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S-30



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It's easy for us to say "our products are ideal for Home Cinema". Let's face it, almost all hi-fi and loudspeaker companies are doing exactly that.

So don't just take our word for it - see what the critics think. It seems that when Canon loudspeakers are tested for Home Cinema qualities, the accolades have come tumbling, in the form of Recommendations, Awards and Best Buys.

In fact, the earliest Home Cinema award we received was way back in 1992, with What Video praising our first model, the S-50, for its audio/visual applications.

"That's not surprising," you may say. "After all, the Canons give you a much wider spread of sound than box loudspeakers, of course they work better than boxes for surround sound".

And you'd be absolutely right. The wider listening area that Canon offers for home hi-fi, along with magnetic shielding on most models, is ideal for Home Cinema.

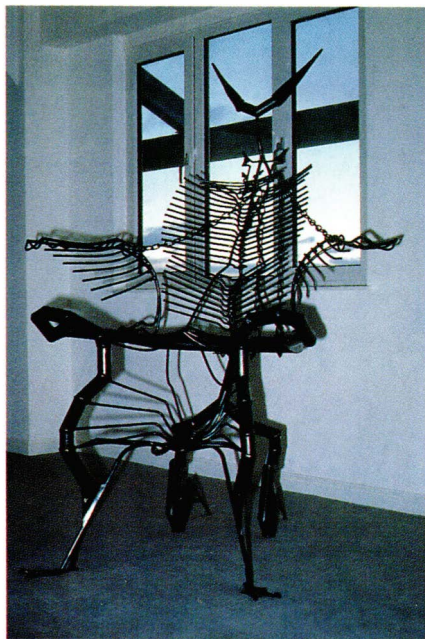
So when putting together your front room theatre, surround yourself with the range of winners from Canon.

Canon
WIDE
DISPERSION
LOUDSPEAKERS

Editor's Chair

Stan Vincent heralds a new dawn for esteemed hi-fi manufacturers Quad, and reflects on Rickie Lee Jones.

THIS MONTH'S CHAIR: BEASTY THRONE © ARCANDEL (0171) 278 5775



Takeovers and acquisitions are the stuff of modern business, but a recent deal in the hi-fi industry deserves more than a passing mention in the *Financial Times*. On 25 September 1995, that doyen of old-school British hi-fi, Quad Electroacoustics, finally surrendered its independent status after 59 years of trading. The company has joined Mission, Cyrus, Wharfedale International, pro-speaker manufacturer Fane Acoustics and drum purveyor Premier Percussion within the Verity Group plc. Former Managing Director of Quad, Ross Walker, will remain as Chief Executive.

According to Walker, Quad had not been making a profit prior to the deal. "I'd been looking for a suitable partner for some time. The people at Verity seem to have been doing some very good things in recent years. There is an inevitable logic about the takeover."

One of the key reasons for this £2.7 million sale appears to have been the spiralling cost of research and development, and the constant contraction of product lifecycles. "Increasingly, as a company the size of Quad, we would have had to limit our horizons," opines Walker. "Provided that there is a market for

conventional amplifiers one can carry on, but you're not going to be able to move significantly into the sort of products that I suspect will be demanded in future. If you look at our own R&D department it has grown from four people in 1989 to 12 today, of which five are full-time software engineers. If you want intelligent product in future, you'll have to be big, to a very large extent."

It's true that the days are long gone when a mainstay product could run and run with only minor tweaks, and the economies of scale available within the £40m-turnover Verity Group will doubtless invest the Quad marque with the R&D power manifest in the Cyrus electronics range, for example. That said, however, Quad's classic ESL63 electrostatic loudspeakers will remain in production, alongside the 77 series electronics product (CD player reviewed in *Sessions*, p 16 onwards). It seems the 66 series will be discontinued in the medium term, but the company has reaffirmed its commitment to service Quad products from yesterday — "we have a reputation to keep up, and we are actually hoping to improve upon our past performance," says Walker.

Like other Verity companies, Quad will continue to trade separately and develop its own products. "We regard our product range as complementary to the Cyrus range. Equally, competition within the group is very healthy. There must be a small amount of overlap, but that is not seen as a problem. There will obviously be cross-fertilisation of R&D strength, but it's very important to retain clear brand identities. The people involved in designing Quad products have to think, eat and sleep Quad."

"Naturally, some technology can be drawn from other parts of the group. Given that we are all using chips, we might as well get together to work out which are the good ones and which are the bad ones, that sort of thing. It's what I call good, common-sense logic."

This outbreak of corporate reshuffling doesn't mark the beginning of the end for hi-fi, but it is yet another indicator of how quickly fat is being trimmed from the hi-fi industry. Time is almost up for the manufacturers and dealers who have failed to keep an eye on the real world outside hi-fi's clubby confines; who

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF HI-FI CHOICE

- ▶ Hi-Fi Choice has been testing hi-fi since 1975.
- ▶ Collectively, our reviewers and columnists notch up over a century of listening to hi-fi.
- ▶ Our hi-fi group tests are the most thorough in the business.
- ▶ Our listening tests are conducted under strict blind conditions, using an experienced panel drawn from the hi-fi industry.
- ▶ No other hi-fi magazine in the world regularly performs blind listening tests.
- ▶ We assess every facet of a product's performance – sound, build and measurement.
- ▶ We can predict how individual components will perform in a multitude of systems.
- ▶ Best Buy products are of significantly greater value than alternatives in the same price band.
- ▶ Recommended products offer a superb performance, if not sufficiently remarkable to earn a Best Buy citation.
- ▶ We look forward to the future of high-quality audio, and the ultimate fusion of images and sound.



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have failed to become market-driven and customer-oriented; who have seen fit to rest on laurels that long since started to wilt. By selling to Verity, Quad is only ensuring success for the brand in future. How many others will act with equal aplomb?

Hello London...

Rickie Lee Jones hit town in the middle of October, and thanks to a friend with good connections, my young lady and I were lucky enough to get excellent seats. Some brief observations:

■ a full-on PA system is all very well, but not when it's connected to a human swept signal generator like Ms Jones.

■ it's a bad sign when Rickie Lee takes off her little tea-cosy hat, and a guy in the audience is heard to proclaim, "Wow, her hair is really well conditioned."

■ if you're a critically-acclaimed female singer-songwriter accompanying yourself on guitar, decide before you go on stage whether you will sit with your legs apart, crossed, or in the lotus position. Constant shuffling makes the audience uneasy.

■ when a solo vocalist affects the consonantless delivery of the character Fenster in the film *Usual Suspects*, it is helpful if lyrics sheets are issued along with the tickets.

Naturally, an excellent night was had by all. Worth lots of anyone's Easy Money... ▲

HI-FI CHOICE

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Update

MALCOLM STEWARD WADES THROUGH THE LATEST HI-FI — AT LEAST THAT'S HIS EXCUSE FOR THE WET SUIT AND GALOSHES



Ever ready Technics

An audiophile pre/power combination that claims to give high-end performance at an affordable price — that's the £800 *SU-C1000/SE-A1000* from Technics.

The *SU-C1000* preamp has the usual tone controls and remote control, but its innards break the mould by running on batteries. A rechargeable NiCad gives up to fifteen hours' worth of mains-independent performance, but mains power is used while recharging takes place. As befits an audiophile design, a switchable MM/MC phono stage is offered.

The partnering *SE-A1000* power amplifier (equipped with a completely separate power supply unit) is a MOSFET Class AA design that delivers 70 Watts into eight Ohms, rising to 120 Watts into four Ohms. It can drive two sets of loudspeakers, offers a headphone socket, and sports a natty '70s retro-looking fascia panel dominated by illuminated power-output meters.

Two other new amplifiers are the £499.95 *SU-A900D* and the £399.95 *SU-A800D*. No batteries here, but both designs use Technics's Virtual Battery Operation circuitry to distance their audio stages from the vagaries of the mains. ☎ (0990) 357357.

NiCads ahoy with Technics's rechargeable-batteried *SU-C1000* preamp.



SRFS and Cimflex make cables Talk.

Another flexible friend

Cable Talk has added a to its range a new speaker cable that boasts SRFS and Cimflex. *Talk 4* uses higher purity copper than the popular budget cable, *Talk 3*, and has its negative conductor directioned, in opposition to the positive lead to improve signal flow: hence the SRFS acronym — Signal Return and Flow System.

Cimflex, the custom insulation used to sheath the conductors, is claimed to be a significant step forward in materials technology. It is chemically inert, so doesn't bleed into the conductors and thereby reduce purity when the cable is produced.

Talk 4 costs a mere £4.25 per metre, with the bi-wire version coming in at £8.50 per metre. ☎ (01252) 373434

In brief

Increased production has allowed Canon to cut the price of its *SV-15* wide dispersion loudspeakers to £99.95 (black) and £109.95 (white). ☎ (0800) 616417.

Naim Audio has issued two new CDs. The first features The Allegri Quartet in the first recording of Bruch's *String Quartet in A Minor*, while the second has Iona Brown and the NCO playing Beethoven, Tippett and Greig in Salisbury Cathedral. ☎ (01722) 332266.



The Chameleon *Ruby* (above) is a new 200Wpc power amplifier hailing from the professional audio world, that claims to be unconditionally stable with even the most difficult loudspeaker loads. Details from distributors Michael Stevens and Partners. ☎ (0181) 460 7299.

The most expensive amplifier package currently in production anywhere in the world — Dynaudio's *Arbiter* battery-powered preamp and 800W monoblocks — will be demonstrated in Birmingham and Glasgow in the week commencing 20 November. For details of these free(!) opportunities to experience what its makers claim to be the best amp in the world, contact Phil Parker at Music Matters Solihull on ☎ 0121-742 0254, or Stuart Bailey at WM Cooper Music Room Glasgow on ☎ 0141-332 5012. And the price of the amplifier? A cool £130,000.

Kronos Distribution has introduced a new range of interconnect cables called *Konnekt*. Priced at £49, £99, and £199 respectively, the *Konnekt 1, 2* and *3* can be purchased on a 14-day home trial basis. ☎ (01868) 748632. ▶▶

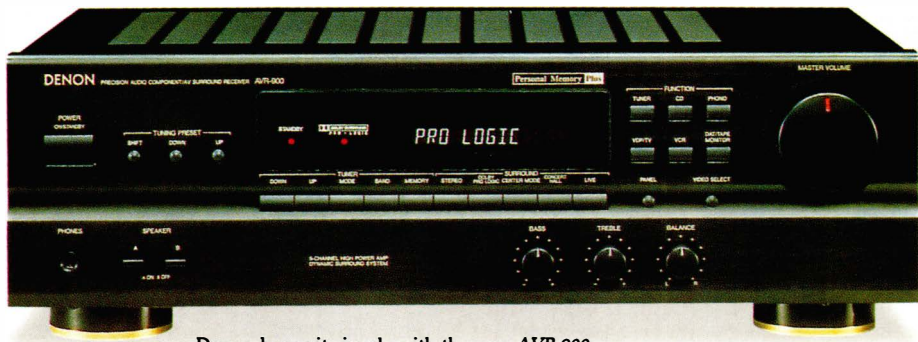
M-S makes sweeter music

Mordaunt-Short has upgraded the top two models in its Music Series range. Like the three recently revamped budget models, the £450 *MS40i* and £550 *MS50i* now sport gold anodised aluminium tweeters, in addition to new, moulded cone-and-surround assemblies for their midrange drivers; revised, braced cabinets; optimised magnet systems; and hard-wired minimalist crossovers. Fully automated computer test procedures have been introduced at each stage of manufacturing for optimum product reliability and consistency.

Mordaunt-Short claim better treble resolution and detail, more accurate midrange, tighter bass and gains in dynamics and sensitivity (both models are rated at 90dB). Two finishes are available — Rosewood or Black Ash. ☎ (01705) 407722 or e-mail 100144.1407@compuserve.com.



Mordaunt-Short Music Series musters much more music.



Denon keeps it simple with the new AVR-900.

Arion carry on glowing

Northern Ireland's Arion Acoustics continues to expand its range of valve amplifiers — all of which have been recently upgraded to Mark 2 status — with *Nemesis*, its first single-ended triode design. This £2,999 pure Class A power amplifier is rated at 18Wpc and comes as a two-box package, thus separating the power supply.

Also new is the *Adonis*, a £495 self-build line-level integrated. Arion claims that this is one of the easiest kits to build, but offers ready-built amps for the constructionally challenged.

Arion also has a new range of silver-alloy interconnect and speaker cables and a mains filter. Interconnect prices range from £75 to £225, while speaker cable prices go from £15 to £50 per metre. The 1100W Titan mains filter costs £150. ☎ (01868) 748632

Denon goes back to basics

Denon's engineers have discarded unnecessary features to deliver the new AVR-900 Pro Logic receiver at £349.99. This entry-level model nonetheless provides a useful range of facilities. These start with three discrete 60 Watt power amplifiers handling the front channels, and two 15 Watt modules for the rears. There are two video and three audio inputs (CD, Tape, Phono) along with pre-out connections for the centre channel and an active subwoofer. The AVR-900 also has switching for two sets of front speakers.

Its tuner section has forty presets, with automatic station finding and programming. Ease-of-use niceties include a colour-and-button-shape-coded remote control, and a Personal Memory Plus facility that memorises surround modes and settings for each input. ☎ (01753) 888447

Revelations revealed

"Easy to site in all but the most intolerant of listening conditions while providing outstanding performance." This glowing sobriquet is offered by the manufacturers of the RMS *Revelation I* (£1,300) and *II* (£1,800) loudspeakers. While acknowledging that there are obvious limits to everything, their designer reckons that these speakers will allow a developing system's potential to be revealed without embarrassment.

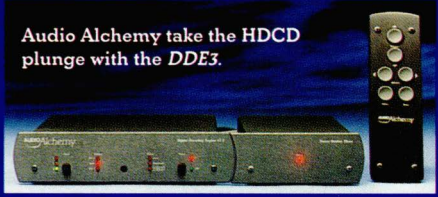
Both models are built from steel, aluminium and solid-wood tops in a variety of finishes. They feature Focal tweeters, bass drivers with 'big' magnets, Michell plugs and silver wiring. External crossovers facilitate bi- or tri-wiring, multi-amplification or active operation. ☎ (01246) 200211



RMS prove that *Revelations* isn't just a bad TV show.

Small but perfectly formed

Audio Alchemy take the HDCD plunge with the *DDE3*.



Audio Alchemy's *Digital Decoding Engine v3.00* is the latest iteration of the company's pocket-sized, high-performance DAC. Along with its Analog Devices 20-bit DAC chips it uses a Pacific Microsonics HDCD filter, which is said to improve performance with regular CDs as well as with the high-definition variety.

This chip, with its ability to provide digital attenuation, also means that the *DDE3* can be remote controlled when you add the optional *RW-1* handset and Intel 87C51 microprocessor. As well as allowing you to select the desired input and control volume levels, these additions also provide access to an improved performance mode in the HDCD filter.

The price of a basic *DDE3* with a *Power Station Four* power supply is £699.95. With the higher specification *Power Station Three* the unit costs £899.95. ☎ (01494) 441736

Audiolab goes every which way

No tone controls on Audiolab's latest integrated.



Microprocessor-controlled versatility is a key feature of Audiolab's new 8000S amplifier. It's designed to work either as a straightforward 60Wpc integrated, or in one of three, front-panel-switched pre/power amplifier modes.

In pre/power mode, the power amplifier section remains internally connected to the preamplifier stage but the preamplifier outputs are operational, allowing you to drive a second power amplifier or an active subwoofer. In pre mode, all signals to and from the power amplifier are disconnected, while in pre-power AV mode both the preamplifier and power amplifier sections operate but do so completely independently.

Other features of this £650 line-level device include a headphone output which automatically mutes all other outputs, and remote control. ☎ (01480) 52521



ATC speaks out for its new SCA 2 preamp.

Pre at last!

Loudspeaker manufacturer ATC has launched the SCA 2 preamplifier, specifically to partner its active loudspeakers. The company also recommends the unit for use with any high-quality power amplifier. It costs £1,750 and a remote control option is available for an additional £275. The remote operates all the pre-amplifier functions and should also assume control over the major features of most European CD players.

Shunning ICs, the SCA 2 has a fully discrete signal path, using bipolar transistors and FETs, and provides two balanced and six unbalanced input connections. All inputs and outputs, including the tape loop, are fully buffered. Balanced output allows the preamplifier to drive interconnect cables up to fifty metres long. A phono input can be supplied to special order. ☎ (01285) 760561

Chord's new cable sings the Siren song.

Chord in the act

The Chord Company asks that you don't judge its new cable by the price tag, saying that the Siren interconnect offers better performance and construction than its £65 ticket suggests.

This cable uses silver-plated OFC conductors in an air-foam dielectric that has a lower capacitance than Teflon. A lapped silver screen provides high rejection of interference, and the purple-sheathed interconnect cable is terminated with Chord Company's gold-plated, black-chrome phono plugs.

The company's original interconnect, the *Chrysalis*, has been upgraded, but the price stays the same at £29.99. ☎ (01722) 331674

ICT for you and me

GLL, aka Goodmans Loudspeakers, has launched the first hi-fi loudspeakers to use its ICT Inductive Coupling Technology. This driver design, in which the tweeter dome sits within the bass unit's voice coil and is driven solely by magnetic flux, has only appeared before in GLL's car speakers and the Arena home cinema series.

The new Imagio range consists of four models, each using a 165mm polymer-cone bass/mid driver with a 25mm aluminium dome ICT tweeter. The £169.95 *IC100* bookshelf model and the £299.95 *IC110*, £419.95 *IC120* and £529.95 *IC130* floor-standers are all bass reflex designs; the three floor-standers are magnetically shielded. Cabinet finishes include Black Ash and Rosewood in tree-friendly vinyl veneers.

☎ (01705) 492777



ICT — speakers with personality.

Meridian's AC-3 soother

Bought any AC-3 Laserdiscs from the States recently? Slightly depressed that there are no LaserDisc players with AC-3 decoders built in? Well, Meridian has the answer to your prayers, in the shape of the 519 Laserdisc AC-3 Demodulator. This converts an RF input into an SP/DIF output, and includes a proprietary filter to de-jitter the signal coming from the LD player. All of this can be yours for the reasonable sum of £425.

Meridian is also offering '5.1' processing on its 565 DSP Surround Sound processor (reviewed HFC 140). This won't be a standard fitment, but any 565, including existing models, can be upgraded for approximately £475. This entails the fitting of an additional 100MHz DSP processor and a new EPROM carrying Meridian's in-house-designed DSP programs. An AC-3 equipped 565 will cost around £2,470. ☎ (01480) 52144

In brief

Audio! Audio! is a new book by Jonathan Hill detailing over 850 classic British amplifiers built between the '40s and early '70s. It costs £12.50 (including p&p) from Sunrise Press. ☎ (01398) 331532.

Origin Live has updated its *OL2* floor-stander. A new bass driver and a wider cabinet bring the £684 speaker's sensitivity up from 87dB to 90dB. ☎ (01703) 442183.

The *AE100* is a £199.95 compact speaker that is claimed by Acoustic Energy to embody many of the qualities inherent in its more costly *AE1* miniature. ☎ (01285) 654432.

Hand-built and sold direct, Titan Loudspeakers' £699 *Super Mini* and £825 *Super Midi* boast cone speeds and attack "in excess of the speed of sound." They also promise bass down to 27Hz. ☎ (01702) 206870.

The revolutionary *Eco Charger* can recharge NiCads and extend the life of disposable alkaline cells, according to manufacturers Saitek. It works with all popular battery sizes, and recharges up to four cells at a time. ☎ (0181) 577 1700.

The Scottish Hi-Fi Exhibition will be held at the Swallow Royal Scot Hotel, Edinburgh from 2 - 6 November 1995.

☎ (0131) 556 7901

Secondhand hi-fi alert:

Tooting Police are looking for the murderer or murderers of 46-year-old Battersea resident Ayodele Odamtten. They haven't established a motive for his brutal killing, which took place between 27 July and 3 August 1995, but know that several hi-fi components were removed from his flat. None of these have been recovered.

The police are therefore keen to hear from anyone who knows the whereabouts of any of the following: Technics *SL-PG200A* CD player, serial number VU1CA01103; Technics *SU-VX600* amplifier, serial number OF2CA6143; Denon *TL-260L* tuner, serial number 0004519837; Arcam loudspeakers, serial number ALS000205; Samsung *VI-1560* VCR, serial number 023862KMB 00464. There's a Community Action Trust reward of £5,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the murderers, so be vigilant. ☎ Tooting Police (0181) 672 9922 or Freefone Crimestoppers (0800) 555 111.



Tastier than Ferrero Rocher?

Ideal for the Ambassador's parties

Launched as the 'ultimate audiophile furniture system', Soundstyle's Select range consists of three-, four- and five-shelf equipment tables in six 'luxurious' colours — Prima Black, Vivo Reed, Misura Green, Senza Blue, Ossia White and Sempra Brown.

The stands are supported by adjustable gold-finished base cones, and there's a choice of shelf heights. The shelves, naturally, are colour co-ordinated. The starting price for harmonising hi-fi and your home's decor is £210. ☎ (01284) 701101

IF WE NEED MORE MONEY WE WON'T BUILD MORE SPEAKERS. WE'LL RAISE OUR PRICES.

Rumour has it there are companies which turn out a hundred thousand speakers a month. For any truth-loving Dane, this is a worst case scenario. After all, the 14 people who build our cabinets are qualified master carpenters. The last time these guys heard the word assembly line was at school.

In our workshop you won't find machines spitting out cabinets like Japanese popcorn (bleah!). Instead, a true craftsman, Hugo Nielsen, saws and cuts, sands and veneers for three days on just one Confidence 3 (the one our company raccoon Knudsen is walking away from in the pic). And stout chief tester Erik "The Ear" Nielsen checks the legendary oversized voice-coils, our unique

MSP cone material and the minimization of phase

problems as well as our famous superfast Esotar tweeters (whose backwards-radiated energy is completely absorbed for echo-free sound reproduction). Each speaker is controlled 86 times before it's officially declared fit for sale.

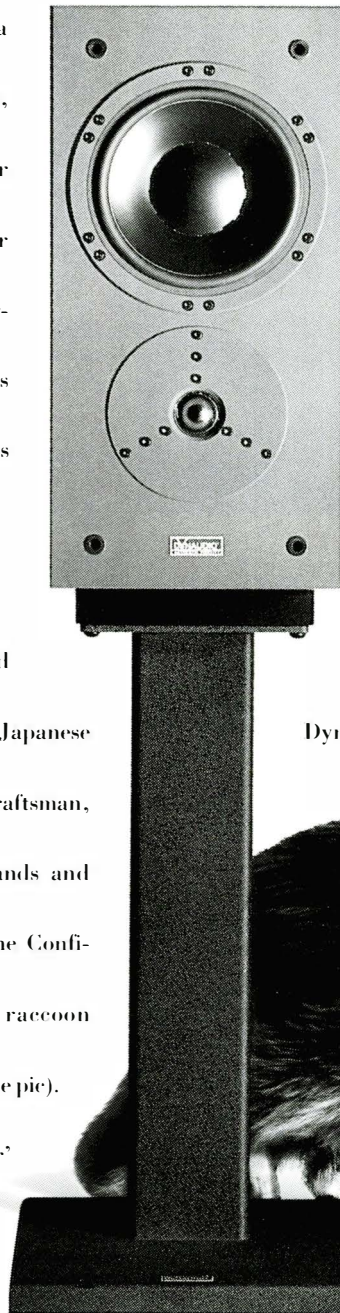
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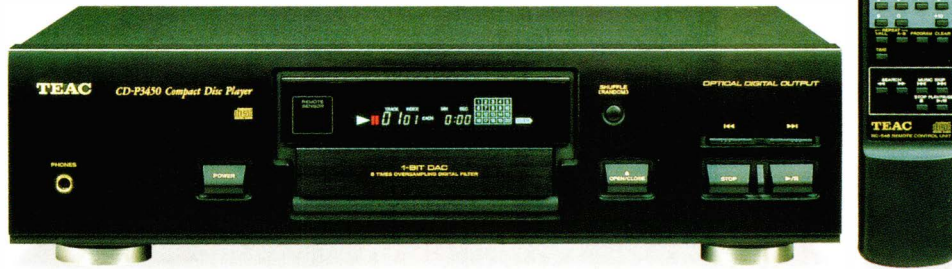
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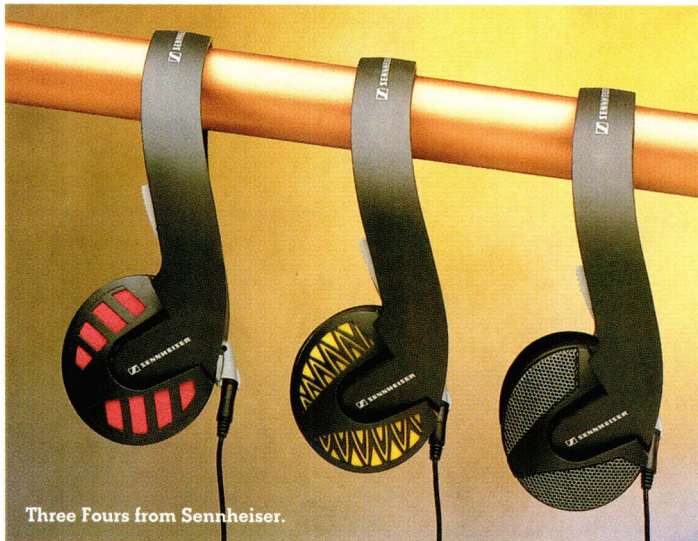
DANES DON'T LIE.™

TEAC's new two-bit, one-bit CD-P3450.



TEAC's bit on the side

TEAC has a new single-bit CD player for budget conscious buyers. The £179 CD-P3450 comes with full remote control and more than just the usual accoutrements and programming facilities expected in a low-price player. It provides program edit, tape-record edit, an auto-space function and three-way repeat. The player also features a centre-mounted transport mechanism, a headphone jack and even a Toslink optical digital output for DAC upgrades or digital recording. ☎ (01923) 819630.



Three Fours from Sennheiser.

Sennheiser's new Expressions

Sennheiser has replaced its popular, middle-market Three Series headphones with the new Four Series 'Expression' range. Each of the three new models features self-adjusting cardanic headbands, neodymium iron magnets and PC-OCC carbon-fibre-reinforced cables with modular connectors.

The redesigned diaphragm and magnet assemblies are said to provide a more neutral response than their predecessors, and the softer washable and replaceable ear pads make the 'phones more comfortable to wear.

The range starts with the £49.95 HD-455. The £64.95 HD-465 is built to the same specification but uses copper-clad alloy wire drivers for improved transient response. The £74.95 HD-475 uses also selected CCAW drivers, this time with Sennheiser's patented DuoFoil diaphragms, which give reduced distortion and enhanced bass extension. ☎ (01628) 850811.

Wogers Wwelease Walves

Rogers, which celebrates fifty years of trading in 1998, has decided to revisit its roots. Out of this re-birthing exercise, two new valve amplifiers have emerged.

Both are integrated designs. The entry level E20a is a 20Wpc push-pull Class A using 6L6G pentodes. It offers a moving magnet phono stage and five line-level inputs. The E40a is a 40Wpc parallel push-pull design with an identical input line-up. Both have been designed to be simple yet effectively powerful, and use short signal paths to retain signal integrity and dynamics. Rogers reckons they'll be content driving speaker with sensitivities of 86dB (E20a) and 83dB (E40a). Prices to be announced. ☎ (0181) 640 2172.

Linn's McSurround Sound

Linn's customers can look forward to the advent of a complete AV system from the Scottish company. Linn currently has a full range of loudspeakers and a surround-sound processor under development. The first arrival are the new AV5140 front-channel loudspeakers.

Specifically optimised for AV use, this magnetically-shielded floor-stander uses a tapered cabinet, with a minimum of parallel internal faces to reduce coloration. Its eight-inch bass driver (loaded with front and rear aluminium ports) has been designed to exploit the extended bass found in film soundtracks. Priced at £1,495 per pair, the AV5140 comes in either black or American Cherry finishes. ☎ (0500) 888 909.

