUAD II's, GEC's, mint £490. SME 3009R, new, unused £140. Black Box 3 £130. Arcam 2 speakers, upgraded £120. Radford SC2 valve pre £140. Other vintage hi-fi. Tel: Paul 01895 446 713 (Jul)

FLOORSTANDING, BUILT Kit speakers. 2 way ported design. Visiton ribbon tweeters, 8" TPX mid/bass units, HDF cabinet, oak veneer, solid light oak front panel, c/w speaker cable. £150. Tel: 01705 362 775 evenings (Jul)

MICHELL ARGO HR preamp £750. Ruark Equinox speakers £750. Trichord Pulsar DAC (One) £700. Trichord digital turntable £300. Tel: 01703 611 581 (Easteleigh) (Jul)

TEAC/ESOTERIC P-700 transport, Jolida SJ-502 50w int. amp (valve), Prism Tara Labs digital cable, spare valve, immaculate, boxed. £800 the lot. Tel: 0181 364 5687 (Enfield) (Jul)

NAIM NAC72 Current style usual pickup boards plus moving coil and CD. SNAIC, boxed £400. HiCap previous style, serviced, boxed £325. Both items original purchaser and immaculate. Tel: 01736 757 721 (Jul)

QUAD ESL63s, black, latest specification £1450. Quad speaker cable, 12 metres £50. Pioneer 400-X amplifier £150. Monostem hi-fi rack and CD stem, wall mounted, silver finish with 4 black slate shelves £180. All mint, boxed, instructions. Tel: 01480 422 337 or 01480 458 617 (Aug)

MICHELL GYRODEK Bronze, new, boxed, unused £550. SME 3009 II, mint condition £95. Shure V15 III £30. Nakamichi DRI cassette deck, little used, as new £425. Tel: 0181 393 4265 (day) or 01737 362 899 (eves) (Jul)

ELECTROCOMPANET EC1 Preamp. AW100 power amp. Mint, boxed, cost £3000, accept £1000. Revox B77 MkII, excellent condition, 4 new tapes £375. Tel: 0181 543 8625 (Jul)

ARCAM DELTA 70.3 CD player with Trichord Clock 2 and digital output board. Boxed, mint £295. Tel: 01296 487 191 evenings only (Bucks) (Jul)

CASTLE WINCHESTER Speakers, dark oak, boxed, in immaculate condition. Bargain £995. Tel: 0116 253 1141 (Jul)

NAIM 72 Preamp £400. Old style HiCap £300. Bundy cable for S. Cap - Snaxo £100. Russ Andrews 8 way multiplug Kimber cable £85. Target turntable wall support £25. Tel: 0121 553 1121 (West Bromwich) (Aug)

LATEST CROFT Micro A, many improvements £280. Magneplanar SMGA black, silver upgraded X-overs, spiked stands £370. Denon MD-0D7 cassette, mint £80. SME3009 improved silver wired £100. All ono. Tel: 01209 613 733 (Jul)

MARANTZ CD63 KI Signature, boxed and in mint condition as new £300. Kef Q55 floor standing speakers in vgc £275. Both 10 months old. Tel: 01797 253 442 (East Sussex) (Jul)

AUDIONOTE M1 Phono pre. excellent sound, mint condition, boxed £385. Rose RV235 valve pre, external PSU £275. Amcron DC300A power amp, £265. Philips CD104, cast transport, excellent condition £110. Tel: 01273 541 462 (Jul)

MISSION 752 Freedoms, black ash, immaculate condition, boxed £385. Nakamichi DR3, little use, mint condition, boxed £185. WANTED: Ittok LVIII, may consider mint LVII. Tel: 01604 765 924 after 7pm (Jul)

QUAD 33/405, immaculate, selection of leads, plugs, manual £255. SME 3009, LP12 board £45. Marantz SP50 DPL decoder and 'sphere' Technics rears, boxed, manual, immaculate £75. Offers? Tel: Al stair 01482 707 827 (Jul)

QUAD 22/ I x II £250, FM tuner £50 LW/MW/SW tuner £75. All in excellent condition. Quad 22/ 2 x II amps £450. Tel: 01286 881 744 (Jul)