RAM reduces Revolver

Competition in the budget loudspeaker market looks set to grow even fiercer, with RAM announcing price cuts for two of its popular Revolver models, which were only introduced last year. The floor-standing Purdey, complete with plinth and isolation cones, drops from £249.99 to £199.99, while the £149.95 Colt goes down to £139.99. The Beretta stays at £99.99.

The range is also set to expand with three new upmarket models — two large floor-standers and a quality stand-mount, all presumably with armoury-approved names — promised before the year is out. ☎ (0161) 973 0505.

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Harrogate HiFi Centre,
15 Commercial St, Harrogate,
01423-504274

HiFi Experience, 17 Coniscliffe
Rd, Darlington,
01325-481418

Holburn HiFi, 441 Holburn St,
Aberdeen, 01224-585713

Music Matters, 351 Hagley Rd,
Edgbaston, Birmingham,
0121-4292811

Music Matters, 93-95 Hobs
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Music Matters, 7 Lower St,
Stourbridge, 01384-444184

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34 Wellington Quay, Dublin,
Ireland, 00 3531 67 19 666

The Music Room, 98 Bath St,
Glasgow, 0141-3325012

Worthing Audio, 20 Teville Gate
Precinct, West Sussex,
01903-212133

W.M. Coupar, 8-12 Wellmeadow,
Blairgowrie,
01250-872436

W.M. Coupar, 33 Reform St.
Dundee, 01382-229588

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A uniquely designed transparent friction sheet placed between the cassette hub and casing allows smoother tape rotation. This embossed sheet reduces rotation torque to one quarter of standard tapes and shows a significant improvement in wow and flutter.

The STUDIO IV metal cassette has a vast headroom for perfect compressionless recording. Making this tape the ideal choice for master recording quality.

Record on the new 353 tape and hear the difference.
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353 tape has been designed to convey the superior dynamics and clarity of digital sound from analogue tape.

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Made possible by the latest advances in resin moulding technology, the tape support surface is totally free from curvature. Together with precision engineered vertical guide pins, the rock steady tape path ensures accurate azimuth which greatly reduces phase differences between left and right signals.

Every cassette may look the same from the outside. But it's the performance inside that counts. Compare 353 with your usual brand of tape and discover the advantage for yourself. 353. Advanced audio and video cassettes.



353 The advantage

Cumberland ho!

In September the first Sound & Vision wowed Central London. Alan took his Biro; Jason took his Box Brownie.

Through the Sound and Vision Show at London's Cumberland Hotel was the first of its kind, dogged by heavy rainfall and pitched directly against the multimedia Live 95 show, it was nevertheless the first UK showcase for a wide range of new products.

In the basement Arcam was showing off its new *Xeta 2* home cinema processor/amp and *Alpha Plus* range of amplifiers, CD player and tuner, while Yamaha was busy with AV demonstrations. But the biggest surprise of the show must have been Roksan's everything-but-the-kitchen-sink product launches. The most important of these were the CD transports and DACs, the Roksan *One* speaker, the *Xerxes 10* turntable, a subwoofer for the *Ojan 3* and a new turntable power supply, but I can also remember seeing a new phono stage.

If the sound levels were anything to go by, there was a fair degree of bloodshed in Naim's AV dem room, where the new £1,600 *NA AV1* was doing its stuff. Naim was also displaying its new £1,997 front-loading *CD2* CD player, plus a remote-control version of the *Nait 3* integrated amp and slimline *NAC 92* preamp in the UK for the first time.

Mana Acoustics was clearly not playing by the audiophile rules. Unlike other companies, which were all showing off the latest hi-tech systems, Mana set its tables the task of holding up a Linn turntable, Naim amps and a pair of elderly Linn Isobarik speakers – the sort of system that would have been considered old-fashioned five years ago. The difference between then and now was that each component was underpinned by the sort of ironwork that would make Isambard Kingdom Brunel feel proud.

In Audiolab's room the display panels were offset by a range of Lego toys built by Audiolab mainman Philip Swift, who was also showing a line-only integrated amp with remote control, the *8000S*. This looks almost identical to the *8000Q* preamp and costs only slightly more than the *8000A* (see Update for details).

It seems likely that Meridian Audio's engineers lost a great deal of sleep over the summer months, working hard to turn out a new 20-

bit version of the popular 508 CD player, the *541* analogue surround processor for those whose wallets don't quite stretch to Meridian's digital surround system, and the new *518* digital audio processor. The latter took a lot of people by surprise, turning an already very good *500/563* combo into what is arguably one of the finest examples of digital audio technology around. The *518* acts as a jitter-buster, resolution enhancer, mastering processor, analogue preamp and even a control interface for multimedia sound cards.

Mission's room was also flushed with new electronics – its Cyrus pre-power combination was joined by the Cyrus *AVmaster*, which combines Dolby Pro-Logic decoder, centre channel speaker, 70W power amplifier and a subwoofer in a single, TV-supporting, unit.

Linn has been busy too. There was *Intersekt*, the advanced multi-room controller for its sophisticated *Knekt* system, but Linn also pulled an AV special out of its hat. Called the *AV 51* system and set to be launched in 1996, first out of the starting gates will be the *AV 5140* front channel speakers, which combine B&O-like design with enough bass for kickin' home cinema. Future *AV 51* products include centre, rear and subwoofering speakers and even an AV processor. All this new gear should go well with the company's new agency – German Loewe TVs.

As I'm sure you've noticed, no hi-fi show is complete without a plethora of new loudspeakers. This year, it was the turn of B&W and Sequence to champion the cause. B&W had a corridor of speakers on display, and was proudly showing off its new 600 series (see Sessions, p16). B&W was not content with just speakers though, as the new range of *Aura* CD player,

integrated and pre-power amplifiers attests.

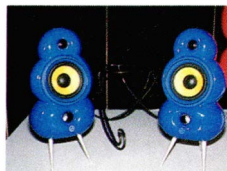
Bass hounds were well-catered for, thanks to REL's £350 *Q-Bass* active sub-bass system. This small, front-firing active box is almost as heavy and as stunning as the company's well-loved *Strata* sub, but shaves a generous £150 off the price.

May Audio Marketing is getting frisky with panel-esque *Sequence* speakers. It introduced three models – the 200 at £200, the 300 at £250 and the 400 at £330. There is also a flat £300 subwoofer, the *SW12*. Acoustic Energy was showing off two new products, one cheaper than any AE speaker before and one more expensive. At the low end, the new £200 *AE100* is a budget miniature looking for all the world like a

scaled-down *AE1* but without the metal cone bass unit and exotic cabinetry. In another room stood a huge pair of the new £5,000 *AE5* floorstanding multiway speakers. These tall, thin, piano black models were fed from a Wadia CD through Gryphon amplification.

Even in the huge speaker market, few come as big or as powerful as the massive (and active) *ATC SCM200As*, being controlled by the new *SCA 2* preamplifier. For huge you might as well read expensive, and on the expensive side we saw the welcome return of

Ensemble. The company now offers a full range of components, spanning the *Dichrono* CD drive and DAC/preamp, *Evocco* amplifier and *PA-1* speakers. Ensemble distributor PM Components had a pair of superb-looking 211-based monoblocks, integrated amps and preamps on



Above: Kevin Scott with the Air Partner Statesmen; left the Townshend Rock Reference Master and Blue Room Mini Pods; below left XTC electronics from Oreille.

show. These were comparatively inexpensive but were not playing, so only time will tell...

Hollow-state technology (valves) was

being championed by Absolute Sounds, Audio Innovations and Art Audio. The latter had two new pre-amps: a high-end modular design and a budget model. Art was also showing modifications to its power amps and the final versions of its modular speaker system. Audio Innovations, on the other hand, was impressing many with its new Alto CD player, used with the Air Partner Statesmen horn speakers.

In the Absolute Sounds valve room a prototype of the Copland HDCD-equipped CD player played through Audio Research and Copland equipment to a pair of Sonus Faber speakers. While its solid-state room housed the new 'budget' Krell *KPS30i* CD player at £5,490, and the £628 Sonus Faber *Concertino* speaker.

Sound and Vision was largely a success, and had some first-rate support from the specialist hi-fi industry and its supporters. Bad luck if you missed out.



Ear Waxings

A month in the life of **Jason Kennedy** — a non-stop social whirl of hi-fi shows, shallots, and a rather tasty valve amplifier . . .

September was a frantic month: hi-fi shows, hi-fi shows and more hi-fi shows. The Ramada show was a bit of a tube frenzy, with a fair selection of foreign exotica that's unlikely to see the light of distribution over here; but at least it provided a bit of variety for us showgoers. Among the phalanx of German companies was one known as Greenwall, which produces a selection of horn hybrids made from carved ply, and a single-ended transistor monoblock boasting a rather tempting six Watt output (surely an all time low for solid state). If it finds a UK distributor I bags first go.

Audio Note has been busy of late, thinking up names better suited to weapons of mass destruction than hi-fi. Monickers including *Conquest* and *Conqueror* will be applied to a new range of Caryesque power amps of the 300B SE persuasion. AN also brought along a beast called the *Ankoru* (inspired by the Moog synthesiser) which takes retro tube chic to new levels. Still, it seems that Peter Qvortrup and the lads have started to produce more than just the longest price list in the business. The integrated *Meishu* looks like it needs some serious attention in my living room ASAP.

Probably the best sound at this show was heard from Lars Risbo's digital amplifier. This is the Harman beastie that Mr Miller investigates on page 28, and it certainly warrants a close look — rarely have I heard such speed and fluidity from such a casually-assembled digital system. Let's hope that the production model, when it appears, lives up to the standard set by this elegant prototype.

The gift of Sound & Vision

The Sound & Vision show at the Cumberland Hotel was a more relaxed affair, largely because it was less well attended. We did, however, manage to fill up the *Choice* dem room most every hour, and it was one of the first hotels I've visited for a long time where good sound was as forthcoming as swift room service.

Interesting new products on display included the wood-clad Holfi electronics from Denmark; a new Roksan *Xerxes 10* turntable (celebrating ten years since the original was introduced but weighing in at a considerably higher price); and the Audio Innovations *Alto* CD player — at last — which comes in at £449.

This little space-age disc driver was up for listening and winning in our room, and jousted with a Voyd for the privilege of driving the Air Partner *Statesmen* in the Innovations room. The price tag (c. £27k) attached to these sizeable horns befits their elevated status; certainly, the sound produced in that tiny room qualified them to represent the country. Good noises and great lighting was also to be found in *la salle à Mana*, where John Watson and Damian had set up dozens of their platforms — and three oil-wheel projectors, naturally . . .

The Cumberland had less obscure exotica than the Ramada, but dedicated spotters would have witnessed some specimens in the Ensemble room, in the shape of bright metal tube amplifiers, and an CD player coming on like a stylish Proceed with a square face plate and oval buttons. While attendance at the Cumberland was less than overwhelming, its patrons knew their onions, not to mention their shallots, making a distinct and pleasant contrast to the anorak-and-trainer-clad adolescent tyre-kickers who congregated in hordes at Live '95.

Live and let die

The Live show is obviously a mass-market consumer electronics event, where one would be rather foolish to expect the civilisation of a decent hi-fi show, but the noise-fest that ensued proved hard to endure. *Hi-Fi Choice* provided a Chill-Out Room as a sanctuary from the Babylonian chaos of the event, but we forgot to build a concrete bunker for the purpose and consequently were forced to compete in the sound war simply to hear our own records. Respect goes out to all the chill-out DJs who spun cool Ambient platters on our behalf — even though this caused one of our Gurus-in-Residence, Alvin Gold, to come out in a nasty allergic rash. Hearty thanks to everyone who supplied gear or helped us on the stand.



Unison Research *Simply Four* — goes down a storm with a certain sort of horn!

Something completely different

I've been enjoying the company of a rather attractive Italian valve amplifier called the Unison Research *Simply Four*, a £1,495 integrated amp of the single-ended pentode persuasion. (There is also a triode option that puts out 11Wpc compared to the 24Wpc on offer here. Also, note that the *Simply Two*, reviewed by Richard Black in last month's issue, deploys a different tube topology, lest you were confused!)

In last month's column I mentioned that the *Simply Four* was a very good match for the horn-equipped JBL S2600s. I went on to try the amp with other speakers, including the aforementioned Air Partners. This combination, in comparison once again with an Audio Innovations *Series 800 Anniversary*, reversed the preferences found with the JBLs. The Partners revealed a lack of high frequencies and a vagueness of tonality in the *Simply Four* — the microscopic analysis of these big horns was just too much. Less critical boxes like the Gamma *Epoch 5* and Audio Note *AN-ESp* were a happier match with the Unison amp; the latter pairing made for a dynamic and musical experience. With switchable feedback, four inputs, a tape loop and the tastiest chassis on the block, this stylish design from Unison Research craves an early audience with your ears. ▲

Choice Sessions

CHECK OUT ALAN SIRCOM'S GOLDEN SELECTION OF LOUDSPEAKERS, OTHER HI-FI GEAR AND COTTAGE CHEESE

Audio Innovations Alto loudspeakers

The latest *Alto* product from Audio Innovations: a speaker that can do nice things to your lounge — audibly.

First out of the starting gate for this month's Sessions is the new Audio Innovations *Alto* speaker. Designed primarily to match the *Alto* system and available only through Richer Sounds, (as with the rest of the *Alto* range), the first Audio Innovations speaker is an elegant £300 two-way small box affair. (Apologies in advance, incidentally, if this month's Sessions seem to be dominated by speakers. There are so many new models this season that it would be unfair not to balance this round-up of exciting new products heavily in the favour of loudspeakers.)

The *Alto* is covered with a plain, clean, no-nonsense pearl-black finish — not exactly the finest veneer, but as most of its peers are wrapped in a vinyl pseudo-tree finish, I admire the *Alto* for its honesty. Beneath the tear-drop grille lives a 165mm doped paper woofer, which sits above a 25mm fabric dome tweeter in an inversion of the normal order of things. Below both of these units sits a front-mounted port and the new-look Audio Innovations

logo in silver. As with most grown-up speakers these days, the *Alto* can be bi-wired and it makes good sense to do so.

A big plus for the *Alto* is its comparative un-fussiness about its partnering equipment. The speakers sound particularly fine with expensive equipment in front of them, yet they smooth over many of the cracks found in the performance from less-than-perfect sources and amps. Okay, so this Polyfilla approach to speaker design becomes limiting when every other part of the system costs big money, but for a budget design, it works just fine.

If you can imagine a speaker with the sort of edge-of-the-seat excitement possible from the finest low-cost Missions, allied to the sort of realism that a well-sorted JPW AP2 or AP3 can produce, then you have the sound of the *Alto* in a nutshell. Like most well-engineered small speakers, it doesn't try to swing extremes of bass or high treble, but opts instead for a dynamic and realistic performance with what small speakers do best — the midrange. In this case, the midrange is as smooth as silk, yet never syrupy or over-ripe.

However, the special performance may also prove to be this speaker's stumbling block — first-time buyers may opt for the initial excitement of other designs in preference to the slow-burn charms of the *Altos*. Granted, if your collection begins and ends with Death Metal, the *Alto* is not for you — especially as it has a slight tendency to get a bit stressed under high volumes and heavy-handed mixing onslaughts. Then again, if you have a fair collection of less ear-bending music, this speaker deserves a good listen.

The *Alto* has a sound in common with other members of its family. The amplifier is very clean and dynamic, with good imagery and a pleasant, if a trifle soft bass, and the speaker shares these traits. Having heard the CD player briefly, it's

in there as well. Personally, I find the *Alto* sound quite attractive, especially when you factor in the £1,100 price tag for the combination.

That said, I hope that this speaker doesn't become 'a must' for *Alto* owners and no-one else. Although the *Alto* amp is superb and the forthcoming CD looks every bit as promising, the new speakers from Audio Innovations have many charms that should attract any buyers interested in speakers at the price. If you are an *Alto* owner already, these are the speakers for you; if you aren't, you owe it to yourself to give them a listen. Just remember: if you like the speakers, don't be surprised if your whole system goes *Alto* soon after.

Audio Components Ltd (Audio Innovations),
Albany Court, Albany Road, Granby Industrial
Estate, Weymouth, Dorset DT4 9TH
☎ (01305) 761017

Exposure XVIII Super Monoblocks

Beware of the XVIII monoblock amps from Exposure. They sound so good, you could be tempted to buy a pair.

The last time I sat in the Sessions chair, I was bowled over by the Exposure XVII preamp and XVIII Super stereo power amp. Exposure then threatened to unleash the 65 Watt, £800-a-side monoblock version of the XVIII on me at a later date, but I honestly didn't expect much improvement.

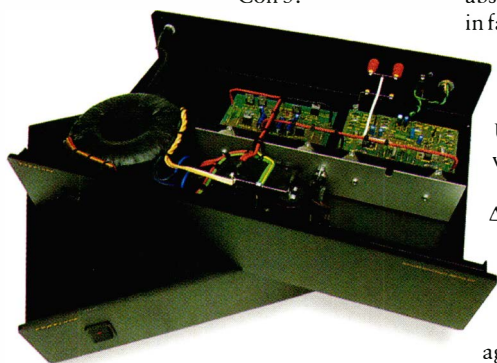
Big Wrong! If the stereo amp had grip, the monoblocks are the audio equivalent of a Mole wrench. No matter how loud, no matter how stressful the load, the music or the surroundings (shouting down PA systems at Live '95 springs to mind), they just wouldn't give up. Further improvements to take into consideration include the extra space around the instruments, the better coherence and all the other details that go to make the XVIII monos the perfect combination of valve-likes smoothness, American-behemoth-like solidity and grip, and Naim-like rhythm.

All of this comes from putting some serious power supply regulation into

Alto speakers — they cost more than a tenor, but could form the bass-is of a soprano lative system!



each monoblock. This justifies the doubling in cost between the stereo and monoblock versions of the *XVIII Super*. There are only two downsides to the monoblocks; on the minor, on the major. The minor problem is that the stereo chassis isn't upgradeable; you'll have to sell the stereo and buy monoblocks. The major drawback is that you should not listen to these amps unless you have the sort of cash necessary to buy them there and then — I had intended to do lots of other things with the money that a pair of Exposure monoblocks set me back. And I'm not alone; rumour has it that one well-known classical magazine is now the proud owner of a pair of *XVIIIs*, which they consider to be the world's best amp to drive Quad *ESL-63s*. Finally, beware — there are bigger and supposedly better amps in the Exposure range, but these would take my bank account straight into Def Con 5.



Exposure's *XVIII* monoblocks have got hi-fi scribes reaching for their wallets.

Exposure Electronics, The Works, 59 North Street, Portslade, East Sussex BN41 1DH. ☎ (01273) 423877

Opus 3 Chorus Δ Loudspeakers

Doing away with coloration by means of concrete may cost speakers the vital boogie factor.

I am not sure exactly what to make of these £600 speakers. Designed and built in Sweden, these small floorstanders are made of concrete, and feature a 25mm metal dome tweeter, a 165mm woofer and a front-firing port. They are made by people connected with the Opus 3 turntable and record label, although the name on the box is Audio Produkter.

The big difference with the *Chorus Δ* is the concrete cabinet, which drastically reduces cabinet resonances that cause boxiness. In addition, the cabinet has no parallel surfaces to propagate nasty internal standing waves.

Sofar, so good. It's the *Chorus Δ* finish that stops me in my tracks. Since in-house concrete isn't very big in Sweden, the lads at Opus 3 went and covered the entire speaker in a white papier mache/plaster composite finish. This

may be environmentally friendly (?), but it also comes off in your hands and gets dirty very quickly. Just as worrying is the fact that I can't get the words 'cottage cheese' out of my mind...

The *Chorus Δ* also benefits from an 'unconventional' room position. By this, I mean that the speakers sound best about 1/3 of the way along the length of the room, close to the walls and with a moderate toe-in. They are extremely fussy about set-up and choice of amplification, so unless you are into heavy experimentation in order to get them exactly right, skip to another speaker review.

Once in the right position and with that certain amplifier, you get an incredibly detailed and coherent sound, which is tonally very neutral, save for a bit of a bark at the bottom end (thanks to the port) and a touch of a zing at the top. The usual cabinet resonances one finds at the price were conspicuous by their absence, which is a major brownie point in favour of the *Chorus Δ*. Imagery, in particular, was very good, projecting a very palpable soundstage into the middle of the room. Unfortunately, good sound staging was only apparent in the 'hot seat'.

My big problem with the *Chorus Δs* is their almost total inability to boogie. These speakers were capable of producing some glorious sounds that made you want to hear all of your favourite recordings again. However, after about one and a half tracks from my Little Feat album, it went back onto the shelf again, never to return. I happen to regard the ability to get down as being of paramount importance and consider products that don't boogie to be musically bankrupt.

Maybe I did not use the right equipment; maybe I was not totally diligent with the set-up; I struggled to get past the 'cottage cheese' finish. Ultimately, the *Chorus Δ* is a valiant effort to make a coloration-free speaker at a reasonably low price, but they were simply not for me.

Pentacone, 4 Cross Bank Road, Batley, West Yorkshire WF17 8PJ. ☎ (01924) 445039

Quad 77 CD player and Quad Remote

A highly dependent CD player turns out to be a very mature and nice-sounding Quad component.

Like the 77 amplifier, launched earlier this year, Quad's new £595 CD player is intended to be used as a part of a Quad system. The sample I tested was a bus-based model with only a D-Sub port on the rear panel — no phono socket or even a mains lead in sight. To make things work, I received a £650 Quad 77 amplifier to go with the CD player. (A version of the CD player that works without the services of



the amp — it accepts phono plugs and has a built-in power supply — can be acquired for £850.)

Given that I had the CD player and amp, it seemed only natural to try out the £299 Quad Remote as well. This uses two-way infra-red comms to talk between system and remote, allowing some smart replication of functions on the remote. Best of all, it looks like a cross between an oversized Nintendo Game Boy and a Tricorder from *Star Trek — The Next Generation*. But beware: with all those stray i-r signals floating around your living room, they may set off other devices by mistake. I own a Meridian 602 transport, which was deeply unhappy about sharing a room with all that Quad signal.

You may find that you have to turn the volume down a few shades when you switch to other line inputs from the 77 CD player, as it seems to have a lower output level than most. Trying it against a Linn Karik/Numerik and the aforementioned Meridian 602, used with a PT Ordinal DAC, firm action was certainly needed to get near a level-match.

That aside, I have almost nothing but

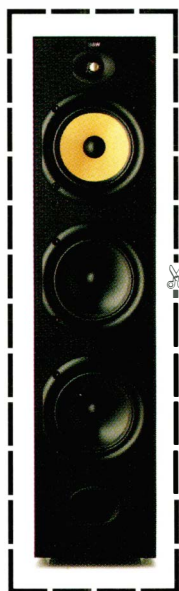
Cottage cheese that sounds good in the right position: *Chorus Δ* from Opus 3.

Are you a member of the Quad squad? If so, check out the 77 CD player.



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praise for the Quad 77. There are a lot of similarities between this CD player and the highly recommended Quad 67, tested back in issue 124, except that the 77 is slightly better. It has a very similar tonal balance to the 602/Ordinal pairing, with increased levels of smoothness across the midband. It also has very wide, but not particularly deep soundstaging, and only lost out in the detail stakes when it came to the absolute blink-and-you'll-miss-'em subtleties.

Where the Meridian/PT set-up had the edge—and the Linn combo won hands down—was in the bass. The former was blessed with considerably more bass energy, while the latter had far superior levels of control. The Quad was also rather more ponderous on the fastest of fast-paced Metallica than either combo.

However, I have not forgotten that both of the comparison CD systems cost between two and three times the cost of the Quad 77. I also feel that the 77 is more funky-sounding than its 67 predecessor. So at its price, it comes in as seriously competitive. There may be more up-beat players at this price level, but few are so balanced in an overall manner. There's a sort of wholesome quality to this player (like the 67 before it) that really makes music, whatever music you care to feed it.

Quad Electroacoustics Ltd, St Peters Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 7DB
☎ (01480) 52561

Vivanco IR7100 cordless headphones

The Vivanco IR7100s represent a big step forward for user-friendliness in the cordless headphones domain.

Given that the Quad Remote's infrared chat-line had given my Meridian 602 a few palpitations, it seemed likely that these £120 Vivanco IR7100 i-r headphones would prompt a heart attack. Fortunately, though, there is more to i-r than the area covered by remote controls, and my 602 and the Vivanco headphones lived side-by-side happily.

The idea is simple enough: take a line-level analogue signal and transmit it to a pair of headphones, using infrared instead of radio frequencies to overcome all those difficult legal obstacles. This means, of course, that the headset itself has to be i-r receiver, amplifier and headphone all in one lightweight package. To this end, you'll notice that the headset uses a AA battery in each ear-cup for the task. The transmitter uses mains power and can broadcast in the horizontal or vertical plane—although using it vertical in a corner of a room and at slightly above sofa height seems to give the best result.

However, strategically placed in the room, the transmitter will allow you almost free reign to walk about with

very little signal masking or attenuation. You also get a rather natty pair of headphones that are remarkably free of the Dr Who stylings so typical of older i-r designs. Whether the IR7100s look like they are worth £120 is another matter but, overall, my only real criticism is that the dual volume controls make it next to impossible to accurately balance the headphone sound.

The sound quality itself is not perfect—the hiss of background interference is ever-present and it's a little compressed—but ultimately it is merely uninspiring rather than unattractive. In many respects, the IR7100 is highly suited for the task it is intended for: adding a background soundtrack while you potter around at home. I was ready to give these earspeakers a proper pasting for being hissy and not sounding lively enough, until I began to unbox the next product for review. Using the i-r headphones, I could carry on listening to Ella Fitzgerald, without tripping over leads or disturbing loved ones watching *Home & Away*. I put away my purist hat and began to enjoy the freedom that only a pair of i-r headphones can bring.

One could easily say the same thing of any of the i-r headphones on the market, but few of them are as complete as these Vivancos. Some hiss too much; others make you look like a Cyberman, and those that do things properly (and even improve on the Vivanco performance) cost considerably more than the IR7100s. While I wouldn't part with hard-earned for any pair of i-r headphones, I can see the fascination and the Vivanco IR7100 is probably the best balance of cost and quality around.

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

B&W DM601 loudspeakers

Kevlar-coned speakers are no longer a privilege for the hi-fi elite. The new 601 model offers lots of fun to all classes.

Few loudspeaker units are as immediately distinctive as B&W's bright yellow Kevlar-coned bass driver. This high-tech unit has appeared in all of B&W's up-market designs lately, save the £30,000 Nautilus. Unfortunately, the units have always been too complex to build cheaply, and the entry-level price for speakers with Kevlar cones has been in the region of £1000. Now, all that has changed.

Radically improved Kevlar production engineering techniques have brought the quality up and the prices down. The first speakers to benefit from this were the new EISA award-winning CDM 1 and CDM 2 loudspeakers at around the £400-£500 mark. And now, the 600 series has been revamped featuring the same drivers at lower-than-ever costs.



Good news for cordless-headphone-enthusiasts: the Vivanco IR7100.

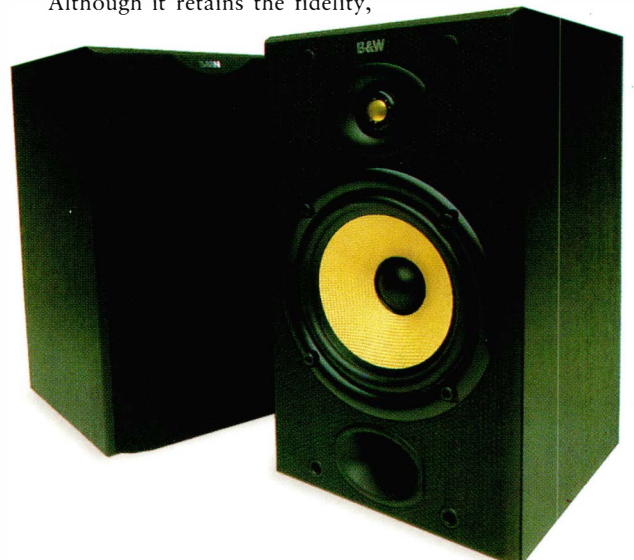
At the bottom of this range, which includes multi-speaker floorstanders, centre channels, subwoofers and a forthcoming dipole surround speaker for home cinema, lies the £200 DM601. Slightly larger than a bookshelf design and slightly smaller than a compact monitor, the DM601 is designed to work on heavily-filled 60cm stands, preferably about 0.5-1m from the rear wall. They are bi-wireable and feature a 26mm metal dome tweeter as well as a nicely moulded port to go with the aforementioned 165mm Kevlar mid/bass unit.

A lot of thought has gone into the complete package. The black vinyl finish hides a solid cabinet and is offset by a neatly moulded front baffle, while the grille is cleverly injection-moulded in a lattice to keep it looking good without ruining the sound. It has also been designed never to tax the output of the amplifiers a £200 speaker would normally partner.

More importantly, however, it seems that someone has been putting happy pills into the tea over at B&W. The company has always been at the forefront of technology, but its designs have often been best described as 'safe'. There were exceptions, of course, but seldom at the budget end. So I'm happy to inform you that the new baby has shaken off the mantle of conservatism and can truly let its hair down.

Although it retains the fidelity,

The Kevlar protected 601s from B&W are more fun than you'd expect!



accuracy and detail of previous models, the new 601 is just as happy playing the Devil's music as it is playing Mozart. Its imagery, soundstaging and coherence are as good as — or even slightly better than — previous 600 series boxes, and the overall tonal balance remains just as neutral as ever. Yet there has been a crucial injection of fun, funk and life into the new 601s with added-Kevlar.

This may not be the perfect box — the port makes a bit of a quack in the upper bass and the speaker is not as unboxy as the more up-market B&Ws — but at least the 601 shows a quantum leap forward in the rock domain that doesn't affect the classical performance. If you are after good balance without the sense of restraint, then the new 601s should be for you.

B&W Loudspeakers Ltd, Marlborough Road, Churchill Industrial Estate, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 8TR ☎ (01903) 750750

Mobile Fidelity Geo-Disc

Aligning your cartridges has never been easier, with the re-introduction of the Geo-Disc from Mobile Fidelity.

So it's not exactly new, but then again, nor is vinyl. Whatever, the £25 Mobile Fidelity Geo-Disc alignment protractor is finally back in the country. Fitting over the platter like a heavyweight LP, the Geo-Disc appears to be a simple but highly effective method of setting that

bane of analogue: cartridge alignment.

Instead of using the more commonly applied two-point maxima and minima method, it makes use of a method of alignment designed by HG Baerwald in the '40s. Basically, this system uses a single point on the travel of the disc, but takes the bearing position into account. To use the Geo-Disc, you first align a guide to the bearing pivot point on the tone arm and secure the Geo-Disc. From here, you simply align the cartridge so that it sits squarely in the alignment gauge on the disc itself. As a final check, another sight-line is fitted to the Geo-Disc in order to match the arm to the cartridge.

The only trouble is that many two preferred tone arms do not suit the Geo-Disc. One, the SME V, adjusts the alignment at the arm base, and as such, SME's own protractor is best suited for the task. The other, the Naim Aro, opts for no adjustment at all, but it is curious to note that cartridges which sound great on the Aro are, according to the Geo-Disc, in perfect alignment anyway.

By happy coincidence, a friend needed a new cartridge on his Rega 3-equipped Systemdek, and another needed a new needle on his old Dual. In both cases, the Geo-Disc made the set-up quicker, easier and more accurate. I checked the setting with a more normal protractor and it was 100 per cent spot-on. It made the sound less edgy at the extremes of the record and less bland through the middle.

I'm sure that if you are the kind of person who doesn't mind spending the hours of minute adjustments needed to use Townshend Audio's alignment graph plotting system correctly, you'll get a slightly better sound than can be produced by the Geo-Disc. Personally, however, I prefer to have a Geo-Disc and a life.

Esoterica (0181) 941 5152

Beer budget Best Buy bits

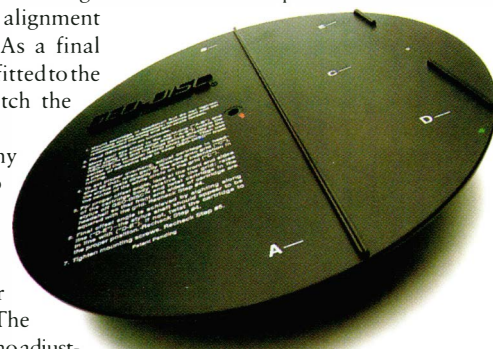
Drawing on the experiences from the Sound & Vision show held in central London in September, Sessions assesses a system that comprises only Best Buy and Recommended components.

Simply slotting together a system at random, from a variety of Best Buy and Recommended components listed in our Directory, doesn't automatically guarantee a good sound. However, in setting-up a demonstration at the Sound & Vision show in September, we found a sure-fire system that really shows what low-cost Best Buy components can do when they're put together.

The digital front-end of such a system is the all-superlative £200 Sony CDP-561E CD player. Its sheer neutrality,

without sounding stark or thin, makes it a superb choice to front this or any other system in the price range. As it adds or subtracts comparatively little to the sound of the CD, it leaves a blank canvas for the amplifier and CD to paint in whatever tones are required.

To this end, we chose a NAD amplifier. But for the sake of keeping the purse under control, Sessions opted for the £189 302 instead of the more powerful and more expensive 304 we used at



Mobile Fidelity's Geo-Disc alignment protractor — for the nippiest needles!

the Sound & Vision show. The NAD has that ever-entertaining, uplifting character, combined with a surprisingly loud sound for its modest 25Wpc output. As a budget Best Buy, it is without peer, and one really needs to spend £50-£100 more to get a better sound, especially with our choice of speakers, which were reputed to be designed with the NAD sound in mind.

The £130 KEF Coda 7s are currently the best-selling speakers in the UK and deservedly so, for they are about the most alive-sounding speakers one could tag onto the end of a cheap and cheerful system. As with all the components in this system, you'd have to spend much more to get a better-sounding unit.

Partner the whole with a decent table, a pair of the Best Buy Atacama SE24 stands (correctly filled to make them completely immobile) and the seriously good and cheap Ixos or DNM cables. This makes a system that costs around £600, but never once sounds cheap. Of course, it has limitations, especially in the bass and overall coloration of the upper bass, but the very fact that it has a sense of imagery and some smoothness and coherence makes it a true bargain, for those seeking realistic, high-end sounds on a very tight budget.

Sony United Kingdom Ltd, National Operations Centre, Piper's Way, Thatcham, Newbury, Berkshire RG19 4LZ.

☎ (0181) 784 1144

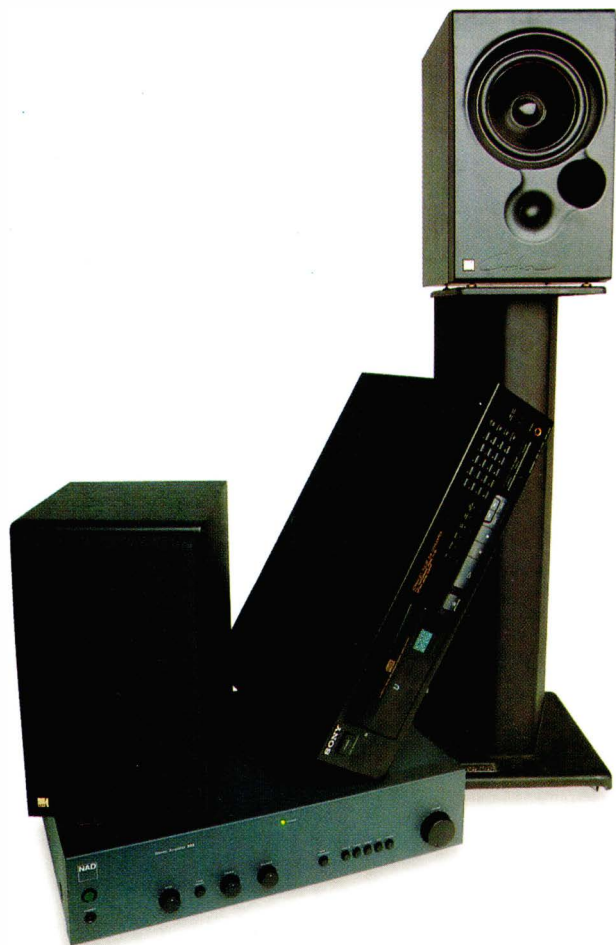
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together and
whaddya got?
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system, that's
what!**



Atacama/Concordant Exhilarant preamp

A little bit of the original romance got lost when Concordant's new preamp was made politically correct.

A long time ago a chap called Doug Dunlop used to make a range of very fine valve preamps that went by the name of Concordant. Sadly, Doug is no longer well enough to keep the Concordant flag flying, so instead the preamps are made under licence by Sambell Engineering, manufacturers of the Atacama speaker stands so beloved of ourselves and many others. The £949 *Exhilarant* line-level preamp is the first of the new wave of Concordant to reach the shelves.

In the interim, there have been many changes in legislation — including the forthcoming CE rules and regulations — that would make previous Concordant preamps about as legitimate as a three-pound note with the face of Ronnie Biggs on the back. Atacama worked hard to keep the new preamps legally kosher without sacrificing the sound quality of the originals. It worked... almost.

Nowadays, the thin captive lead is gone in favour of an IEC socket, but that's the only concession toward the '90s. The basic Concordant style has been slightly changed, making the preamp box longer and a tad taller than before. Its layout has been altered to simplify matters, but it still adopts the basic look of every Concordant pre-amplifier — you either love it or hate it. With a vengeance.

My sample was an early one that couldn't ever rid itself of an alarming level-dependent hum, but later models have overcome this problem with no apparent sonic degradation. That aside, it had most of the charm found in the original Concordant preamps. It was always consummately musical in a slightly rich and warm manner, and had that typically Concordant deep-but-not-wide image, no matter which power amp and speakers are used.

The *Exhilarant* is something of a songstress; perhaps it's not the most analytical preamp around, but then few amps at this price can portray a sense of atmosphere like the Concordant. This is not just ambient information retrieval — it has something more to do with the sort of benign coloration (large amounts of second harmonic distortion, presumably) that the *Exhilarant* bestows on any music playing.

Compared to the original design, however, this magical quality is reduced. Some will prefer the more honest approach of the new preamp, and I confess that it makes for a universal recommendation. I know also that the new models are more acceptable in the new Euro climate. However, I still feel that a lit-

tle bit of the romance has gone out of the design, which is a shame.

Sambell Engineering Ltd, Winston Avenue, Croft, Leicestershire LE9 3GQ. ☎ (01455) 283251

Neat Mystique speakers

Sometimes you sober up and realise that certain things are still truly impressive. Such as the Neat *Mystique* speaker.

"I've just heard a pair of speakers you'll love, you gotta come round and hear them," said John Watson of Mana Acoustics. About three evenings later, full of lager and curry, I got to hear the speakers through John Watson's extensively supported system, playing everything from the Stereo MCs to Wings at the sort of levels that would send most speakers into an electrical coma. This was my first encounter with the £550 Neat *Mystique*.

What surprised me most about these speakers was that, despite their size, they were almost capable of the sort of things that only John Watson's old Linn Isobarikscando. But what also surprised me was the price, which (with my senses under the influence of curry, lager and loud music) I simply could not believe was anything less than about £1,500. Days later, I was still dazzled by their performance.

What you get for your £550 is a no-frills black floorstander with a 2.5mm titanium-coated plastic dome tweeter, a 160mm poly bass driver and a rear-firing port. Aside from a small metal plinth to take a set of spikes and a rear bi-wire terminal, that's it. Since my sample was made, a walnut finish model has been added (at extra cost) and the *Mystiques* now sport the luxury of a grille.

With a rated efficiency of 86dB/W/m and a nominal impedance of eight Ohms, this is not the most difficult speaker to drive. And nor is it difficult to accommodate: since it's designed to work as a boundary design, it doesn't intrude into the room.

The *Mystique* was designed to work with Mana *SoundBases* as a £300 upgrade. But even without the Mana bases, the *Mystique* sounds first-rate. Although it has a fast metal-dome tweeter, there is no trace of spit. This tweeter integrates superbly with the bass unit, making for a wonderfully coherent performance that's full of zest and life. It also has some of the tightest, most rhythmic bass lines around at the price. Imagery is compromised by the boundary position, but it still creates a good sense of instruments playing in their own space.

This is where the Mana bases come into their own. Where there is a little space around the instruments, the Mana effect adds extra space and blackness around each player. It also adds to the zest of the treble and the depth



Concordant amps — now manufactured by Sambell Engineering.

and impact of the bass. In all, for about £900, you have a real giant-killer, capable of trading sonic blows with the very best at a fraction of the price. No, it won't offer the same transparency as a Quad ESL-63, the dynamics of a Living Voice *Air Partner* or more bass than a Wilson *Grand SLAMM*, but such comparisons are foolish when you consider the sums of cash involved.

With or without the Mana tables, the *Mystique* is an excellent performer, with only a couple of very minor caveats. First, the speaker seems to need a half-hour warm-up if it has been left unused for more than about a weekend. It still sounds good through this shake-down period, but, like all good transducers, it gets progressively more liberated over the first half-hour. Second, the speaker doesn't integrate quite as well at very low listening levels.

Another plus is that this must be the most upgradeable speaker around. Here's show: you start with the basic hi-fi set-up and the Neats are happy. Then add a set of Mana *SoundBases* and they get better. Then upgrade the electronics. Add another set of Mana tables. Before you know where you are, your simple CD/amp/speaker package has disappeared beneath a ton of Mana tables and has turned into pre-power amps and upgraded cables. Although they sound good with modest electronics, they continue to get better and

Neat *Mystiques* and Mana *SoundBases* are just made for each other.



One of life's more rewarding decisions.

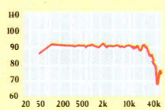
KEF Reference Series Authorised Dealers



KEF Reference Series

If only all decisions in life were as straightforward as this.

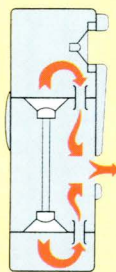
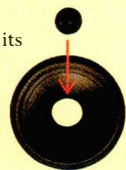
The fact is that if you want the purest sound and the most uncompromising specification, it simply has to be New KEF Reference.



Every speaker must match our engineers' 'reference' prototype to an almost unbelievable

tolerance of 0.5 decibels. This means you can be sure that the sound KEF created will be recreated in your home. Exactly.

Our breakthrough Uni-Q® technology delivers an astonishing stereo image, its unique point source design, with the tweeter at the exact acoustic centre of the mid-range cone, lets you visualise the precise location of every performer on the stage. What's more, because of Uni-Q's smooth, even dispersion you'll hear that incredible realism throughout the room. From speakers this good you'd expect outstanding



bass performance. With KEF's famous 'coupled cavity' bass system, now further improved with interports, you get it. We go to similar extremes in perfecting every detail.

Some you can't see, like Oxygen-Free Copper internal wiring or magnetic shielding (vital in Home Theatre). Some you can - sumptuously veneered cabinets with heavily gold-plated feet and terminals, for example.

In other words, each pair of Reference speakers is as close to perfection as KEF can make it.

When you know you can choose the best, would you willingly settle for anything less?

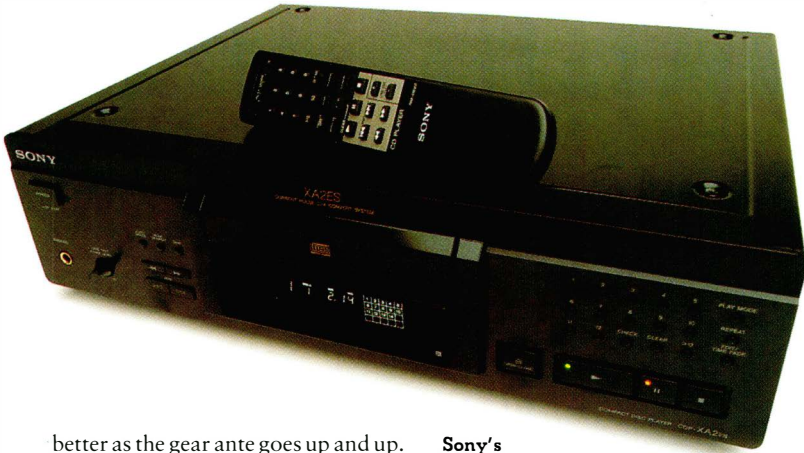


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better as the gear ante goes up and up. I found that, in particular, the match between the Neat *Mystiques* and Exposure monoblocks was one that I couldn't better without a cash injection of £1,000 or more.

If you are looking for an exciting, funky-sounding speaker, but can't spend exciting, funky money, then this box is for you. It'll keep going with any upgrades you throw at it, and you'll be hard-pushed to outgrow the Neat *Mystique* this side of the Shahinian *Arc* or the Naim *SBL*. It may not look like a million dollars, but it sounds that way. *Neat Acoustics, Unit 1a, Stainton Grove Industrial Estate, Barnard Castle, Co. Durham DL12 8UJ*
☎ (01833) 631021

Sony CD player

Sony are heading for a higher end of the CD player market with the launch of their new, robust and damn solid XA3ES.

Something seems to be going extremely right deep in the heart of Sony's CD player R&D team. For the past two or three years, Sony has been producing some of the finest low-cost CD players around. Yet in the UK at least, Sony has fought shy of venturing into the upper price brackets of late. This has mostly been due to the British economic climate, but perhaps also because the last samples of mid-price Sony players were a trifle analytical (albeit being very well made).

Now Sony is back and it means business. The damn heavy new-look £350 XA3ES is the vanguard machine — expect a legion of other up-market Sony players, including the ultra-high-end *Reference* series machines, to follow. It features the new-look Sony styling, which is another design classic, I'm afraid, with its centre-loading drawer and thick black front-panel with a recessed top. Unlike previous Sony players, the front-panel button count is admirably low, while the rear panel sports fixed and variable analogue outputs, but only Toslink digital output, which is a major shame. Under the hood is typical Sony bitstream engineering, beautifully applied.

The first thing that hits you about

Sony's new XA3ES CD player makes Sherman tanks run for cover.

the sound of the XA3ES is the bass — it is weighty and solid, with bags of bottom-end grunt. Next comes the sheer detail and then the quicksilver dynamics. Finally, you'll be impressed by the almost total absence of grit or grain to the treble and how the package ties together into one silken, coherent whole.

It has that almost master-tape quality that has been so applauded in our blind tests of recent Sony players. If anything, I would say that this player has greater bass impact and scale, although that may pale against the forthright nature of the superb budget players. However, I feel sure that the solidity and slam of the more expensive machine will prevail in many cases.

My only criticism of the Sony's performance still concerns the slightly dispassionate nature of the performance it produces. Every last morsel of information is laid bare with the XA3ES, but one can't help wanting for a bit more life, even if that was at the expense of some detail. It is absolutely fine on safe, well-recorded material, but lob in a classic piece of music that sounds like it has been recorded by a three-year-old in a bathroom and you lose some of the fire and passion that made the recording a classic in the first place. This is doubly true when it comes to remasters of old tracks onto CD.

However, such criticism is rather petty, and the XA3ES is about the most 'musical' Sony CD player to date — discount dynamite like the *CDP-561E* notwithstanding. In addition, I don't believe you'll find a CD player that's better built or more precise at the price. All I will say is: make sure that you listen properly to the XA3ES before you buy it. Not only to check out the fine detail and the bass, but because, judging by the way it's built, it will be with you for a very, very long time.

Sony United Kingdom Ltd, National Operations Centre, Piper's Way, Thatcham, Newbury, Berkshire RG19 4LZ

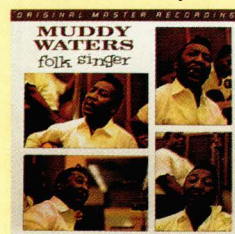
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Alan's CD Choice

Although it's not a conscious omission, we seldom use enough classical music in our equipment tests. However, Dick Shahinian recently played me a classical CD that has rapidly become a vital part of my reviewing armoury. It's **Rachmaninov's *Symphony No 3*** and ***Symphonic Dances***, as played by **David Zinman** and the **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra** and released on Telarc.

I have previously acquired the Athena vinyl pressing of the *Symphonic Dances*, performed by a different orchestra, but this special Telarc recording uses top-class digital engineering to make a recording that's every bit as valid as the early '60s Athena version. The Telarc is a very fine recording and is played with real fire and passion, even matching the more common Decca/Ashkenazy recordings.

Two other 'audiophile' discs (on LP) that have come into my possession of late are also well worthy of attention. The first is **Muddy Waters *Folk Singer***, from Mobile Fidelity; the second is a 180g re-issue of



ORIGINAL MASTER RECORDING Boss Tenor by Gene Ammons on Verve.

Neither represents the current all-digital state of the art in recording techniques. In fact, the jazz recording is well over 30 years old. Nevertheless, both have a freshness and

unprocessed quality that is at once flattering to all kinds of audio equipment. There is a wealth of fine analogue recordings coming out of these sources in the near future, and as I speak I have copies of Bob Marley, The Allman Brothers, Billie Holiday and many others just bursting to get out of their plastic wrappers. I'll keep you informed...

Before getting round to that in some future issue, I should confess that I normally have quite a problem with 'audiophile' recordings. For a start, their fantastic recording quality is totally invalid when it comes to equipment evaluation, as they make almost any audio system sound very good. But more importantly, the quality of music in these recordings is often poor: a beautifully recorded third-rate pianist is still just a third-rate pianist.

To this end, my last choice this month is as far removed as possible from 'audiophile' sensibilities. The CD **Mellow Gold by Beck** is diverse, quirky, uneasy and full of randomly-directed venom and hatred of all things American. However, it also manages to praise The American Dream in a way that only the likes of Tom Waits and Neil Young can match (despite Young being Canadian). This record is



very much like surf-punk-meets-white-rap-on-the-set-of-*A Nightmare on Elm Street*. Most of the album is too disturbed for everyday listening, but *Mellow Gold* is worth the expense, merely for the first two tracks alone.

Hi-fi on the net

If you thought the Internet was just for computer buffs, think again. A wealth of information awaits the hi-fi fan, and here's PJ Fisher with a guided tour to the hottest hi-fi service stations on the Infobahn.



Mention of the Internet crops up virtually everywhere these days, and here it is again. However, it's fitting that the only UK hi-fi magazine with a kosher e-mail address should tell you what the Net can offer to the audiophile.

For those of you who don't know already, the Internet is the fast-expanding 'network of computer networks' that offers you global access to information for the price of a phone call. Using the Internet means that you can connect to computers on the other side of the world from the comfort of your living room or office. You simply need to open an account with one of the growing number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) such as EasyNet or Demon (see box) who now provide nationwide logging on points—so you should be able to get Internet access from a local number.

These ISPs will provide full Internet access (including e-mail) from around £15 per month, but prices and services vary—read a specialist Internet mag to find the best deal. So long as you have a credit card, a PC and a modem, you are ready to start exploring the globe. Audio enthusiasts tend to be technically minded people, so getting yourself onto the Net shouldn't be too much of a problem.

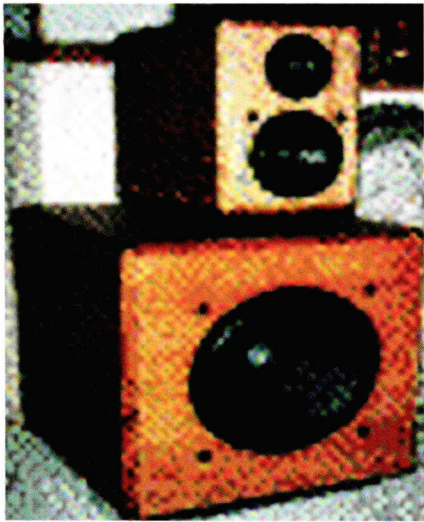
Once connected, you will probably want to head straight for the World Wide Web or

AudioWeb should be one of the first ports of call in every audiophile's Internet net surf.

one of the many thousand newsgroups. Of these, the Web is probably the first port of call for most new Internet users, mostly because it offers access to pictures, sounds and video clips, and a never-growing community of online publishers. Certainly, the Web offers plenty that's of interest to those who like to indulge their love of music and want to hear it reproduced on high quality equipment. There's something for all types of audiophile—from how to build your own speakers, through the pros and cons of valve amplification, to descriptions of the kind of systems that people use at home. A bit like a hi-fi magazine, really!

My Spidey-sense is tingling...

Things move fast on the Internet. When I did a search about six months ago it revealed barely ten sites relating to hi-fi or audio. However, while researching this feature in September I received a listing of more than 100 sites to visit on the Web alone. It's pleasing to note that a strong British presence now exists among these sites, but it's entirely fitting given the UK's long-standing contribution to the world hi-fi scene. Some commercialism is creeping in—forexample, there is now an official Sony site. Inevitably this focuses on mini systems and MiniDisc—



This unknown, novel and fun-loving speaker was spotted on Suzanne's Totally Bitchin' Kit.

if this sort of thing turns you on then connect to <http://www.sel.sony.com/SEL/consumer/hifi/hifi.html> for a look at Sony's forthcoming consumer products. Other manufacturers will inevitably have a similar corporate presence on the Net, but at present the majority of hi-fi related sites are run by enthusiasts for enthusiasts.

Probably the best place to start is the excellent *Hi-Fi On WWW* site at <http://www.unik.no/~robert/hifi/hifi.html>. This makes life very easy, as it diligently lists all the known Websites and newsgroups devoted to the world of audio. New and highly recommended sites are clearly marked. *Hi-Fi On WWW* is US-based — the list of Californian dealers is a little redundant — but it's regularly updated. It doesn't look too snappy, but it is a brilliant reference tool. And of course, all the listings have hot links so that you can home in on the information you want. *Hi-Fi On WWW* even has a couple of search facilities of its own if you still can't find what you're looking for.

...Did someone call a Web-slinger?

As I said, the Web offers some real enthusiast material, and I was particularly drawn to the *Analogue Addicts Archive* (<http://www.york.ac.uk/~mjgw100/aaa.html>). Again, this isn't going to win any Web design prizes, but it should come as a delight to any Keepers Of The Faith. By which, of course, I mean analogue fans.

Surprise surprise: this is a British site brought to you by a couple of vinyl fans called Matt Wenham and Kevin Hughes. Although it exists as a Web site it is really a collection of mailings propounding the opinions of vinyl fans. And of course you can join in at any point by using the built-in mailing list facility. As a taster you can argue the toss about the *really ideal voltage* for a Rega Planar 3, or whether rice-paper record sleeves are worth having — and of course the merits of Pink Floyd on vinyl.

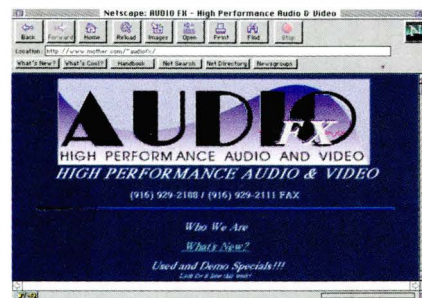
My favourite enthusiast's page, which is also a great example of a personal Home Page, is bodaciously entitled *Suzanne's Totally Bitchin' Kit*. It features a picture of said Bitchin' Kit, plus a complete history (from school-

days onwards) of how Suzanne was converted to the cause of fine audio. The story runs from the misery of a music centre right up to today's fun with a Sony TCD-D3 DAT player and Linn Majik. But the major attractions of Suzanne's site are her unbridled enthusiasm and a complete absence of the po-faced nonsense so often spouted by many male audio nuts. What's more, she loves music, even if it is *Hooked On Classics*... Check out Suzanne on <http://musicinfo.gold.ac.uk/index/bitchin.html>. Meanwhile look forward to her next upgrade. I wonder if she's married?

Eight-legged groove machine

Staying in Britain, you should take a look at the excellent new Webzine (Web magazine, lexicography fans) which is rather predictably dubbed *CyberFi*. Don't be put off by the naff name, though, as former *Audiophile* editor Jonathan Kettle produces a fact-packed and thought-provoking online magazine that's updated every Friday. Like all of these sites it provides a genuine alternative and useful complement to the traditional printed hi-fi magazines. Recent issues have featured a round-up of the world's best turntables, and debates over the merits of valve amplification. *CyberFi* deserves to succeed, and it costs nothing except to those who wish to use it for commercial purposes. See for yourself on <http://www.virtual-publishing.com/cyberfi/valvejk.html>.