KLIPSCH BELLE loudspeakers. Rare 104dB folded horn design between Klipschorn and LaScala 90.5 cm(h) x 76.5 cm(w) x 47.6 cm(d) with oiled oak cabinets and full grilles making them extremely elegant in addition to their shattering dynamics and outstanding imagery. Excellent condition, new £5000, sell £2200 ono Tel: 01929 480 435 eves (Jul)

BEARD AUDIO Systems P500 export valve preamplifier with 2 phono stages. Very good condition with original GEC's/Telefunken. £300 ono. Cable Talk 3 bi-wire speaker cable. 2-5m runs terminated with spades/banana plugs £35. Tel: 01929 480 435 eves (Jul)

MARANTZ CD12-DA12 CD player £1550. Nakamichi 1000 ZXL cassette player (serviced) £1050. Conrad Johnson PV10A preamp + MV55 power £1550. Teac 10" reel to reel Model X10 £265. Tel: Graham 0171 383 0677 (Jul)

EPOS ES11/Stand £250. Rega 3/Linn K5 £150. Naim 42.5/140 £400. Will swap Epos/Rega for Naim Hi-Cap. Tel: 01768 898 767 (Jul)

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TOWNSHEND ROCK Mk2, Rega RB300, rewired with van den Hul cable and Tiffany plugs, Stilton Audio Technica ATF5. Can demonstrate, perfect working order. Cost £860. Best offer secures. Tel: 01386 423 957 evenings (Jul)

QUAD ELECTROSTATIC Loudspeakers. 1973 'radiator style'. Extensive service late 1995. Black grill + trim. Demo with 33/303 available. £375. 0131 557 4438 (Aug)

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AUDIO RESEARCH LS7 pre-amp, mint condition, boxed plus manual. Sale due to upgrading. £1500 Tel: 01752 787 459 (Jul)

AUDIO SYNTHESIS DAX2 £1390 (£2200), Yamaha E390AV amp £125 (£250), B&W CC6 £140 (£230), Musical Fidelity X10D £80 (£120) Audioquest Midnight 3.5m £150 (£260) Audioquest Cobalt 3.5m £200 (£360) Tel: 01296 747 852 (Jul)

REVOX B150 INTEGRATED stereo amplifier 80-100w rms 6 inputs 5 outputs fluorescent function display. Excellent condition £375 Creek OBH12 remote controlled passive preamplifier including power supply mint boxed £95 Tel: 01736 360 367 (Jul)

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LOWTHER PM6 Acousta speakers £240. Luxman T88 tuner £80. Quad 33 pre amp £75. Marantz 20 band graphic equaliser £45. Thorens TD160B turntable, Formula 4 arm cartridge £130. Denon DCD 2560 CD player £240 vgc. Tel: 0181 681 1054 (Croydon) (Jul/I)

WANTED: NAIM late model Hi-Cap power supply and Nat 02 tuner Tel: 0181 977 2886 evenings (Jul/I)

MARTIN LOGAN SL3's mint, boxed and manuals £2500 ono. Jadis JP80 £4000 ono. Lyra Parnasus £650 ono. Upgrading. Tel: 01708 442 598. Mobile 0411 069 525. Work 01223 868 204 (Aug/I)

NAIM GEAR (new style) CDS £2200. Pre-Supercap 52 £2500. NAP250 £1000. NAT01 £900. LP12 Lingo Ekos Arkiv £1200. Nakamichi CR7 £1100. Heybrook Sextets £800. All mint. Tel: 01473 610 434 (evenings) (Aug/I)

AVONDALE APX2 superior Hycap psr New Aug 97 £275. Linn Klyde MC cartridge, low output, little use £175. Leak Troughline 3 stereo tuner Stereo 30 amp double sleeve £120 Tel: 01952 249 627 (Jul/I)

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NAIM NAC 82 preamp 1.5 years old £1400 ono. Acoustic Energy AE1s on dedicated stands, mint cond £600 ono. Quad 77 Carbon Int amp, boxed as new £400. Rotel RT950 BX tuner, mint boxed £150. DPA Renaissance CD player, mint, 1 year old £600 ono. Denon DAS 810 cassette deck (£300) 3 head £140 ono. Castle Severn mint, beech, £300. Tel: Jules 01792 280 061 (Jul/I)

ELECTROCOMPANET ECi/I 100wpc - 80 amps current (£2300) £1250 Rogers L53/5A + ABI subwoofer, few weeks old (£1250) £750. Orelle CM10T/DA180 Mk 2 (Colloms recommended) Silver Interconnect (£1400) £650 Records wanted. Tel: 01902 892 613 (Jul)