There are even a couple of UK hi-fi dealers who have crossed over the digital threshold. Both Grahams Hi-Fi (<http://www.demon.co.uk/>)



Web sites like this one from Audio FX above are set to become more commonplace.

grahams-hi-fi) and Moorgate Acoustics (<http://mkn.co.uk/help/extra/people/moorgate>) have funky little Web sites. Don't be surprised if there are more dealers on the Net by the time this article is printed.

But it's back to the States for a very serious site indeed. The white-coated, bespectacled dudes at the Audio Engineering Society (<http://www.cudnever.edu/aes/>) probably wouldn't have much time for *Suzanne's Bitchin' Kit*, but their site is worth a visit for those involved in serious audio engineering. And that, after all, is what hi-fi is all about. You'll find papers on standards, education and links to other heavyweight audio sites.

Digital enthusiasts should drop by on *Digital Domain*. This is really more for pro sound engineers than audiophiles, and offers advice on preparing a tape for digital CD mastering, jitter problems and "how a digital dub

Hi-Fi Forum Frolics

CompuServe's Consumer Electronics Forum (GO CEAUDIO) continues to grow, with Acoustic Research now joining the roster of audio and hi-fi companies with an on-line presence. The bias remains firmly American, however, with KEF and Sennheiser being the only European outfits venturing into this corner of cyberspace. Nonetheless, the forum is still worth a visit, as there are several amusing threads. These include the worst songs in the history of rock and how to write a rap/house/disco hit using the C+ programming language.

Component of the year award went to Snell Acoustics' RCX-1000 six-channel speaker-and-room-correction DSP device.

can sound better than the original". Find out at <http://anansi.panix.com:80/userdirs/bobkatzi/>. But don't dither too long, because there's still the Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab site to investigate. This deserves a special mention, as Mobile Fidelity has been serving audiophiles with master-disc quality LPs and CDs since the late '70s. MFSL's site on <http://www.ora.gnn/bus/mfsl/index.html> will keep you up to date on latest releases and activities. You can also order discs online (but beware credit card transactions over the Net).

I have only picked out a handful of hi-fi related sites that represent the best currently available. This situation is bound to change, however, especially if you are so taken with the Web that you decide to create your own site (free Web space is now included with a number of dial-up Internet accounts if you shop around).

Two final points. First, isn't it kinda ironic that all this digital technology is being used to promote the wonders of valves and vinyl? And second, don't forget all the other good stuff out there on the rest of the Internet! ▲

Newsgroups

Here are some of the newsgroups worth checking out. You will need relevant software on your Mac or PC to read these. Check your Internet provider or the computer press for details.

- rec.audio.high-end
- rec.audio.marketplace
- rec.audio.misc
- rec.audio.opinion
- rec.audio.pro
- rec.audio.tech
- rec.audio.tubes

UK Internet Providers

CityScape ☎ 01223 566950
 CompuServe ☎ 0800 289378
 Delphi ☎ 0171 757 7080
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Freedom — is the Vivanco range of cordless infra-red headphones. The unconditional freedom to be on the move as you listen to your hi-fi system or TV.

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IR 6500 " ... you can move around in full juicy stereo completely unencumbered by wires... the quality really is remarkable..."

- *London Evening Standard, Mar '95*

IR 6000 " Competes well in terms of performance and features with... expensive... models"

- *What Home Entertainment, Feb '95*

IR 7600 " ...they give an enjoyable, relaxing listen. They also have a great bass for pounding dance music"

- *What Hi-Fi?, Jun '95*

IR 5000 " Good value for money"

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IR 5000



IR 6000



IR 7100

VIVANCO
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IR 5700



IR 6500



IR 7600

Living by numbers

Ever wanted a direct link between your CD player and speakers? It looks like **Paul Miller** has found one...

Imagine, if you will, a 200 Watt amplifier that can drive any loudspeaker without clipping, but weighs just 6kg. An amplifier that is fed directly from the digital output of your CD player or DAT recorder, yet contains no conventional, integrated D/A converter or analogue amplification.

Imagine an amplifier whose volume control suffers no drift or deterioration in channel balance at low levels and maintains a constant dynamic range regardless of its setting. There would be little or no waste heat, and the unit would sound as dynamic, vivid and compelling as the highest high-end hi-fi—but without the breath-catching price tag. Thanks to the Danish Research Division of Harman's Consumer Group, this conception of audio fantasy will soon become a commercial reality.

It takes shape in the form of the first 'audio quality' Class D power amplifier, a working prototype of which was demonstrated during September's hi-fi show at the Heathrow Ramada hotel. *Hi-Fi Choice* was honoured to be given a World Exclusive hands-on session with this amazing 'Discrete-Time Digital Power Amplifier'—and the results are printed below for your ongoing delectation.

We've heard the future

We auditioned Harman's all-digital power amp in the same environment and system used for our amplifier and CD player tests. Fed directly from the digital output of a Sony *CDP-715* CD player, the Harman amp immediately bested the performance of DPA's *DSP200/DPA200* amplifier combination—our blind listening reference for the past seven years.

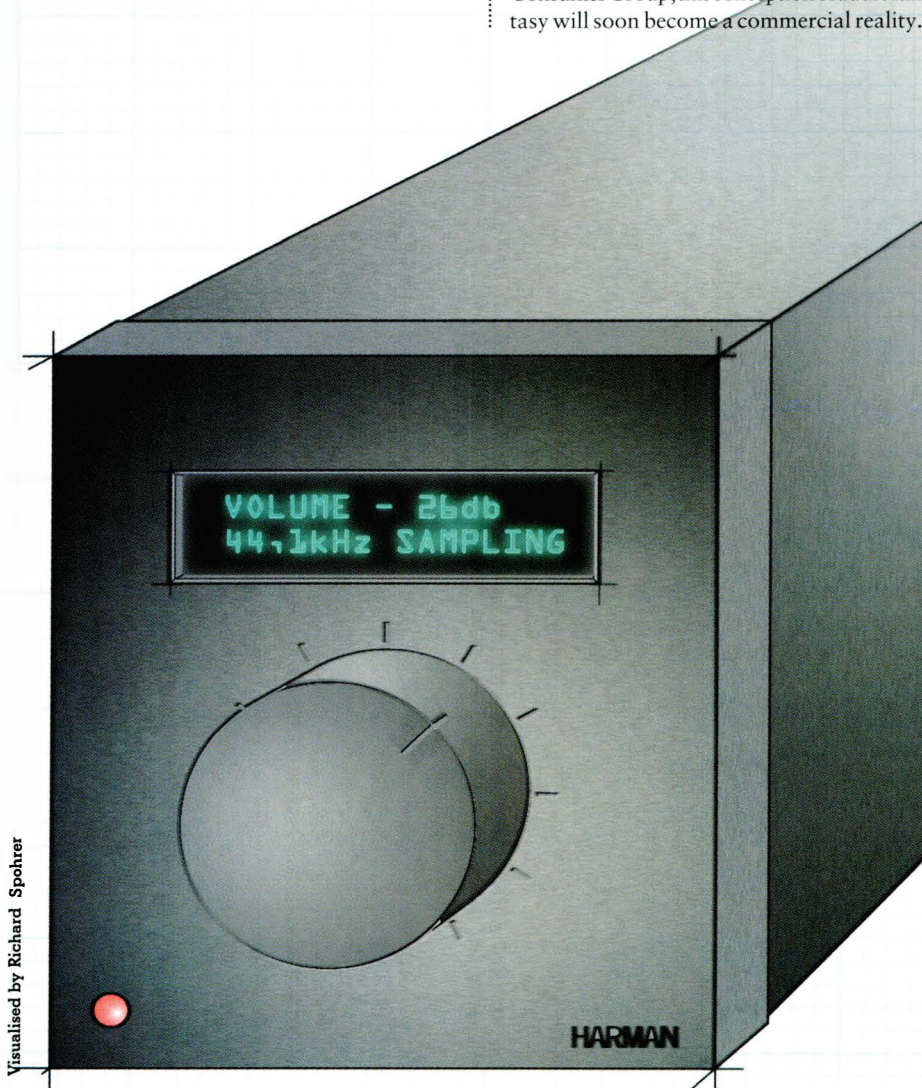
The sound of this prototype amplifier was controlled to the point of stoicism, although its music never once sounded impassive, grey or indifferent. Quite the reverse, for as notes shuddered from a blacker-than-black acoustic, they inspired an uncommonly 'natural' sense of musical colour, spaciousness and powerful dynamics. Above all, this amp boasted a rare 'presence'—a tremendous feeling of ease that permeated every style of music played.

Naturally, there is always room for improvement. This is, after all, alleged to be the only amplifier of its kind in the world. Its bass, for example, still lacks the exemplary control and finesse demonstrated through mid and treble. Nevertheless, the musical performance of this one-off working model still left an indelible impression on all who heard it one late September evening.

The Class System works!

Audiophiles are already aware of the sonic advantage earned by genuine Class A amplification—it remains a subjective favourite despite the implications of high heat dissipation and a low, sub-50 per cent, electrical efficiency. In Class A amplifiers high bias levels are used to ensure that the complementary power transistors remain conducting throughout the entire cycle of the musical waveform.

In Class B amplifiers the bias level is reduced so that the complementary (or push-pull) transistors conduct sequentially, in response to the positive-going and negative-going portion of the waveform respectively. Lower bias means less waste heat and a higher efficiency (maximum 78 per cent), at the expense



Visualised by Richard Spohrer



Above and below left: an artist's impression of the amp that could shape the future of audio.

of crossover distortion when one transistor picks up where the other has left off.

Most hi-fi amps are biased between Classes A and B, hence the term Class AB. Class D, however, is very different. Here the output transistors act as switches that are either fully on or fully off and, as an ideal switch does not dissipate any heat, a Class D amplifier theoretically approaches 100 per cent efficiency. This is distinct from the variable 'partial conduction' of Class A and B amplifiers.

With the possible exception of Thrash Metal, however, the continuous 'curve' of a musical waveform cannot be represented by single on/off states. So, in a Class D amplifier, the signal curve is built-up by varying the length of time that these switches are held on and off. This is known as Pulse Width Modulation or PWM.

Dancin' Danny D

Crucially, a Class D amplifier need not be a 'digital' amplifier. Indeed, analogue Class D designs are currently used for certain exotic in-car audio systems where high efficiency is vital. However, digital aficionados will be speculating already that a PWM amplification stage must bear comparison with the PWM bitstream converters found in many modern CD players.

By operating the PWM amplifier 'switches' at a rate synchronous with the digital data emerging from a CD player, it's possible to amplify this digital information without first converting it into the analogue domain. The 'amplified' digital code emerges from the PWM output stage as a series of high voltage pulses which 'describe' the music in very fast, synchronous snapshots. This is the origin of the term 'Discrete-Time' Digital power amp.

Harman's prototype is rather like a bitstream DAC that can drive a loudspeaker without the need for an intermediate analogue amplifier. And, just as you cannot 'clip' a CD player, nor can you 'over-drive' this digital amplifier.

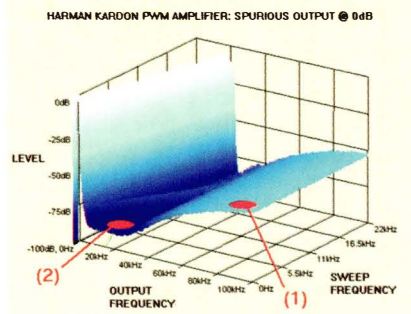
The woster of widgets

Outwardly, this prototype amplifier is simplicity itself. An optical digital input flanks 4mm loudspeaker binding posts on the rear while a single rotary volume control and associated display decorates its alloy fascia. Incoming digital data is processed using Crystal's CS8412 acquisition chip while NPC's SM5843 provides a total of eight-times oversampling.

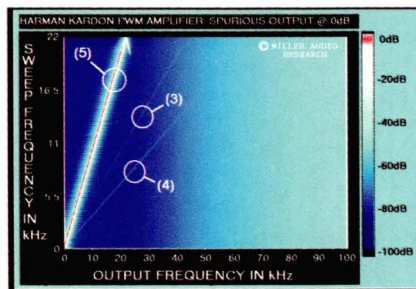
The clever stuff, however, goes on inside a 24-bit Motorola EPROM where proprietary

digital processing is employed to chop the oversampled 16-bit code into smaller seven-bit digital 'words'. Quantisation errors are produced by this truncation, and are manifested as an increase in noise across the entire oversampled bandwidth, ie eight times 44.1kHz, which is 352.8kHz.

Noise-shaping concentrates this noise



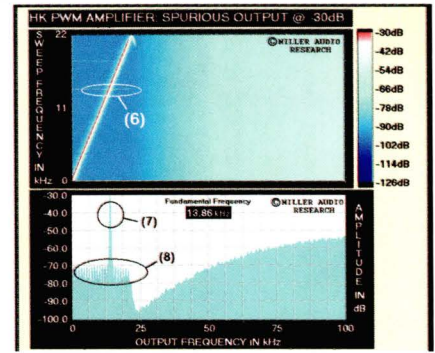
towards the top of the spectrum (1), freeing the audioband (2) and returning it to something approaching its original 16-bit dynamic range. High fourth to fifth-order shaping is required to re-distribute this noise over such a limited range, which explains the steepness of the curve. Most modern CD players also incorporate a



similar bit-truncation and noise-shaping technology, but this amplifier goes one stage further by applying a pre-equalisation (an inverse distortion) to the digital code, cancelling many of the distortions inherent in its high power PWM output stage. The special intensity plot shows that second and third harmonic distortions (3) and (4) of the audio sweep (5) are reduced close to the level of background noise.

New high-speed MOSFET switches are used in the PWM output stage which runs at 352.8kHz (eight times oversampling) and at a sufficient voltage to generate 200W into an 8 Ohm speaker. Incidentally, the volume control directly adjusts the voltage that is switched, thereby maintaining the dynamic range of the input signal at all output levels.

As a further aid to compactness and efficiency, a switch-mode power supply is employed — its 88.2kHz switching is synchronised with



the 352.8kHz of the PWM output stage to avoid spurious intermodulation (beating) distortions. Nevertheless, at lower signal levels, our advanced virtual instrument test facility exposed a momentary instability (6) between power supply and output stage, triggered by an audio signal containing 13.86kHz (7). For clarity, this frequency has been sliced-out to show the spikes of distortion (8) caused by this instantaneous 'blip'. Naturally, the commercial version of this 'digital amplifier' will need to be thoroughly de-bugged!

Finally, a fourth-order analogue filter couples the digital PWM output to the loudspeaker, blocking the very-high-frequency, noise-shaped 'rubbish' while revealing the analogue music waveform across the usual 0-22kHz (CD) audio bandwidth.

Currently, this is the prototype's most vulnerable spot as its analogue filter complicates the amplifier's output impedance, modifying its frequency response according to the reactive nature of loudspeaker and cables. A future version is likely to incorporate an auto-calibration feature, using a test pattern to determine any irregularities caused by the speaker load and applying an inverse compensation in the digital domain. And, because the amplifier is largely DSP-based, such a feature (including preset 'speaker memories') could be incorporated "more or less for free".

Gimme gimme gimme

"How much and when?" I hear you ask. About £2,000 a year from now seems a good guess, and that's not an unreasonable ticket for a single box that replaces a standalone DAC and 200W amplifier. And once the economies of scale take over — it cannot be long before Far Eastern giants follow Harman's bold lead — expect to see the price of genuine 'digital' amplifiers come tumbling down.

This, however, is just the beginning. By integrating a Class D amplifier into the design of a loudspeaker, the audio signal can be distributed, manipulated and amplified in the digital domain right up until the last possible moment. Complex loudspeaker equalisation is a relative doddle in DSP, and would rid the hi-fi system of speaker crossovers and cables, analogue interconnects and conventional amplification in one fell swoop.

Though it is no more than a prototype at this stage, Harman's Discrete-Time amplifier is a clear signpost to the potential future of affordable, high-quality domestic music reproduction. ▲

A heavenly Response

Never mind the run-in time — Alan Sircom can wait for a truly magical speaker experience.

Forsometimes now I have rated the ProAc *Response One* as my favourite small-box loudspeaker. It's fast and tidy, and sufficiently honest for the lack of any real bass to be overlooked. To my mind, any speaker that could combine the speed and clarity of the *Response One* with a realistic bottom end would be a winner. And I guess that's how I'd have to describe the £2,700 ProAc *Response Two Point Five*.

When it comes to unpacking this new ProAc, you'd be well advised to enlist help, ideally from a Krypton Factor heat winner. Each speaker comes packed in a large, double-skinned box that is next to impossible to open.

Mind the spikes!

While it's not the heaviest speaker in the world, the *Two Point Five* weighs plenty for a rather svelte floorstander. A small matching plinth adds a couple of centimetres to the footprint of the speaker and thereby increases stability. I tried the speaker both with and without the plinth, and was surprised how much difference that extra piece of wood made to the sound. One criticism here concerns the brass collars that lock the large spikes to

either the speaker or plinth. If you over-tighten the spikes, the spike locks into the collar and refuses to move, while the collar spins freely in the wooden plinth itself. But in truth, I can't think of a way to overcome this

without breaking the elegant line of the speaker plinth.

The *Response Two Point Five* has to be one of the prettiest speakers on the hi-fi circuit at the moment, especially when finished in the same sumptuous burr ash as our review sample. This elegant finish extends to the sides and base, although the rear panel, with its rhodium Michell bi-wire posts and rear-firing port, is in a more utilitarian black. This tall floorstander is neatly slimline and without the grille; only two handed drive units break its smooth lines. The result is less pleasing when the grille is left on, but at this quality level, it should only be used as protection when the speakers are not being played.

The two drivers are the 19mm fabric dome tweeter used in many a ProAc *Response* speaker, and a 178mm Scanspeak carbon-fibre mid-bass unit, which has a very uneven texture and looks as if it was finished in a hurry. Driver units of this type have been seen in the Wilson WATT/PUPPY and prototypes of the forthcoming Wilson Benesch speaker, but never before in a ProAc design. After its success in the *Two Point Five*, you can expect to see this carbon-fibre unit—and, unfortunately, cheaper and less well-made clones—in many other models.

Two Point Five childhood

The attempt to mate the tweeter with the carbon-fibre bass unit has meant that the *Two Point Five* is less efficient than the rest of its *Response* siblings, lowering the claimed sensitivity to a humble figure of only 86dB/W/m. In truth, this will not pose any problems for the majority of high-end amplification, but it precludes using the *Two Point Fives* with a 3W single-ended triode design—unless you like your music exceedingly quiet.

The other by-product of the carbon-fibre drive unit is the inordinate run-in time. I appreciate that all reviewers labour the point about running in speakers, and ProAc boxes are known to have a long run-in, but the *Two Point Five* takes the biscuit. A note accompanied my review samples, suggesting that they needed a few hours run-in before



Leave the grilles off and do away with all opposition in the 'How do we furnish our home?' debate.

attempting any serious listening. A few hours? They were switched on for ten hours a day, five days a week for several weeks in our office system before they even got to my place, and then they were given some serious abuse before I put finger to keyboard. Even three months after being delivered, the *Two Point Fives* still seem to have a little way to go before they give their best. Deadlines wait for neither man nor drive unit, however, so keep on reading in the knowledge that I firmly believe there is still better to come from the *Two Point Fives*.

Growing talent

I used the *Two Point Fives* with a number of components — both valve and solid state, both analogue and digital. Rather than give a long and torturous list of components, suffice it to say that the *Two Point Fives* simply complemented each product's performance with candour and accuracy. If you fed them signal from a cheap CD player, the sound-stage flattened and the response became bright. The very best analogue sounded warmer and more musical, yet not as accurately focused or as weighty as similarly-priced digital audio.

What shocked me about this design was the sheer speed of the bass driver. As it runs in, it gains more and more bass depth, but the carbon-fibre unit always keeps up with the speed of the tweeter. It gives the *Response Two Point Five* the sort of transients that only electrostatics can normally achieve, with the dynamic attack typical of a good box. The result is that the bass of a note appears at the same time as the treble attack and the percussive elements. Such integration between two drive units is so very rare that it is near magical when it occurs.

As its voice broke and the bass began to drop, the *Two Point Five* needed to come further and further away from the rear wall. Yet, at about 0.5m into the room, it began to open up. At this point, images began to flow and the speakers just started to disappear sonically. There was always a hint of ProAc warmth and ProAc zing, but these minor colorations do nothing but enhance the performance, unless you listen solely to thrash metal. And with a speaker this good in most areas, such foibles can be overlooked easily.

The other ProAc trademark was stamped all over this speaker: coherence. From top to toe of its frequency response it tied together performers in the sound stage with a silken thread. This was particularly noticeable on early stereo recordings like Billy Holiday's *Songs*



For Distingué Lovers. Any peaks or spikes in the frequency response would undermine the smoothness of the recording, but the ProAc sailed through these pieces with flying colours.

Confessing to a combination

They really had all the aspects I liked about the ProAc *Response One S* — that speed, that smoothness, that warmth and that easy, unforced quality to the music — with an extra underpinning of bass. This gave the *Two Point Five* a deeply rooted solidity to its music, without compromising the performance one iota.

I tried the *Two Point Fives* on everything from Albinoni to Zappa, at every volume level from a whisper to a scream. No matter what I played on these speakers, it always sounded fast-paced and enjoyable, with a side helping of musicality. Jimmy Hughes once said that a good hi-fi product should give the best from almost every kind of music, and on that criterion, the *Response Two Point Five* is a very good loudspeaker indeed.

Although I am loath to make systemic judgements with high-end components, there is one name which kept coming back to me: Audio Research. While listening I couldn't help remembering the sound and the emotion that the *LS7/VT60* combination brought about when I tested it back in issue 136. Some time after that, there followed a couple of conversations with dealers who stocked both ProAc and ARC, who said the sound of the two combined is greater than the sum of the parts. Finally, it was Stuart Tyler, Mr ProAc himself, who confessed to being a Audio Research user whenever products are tested. Unfortunately, I couldn't get my hands on an ARC combination to check this out, but I am reliably informed that the pairing is one of those all-time greats, like Kenneth

Brannagh and Emma Thompson. On second thought, make that bread and butter or peaches and cream.

I dare say that you could do better than the ProAc *Response Two Point Five*. But not in a conventional box and not for under £3,000. If you want a better conventional box speaker, then it's either bigger ProAc's, or it's out with the attaché for Wilsons, Avalons or similar. Otherwise, you need to consider panels, omni-directional Shahinians or single system all-Linn, all-Naim.

Truth or dare

My feelings? For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good conventional boxes, the *Two Point Fives* should definitely be the first port of call.

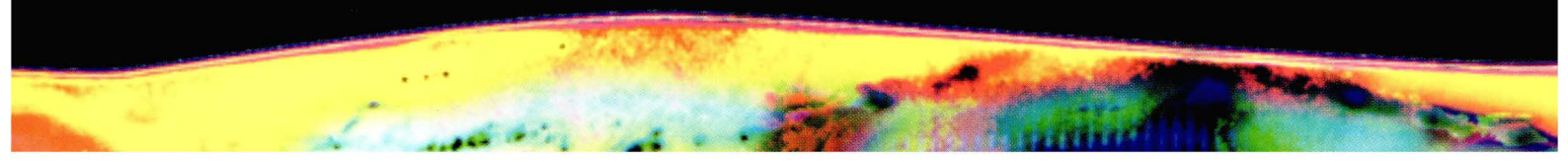
At the start of this review I mentioned that I had been using ProAc's *Response One S* speaker for many years. After hearing the *Two Point Five*, I simply can't live with its smaller sibling any more. Finding so little to criticise makes me feel uneasy, and never before have I written a review where the biggest problem seemed to be an ill-fitting collar on the base of the speaker. Now either my critical faculties are on holiday or the ProAc *Response Two Point Five* is the best 'real-world' box speaker I've heard. I'm sure it's the latter.

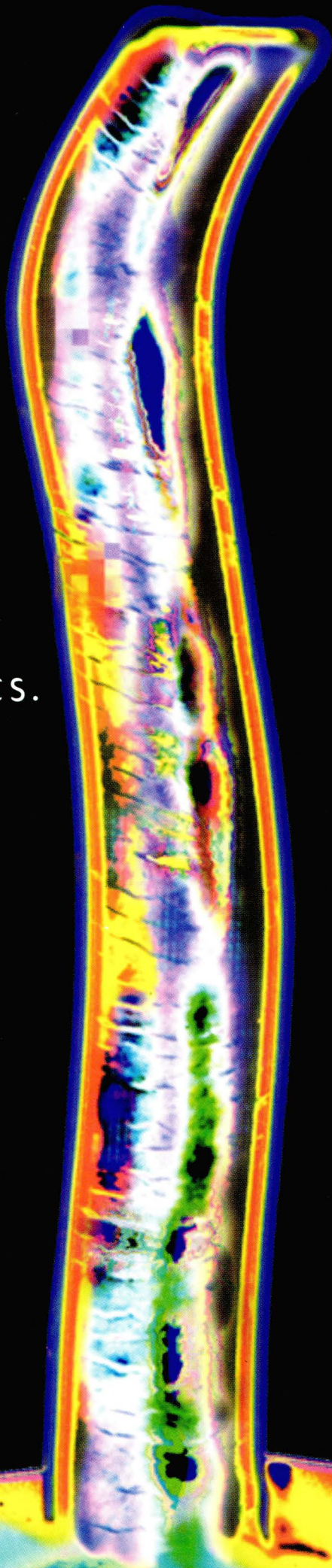
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The 178mm carbon-fibre mid-bass unit prolongs run-in time, but secures a great performance — eventually!

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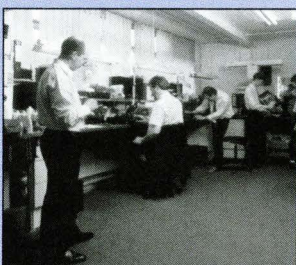


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Help!

IF YOUR SONIC SPARK PLUGS ARE DAMP, YOU NEED AUDIO ADVICE FROM ALVIN 'CRANKSHAFT' GOLD

Codas or candy?

I have a Yamaha AX-400 amp, Acoustic Research 112 speakers, and a new Marantz CD-63. When I bought the latter, I also rewired the system using QED 79 strand speaker cables, but cheap interconnects. As I'm new to hi-fi, I'm uncertain about how to upgrade the system from here. My budget is limited to £150-£200.

Brian Drought, via the Internet

In the spirit of putting first things first, I am tempted to suggest that £150 or so would buy a neat pile of CDs. But if you are set on a quick and cheerful upgrade to your system, there are plenty of options, probably the most effective of which would be replacing the speakers. To my mind, the obvious suggestion is the KEF Coda 7, a fun little bundle that sounds clean yet bold and outgoing, and which is capable of getting along

just nicely with relatively inexpensive, medium power amplifiers. Just be aware that the Coda 7 has its limitations, notably a rather slim-sy structure that causes the sound to change audibly with changes in volume level.

Beyond Best Buy

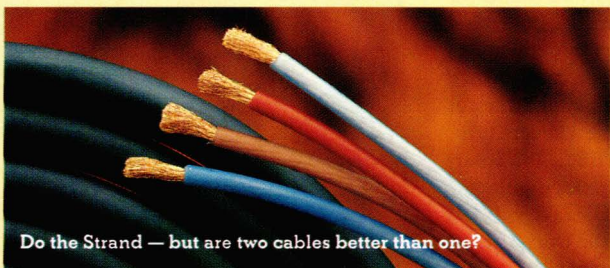
My current all-Best-Buys system consists of the following: Philips CD850 CD player, Rotel RA-820AX amplifier, Mordaunt-Short MS20 speakers, Atacama SE24 stands, Cable Talk Talk 3 speaker cable and QED interconnect cable. I find the sound too polite and relaxed, especially with rock. Percussion sounds bland and the bass could be tighter and quicker. I'm after a more lively, dynamic and immediate sound, but the budget is tight. Which of the following tweaks would you suggest: bi-wiring the speakers, filling the stands with sand, replacing Blu-Tack under the speakers with spikes, fitting Deflex panels into the loudspeakers, or fitting the Trichord Clock 2 modification to the CD player? Perhaps you have a different suggestion...
Carlos Lorenzo, Suffolk

It's scarcely a novel observation — in fact one of the respondents this month makes the very same point — but only about half the success of any system can be attributed to the major hardware. The rest is in the way it is used. According to some, the Trichord clock mod kit really does the biz, but I can't vouch for it personally, and until I do I shall retain my deep, natural scepticism. I must say I'd worry about modifying the speakers too.

The other ideas, however, are broadly on the right

tracks. I'd certainly bi-wire the speakers, which should improve definition and instrumental separation, as well as damping the bass more effectively. Mass loading the stands would also help, but spiking the speaker bases is a definite maybe. Very small beads of Blu-Tack may well sound preferable, but listen to that for yourself. Use the speakers without covers, clean all the contact points on the cables, and try pulling the speakers a little further away from the walls (a shot in the dark, this one). High quality equipment supports are certainly called for, but a major component change is really what's needed. I'd upgrade the amplifier, and get a (multibit?) CD player to add some fire to your system's belly.

Query of the month



Do the Strand — but are two cables better than one?

Wire to go from here?

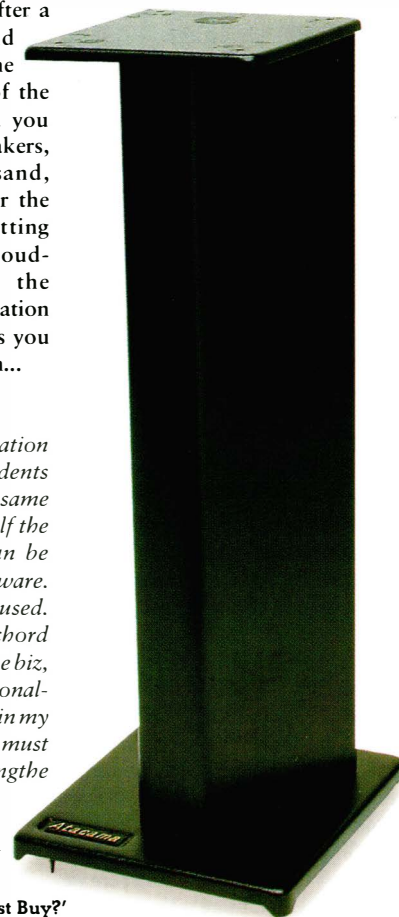
I am confused about the principles of bi-wiring, and cannot understand how speakers can receive both positive and negative high and low frequencies independently. If both sets of wires originate at the positive and negative terminals of the amplifier, surely all frequencies will be sent down the wires in a muddle — so what is the point? I read in a recent copy of *Hi-Fi Choice* that the purpose of bi-wiring was to bypass the loudspeaker's crossover circuits, but I simply can't see how this can happen.

David Setchfield, Hong Kong

We have not been able to trace the comment that you attribute to us. It may be that you are confusing bi-wiring with active crossovers. In active mode — popularised by companies like Apogee, ATC, Linn, Meridian and Naim — the crossover is placed between pre and power amps, allowing the power amps to drive the speaker cone directly, with only a length of cable between them. However, this method usually requires as many amplifiers as there are drive units in the speaker concerned.

In a bi-wired loudspeaker, although both sets of cables carry the full audio band, they feed to separate treble and bass crossover sections within the speaker. This prevents powerful bass sounds modulating (distorting) the delicate treble information, via the common signal return path that would be found in non-bi-wired crossovers.

Bi-wired speakers move this earthing point to the joining of the speaker cables at the amplifier terminals. Alan Sircom/Paul Miller



Atacama SE24 — 'Beyond Best Buy?'

Pioneer's PD-S904 is one to look for in 'Down to the music'.



Down to the music

My current system includes a Cambridge Audio P70 amp and Mission 753 loudspeakers. I hope to upgrade my source, and have shortlisted the Marantz CD63, Sony CDP-915E and Onkyo DX750 players in the hope of adding a touch of sparkle to the sound. Which would be best?
Jim Hawthorne, County Down

All three CD players you mention are worthy to take pride of place in your system. All three received Swing Tags in our tests. However, both the Marantz CD-63 and Sony CDP-915E have been discontinued and currently we have yet to test the replacements. Obviously, you may find these models at discounted prices, which could be an advantage, but otherwise you will have to check out the latest models by Sony and Marantz, many of which may not be formally tested in Choice for a few months.

Sony's new CDP-561E is slightly below the kind of budget you mention, but is well worth checking out as a benchmark player. Another model that may be worth a look is the Pioneer PD-S904, a successor to the celebrated 802. This player features Pioneer's proprietary Legato Link anti-aliasing filter. This has the effect

of making the Pioneer rather system-dependent, but it can sound very persuasive when it comes to life in a complementary system.

Finally, why not investigate more expensive players like the Arcam Alpha 5 Plus or 6 Plus, which have done well in informal tests.

Classic CD player sought

I have a Technics 900 Mk 2 amp and Tannoy Profile 632 speakers, and am thinking of buying a new CD player. I have a few in mind, such as the Sony CDP-915E, Pioneer PD-S703, NAD 502, Denon DCD-101S, Marantz CD-63SE and Technics 770A. I like classical and choral music, and I also listen to pop/rock songs. However, I do not like jazz. What would your recommendations be?
Steven Chan, via the Internet

It is quite likely that one reason why you don't like jazz is that your hi-fi system is not up to the job. It has always been my contention that good hi-fi is a powerful advocate for the new and the unfamiliar. Indeed, for me this almost defines what hi-fi is all about, rather than the usual empty shibboleths of tonal accuracy, low distortion or whatever. You could go as far as saying that the right choice of system will be the one that makes jazz approachable, which you could

then use as the basis of a test with your chosen dealer. Of course, I exclude so-called ambient or chill-out 'music' which, in my view, is about as close to being music as I am to winning the National Lottery (I never enter). I had to spend hours listening to sub-Kraftwerk (if that's not a contradiction in terms) ambient audio doodlings at Live '95, and believe me, it seemed like years.

But back to the subject in hand. You've named a bunch of decent players, but I suspect that the Sony CDP-561E, a snip at just £200, is better than any of these. The story here is that Sony UK's Eric Kingdon has been working on a number of new hi-fi components over several years, and his team's dedication has finally been recognised and backed by Sony Japan. The CDP-561E marks a renaissance of Sony's fortunes as a serious player in the hi-fi market. Let's drink to that...

Quad vadis?

Currently using a Quad 34/405-2 amp combo, I am considering using the new 77 to replace the 34 and bi-amp with the 405-2. I believe this would be a valid configuration but I'm not sure how well suited the old 405-2 would be to partner the radically new 77. I'd appreciate any thoughts...
Tim Hills, via Compuserve

Bi-amping — driving the bass and tweeter of a speaker with a separate amplifier, each with its arm of its passive crossover network, is a valuable technique that can

improve the performance of a loudspeaker, depending on the design and capabilities of the speaker and the amplifiers. Whether it is sensible to bi-ampify in your case depends on precisely what combination of equipment you own — there's certainly no way that I can advise you without knowing what speakers you have. But let me add that irrespective of the merits of bi-amping per se, I would rather have a single really good amp than two moderately good ones.

Waxing lyrical

My system comprises a Quad 67 CD player, Cyrus III amp with PSX power supply, Mission 753 speakers and Chord cables, and intercon-

Query of the month



Each month we're giving away a one metre pair of Precious Metals interconnect cables to the writer of the most interesting letter. If you have any system queries send them to: *Hi-Fi Choice* (Help!) Dennis Publishing Ltd, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

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FACTORY DIRECT

Acoustic Energy AE100 - £199.95

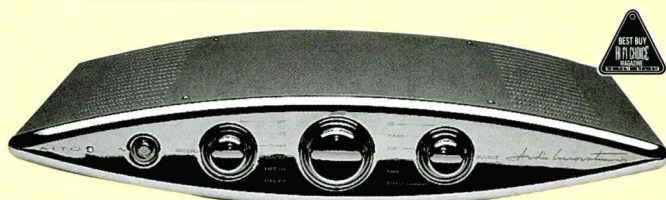
In keeping with their tradition of excellent small speakers, the AE100s give "superb clarity... focus and depth" at "a price that makes them too good to miss". "You're onto a bargain".

-What Hi-Fi? - October 95

WHAT HI-FI? Verdict ★★★★★



FACTORY DIRECT



Audio Innovation Alto Amplifier (Black) - £299.95

Chrome version (pictured) - just £329.95

Also available Alto CD-player, (Chrome) - just £449.95, (Black) - £399.95

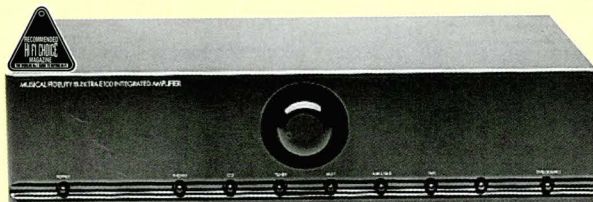
"Succeeds in projecting a marvellous sense of space, air and delicacy... listeners were utterly charmed by the Alto's unforced and thoroughly natural presentation".

-Hi-Fi Choice - June 94

WHAT HI-FI? Verdict ★★★★★

Musical Fidelity E100 - £599.95

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WHAT HI-FI?
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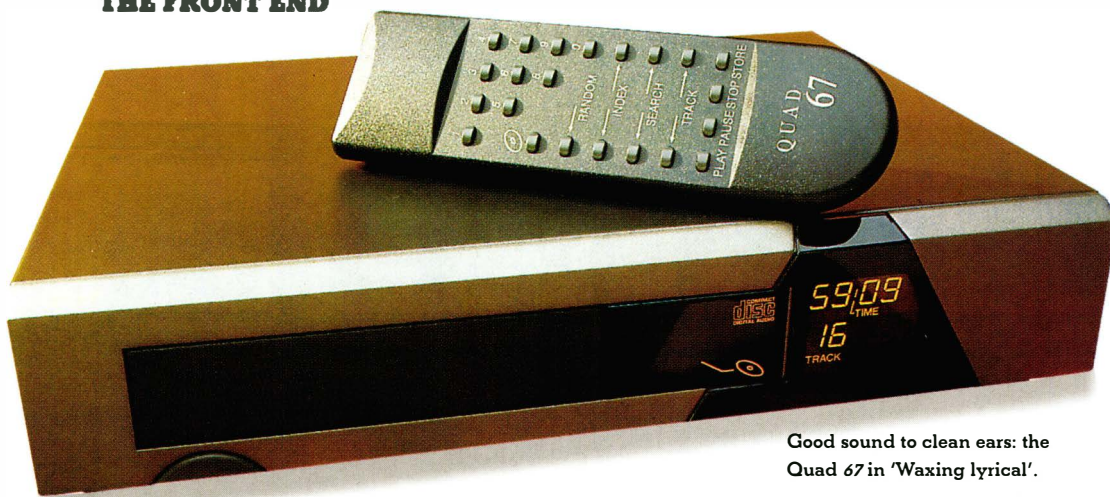
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Good sound to clean ears: the Quad 67 in 'Waxing lyrical'.

nects. Unlike most of the people writing to you, however, I'm entirely happy with it. Last week I had a sore throat, and on visiting the ENT specialist he noticed a big lump of wax in my left ear. In five seconds he had removed it, and BINGO, how much better my hearing is! I rushed to my beloved system, and yes, it is cleaner, sharper and more entertaining. The result was stupendous. I would like to say to other audiophiles that before upgrading your CD player or whatever, make sure that your ears are up to scratch!
H Dandachi, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

You're absolutely right, as I can attest from personal experience. It goes without saying, of course, that ear syringing should only be performed as a corrective to a medical complaint, to whiten an ear blockage, and by properly trained medical personnel with experience of ear wax removal. You kids out there, don't you go trying this one at home.

Pure and healthy

I have recently begun to build my first hi-fi system. I started with an A-X5030 from Teac, and a T-X4030 from the same company. I also have an old Technics SL-PG370 CD player. I would like to buy a pair of good £500 speakers with a pure and 'healthy' sound. Please help!
Eyal Horev, Israel

You should, of course, investigate indigenous brands, which in your case would include Morel (although this company is now based here in the UK), and Ram Kol, if it is still operating. Other good choices with the 'health', serviceability

and robustness that you will clearly need include Castle Severn (floorstanding, £500), the DM620I from B&W (ditto, £430) and the Polk RT8 (US-made, ditto, £380).

Sting in the tale

My system includes a Marantz CD10, Cyrus III amplifier with PSX-R and a pair of Mission 780s speakers borrowed from a friend. I know I should upgrade the speakers, and I have a maximum budget of £1,000-£1,500 for them. I've listened to models from Mission, KEF, Royd, Ruark, B&W and Castle. I found that I particularly liked the Ruark Talisman II and the P4 from B&W.

I listen to acoustic music and soft rock. I like my music to be solid with a very deep bass and a strong sense of detail, so that the music sounds almost live. You will know if you play Sting's *Probably Me* (track 7 on *Best of Sting*), that this is what hi-fi is all about. My room is 4.5x3m. I love strong projection, but I'm not that keen on a mid-forward system.
Karl Hay, Hertfordshire

Sitting here safely in my flak jacket, I could quite easily reel out a list of my fave speakers, but you've kind of done it already. You clearly know what you're looking for, and to prove it you've picked out a range of excellent brands, and have committed a budget that practically guarantees some measure of success. You must also therefore know the rest of the story: you have to find a quality dealer, and have a listen to as many of your shortlisted models as you can — in a system as close to your own as possible. BADA members are a good place to start.

I will, however, make three points. Point one is that you have an excellent CD player and amplifier, as I am sure you realise. Second, I rather fancy the UKD Callas Gold, which is not on your shopping list. It has tremendous vitality and projection, and it's the right size for your room — anything bigger is likely to sound overwhelming. Finally, Sting is for wimps. Ya boo sucks!

Hot amps

My system includes a Pioneer PD-S703 CD player and A-

503R amp, an Audio Alchemy DAC-in-the-Box converter, van den Hul *The First* digital interconnect, Rega Kyte speakers and Cable Talk Talk 3 speaker cables.

I am writing to you because I am not happy with the amp. It seems to lose a lot of the mid-band and it sounds dull. I now have a feeling I bought it because it was a hot day.

As to upgrades, I have so far been considering the Audiolab 8000A and the Arcam Delta 290, but I have no opportunity to listen to them before purchase. What do you recommend on my £500-£600 budget?
George Czartoryski, Poland

You're right about the Pioneer, which, unlike some of its stablemates, is a thoroughly uninspiring and, yes, cloyingly dull amplifier. If you can locate a sample of the original UK spec A-400 (not its successor, the A-400X, please note), you will find it to be one of the most lively, engaging, yet transparent amplifiers you could wish for, and it will drive anything — and I mean anything.

If this idea proves impractical, then by all means try either of the two amplifiers that you have named (in the UK, at least, these both sell for £500 or thereabouts, whereas the A-400 is a little less than £300). You have selected two highly developed and thoroughly well sorted mainstream designs, and they're both very well built internally. All this makes it quite hard to choose between them. In the final analysis however, I believe that the crisp, detailed Arcam will be more to your taste than the slightly more thickly set Audiolab 8000A. Enjoy!



UKD's Callas Gold is just right for a quick 'Sting in the tale'.

The Jimmy Hughes Experience

If you're a DIY kind of hi-fi fan, **Jimmy Hughes** is your man.

This month, you'll need your sonic screwdriver, some Blu-Tack and a cereal packet. . .

Moulded baffles, it seems, are in. An increasing number of speakers thus equipped are making their way onto the shelves of your local hi-fi emporium. Recent examples have included designs like Wharfedale's *Modus Music* range, which, like most moulded-baffle designs, has its main drive unit recessed behind the front baffle. Now this may seem like a purely cosmetic move, intended to inject a little style into speaker aesthetics and hide the driver fixing screws, but I'm convinced that it can have important and far-reaching effects on sound quality.

The vast majority of hi-fi speakers still persist with a flat baffle, the drive units mounted on the front to give wide, unimpeded dispersion. This helps avoid diffraction effects and problems with tonal coloration. However, in my experience, narrowing the dispersion of the speaker drive units makes the music sound firmer and more solidly focused, so it projects further out in the room without having to be played loudly. Bass gets tighter, and it becomes easier to hear pitch changes.

Voices and instruments are more solidly delineated and three dimensional. It's almost as if recessing the drive units in this way has a very slight horn-loading effect, giving a better coupling to the air—hence the greater sense of attack and firmness. It's also possible that there's a reduction in unwanted interaction effects at the baffle between drive units.

Interestingly, many of the old BBC-based monitor designs (like Spendor's *BC-1*) had the main bass/mid driver mounted behind the baffle. Ditto the *LS3/5a*, which also had thick, square-section felt bars around the tweeter. Now I'm not saying that either of these famous speakers was a flawless performer, but I feel certain that both would have sounded noticeably less good had the bass driver been mounted on the front of the baffle.

So why don't we see more recessed drive units? It's uncommon with serious hi-fi speakers, yet nearly all speakers supplied with current mid systems feature heavily-moulded baffles. However, I suspect that the main aim here is to create an impressive hi-tech appearance! Doubtless many speaker designers feel it's vital to allow the drivers a wide dispersion, and thus would not agree with a word I've said. Yet I

feel that they may have failed to appreciate the possibilities on offer.

There are certain practical drawbacks too. Designing a speaker cabinet so that the bass/mid unit fixes from behind the baffle can make the manufacturing process much more labour-intensive. If you've ever had to take apart a Spendor *BC-1*, you'll know just how many screws hold the front baffle in place. It's much easier to make a one-piece enclosure and mount the drive units from the front.

If you're up for a bit of simple DIY and have a taste for experimentation, it's possible to simulate the effect of a rear-mounted driver by making a false baffle. One way would be to make a cloth-covered wooden grille about 1.5cm thick with suitable circular cut outs for the drive units, and use it in place of the existing speaker grilles. This would probably be the most elegant solution. However, before going to all that trouble, it's possible to fake the effect with some cardboard and Blu-Tack! Later on, if you hear a worthwhile difference and like the effect, you can make things more permanent—perhaps by fabricating a new speaker grille as outlined.

First the bass unit. Begin with some thin flexible card (an old cereal packet will do) and cut a strip some 8mm wide and about 30cm long. Fix it to the upper circumference of the bass/mid driver chassis so it forms a semi-circular barrier between the bass driver and tweeter. Play some music (choose something with a bass line that's plucked; perhaps a disc where the lower frequencies spread slightly and lack tightness) and see what happens. With the card in place the bass should tighten noticeably, and voices and instruments ought to focus more solidly. Card removed, you may find that things sound smeared and lacking in solidity.

If you like what you hear, try putting a small



ring around the dome of the tweeter. You could make this out of Blu-Tack, or perhaps some thick felt, *LS3/5a* style.

The depth of the ring and its proximity to the dome is a matter of personal taste; the bigger it is and the closer it gets to the tweeter diaphragm, the greater the effect—for better or worse! If you hedge in the tweeter excessively the tonal balance will harden; and if you make the ring too small and/or too far from the dome, the effect will be negligible.

My *Impulse H-1*s have both bass driver and tweeter mounted on the front of the baffle, and are treated in the manner outlined. The improvement is very noticeable; so much so, I would never willingly go back. I've also done something similar to the *REL Stadium II* subwoofer that's currently in my system, putting a 20mm-wide PVC tape band around the lower edge of the mesh cage that covers the *REL's* Volt bass driver, to narrow dispersion. This has resulted in firmer, more solid bass, with increased attack and improved clarity/definition. Give it a try and see what you think!

HINTS & TIPS: SPIKES

During the late 1970s there was a slow but gradual realisation that the perceived sound of individual hi-fi components could be radically altered by resting them on different support surfaces. Hand in hand with this went a growing appreciation of the need for components to be rigidly mounted and wobble-free. Loudspeakers proved particularly sensitive, needing to be firmly anchored and devoid of movement. But achieving the desired rigidity was easier said than done — how do you rigidly fix a speaker that sits on thick carpet?

The answer was steel spikes. These penetrate the carpet and go into the floor itself, thereby giving a much more solid fixing. There is a certain logic to the firm fixing of speakers, because cabinet movement will inevitably lead to losses of information — cone movement in one direction is partly cancelled by unwanted cabinet movement in the opposite direction. However, it was soon realised that similar improvements in focus, tightness and control could be obtained by siting source components and amplifiers on spikes.

Accessory spikes and cones to 'improve' the sound of your system were soon available, and if an increase in tightness and sharpness was the desired effect, very often the results were highly beneficial. As I opined last month, though, an excess of spikes (especially in conjunction with concrete floors and glass shelving) can lead to a stark, brittle sound that lacks warmth and ease. Of course, much depends on the tonal balance of the listening room and personal taste; where the system sounds warm, soft and slightly lazy, the use of spikes will help improve focus, detail and dynamics. With the immediacy of CD, however, don't many systems already err on the side of brightness and harshness?

In order to work correctly, spiked stands need careful installation. Where four or more are used in groups, it's vital to adjust each spike to the correct height. If you're setting up a speaker stand, begin with the stand in position but the loudspeaker removed, and adjust the spikes up or down so that the stand is level and there's no side-to-side rocking. This is crucial, especially on concrete floors, as speaker and stand may 'chatter' if there's excessive movement.

Most spikes are fitted with a lock nut, which should be tightened once the correct height has been found; otherwise the spike will wobble in its fixing hole.

To reduce any tendency to chatter when spikes are used with concrete floors, it's worth weighting the stand. Hollow steel stands can be filled with lead shot or sand, increasing the mass, which should result in improved sonic focus and a wider dynamic range. The sound should be firmer and more controlled, especially at high volume levels. If you're using support cones under speakers or other hi-fi components, it's often beneficial to put something slightly compliant at the base of the cone to act as a cushion. Goldring markets a nice cone with a thick sticky pad on the base, which maintains rigidity, yet gives some decoupling too, creating the best of both worlds.

Incidentally, spikes and cones seem to work best when used so that they point downwards. However, if you want to put a set of cones under a CD player (say), it is probably easier to have the base on the support shelf with the point of the cone going into the bottom of the component. However, if you take the cone and reverse it, you'll find the improvement is greater — in most cases anyway! For stability four spikes are often specified, but for sound quality it will usually be found that three spikes are better. If three-point suspension is felt to be unsafe, go for five support cones or spikes — for some reason, uneven numbers of support points seems to give a better sound. Generally, the sharper the point of the spike or cone, the greater the effect it will have on the sound.

How do spikes work? The argument regarding mechanical rigidity and checking unwanted movement may fit with loudspeakers, but it's harder to justify with amplifiers. And why should the direction, up or down, of the tip make any difference? My personal belief is that spikes and cones manipulate the electromagnetic energy forces that surround all hi-fi components, helping to disperse them through a sharp 'grounding' point. If this is so, it explains why the direction of the tip is significant, and why it has an effect with hi-fi components that shouldn't really need rigid coupling, like amplifiers. (*This is heresy! — Ed*)

I sometimes wonder whether spikes wouldn't actually have an adverse physical effect on components such as CD players and amplifiers — items that benefit from decoupling — from a microphony point of view. The drawbacks are almost certainly disguised by benefits like increased focus and attack, leading one to conclude that things sound better even though the 'improvement' is probably a 70/30 mix of changes for better and worse. Introducing a little decoupling seems to help, giving the advantages of spikes with fewer disadvantages. π

DEALER DECISIONS

Three well-known London dealers give of their opinion

The Query

I have a rapidly ageing but still able system dating back over a dozen years, comprising Rega Planar 3 turntable with A&R P77 cartridge, A&R A60+ amplifier and a pair of Linn Kan speakers, connected up with Naim NACA4 cable.

I wish to add a CD player that will have the longevity and tonal balance to match my system. I listen predominantly to orchestral classical music, occasionally to light classical and opera, but never to popular music, neither jazz nor rock. I understand that I will have to spend upwards of £600.

A friend of mine suggested that I should change the speaker stands for the Mk II Kan stand, but I understand that this stand no longer exists. Can you suggest an alternative?

Geoff Patlow, via the Internet

Son Et Lumiere

Adding a CD will give some life to the system, but I think that you will have to change the amp as well. Personally, I would stick to the Naim Audio range. These products work exceptionally well in their own right, but in partnering them with the Kans you will realise a rare but special kind of synergy.

The basic Naim Audio CD player is the CD3 which retails for about £950. In order to maximise the performance of your sources and loudspeakers I would partner your new CD with a Naim NAC92/NAP90 pre/power combination. This is the minimum set up for use with the Kans, but should you feel flush then maybe you should listen to the NAC72/NAP140. The NACA4 you have at the moment will work well, but if your dealer is up to it get him to lend you some NACA5.

Do change your stands. The Sound Organisation Super High Stands are a suitable alternative to the now discontinued Linns.

Colin Welford, Son Et Lumiere, London W1

Grahams Hi-Fi

This might be the time to consider replacing the A60 with a more up-to-date model. You might try Arcam's own Delta 290, Naim Audio's Nait 3 and Linn Products' Majik.

To further improve the sound, the best option is to upgrade the tonearm from the Rega R-200 to the RB-300, which is available at low cost thanks to Rega's special trade-in deal. At that time, the turntable and stylus could be checked over and we could advise on any possible improvements.

You are well advised to change your speaker stands to the Linn Kan II. Despite that model now being obsolete, most Linn dealers will have some around second hand (we have).

Finally, the CD player we recommend at around £600 is the Arcam Alpha 6, from the same make as your existing amplifier. If you do purchase a new amplifier, you might like to audition Naim Audio's CD3 and Linn Product's Mimik II.

Danny Haikin, Grahams Hi-Fi, London N1

The Cornflake Shop

The CD players that we'd recommend to complement your existing system would start with the Arcam Alpha 6 (right), which shares the good looks, build quality and reliability of the award-winning Alpha 5+ CD player, but has a totally new digital 20-bit audio board.

Considering that you listen mainly to classical music, it would be worth listening to two more expensive players; the Meridian 506 CD player which, having a bitstream D/A converter, has a more subtle, smoother overall sound, and the AVI S2000 MC2, which is a multi-bit CD player with superb clarity and a very wide, revealing soundstage. Also worth auditioning is the Naim CD3.

We've never sold the Linn Kan speakers, but have used them in the past for demonstrations and found that they work well on Royd speaker stands. Alternatively, Target HS stands filled with bird sand would do the job admirably. We have a secondhand pair of Kan speaker stands — for £35 — which you might be interested in.

Rob, The Cornflake Shop, London W1





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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Stan Vincent's enthusiastic report on multimedia CD (Editor's Chair, November) requires a correction and some comment.

First, the existence of separate left and right rear channel signals is a property of the surround encoding system employed and not of digital audio. Second, the quality of MPEG-2 encoding is completely under the control of the producers, who can trade quality against storage requirements. Obviously demos will employ the highest resolution settings, but will commercial sell-throughs do the same? A cynic would note that by holding digital picture quality down to S-VHS standards, the industry would be able to claim higher standards than VHS, while retaining LaserDisc as a premium-price collector's medium.

Finally, on a completely unrelated subject, your Directory entry for AudioQuest *Optilink Z* reads that the cable lacks depth and extension in the frequency extremes. To the best of my understanding, an optical interconnect only passes a bit-stream, with no knowledge of what a particular zero or one represents, this being a matter for the DAC. How can such a cable favour particular frequencies?

David Lockwood
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

You are absolutely correct in that separate left and right rear channels are a function of the surround system employed. However, since the only systems that provide stereo rear channels are digital ones, and it seems unlikely that there will be an analogue one; surely this is something of a non-sequitur.

On the subject of MPEG-2, while we realise that the important decisions are in the hands of the producers, we hope that quality will prevail. Remembering the risible quality of some early CDs we live more in hope than expectation, but we could be pleasantly surprised.

Your final note is the sort that sends shivers throughout the reviewing community, as it is a painful reminder of the beliefs of the more reactionary members of the Audio Engineering Society, some of whom still believe that cables make no difference at all. Although objectively there would be no change in the frequency response between this optical cable and a reference cable, the jitter performance would account for the sort of frequency-related differences mentioned in the Directory.

Speaker's Corner

Just a few lines to enquire as to whether any of your readers have had any problems with JPW loudspeakers. Both bass units and one tweeter of my 80Wpc-rated AP2 speakers gave up while being driven at about 25 watts by my NAD 3020E amp.

Upon returning my speakers to JPW I informed that the damage was caused by clipping and that the company could not be held responsible.

As anyone familiar with NAD amplifiers will know, the 3020E has an orange 'soft clipping' warning light — not that the amp was being driven any-

where near to its limits when the speakers stopped working.