LEXICON DCI Processor THX/AC3/DTS fitted. LDD1 RF demodulator included £3000. Rel Strata 2 subwoofer £300. Pioneer CLD 925 Laserdisk player and 25 disks £495 Tel: Tom 0113 234 6111/0113 240 2043 (Jul/I)

NAKAMICHI RX300/RX202 £350 each ono. Awia 6900 C/deck £150. Poweramp NAD 902 new, £150. Russian valve amp, new, £500. Luxman receiver £150. Toshiba DD turntable/SME TT £200. Thorens 125 £125. JBL 4410 £500. Denon 610 c/deck £120. Pioneer A400 amp £150. Tel: 01494 721 274 (Amersham Bucks) (Jul/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X10D valve CD buffer, boxed, few hours use £60. Pickering XLZ/3500E hybrid cartridge unused £30. Pioneer PL514 turntable/Shure M75EJ £25 Tel: Steve 01429 867 432 (Hartlepool Teeside) (Jul/I)

ATC SCM50A Active speakers, walnut £2750. Audio Research LS15 preamp with remote £2150. Marantz CD94 with Bitstream processor upgrade and separate power supply £595. Excellent, boxes and hand books Tel: 0115 924 2075 (Nottingham) (Jul/I)

NAIM SPEAKERS black new drivers fitted upgraded, vgc £1000 ono. Buyer collects Tel: Alistair 0141 942 8415 (Glasgow) (Jul/I)

PRIMARE 302 CD Celestion 300 spks. NAD 1000 Preamp NAD 902 power x2. NAD 502 CD. Audio Alchemy V10 DAC & Power Station 2 + Transmission interface. Tannoy 611 spks. Isoplat Platform x2. BBE Restoration system. Franckenstein. All above immaculate and at half price. Tel: 01604 766 124 (Aug)

ARCOM ALPHA 9 & 9P biamp combo £600. (£900 new) 3 months use. Musical Fidelity X10D line stage £60 Tel: Andy 0181 845 2126 or 0956 542 314 (Jul)

LINN INDEX II loudspeakers with matching Ku-Stone stands. Excellent condition £195. All offers considered Tel: 0181 870 7372 (Jul/I)

PHONO STAGES; Burmester 838 (£1500 new!) £300 Riverside P2 (valve) £125 Thorens TD124, Martin Bastin plinth (£300) F&S psu (£100), FR64S £500 Voyd Valdi, no platter/lid £100. Audio Synthesis Transcend transport (£1395) £400 Cambridge Audio CD4/Dacmagic 2 £120 Meridian 203 DAC £150 Parasound DAC-1100HDCD (£1000) £400 Tel: 0181 672 4319 (Jul/I)

AIR TIGHT ATMI valve poweramp £900. ATM2 & ATM3 Stereophile recommended Class A. Speakers:- Celestion 7000 ribbons £350, Helius Syrius II (95dB sensitivity £2400) £800. Rotel RL915 (MS Pageant design, best buy Hi-Fi Choice £215) £50 VdH Revelation speaker cable 2m pair £200 Tel: 0181 672 4319 (Jul/I)

GAMMA SYSTEM Era preamp (£1000) £200 Space power/integrated (£3500) £800. Epoch speakers (Focal drive units £1500) £400; all 3 £1300. NAD 6220 cassette deck (£200) £30 Nottingham Analogue Tracer 3 cartridge (£410) £140 Tel: 0181 672 4319 (Jul/I)

KLIPSCH HERESY 2 speakers (new) £450 Quad 77 amplifier (new) £400. Alphason Sonata turntable & HR100mcs arm £400. Teac P30 transport (new) £1600. Epos ES11 & stands £300 Tel: 01952 502 097 (Telford) (Jul/I)

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ALPHASON DELTA arm Cardas wired £100 Ariston RD90 superior turntable unused still boxed £225. Dali 104MS speakers £250 or W.H.Y. Tel: 01592 265 096 (Scotland) (Jul/I)

TARGET HI-FI unit. Smoked glass stand with 7 shelves. As good as new £185. All offers considered Tel: 0181 870 7372 (Jul/I)