I have since written to JPW expressing my dissatisfaction with its explanations and its reluctance to honour any guarantee of quality regarding the AP2s. Perhaps any future buyers of these £200 loudspeakers should take note!

H Hayler
Plymouth, Devon

We have to side with JPW on this matter, it's a common mistake to assume that high powered amps destroy speakers, but in fact, a 25Wpc amp driven at full tilt can do more damage to a speaker than a 100Wpc amp that is not even straining to achieve the same volume levels. You will find that is a common policy among loudspeaker manufacturers not to guarantee repairs on blown drive units, especially when they are welded solid, as I understand your units were. This is because they have an alarming habit of returning blown-up soon after. As I gather JPW have suggested, perhaps you should have protection circuitry fitted into your speakers. Otherwise, I suggest that either you change your listening habits, or buy a new amp that can take the volume levels.

All done in the best possible taste

In the past it has been stated that the better the hi-fi system, the wider the listener's taste in music becomes. And in effect, this is a factor that influences one's direction in musical taste, especially for those who cannot afford to tread the path of regular upgrades.

Despite considerable tweaking, my budget system produces too rich a bass for my rather complex tastes in music.



JPW AP2s in Not Bomb Proof shocker!

To counter this I have started buying music by artists with more simple styles, such as Mary Black and Van Morrison, thus allowing my speakers to cope better and therefore produce a more satisfying sound.

It is perfectly possible to enjoy music without expensive upgrades by listening to music that shows the strengths of the system, and 'mothballing' those styles that highlight the weaknesses. Obviously, an open mind is required to make these musical transitions.

Terry Pullen
Ocean Reef, Western Australia

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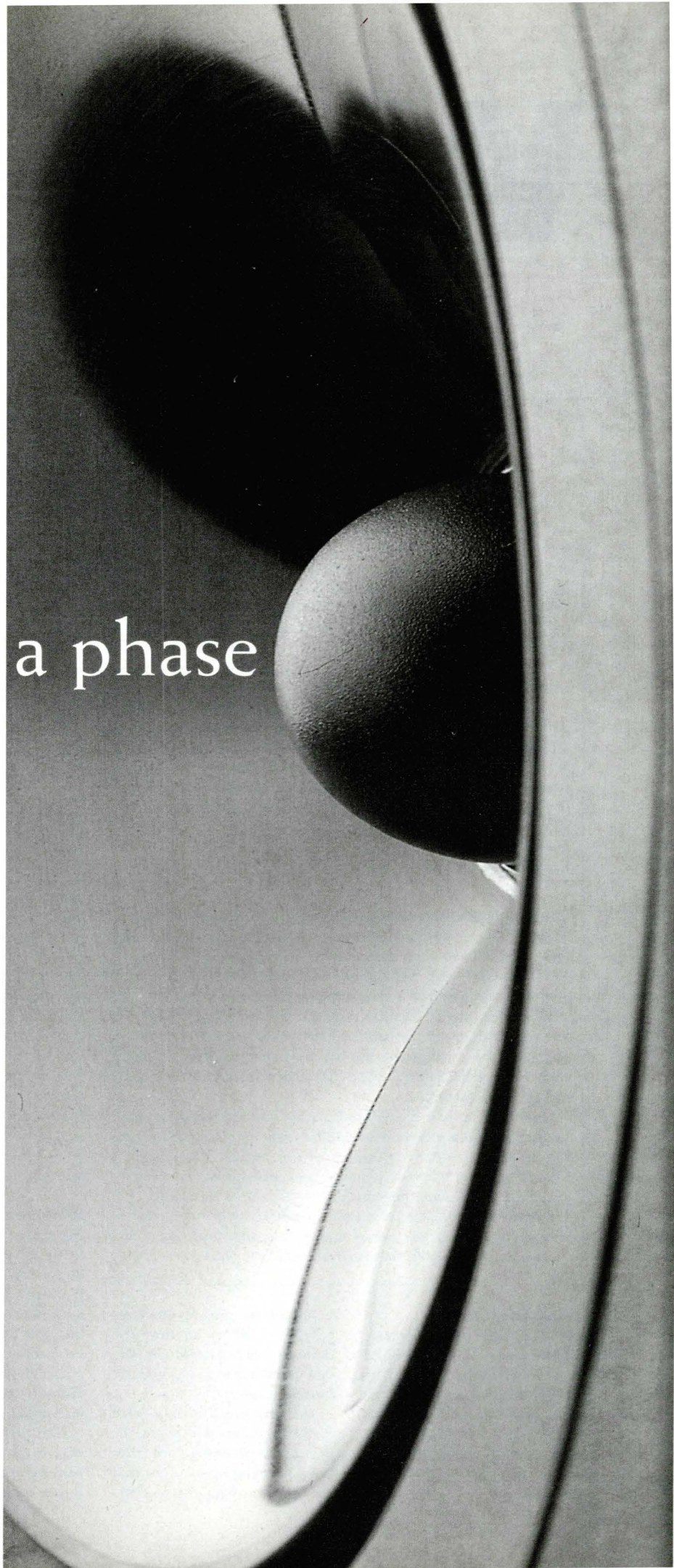
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BUDGET INTEGRATED AMPS

Gourmet audiophile and graphmeister supreme Paul Miller picks
the best integrated amplifiers under £300.

Assuming that you've fully digested our mammoth test of budget CD players back in issue 147, how about a dessert course of matching integrated amplifiers? There's plenty of variety on the menu, including remote-controlled models that will appeal to the couch potato with a sweet tooth, and stark, minimalist designs to tickle the palette of the hard-bitten enthusiast. And between these suet puddings and dry cracker biscuits we're also offering a range of low-fat cheesecakes – amplifiers that attempt to appeal to both heart and mind with varying degrees of success. As ever, the secret is in the topping.

Many of these budget amplifiers are little short of engineering triumphs, particularly those with price tags that nudge below the £200 price point. Because amplifiers are required to wrestle with 'real world' loudspeakers they need far chunkier power supplies and associated circuitry than, say, their partnering CD players. And practical power supplies, robust power amplifier stages and alloy heatsinking all take their fiscal toll before the designer has a chance to start worrying about MM disc stages, motorised volume knobs and the possibility of remote-controlled operation.

In practice there's really no reason why audiophile thinking and remote flexibility

need to be mutually exclusive; yet, when funds are tight, designers often end up robbing Peter to pay Paul in the struggle to offer all things to all consumers.

As a result, the most successful amplifiers in this cut-throat sector of the hi-fi kitchen are usually those that make most ingenious use of relatively basic ingredients. But I'll not spoil the show by spilling all the beans at this stage, so read on to discover which of these dishes left a bad taste in the mouths of our panellists and which had them clamouring for second helpings.

How the Listening Tests were done

Variety and objectivity are the keys to the reliability of our comprehensive listening tests. Variety comes in our choice of music, which extends from pop, rock and jazz through to classical, female vocal and folk.

Objectivity, meanwhile, is maintained by blind listening within a consistent and familiar hi-fi system that allows the cross-correlation of results from one test to another. So, Sony's classic CDP-715E CD player was retained from issue 137 alongside a new pair of Audio Note's AN-E loudspeakers (issue 106) and cabling from Silver Sounds (issues 108 and 109). Before auditioning, each amplifier was thoroughly 'burned-in' using a white-noise generator in the lab.

Our use of precisely matched listening

levels is another unique feature of the *Hi-Fi Choice* reviews, ensuring that every amp is auditioned on a fair and level playing field. On this occasion no less than two separate panels were employed. At the beginning of each day's listening, the volume level was adjusted according to the taste of the panel, after which time it remained constant.

Best Buy and Recommended swing-tags are awarded by the 'blind' panel, whose judgement is based on solely the price of the amplifier after auditioning. Thanks to Roger Batchelor (Denon), Keith Haddock (Harman UK), Mike Martindell (Arcam), Guy Sergeant (Audio Components Ltd) and Alan Sircom (*Hi-Fi Choice*) for the loan of their ears.

THE CAST LIST

Arcam Alpha 5 Plus.....	£240
Cambridge A1	£100
Deva 125	£249
Harman Kardon HK610	£200
JVC AX-R5	£200
Marantz PM-55SE	£250
NAD 310	£150
Pioneer A-300R	£200
Rotel RA-930AX MkII	£150
Sony TA-F246E	£200
Technics SU-A600 Mk2	£230
Yamaha AX-490	£250

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Arcam Alpha 5 Plus

Not new but modestly improved, Arcam's *Alpha 5* amplifier has recently been re-launched, along with its companion *Alpha 6*, in 'Plus' guise. Anyone who cares to compare the machine in the photo above with its mugshot in issue 134 will be hard pressed to spot the difference from the familiar, slimline chassis populated with tone, balance and volume controls, and selection for some six inputs. The latter include a permanent MM phono stage, but in an attempt to squeeze a higher performance from its novel power amp, Arcam has enhanced its isolation from noise and distortion sometimes created by a big and beefy power supply.

The toroidal mains transformer is now better shielded, while improved current sources reduce the power amp's susceptibility to modulation via the supply — claims that are borne out by appropriate improvements in the *Alpha 5's* measured performance (see Lab Report).

The excellent build quality is on a par with the look-alike *Alpha 6* (issue 129) although the £100 gulf that separates the two models represents the loss of remote control and a slight downgrading of its internal component quality.

Sound Quality

After the window-opening effervescence of Harman's *HK610* in our listening tests, the more enclosed and broody intonation of the *Alpha 5+* proved something of an anticlimax. However, our listeners were impressed by the sheer strength and purposefulness of its music, an engaging confidence that was unaffected by its lack of airiness and atmosphere.

So, Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* still sounded lively and well-integrated but offered no great sensation of depth or ambience. "Mozart in the comfort of your broom closet," remarked one listener. This same effect carried over to the '50s recording of Freddie Hubbard where, despite the airless and mildly claustrophobic ambience, the unique and sultry tonal colour of the sax was preserved, along with a marvellous sense of all the musicians playing along together. "Still very satisfying," concluded the panel.

Less explicit and less lively than the CD input, Arcam's MM stage was "remarkably free from the worry of musical dynamics". This tallies with the "lack of dynamic contrast" voiced against the original *Alpha 5* in issue 134. Bright-sounding loudspeakers would undoubtedly partner the *Alpha 5+* to better effect.

Conclusion

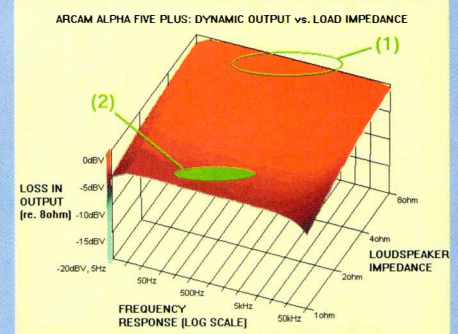
Almost regardless of its tonal consistency and ability to delve deep into a mine of detail, the performance of Arcam's latest *Alpha 5* remains dominated by an unwelcome sense of caution and confinement. It seems as if Arcam's uncommonly capable power supply, while empowering the *5 Plus* over the trickiest loudspeakers, is also stifling the subtle contrasts, the playfulness and zest that helps bring recorded music to life.

Fortunately, Arcam's own *Alpha 6* clearly demonstrates that none of these qualities need be mutually exclusive so long as the circuit 'matrix' — the nest of peripheral resistors and capacitors — are similarly inclined. Sadly, and in contrast with the *Alpha 6*, this is not a luxury extended to the budget *Alpha 5 Plus*.

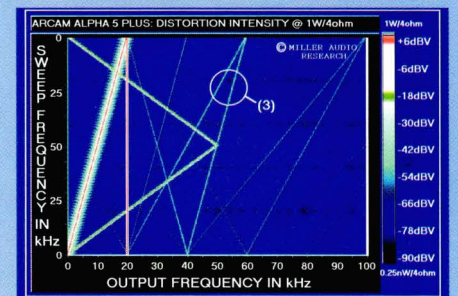
VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£239.90
▲	An even-handed and detailed improvement on its predecessor.
▼	Lack of air makes for oppressive listening
✉	Arcam, Pembroke Avenue, Denny Ind. Centre, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB5 9PB (01223) 440964

LAB REPORT

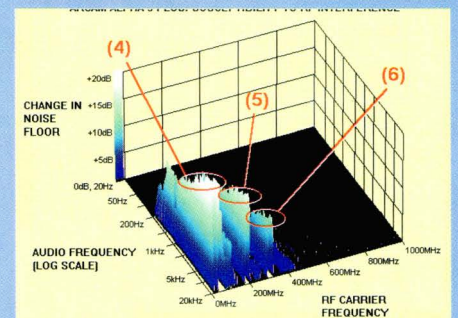
POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



TOTAL DISTORTION



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



The remarkable correlation in measured performance between this *Alpha 5+* and the original *Alpha 5* (issue 134) pays testament to the consistency of Arcam's manufacturing process. Once again, an astonishingly capable power supply is its principle claim to fame, revealed here in the flat and extended power response (1) that holds true — under dynamic conditions — right down to the lowest impedance loads (2).

Capable of sustaining momentary bursts of 430W, this '40W amplifier' is more tolerant of aberrant loudspeakers than any other in this budget price category. Otherwise, Arcam's revisions have yielded an improvement in residual hum and S/N of about 1dB without changing either its input sensitivity or distortion (typically 0.003-0.006 per cent). Once again, the highest odd-order IM distortions (3) are still well clear of the audio band.

Sadly, and despite Arcam's new input coupling capacitor, these mods do little to reduce the *Alpha's* susceptibility to RF interference at 50MHz (4), 200MHz (5) and 300MHz (6). As ever, this could give rise to slightly unpredictable results with some CD players.

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Cambridge A1

In the late nineteenth century, paying customers of a riding stable in deepest Cambridgeshire routinely had their mounts selected for them. No argument, no debate, you simply rode the horse you were given. The proprietor of these stables was called Hobson, an inflexible individual who, in modern times, has lent his name to the range of integrated amplifiers available to the discerning punter with £100 in his saddle pocket.

In this instance, Hobson's choice is the A1, a surprisingly capable box of transistors that's assembled in the PRC (People's Republic of China) and not the university town suggested by its familiar logo. If the A1 was built in Cambridge it would probably cost £200, undermining the efforts of Richer Sounds' Audio Partnership.

Its styling is perfunctory but clearly designed to match Cambridge's DACMagic-1 converter and CD4 CD player (issues 136 and 147). Simplicity is the key, as a dual-concentric volume control avoids the need for a separate balance knob while a MM phono input is only provided as a retro-fittable option.

Similarly, A1's modular construction, with separate boards for localised input selection, volume and tone controls, makes for easy assembly and servicing. The complementary power amp, with its discrete Darlington output stage, is even fitted with full electronic protection (see Lab Report) and some 'tweaky' Siemens layer-type coupling caps in the volume chain.

Sound Quality

Auditioned immediately after Marantz's unfortunate PM-55SE, the A1 seemed to offer a more composed performance that was likened to "a welcome but not entirely invigorating breeze". In general terms there's plenty on offer,

including a good overall balance, an easy-to-follow bass line, pleasing, unforced dynamics and a decent sense of control. Nevertheless, this did not always add up to a particularly riveting musical experience.

Chris Isaak returned to eloquent form on this occasion, avoiding the 'floppiness' heard earlier in the day despite him being "chained to the floor between the speakers" and lacking both the vitality and airiness to develop a truly realistic acoustic. The A1's reluctance to burst free was also reflected in the stilted demeanour of the solo violin from Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante*, an instrument that sounded both clear and detailed but still lacked a sense of spontaneity and virtuosity.

Eddi Reader's voice, meanwhile, tended to overwhelm the subtleties of background detail, burying the rushing sound of synthesisers to the rear of a rather flat and mono-esque soundstage. Even Freddie Hubbard's *Plexus*, whose instruments are usually shunted to the far left and right, was coerced into the middle of the speakers, diminishing any sparkle and spaciousness *en route*. Composed then, but not always so compelling.

Conclusion

Before being acquainted with the price of Cambridge's A1, one panellist concluded that "this does not sound like a cheap amplifier. It's more like a poorly-executed £500 heavyweight: tonally on track but, musically, just plain dull". This is a pertinent observation when you bear in mind the invasive nature of Cambridge Audio's over-protective, er, protection circuitry.

However, at just £100 and for listeners on the strictest of budgets, the A1 still faces no credible competition. So who are we to argue with Hobson?

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £99.95

◆ No real vices...
...an equal number of virtues.

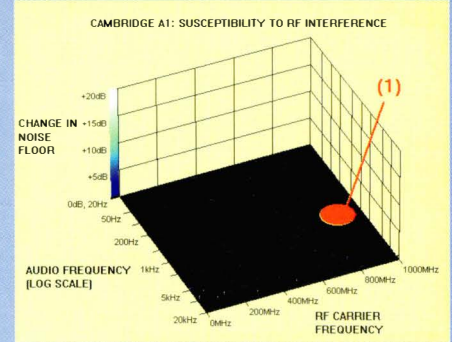
✉ Hi-Fi Club, Richer House,
Hankey Place,
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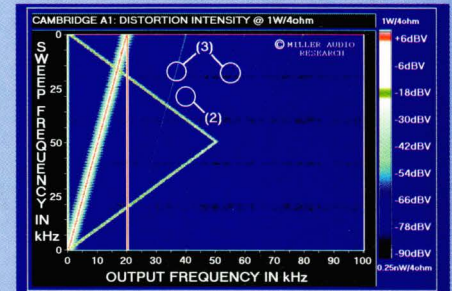
LAB REPORT

AMPLIFIERS

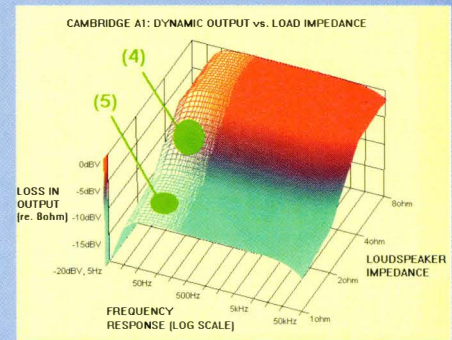
SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



TOTAL DISTORTION



POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



First the good news. An inverting line input stage provides a sufficient rejection of ultrasonic noise to prevent RF distortion from muddying the musical picture — hence the clean plot (1). Conventional distortion, too, is kept to within 0.003-0.01 per cent across much of its 37W range and is limited to high frequency harmonics (2) and innocuous IM patterns (3). Nothing nasty here.

Thanks to our latest test, however, the origins of the A1's subdued character are now graphically revealed. Here we see the repercussion of Cambridge's invasive protection circuitry which both restricts (4) and permanently distorts (typically > 1 per cent THD) the 'current' available to sustain the A1's output into sub-4 Ohm loads.

Under dynamic conditions the A1's voltage output falls by 10dB (a factor of three), realising momentary bursts of just 27-29W into low impedances (5) where, theoretically, values in excess of 200W would be more appropriate. Sensitive, easy-load speakers are a must. Having relayed these findings to Cambridge, we hear that suitable revisions are now afoot.

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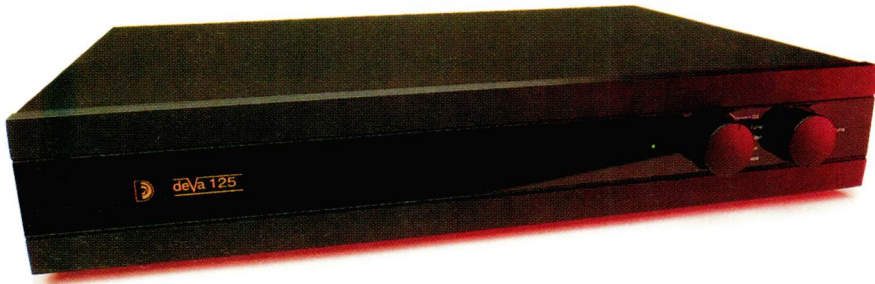
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DeVa 125

Although Morgan Audio Systems has apparently been exporting a range of amplifiers to the Far East over the last three years, only now has it turned its gaze towards the home territory. Baby of the range is the DeVa 125, a lower-powered, line-only offshoot of the DeVa 600 — an export-only model that comes equipped with full remote control.

As you can see, its dour styling errs on the functional side of frivolity, with the single (ie non-concentric) volume control and six-way input selector proving adequate for a no-frills system. Round the back you'll find recessed 4mm sockets for use with banana-equipped speaker cables.

Under the matt black bonnet, however, it's clear that the DeVa 125 has been designed to a tight budget. Obviously, Morgan lacks the economies of scale enjoyed by competitors like Arcam and NAD, let alone mass marketers like Sony and Technics. This is a very basic design, featuring a single-rail power supply and integrated output stage from Thompson. Passive components in the signal path, including the vital DC-blocking capacitors (a feature of all single-rail designs), are of commercial rather than 'audiophile' quality.

I remain confused, however, by what looks like a black metal screening can placed over the line input circuit tracks. As far as I can tell, this is an empty plastic box glued on to the PCB.

Sound Quality

Subjectively louder than every other amplifier in this test, the DeVa 125 throws an unlikely quantity of music at its audience, rather like a barrage of light artillery. If this suggests that the 125 is unsubtle then, as one panellist remarked, "you've got it in one".

The amplifier enforces a bouncy and attractive sense of rhythm on all types of music. This sounds just fine with the likes of the Red Hot Chilli Peppers but, otherwise, you'll find more measured styles of music still sprinting unceremoniously towards the finishing tape.

The introduction to Freddie Hubbard's *Plexus* uses a grand piano to set the musical scene, yet in this instance (and before we knew what had hit us) the brass had burst upon the scene with an effect that was described as "more impotent than dramatic". Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* proved to be a roller-coaster ride, never once pausing for breath as it chased through sheet after sheet, skipping over incidental details and subtleties of sound-staging en route. A characterful performance then, neither unappealing or uninteresting, just very hyper.

Conclusion

It's an amp evidently conceived for the Beavis and Butthead generation, any music that is launched from the DeVa 125 inevitably hits the ground running. Likely as not, even if your ears are fit enough for the chase, a session with the 125 will leave you gasping for breath.

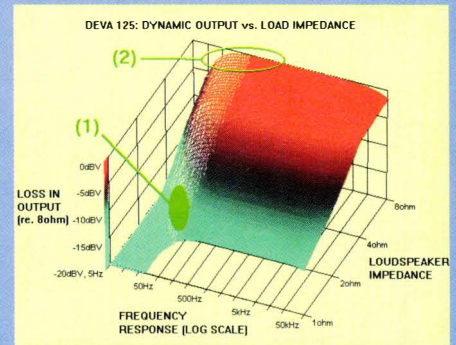
Incredibly, one listener likened this musical dash to the sound of an earlier amplifier sold under the Ion brand, a heritage that, by all accounts, is impossible to forget. To the best of my knowledge, the Ion also used a single rail PSU and one of its founders is now involved with Morgan Audio.

Naturally, the extent of its 'whizzo tendencies' will depend very heavily on your choice of loudspeaker, with lightweight bookshelf monitors faring worst of all. Unless, of course, you insist on living life in the fast lane.

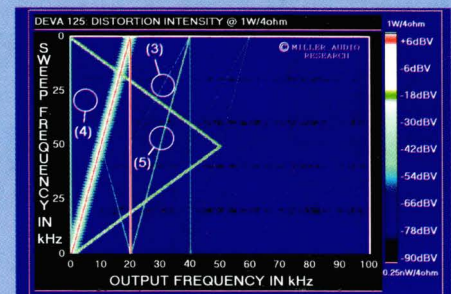
VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£249
▲	The choice for adrenalin freaks.
▼	Finesse and subtlety are not its stronger points.
✉	Morgan Audio, 141 Vauxhall Road, Liverpool L3 6BN
☎	(0151) 255 0946

LAB REPORT

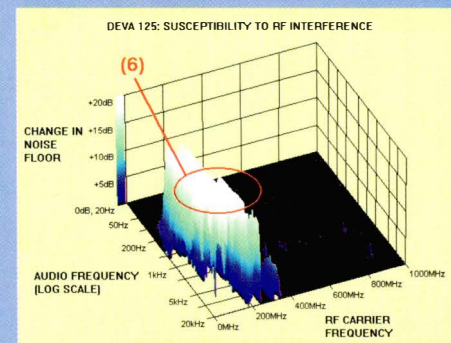
POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



TOTAL DISTORTION



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



Like NAD's 310, the DeVa 125 uses a single-rail power supply although, unlike the 310, there is no compensation for the reactance and high 1.05 Ohm output impedance caused by the 220µF AC-coupling (DC-blocking) capacitors. This oversight, in tandem with the poor 3.5A maximum current delivery (equivalent to bursts of just 13W into one Ohm) only aggravates (1) the amplifier's early bass roll-off (2).

This explains the 125's light and breezy sound but confirms that it is suitable only for very sensitive, easy-load loudspeakers. Neither does the DeVa 125 meet its rated specification, with an audioband power output of just 15-21W into eight Ohm. Apparently Morgan Audio's spec sheet is provided by an external, overseas testing facility using export (rather than UK) stock.

Distortion (just 0.013 per cent midband) rises with frequency (3), leaving IM patterns to dominate both in (4) and out (5) of the audioband. The 77dB S/N ratio is also poor, although it may disguise the worst excesses of RF interference (6) caused by some CD players.



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Harman Kardon HK610

Following hard on the heels of Harman's line-only *HK1400* (issue 129) comes a selection of no less than five new integrated amplifiers, each devoid of a conventional phono disc input. A plug-in module, called the *PH600*, will cater for both MM and MC phono cartridges but the basic, line-only specification of this new range only serves to emphasise the diminished importance of vinyl these days.

As the baby of the range, the £200 *HK610* may lack the full remote operation of its bigger brothers, but its CD, tuner, video and aux source selection is still electronically-switched, albeit via a mechanical selector. Bass, treble and balance controls remain permanently in-circuit which, in keeping with HK tradition, is entirely discrete in its construction.

No ICs here, then: just an elegant and symmetrical high-gain power amp whose improved ultrasonic stability has allowed HK to abandon those nasty-sounding output inductors. Just a pity, then, that these speaker outputs are still switched using a couple of feet of internal cabling, stretched to and from the A/B selectors and speaker binding posts...

Sound Quality

Described as "unusually clear, clean and vivid", the sheer energy and zest of this amplifier's performance grabbed us from the word go. As the favoured amp of both days' blind listening, the *HK610* drew a very deep picture of Eddi Reader's *Mirmama*, exposing synthesiser tracks meandering at the very back of the stage while, suspended in front, the vocals and acoustic guitar captivated us with their life and vibrancy.

The character of instruments and vocals alike was also portrayed with what was described as a "sympathetic enthusiasm" while betraying only the merest emphasis of "top and bottom". This was certainly the first time we had noticed the brushwork from Chris Isaak's *Forever Blue*, our panel also remarking on the powerful, clean and articulate sounding vocals that so perfectly complemented the fretwork of his guitar — taut strings that now 'squeaked' with an uncanny realism.

This ability to portray a tremendously deep and almost 'layered' soundstage played directly into the hands of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante*, where the background horns now emerged from behind the wall of strings, including violins and cellos that were each readily definable as distinct groups within a very busy mix.

It's the sort of sound that withstands very close scrutiny, "almost as if we could walk up to the music and inspect it with a magnifying glass," suggested one listener. "While avoiding the sterility of a mortician's slab," added another. Fabulous stuff.

Conclusion

With the possible exception of NAD's *310*, Harman's remarkable *610* was the only amplifier in this survey that reminded our blind panel just why they had voted our source CD player, the Sony *CDP-715E*, top-of-the-heap in issue 137.

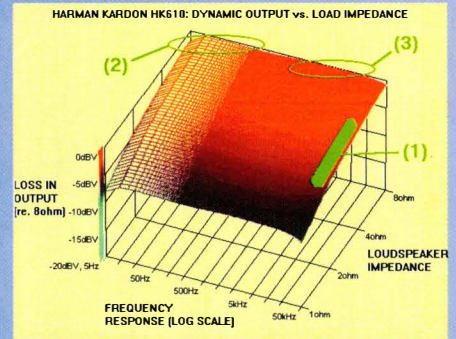
Like that CD player, the *HK610* amp not only grants tremendous access to the music but also the intent behind it, offering an upbeat performance that's never less than gripping. Fizzy and sparkling but with an unexpected kick, the *HK610* was likened to the new breed of alcoholic lemonades. Both are intoxicating but only one gets the Best Buy swingtag.

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£199.95
▲	Lively yet very friendly and convincing sound.
▼	Could prove too exciting for the faint-hearted.
✉	Harman Audio UK Ltd., Unit 2, Borehamwood Ind. Park, Rowley Lane, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 5PZ
☎	(0181) 207 5050

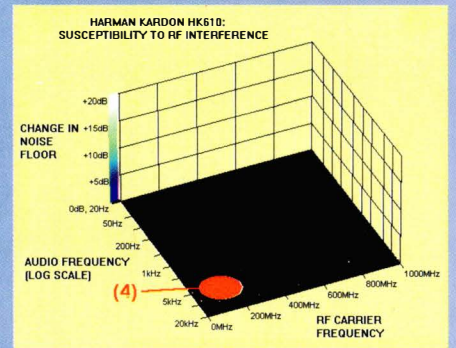
LAB REPORT

AMPLIFIERS

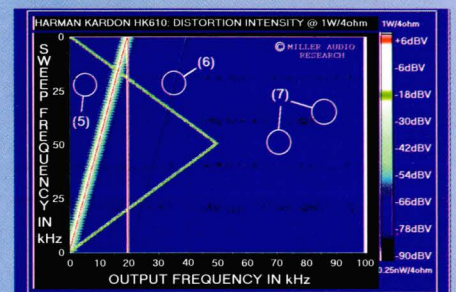
POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO RF INTERFERENCE



TOTAL DISTORTION



Harman's claims for a 'High Instantaneous Current Capability' are usually rather extravagant, and the +/-30A suggested for the *HK610* is similarly wide of the mark. In practice, its 12.7A maximum current is limited only by HK's in-built protection circuitry, allowing its relative output to fall linearly with decreasing load impedance (1). This seems to be subjectively preferable to an abrupt intolerance of dynamic speaker loads lower than four or two Ohm.

Note the characteristic boost to both bass (2) and upper midband (3) detail, as suggested by our blind listening panel. Meanwhile, the utter absence of RF interference (4) also proves that achieving the cherished CE Mark (indicating compliance to EMC regulations) needs not destroy any chance of a decent sound quality. Sensible design rather than brutal filtering is the key.

Audioband noise is also suitably low at -87dB (re. 1W/eight Ohm) while distortion hovers around 0.008 per cent, comprising mainly IM patterns both in (5) and out (6) of the audioband, including some high-order tracks (7).

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JVC AX-R5

Question: What do you get if you take JVC's £170 AX-372, add a remote control and electronic input selection? The answer comes in the form of this £200 AX-R5, the cheapest of two new integrated amplifiers equipped with what JVC describes as 'A/V remote control'. As far as I can tell there's plenty of 'A' but very little 'V' about the AX-R5, aside from the possibility that one of its tape inputs could, conceivably, be hooked-up to a VCR.

This is a straightforward but very flexible hi-fi amp all right. No CVBS or S-Type video inputs here, just provision for MM phono, three line and two tape sources, all selected via a natty rotary encoder that decorates the far right of its busy little fascia. Tone, loudness and balance controls complete the picture along with a motorised volume knob that, along with input selection, also comes under the gaze of JVC's full system remote control.

Plenty of technology to keep the ad boys happy, too. Like JVC's 'Advanced Super-A' power amp bolted onto a high-rigidity 'Z-Chassis'. In addition, there are two sets of speaker outlets, though the 'A' set is located underneath the 'B' set because, and I quote, "it is level with the PCB and therefore has a shorter wiring length". I might have taken this seriously if it were not for the fact that both A and B outputs are wired via at least 12 inches of ribbon cabling to and from the speaker selector switches!

Sound Quality

As we listened from track to track, an uncertainty developed both in the descriptions offered by the panel and in the sound carved-out by the amplifier. At the outset, Chris Isaak's characteristic vocals were

described variously as "articulate" and "engaging" as the track bobbed along with a decent sense of weight.

No such luck for Eddi Reader whose expressive talent was marred by hitting sustained notes that, in turn, would reinforce the drone of a backing synthesiser, creating an unwelcome 'bloom'. One listener even compared the sound of this backing synth with the thoroughly unfamiliar buzz of an old-time mellotron, lending the track a dated early-'70s progressive-rock feel. "Very Yes," confirmed another panellist.

By contrast, Freddie Hubbard sounded a little pale and uninteresting rather than suffering the intensity that had spoiled Eddi Reader's performance. The drum sound and sax tone were both pretty realistic but the overall effect was very 'matter-of-fact'.

This feeling of emotional detachment was perhaps more obvious via the MM input, where the tremendous charge and tension developed by Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* was casually abandoned in favour of a presentation that was, to be blunt, perfectly presentable but still utterly soporific.

Conclusion

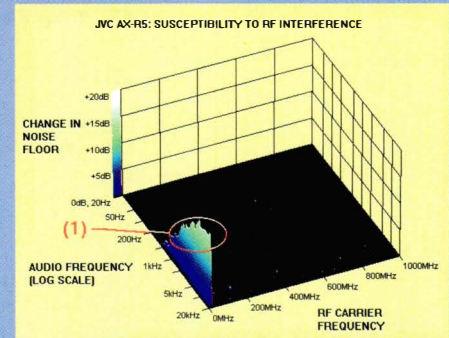
Rather less than the sum of its generous parts, the AX-R5 seems more than capable of describing a very detailed and articulate sound, albeit in a decidedly mechanistic fashion. Its well-meaning attention to detail never quite crosses the threshold into anything approaching the 'real thing'. "Always the bridesmaid but never the bride," was one judgement. When widgets and convenience are king, however, JVC's knobby-looking AX-R5 may well be worth a squirt.

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£199.99
▲	Lots of even-handed and articulate detail from a versatile package.
▼	Let down by the superficiality of it all.
✉	JVC UK Ltd., JVC House, JVC Business Park, Priestley Way, London NW2 7BA (0181) 450 3282

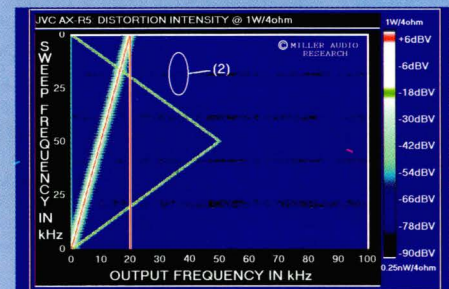
LAB REPORT

AMPLIFIERS

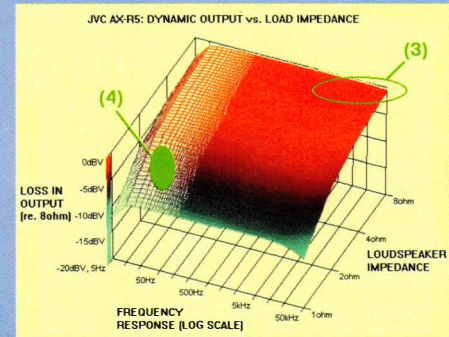
SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



TOTAL DISTORTION



POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



To be perfectly honest, what we have here is an amplifier that treads the straight-and-narrow of the textbooks without sounding terribly inspired into the bargain. All of its inputs are stringently filtered to earn its CE mark (a compliance to Europe-wide EMC regulations), hence the solitary blip of RF IMD (1).

Judicious compensation, meanwhile, squashes distortion down to 0.006 per cent while the preferential margins of the MM disc input reduce this to a spectacular 0.0025 per cent. You might just be able to make out a hint of second-order IM distortion (2) on the centre plot, though while such patterns are plainly visible on my monitor, they sometimes get 'lost' in the printing process. You'll have to take my word for it!

Noise is also very low at -99dB (re. 2/3 output) though the 50W/8 Ohm rating of the amplifier is hardly encouraged by the merely adequate 8A reserves of current. In practice, its extended power response (3) gently sags under the strain of loads between eight and two Ohms (I'd stick to 4-8 Ohm loudspeakers), falling more sharply thereafter (4).



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Marantz PM-55SE

Historically, the 'Special Edition' motif is an icon of quality, a badge of honour worn by products born of an existing model but featuring various performance-enhancing tweaks. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, there never was a PM-55 amplifier to be granted the SE treatment. Instead, this PM-55SE looks suspiciously like a remote-controlled version of the PM-44SE MkII that was dashed on the rocks of issue 134.

It has the same rotary input selector for MM phono, CD, tuner and aux line inputs, the same balance control, DCC/tape monitor and source direct buttons, too. In fact the fascia design is identical except that, in the 55SE's case, the volume control is motorised and the mute facility is fired by remote control. Hence the IR 'eye' that replaces the headphone socket fitted to the PM-44SE MkII. Incidentally, all the remaining widgets on the RC-53 remote cater for matching AV separates, not the PM-55SE.

Sound Quality

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," quoted one erudite listener. "Yeah, it hacked me off too," muttered the low-brow panelist to his right. What they were referring to, as it happens, is the dichotomous performance of the PM-55SE's MM phono and line stages. The latter upset us with its combination of smooth, syrupy sweetness "laced with spirit vinegar", while the former soothed us with its woody woodwinds, its weight, drive and gracious sense of space. This was "surprising", our listeners added, "in the light of the curiously messy and befuddling performance that gushed from the line stage".

No panelist made any

specific reference to the tonal balance of the amplifier, but preferred instead to address its peculiar style of presentation. Specifically, there was a weight, a presence and drive to Joni Mitchell's *Cool Water* via MM that was papered over on the CD input, leaving the likes of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with "glycerine violins" that robbed the orchestra of its life, its form and its texture.

It proved difficult to associate the PM-55SE with one particular coloration because, in truth, its foibles are unpredictable. Eddi Reader initially lulled us with a soft and inviting performance but this steadily became more relentless, too sickly and insistent for enjoyable long term listening. What a difference five minutes can make...

Conclusion

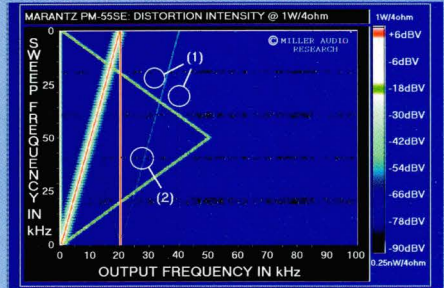
Yet again we are faced with an SE amplifier that failed to excite the hearts and minds of our blind listening panel. If nothing else, this demonstrates that both Marantz's design team and our experienced listeners are wholly consistent in their respective criteria, even if those ideals remain opposed. Respect, nevertheless, to Marantz for continuing to partake of this auditory fire walk — most of its hi-fi competitors would have long since run, hotfoot, for the comfortable safety of less searching reviews.

Nevertheless, I am bound to reiterate that the superficially seductive quality of the PM-55SE conceals an underlying confusion on the part of the amplifier. Its sound is not reckless or aggressive but neither does it betray a clear sense of cohesion. And if direction is needed, Marantz need look no further than the grand performance offered by its own CD-53 and CD-63 CD players.

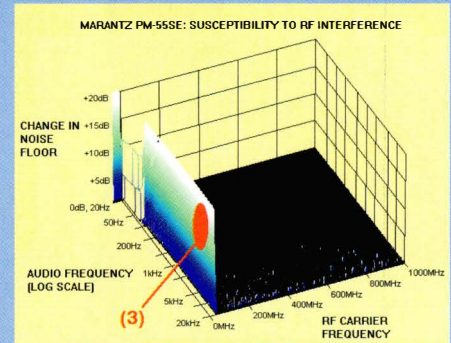
VERDICT	
SOUND	★☆☆☆☆
VALUE	★★☆☆☆
PRICE	£249.90
▲	Phono stage sounds moderately less bizarre than CD input.
▼	Rather too sweet and sour for the panel's taste buds.
✉	Marantz Hi-Fi UK Ltd., Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 575-583 Bath Road, Longford, Middx UB7 0EH (01753) 680868

LAB REPORT

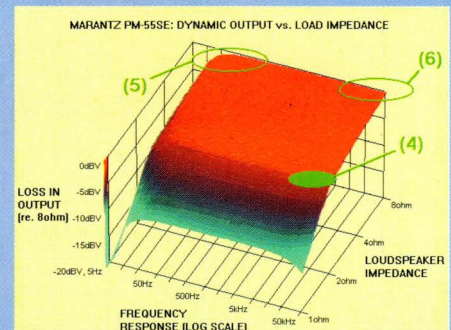
TOTAL DISTORTION



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



Comparisons with the PM-44SE MkII (issue 134) prove illuminating. Both amplifiers enjoy very low levels of distortion at the 1W level (typically <0.003 per cent) composed mainly of innocuous second-order harmonics (1) and 1M patterns (2). However, while distortion increased with output in the PM-44SE MkII, THD remains fixed in the PM-55SE under scrutiny here.

Both amps feature a wide 89-90dB S/N ratio (re. 1W/eight Ohm) and both are wide bandwidth designs that betray a hint of gain at the bottom end of the RF spectrum (3). Meanwhile the 56W/92W eight Ohm/ four Ohm power output is within 0.8W(!) of that recorded for the PM-44SE MkII, specs that are mirrored by the +1.0dB dynamic headroom and 17.6A maximum current (equivalent to 310W into one Ohm).

As we can see, this endows the PM-55SE with a tolerance of tricky speaker loads, right up until two Ohm or so when its headroom is probably limited by electronic protection (4). Marantz's characteristic low-bass roll-off (5) but extended HF (6) is just as evident, the former even more pronounced via the MM input.

541



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Pioneer A-300R

With a title like *A-300R* you could be forgiven for thinking this was a remote-controlled version of Pioneer's *A-300* (issue 92) or *A-300X* (issue 116). Even our own Sessions reviewer thought so in issue 147. In reality, this new amplifier is a scaled-down, lower-powered version of the *A-400X* (issues 129 and 138).

This concurs with the results of our blind listening tests. After all, with the *A-300* and *A-300X* consistently rejected, only the *A-400X* and now the *A-300R* have had the subjective impact to earn themselves a *Hi-Fi Choice* swingtag.

This budget version lacks the separate record out selector fitted to both the *A-300X* and *A-400X*, while catering for the same range of MM phono, line, CD, tuner and two tape inputs. The earlier dual-concentric volume control is now replaced in the *A-300R* by separate balance and motorised volume knobs, the latter being the only armchair facility envisaged for the *A-300R*.

With enhanced sonics in mind, Pioneer is running the internal microprocessor from an independent supply which deactivates when not in use. Meanwhile, the current-mirror and current-feedback technology that originally featured in the *A-400X* has been distilled into the *A-300R*'s own 'Wide Range Linear Circuit'. The original *A-300*'s employed a different 'Super Linear Circuit'.

Sound Quality

"Crisp, snappy, with a hint of dryness and a powdery texture," remarked one panelist, "not unlike a chilled Chablis on a summer's evening". This is certainly a very clean, breezy-sounding amplifier and one that puts the articulation of

vocals, the cool rasp of brass and vivid shimmer of strings ahead of euphonic warmth.

Pioneer's MM phono input is darker-sounding but no less open or spacious. It's certainly not a perfunctory afterthought, proving a delicate but less dynamic alternative to the line stage. It revealed the busy role played by the percussionist in Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* to good effect, yet did not quite swing the scales of drama. "Plenty of darkness," concluded the panel, "but neither as broody nor menacing as it could be".

Returning to CD and Chris Isaak sounded very neat and tidy. However, this was another occasion where he adopted the 'Roy Orbison style', a vocal characteristic that sounded an octave higher than with amplifiers like the Sony. The guitar picking was clear, and his stage presence strong, but *Forever Blue* was just a little too 'feel-good' and upbeat to capture the melancholie of the music. On the other hand, this upper-mid emphasis reinforced the period character of instruments — and particularly the strings — from Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with more than a little humour. Damn reality, this amplifier is just good, clean fun.

Conclusion

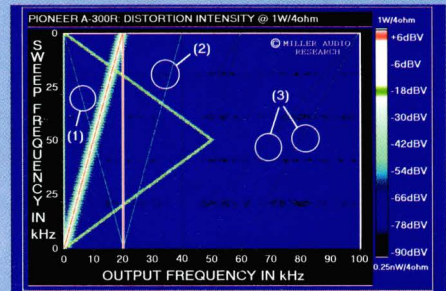
Honest to the intent of the composition while playing down any possible dark side of the musical force, "this amplifier needs to get in a few more fights," suggested one helpful panelist, "if only to appreciate that not all music is happy-happy, joy-joy". With apologies to Ren and Stimpy, the Pioneer *A-300R* is recommended as a natural tonic for those of us worn down by the ongoing stress of life. And the remote volume control? Well, that's just a bonus.

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£199.95
▲	Lively, clean and fun-sounding but neither bright nor aggressive
▼	A little too happy for its own good; needs to become more streetwise.
✉	Pioneer High Fidelity (GB) Ltd., Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Slough, Berks SL2 4QP
☎	(01753) 789789

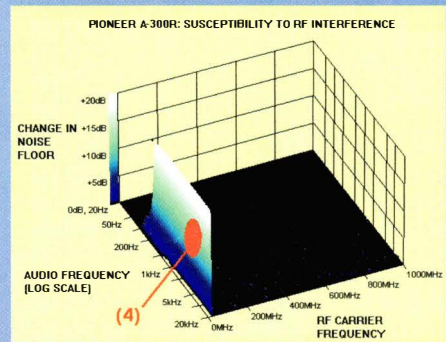
LAB REPORT

AMPLIFIERS

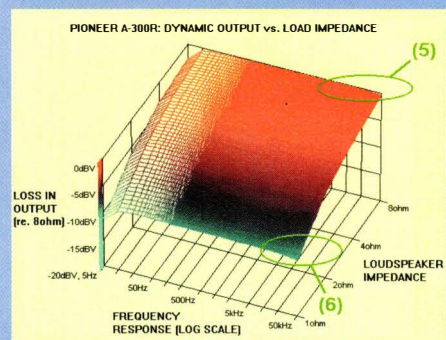
TOTAL DISTORTION



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE

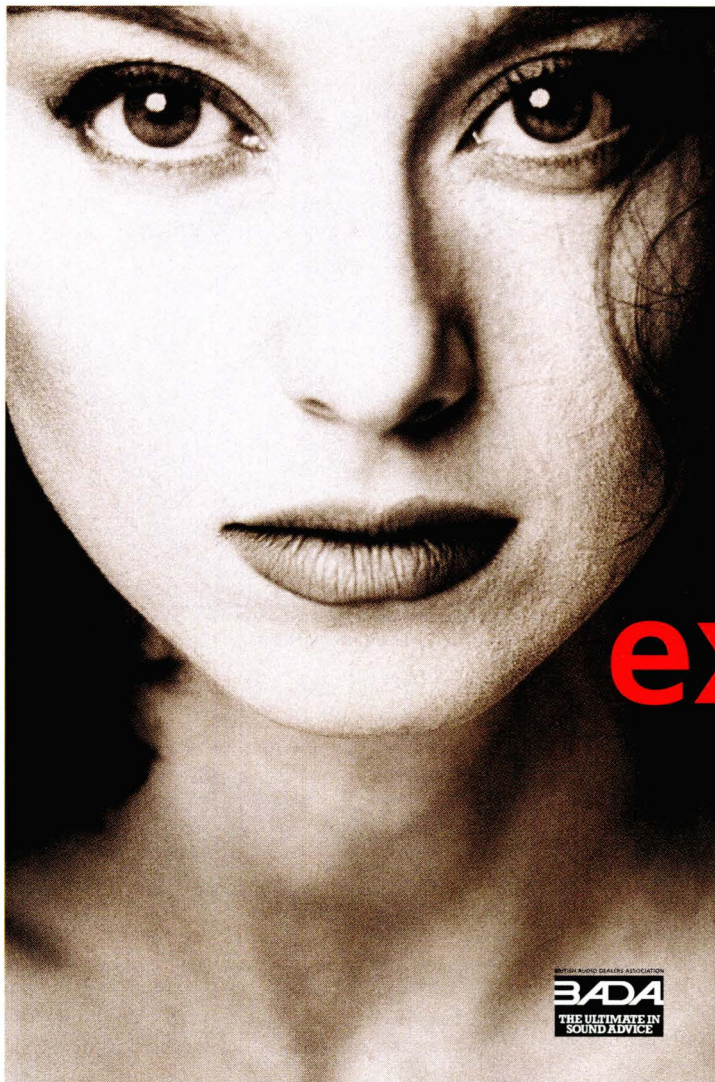


POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



At just 50-53W into eight Ohms and 70-81W into four Ohms, the *A-300R* is about as powerful as the older *A-300X* while its higher 0.02 per cent distortion is closer to the *A-400X* in overall character. Here we see relatively innocuous second-order IM and harmonic distortions well within (1) and just outside (2) the audioband, while very high-order patterns (3) suggest that this is, indeed, a moderate or low-feedback design. Importantly the nature of these distortions is relatively benign, even though they do contribute to its overall 'character'.

What Pioneer describes as its 'Wide Range Circuit' is revealed in the momentary blip (4) on the RF plot, caused by the extension of its VHF response. This is also evident from the extended treble (5) visible on the dynamic output plot, a feature that's maintained (6) even when driving very tricky speaker loads. In this instance, the loss in relative power is both uniform and proportional to the difficulty of the load, allowing the *A-300R* to maintain its bright and bubbly sound in spite of its sagging output.



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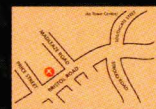
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Rotel RA-930AX MkII

“If you had an award-winning budget amp on your books and the time came to update the range, would you junk a successful design?” So began our review of Rotel’s first RA-930AX amp in issue 104, itself a derivative of the fabled RA-820AX (issue 80). For the MkII version, Rotel-Taiwan has not touched the outward appearance of its RA-930AX, but Rotel-UK has certainly sanctioned changes within.

Hence the familiar facia with its balance and volume controls flanked by defeatable tone, tape monitor and input selection facilities. Rotel has actually succeeded in reducing the price of the RA-930AX MkII, I was informed, “by shaving off margins rather than compromising on component quality”.

Either way, there are three principal changes that separate the original RA-930AX from the MkII. New decoupling caps in both line and MM disc stage power supplies, for example, are joined by new emitter resistors in Rotel’s famous Sanyo-based power amp circuit. Crucially, the Signetics line-stage op-amp has now been usurped by a Texas TL072 ‘equivalent’, which Rotel considers to “sound sweeter and image better”.

Sound Quality

This is one amplifier that, on two separate blind listening sessions, had its MM performance voted very firmly ahead of the CD input. Unusually, the MM input portrayed a more realistic sense of space and musical dynamics, all underpinned by a decent, solid bass. Our CDs, by contrast, were afflicted by a less sympathetic colour, a restricted dynamic range and a fore-shortened sense of stereo depth. Tonal colours, too, were described as “slightly

grey and diluted”.

Freddie Hubbard’s sax sounded a little soft, sandy and grey it became a rather pale-sounding instrument that refused to let its hair down. Similarly, Mozart’s *Sinfonia Concertante* sounded “tonally very neat and tidy”, but still lacked range and extension in all facets of its CD performance.

There’s nothing nasty about this sound yet, by contrast, the life, weight and colour of the classical instruments from our vinyl LP of Rachmaninov’s *Symphonic Dances* breezed through the listening room like a welcome wind of change. Returning to CD resulted in a staler sound that was at its best with the likes of Chris Isaak’s moody vocals, and delicate but immediate and well-focused percussive brushwork. Equally, the Rotel was just as easily undermined by the awkwardness of Eddi Reader’s complex instrumental backing.

Conclusion

By all accounts, something has gone terribly wrong in the most recent transformation of the RA-930AX. Once a cherished favourite, the musical baby has most definitely been ditched along with the commercial bath water. So although the RA-930AX is now more affordable, the original incentive for its purchase has also been dampened.

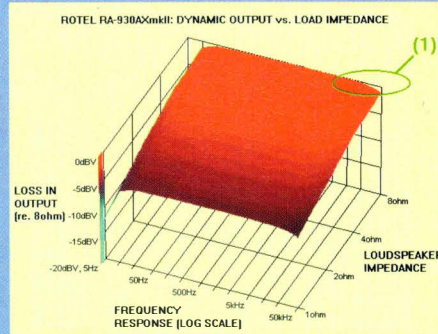
Once “a real scorcher, packed with intriguing musical detail and bags of enthusiasm”, the RA-930AX MkII no longer sounds splashy, bright or even terribly messy, but is simply too unambitious for the music’s good. It’s no coincidence, I’m sure, that the one spark of magic — the MM phono stage — is the only facet of this amplifier not to have been changed. That old adage ‘if ain’t broke, don’t fix it’ seems appropriate.

VERDICT	
SOUND	★☆☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£149.95
▲	A tidy, well-ordered and conservative-sounding amp. Great MM input.
▼	Downright grey and “not terribly interesting” via CD.
✉	Gamepath Ltd., 25 Heathfields, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK12 6HR
☎	(01908) 317707

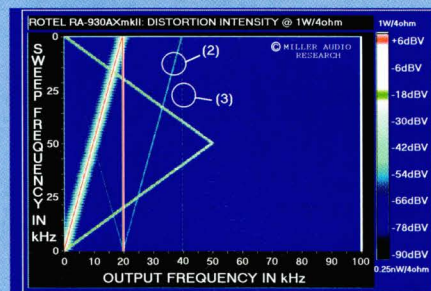
LAB REPORT

AMPLIFIERS

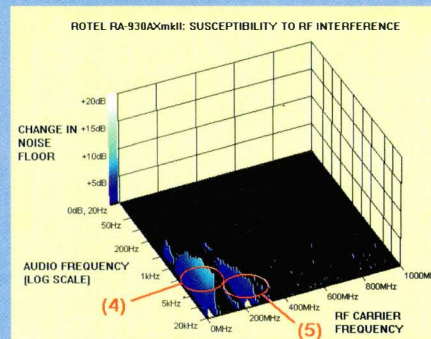
POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



TOTAL DISTORTION



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



Although there is nothing ‘wrong’ with the new RA-930AX, its character has changed, and this is reflected in differences between this RA-930AX MkII and the MkI from issue 104. Its power output is down, particularly at high frequencies where, despite holding up well under dynamic conditions (1), its continuous output has dropped from 75W to 64W (re. 20kHz/four Ohms).

Meanwhile, distortion has increased from typically 0.006 to 0.02 per cent in the new version, reflected in bolder second-order IM patterns (2) in addition to simple harmonics (3). Unusually, harder-sounding third-order distortions tend to dominate as the amp drives easier speaker loads at very modest power levels, suggesting the character or ‘colour’ of the amplifier may be more affected by speaker impedance.

More fundamentally, the line input sensitivity has increased to 18mV (for 1W/eight Ohm) while the A-wtd noise has deteriorated from -86dB to -81dB. This represents an increase in gain, and helps bury the lasts vestiges of RF interference at 20MHz (4) and 210MHz (5).

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Sony TA-F246E

Based loosely on last season's TA-F244E, this season's £200 contender sports the same chunky yet minimalist appearance along with the same MOSFET-based power amp. Key revisions include a change of name from TA-F244E to TA-F246E, although rumour has it that there's also a new MM phono stage and some higher-quality coupling capacitors on offer. The new toroidal transformer and power supply, beating away under its perforated bonnet, probably help too.

On the subject of perforations: I was surprised at the high temperature (typically >70°C) reached by the amplifier's internal alloy heatsinking. Do all TA-F246E's run at this temperature or was it just that the bias current of this review sample was set a little higher than usual?

Enriched bias and enriched sound quality are not uncommon bed-fellows, it must be said. However, because MOSFETs have what's called a 'negative temperature coefficient', overheating rarely results in thermal runaway and a busted amplifier. Incidentally, these fluted heatsinks have also apparently been designed to reduce the effects of vibration within the amp.

Features include separate record out and input selection and, er, a volume control. No balance, no tone controls and no spurious loudness facilities. Just good, clean amplification with the minimum of frippery.

Sound Quality

There is a very relaxed, almost lazy quality to the sound of this amplifier that, rather than quelling the music's passion, seduces you with its guile and subtlety. This is taken a little too far via its MM input, where the amplifier can sound too laconic and distant, prompting our classical selection to be described as

"Rachmaninov with boat anchors". "Plodness abounds" remarked another.