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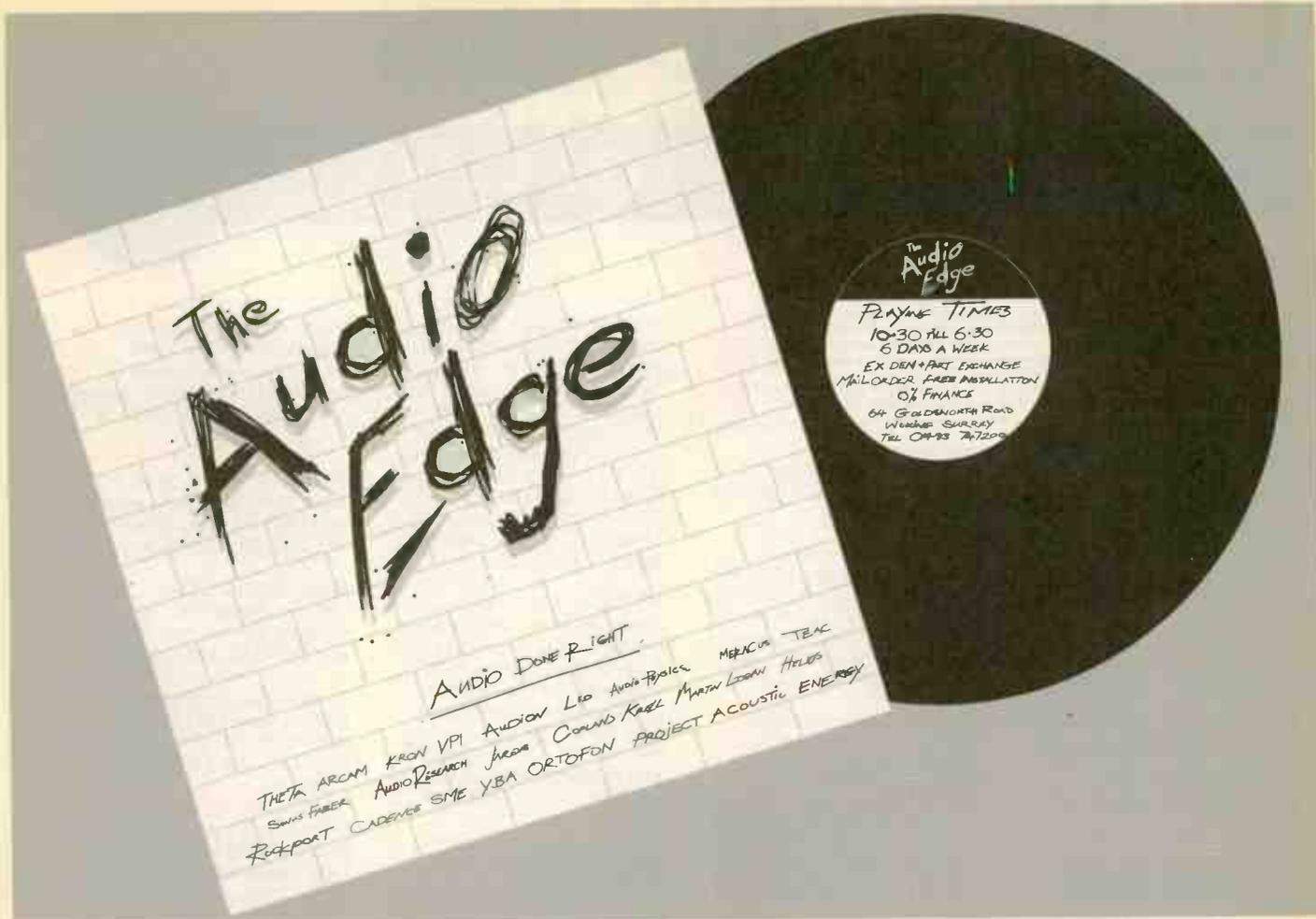
LEAK STEREO 20 rebuilt mint condition boxed £275. Magnaplanar SMGAs mint boxed £345. Cyrus 2 + psx mint boxed 1989 £300. Cyrus PCMI CD, boxed mint £150 Cambridge A100 poweramp mint boxed £150. Cyrus 737 Freedoms, mint £150. Cambridge A100 pwr amp, mint, boxed £145. Tel: 0141 571 4947 or 0411 756 829 (Glasgow) (Jul/I)

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