With CD as the source, the amp has an even, perhaps slightly rich tonal balance which, for all its lack of gusto, remains very tidy and composed under duress. Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* was handled extremely well, and applauded for a lively and weighty sound that was "shiny and clean" rather than generous. At times, the upper strings could sound a little hard without necessarily sounding bright, as did the guitar from Eddi Reader's *Mirmama*. This hardness is a hallmark of the TA-F246E, regardless of the music's varying complexity.

Returning to the 'lazy' theme, Chris Isaak sounded very full and vibrant, his exceptionally husky, breathy vocals putting him "firmly in the Elvis mould" this time around. This was a very positive and determined performance that showed off the TA-F246E in its best light. Sharply focused soundstaging, however, is not its strong suit. Voices, in particular, can sometimes appear a little diffuse, spread widely between the speakers within a very open, spacious and ambient acoustic.

Conclusion

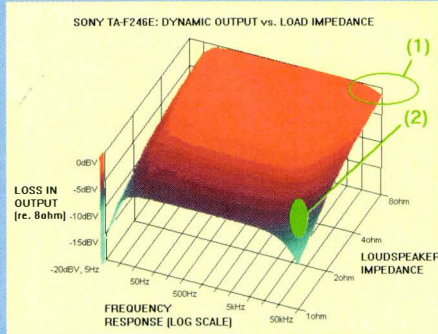
More civilised than Technics' SU-A600 Mk2 but also less exciting, the polished performance of Sony's TA-F246E remains very enjoyable in its own right. I still remain a little concerned at the excessive operating temperature of the power amplifier but, putting this aside, the unit just about emerges with a clean technical bill of health. Add to this Sony's customarily high standard of construction and finish at a very agreeable £200 price, and you've got the recipe for a strong, value-oriented recommendation.

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£199
▲	Gentle, atmospheric and subtly detailed.
▼	A little too reserved at times, lacks vim and vigour.
✉	Sony UK Ltd., National Operations Centre, Piper's Way, Thatcham, Newbury, Berks RG19 4LZ.
☎	0181-784 1144

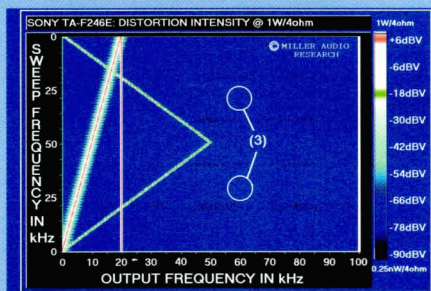
LAB REPORT

AMPLIFIERS

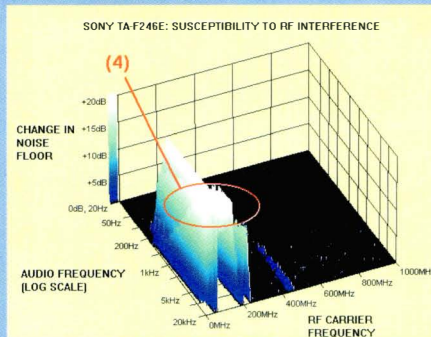
POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



TOTAL DISTORTION

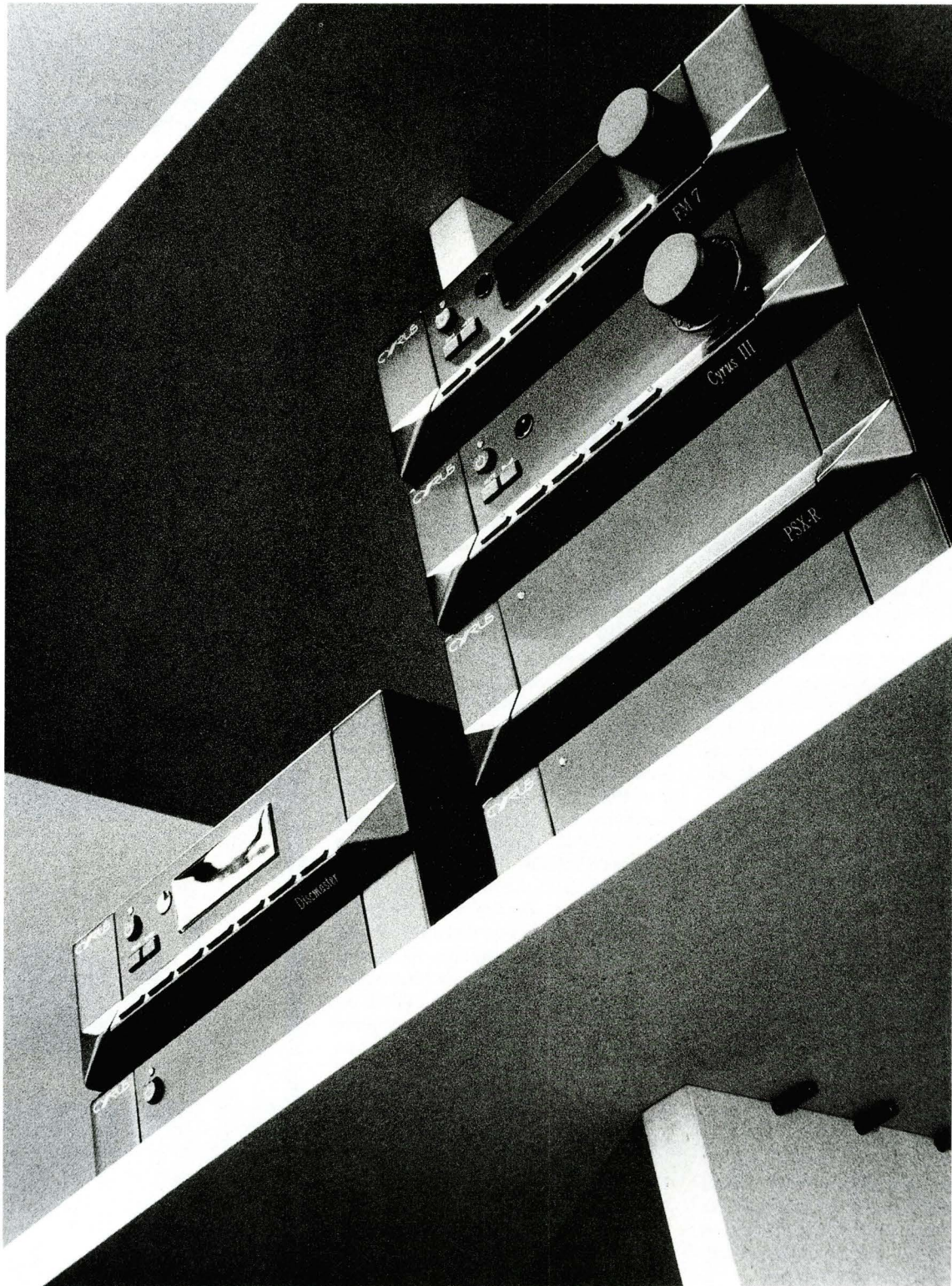


SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



Despite Sony's latest 'audiophile' tweaks, it has still managed one or two silly oversights. The speaker outputs, for example, are switched via a local relay yet all power — including the maximum 13.8A pulses of current — are still required to pass through lengths of fine copper track on the output PCB (Printed Circuit Board). Hence the relatively high 0.12 Ohm output impedance which, in some circumstances, could exaggerate the gentle relaxation in its treble response (1) visible when driving tricky loudspeakers (2).

Meanwhile, aside from the merest hint of HF distortion (3), THD is squashed to within 0.003 per cent by the adaption of a very linear circuit design with moderate levels of compensation. However, the best-case 91dB S/N ratio (A-wtd) is really no great shakes and even fails to disguise the significant bursts of RF IMD that occur in response to pollution centred on 100MHz (4). Clearly, with the 100MHz region being a particularly active region of the radio band, this bug should be redressed. A similar problem was detected with the older TA-F444E.



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Technics SU-A600 Mk2

This may look like the sort of amplifier, replete with features, that typically comes with a remote handset in tow. In fact, it's the only model in Technics's A-series not to feature a remote control, even though it still shares with its siblings certain advantages, like electronic selection for the MM phono, tuner, CD, aux and two tape inputs.

Otherwise, the *SU-A600 Mk2* is no less flexible than either the *SU-A800 Mk2* (issue 134) or the *SU-A900 Mk2* (issue 138). Balance and defeatable bass/treble tone controls are included along with relay-operated A/B speaker selection to avoid unnecessary internal wiring. A feature absent from the JVC and Harman designs, for example.

The amp is also built onto the infamous 'rubber car mat' HCB (Hybrid Construction Base), while fan-assisted cooling prevents the 'MOS Class AA Circuit' from cooking itself at high volumes. Here, we see the main evidence of cost-saving, for both the MOSFET voltage amp and bi-polar current dumpers that form the Class AA output stage are fashioned from integrated power modules rather than discrete transistors. The costlier VBO (Virtual Battery Operation) power supply may also have gone skyward, but at least the superior R-core mains transformer, with its reduced magnetic field, has been retained.

Sound Quality

Quick to get stuck into the drama of its music, the *SU-A600 Mk2* impressed our listeners with its assertive, if not entirely clean-cut performance. Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* bounced along with what was described as a "genuine jolliness" — a breezy and entertaining sound

held aloft by groups of sprightly and nimble-sounding strings. All the little twists and turns — the threads of the music — were clearly picked out, although upper strings were not entirely free of glare.

This 'spotlighting' was also observed with Chris Isaak's acoustic guitar, which sounded a little hard. Nevertheless, the amp preserves a decent sense of "air being moved around by enthusiastic musicians". Freddie Hubbard's percussion sounded especially expressive, boppy and alive — a little splashy perhaps, but full of natural, vibrant colour daubed from a bold brush.

Its bass is understated rather than deep, but what remains is tight and sufficiently weighty to "do the business without drawing attention to itself". Incidentally, the MM phono input sounds noticeably weightier but also "scruffier, rather like Billy Bunter on a bad day". It is both dynamic and reasonably articulate, with a great low-string sound even if it lacks the life of the CD input higher up, where it was described as "passable but a little woody".

Conclusion

Very unlikely to be ignored, the *SU-A600 Mk2* has no sympathy with aural wallpaper, taking a grip of every style of music before giving it a good shaking. "Occasionally," our panel mused, "bits fall off but, on the whole, it's a remarkably coherent, upbeat and entertaining performer".

In every respect, the *SU-A600 Mk2* is the scallywag sibling of the £400 *SU-A900 Mk2* from issue 138. Both are very well-built and both sound just dandy, even though the *900* has an edge in power and civility borne of its extra resources. At their respective price points, however, both are firmly Recommended.

VERDICT

SOUND VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE ★★★★★

£229.95

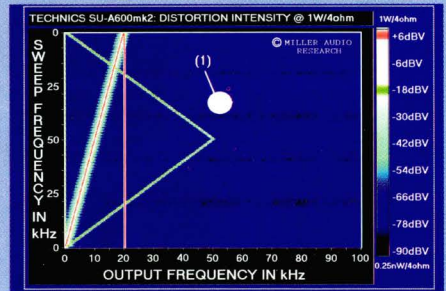
▲ An amplifier that's great fun to be with.

▼ Can be a little untidy from time to time.

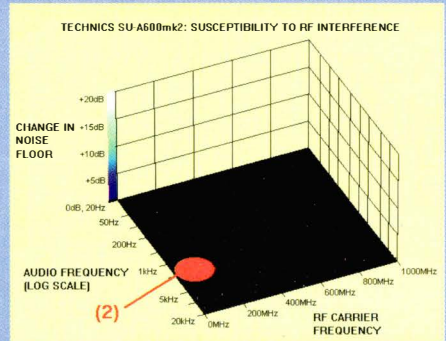
✉ Panasonic UK Ltd., Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 4PF (0990) 357357

LAB REPORT

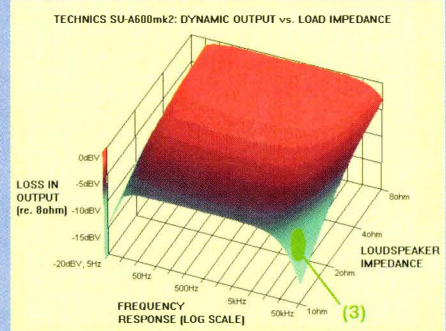
TOTAL DISTORTION



SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



Distortion? What distortion? At less than 0.001 per cent any suggestion of harmonic or IM patterns are buried into the deep blue/black depths of its background noise (1). Funnily enough, and rather like Sony's *TA-F246E*, the best-case 91dB S/N ratio of the *600 Mk2* is well short of the best in this test, though by happy coincidence, any RFI (2) may well be lost in the shagpile of this background carpet of noise. It's an unfortunate fact that many amplifiers with a wider dynamic range also open the door to greater RF susceptibility.

Furthermore, and just like Technics's own *800 Mk2* and *900 Mk2* (issues 134 and 138), there's an unusual (9dB) improvement in the S/N of its MM phono stage as the volume is advanced from 1W to two-thirds output. Unusual, but true. The 1dB channel balance error isn't that clever at -20dB (mid-volume), but at least there's a sufficient reserve of current to keep the amplifier ticking over into difficult speaker loads. There's some buckling at high frequencies into really nasty loads (3) but, otherwise, all is well.



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Yamaha AX-490

Described by Yamaha as a 'Middle Class' integrated amplifier, the AX-490 is both the most flexible and the most powerful contender in this 12-way test. Its claims to fame are various but include full remote control both over its motorised volume control and the selector that routes its MM phono, tuner, CD, aux and two tape inputs. No electronic or solid-state input selection here, though. Instead, Yamaha has provided a stepper-motor which rotates the source selection knob!

The most desperate of couch potatoes will be saddened to learn that Yamaha's A/B speaker selection, bass, treble, variable loudness and balance controls still have to be adjusted manually. Then again, other functions on the same VR50590 handset will also control matching tape decks, CD players and tuners from the Yamaha stable.

Two further options, labelled 'Pure Direct' and 'CD Direct' may seem, at first sight, to conflict with one another. In fact, they are two facets of Yamaha's so-called 'TOP-ART' design. The former bypasses all tone and pre in/out circuitry while the latter takes an even more direct route, avoiding the main input selector to feed directly into Yamaha's symmetrical power amp. CD Direct was used for our auditioning.

Sound Quality

To be perfectly frank, the panel was split over the Yamaha. It happens from time to time. On this rare occasion the 'red corner' described the AX-490's performance as warm and compelling, "like an old and cherished family heirloom". Meanwhile, the 'blue corner' responded by boldly suggesting that "its plummy bass and stuck-to-

the-box sound lacked dynamic headroom and legroom".

In their view, all musical events were brought up, or down, to a single dynamic level that compelled the performers of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* to "run at full pelt". In similar fashion, the backing instruments collapsed once Eddi Reader took to the stage, even though, the guitar, synth and percussion immediately seemed to regain their composure once she relented.

The red corner retaliated by claiming that Chris Isaak's backing instruments were nicely separated while the double-tracking of Eddi Reader's voice was, in fact, revealed to good effect. Towards the end of the session, the blue corner did acknowledge a growing appreciation of the amplifier's finer qualities but was still displeased by its occasional tendency "to shout, blare and generally leap up and down all over the music with size 16 hob-nailed boots." Other than that, they were quite impressed!

Conclusion

If we rated amplifiers according to either their flexibility or Watts-per-pound, then Yamaha's AX-490 would currently be relaxing at the top of the pile. As it stands, however, the ability to recreate something that resembles living, breathing music is far closer to the top of our blind listening agenda.

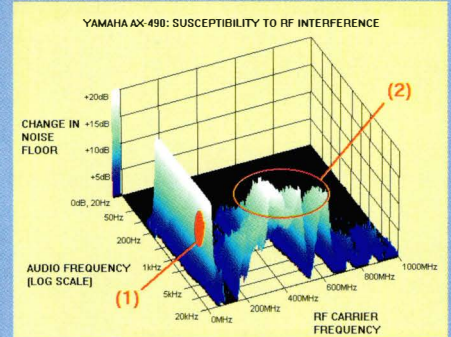
To this end, the mixed response of our panel rather puts the kibosh on any cut-and-dried conclusion, although I'm bound to point out that neither group was especially keen to endorse its recommendation. However, there's no debate over the value or convenience of the AX-490 so, if the idea appeals, why not give it a whirl?

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★☆☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£249.95
▲	Widgets aplenty in this high-power, high-value amplifier.
▼	Unemotional sound evoked an uncertain response from the panel.
✉	Yamaha Electronics UK Ltd, Yamaha House, 200 Rickmansworth Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD1 7JS (01923) 233166

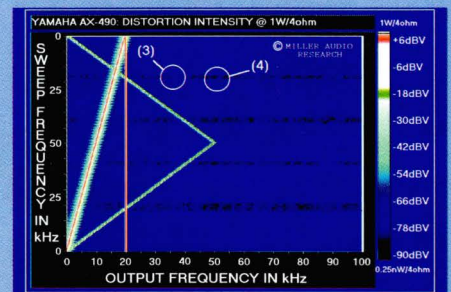
LAB REPORT

AMPLIFIERS

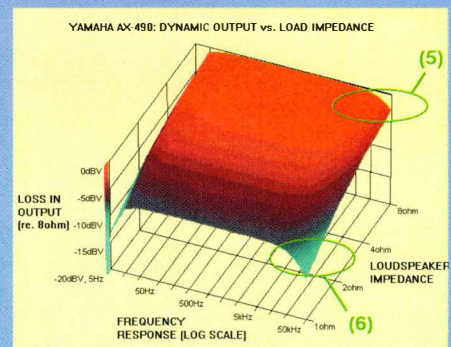
SUSCEPTIBILITY TO INTERFERENCE



TOTAL DISTORTION



POWER RESPONSE VS SPEAKER IMPEDANCE



Yamaha's claims for the enhanced S/N of its 'CD Direct' line stage amplifier are borne out on the test bench, where the latter scores a 9dB advantage over the 'Pure Direct' option. Ordinarily, the amplifier's hum contribution will remain consistent from input to input, but here a clear difference emerges between CD and MM phono.

Unfortunately, widening the 'dynamic window' also serves to expose the erratic effects of RF interference. The initial blip (1) at the top of the amplifier's bandwidth is of less concern than the great mound (2) demonstrating its susceptibility to RFI between 200 and 700MHz. This undoubtedly ties in with the panel's uncertain subjective judgement.

Otherwise, the second (3) and third-order IM distortions (4) (typically <0.003 per cent) are of little consequence. The 112W/169W eight/four Ohm output capacity is also very generous and even the slight shortfall in extreme treble (5) is not aggravated by lower-impedance speakers (6). So if the AX-490 splits opinion I'd not expect this to be speaker dependent.

DECODING THE TEST RESULTS

Most hi-fi buffs are interested in areas of performance like power output, headroom and maximum current, so it's as well to know that all three parameters are measured here to a fixed limit of just one per cent distortion.

However, more power does not necessarily mean more quality. Instead, if you want an amplifier to drive difficult or multiple speaker combinations, look for a high-current model that gets close to doubling its power output between 8 and 4 Ohm loads.

Unfortunately, any amplifier with an appropriately stiff power supply will, conversely, also suffer from a limited dynamic headroom. This latter figure gives us some idea of the maximum short-term power available under the dynamic music conditions encountered in real life.

Understanding the Dynamic Output plot

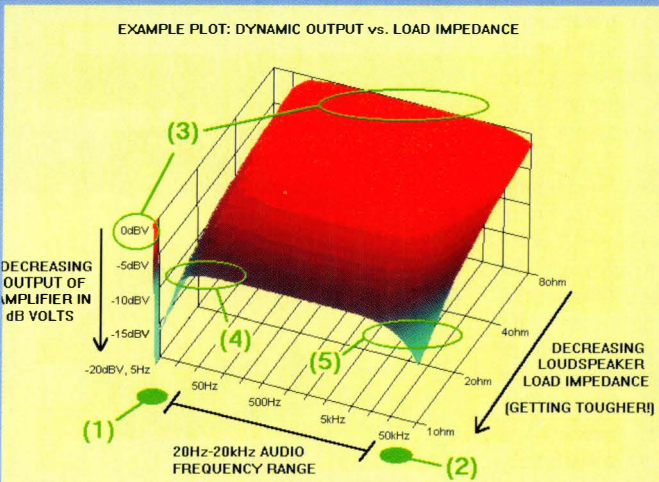
This latest, and highly revealing 3D image, comes into its own when we want to examine power output under music load. By demon-

strating how the dynamic output of the amplifier varies with both frequency and speaker load impedance, this one 3D plot replaces both our conventional 5Hz-50kHz frequency response and power output measurements in a way that more accurately reflects the 'real world' performance of the amplifier.

These plots detail the frequency response of the amplifier from the deepest sub-bass (1) to beyond the limits of our hearing (2), as the amplifier is driven to full output under dynamic rather than steady-state conditions. Treating each amplifier as a voltage source, their maximum dynamic output into eight Ohms is normalised to 0dBV (3) so that the 'load tolerance' of, say, a 50W model can be compared directly to that of a 200W or 15W amplifier.

Regardless of its notional power output, the 'ideal' amplifier would have sufficient current to sustain a constant voltage across all load impedances. This would produce a red plot, uniformly covering the upper surface of the 3D cube. Such an amplifier would drive all loudspeaker loads with equal

proficiency. In practice, however, the amplifier's output begins to sag (colour-coded from red to blue) as the loudspeaker impedance falls from eight, through four to two and one Ohms. You may also notice a change in the relative bass (4) and treble (5) response of the amplifier, reflecting tonal aberrations heard when listening to music.



CONCLUSIONS

Best Buys and Recommendeds

It's not unusual for around 50 per cent of the amplifiers in our grand surveys to emerge with a swing-tag of some description, but it is unusual for many of the remaining 50 per cent to sink way below the waterline. Amplifiers including JVC's AX-R5, Arcam's revised Alpha 5 Plus and the Cambridge A1 all sounded too reserved to adequately reflect the virtuosity of the music.

The DeVa 125 is just plain bizarre,



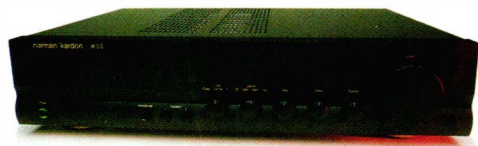
offering a quick and lightweight sound that demonstrates a marked intolerance of tricky speaker loads. For a similar outlay Marantz's PM-55SE seemed like a better bet. But the blind listening tests indicated an inconsistent performance that shifted disconcertingly, depending on source and musical selection. After an impressive start, the PM-55E soon fell back in the field.

Then there was Rotel's RA-930AX MkII – another 'sure-fire hit' that, in practice, missed the musical target by several yards. Perhaps *Hi-Fi Choice* should mount a campaign to see the original RA-930AX restored to its former glory, complete with Best Buy swing-tag. Yamaha's AX-490 proved more perplexing than disappointing, an amplifier that could sound gloomy

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS	ARCAM ALPHA 5 PLUS			CAMBRIDGE A1			DEVA 125			HARMAN KARDON HK 610			JVC AX-R5		
	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
MAX CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 1% THD INTO 8OHM	59W	60W	56W	35W	37W	37W	15W	21W	20W	50W	52W	52W	50W	49W	49W
1% THD INTO 40HM	85W	91W	89W	53W	59W	57W	16W	33W	28W	74W	79W	78W	76W	79W	78W
DYNAMIC HEADROOM (IHF)	+1.3dB (81W)			+1.0dB (47W)			+0.7dB (25W)			+1.1dB (67W)			+1.1dB (63W)		
MAXIMUM CURRENT (5MSEC, 1% THD)	20.7A			5.2A*			3.5A			12.7A*			7.8A		
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE	0.054ohm			0.047ohm			1.05ohm			0.073ohm			0.101ohm		
DAMPING FACTOR	147.9			169.6			7.61			110			78.9		
	CD/Aux	MM		CD/Aux	MM		CD/Aux	MM		CD/Aux	MM		CD/Aux	MM	
STEREO SEPARATION (1KHZ)	73dB	74dB		68dB	61dB		61dB	61dB		98dB	88dB		85dB	85dB	
(20KHZ)	48dB	47dB		43dB	34dB		34dB	34dB		75dB	62dB		62dB	62dB	
CHANNEL BALANCE, 1KHZ (-20DB)	0.6dB	0.6dB		0.5dB	0.9dB		0.9dB	0.9dB		0.2dB	0.3dB		0.3dB	0.3dB	
CHANNEL BALANCE, 1KHZ (-60DB)	0.8dB	0.8dB		2.5dB	4.3dB		4.3dB	4.3dB		0.5dB	0.5dB		0.5dB	0.5dB	
TOTAL HARMONIC DISTORTION (0DBW)	-86dB	-80dB		-98dB	-88dB		-88dB	-88dB		-82dB	-85dB		-85dB	-92dB	
(2/3 POWER)	-90dB	-81dB		-81dB	-78dB		-78dB	-78dB		-75dB	-85dB		-85dB	-92dB	
CCIR INTERMOD DISTORTION (0DBW)	-96dB	-83dB		-90dB	-87dB		-87dB	-87dB		-77dB	-96dB		-96dB	-92dB	
(2/3 POWER)	-100dB	-85dB		-77dB	-80dB		-80dB	-80dB		-77dB	-100dB		-94dB	-94dB	
NOISE (A WTD, 0DBW)	-87.0dB	-81.8dB		-86.7dB	-76.6dB		-76.6dB	-76.6dB		-87.2dB	-85.3dB		-85.3dB	-79.5dB	
(2/3 POWER)	-99.0dB	-82.7dB		-90.3dB	-87.1dB		-87.1dB	-87.1dB		-98.7dB	-99.2dB		-99.2dB	-81.2dB	
RESIDUAL NOISE (UNWTD)	-76.4dB	-76.3dB		-70.0dB	-73.2dB		-73.2dB	-73.2dB		-73.1dB	-75.1dB		-75.1dB	-75.1dB	
INPUT SENSITIVITY (FOR 0DBW)	22.4mV	252uV		43mV	85mV		85mV	85mV		27mV	29.5mV		29.5mV	392uV	
(FOR FULL OUTPUT)	177mV	2.0mV		264mV	394mV		394mV	394mV		197mV	210mV		210mV	2.77mV	
DISC OVERLOAD (1KHZ)		107mV		5.3V	> 16V		> 16V	> 16V		> 16V	> 16V		> 16V	119mV	
(20KHZ)		1006mV		5.3V	> 16V		> 16V	> 16V		> 16V	> 16V		> 16V	917mV	
(50KHZ)		12180mV		5.6V	> 16V		> 16V	> 16V		> 16V	> 16V		> 16V	1735mV	
TAPE OUTPUT/IMPEDANCE	9.4V (disc) / 1.9kohm	3.0V (line) / 23.8kohm		As source / as source	As source / as source		As source / as source	As source / as source		10.0V (line) / 2.1kohm	8.9V (disc) / 635ohm		8.9V (disc) / 635ohm	8.9V (disc) / 635ohm	
INPUT LOADING	21kohm/100pF	47kohm/80pF		85kohm/20pF	55kohm/60pF		55kohm/60pF	55kohm/60pF		21kohm/650pF	45kohm/650pF		45kohm/650pF	47kohm/240pF	
DC OFFSET LEFT/RIGHT	0mV/+5mV	None!		-21mV/-12mV	None!		None!	None!		-24mV/-4mV	-1mV/-10mV		-1mV/-10mV	-1mV/-10mV	
SERIAL NUMBER	AL5021896	None!		111261	None!		None!	None!		S253-07047	12900037		12900037	12900037	
RETAIL PRICE	£240	£100		£249	£249		£249	£249		£200	£200		£200	£200	

* Current to 2% THD

* Limited by protection



one moment but modestly compelling the next. It's worth a second look.

The *SU-A600 Mk2* continues Technics's trade in swing-tags with a jolly, up-beat if occasionally rather scruffy sound, that'll successfully merge with many a budget system. If you're looking for something, well, a little more relaxed, but don't want to stray from the 'big names', then Sony's *TA-F246E* would seem the ideal choice. Its mellow and subtly atmospheric performance will charm the laid-back listener.

However, for a blend of Technics's joy-de-vivre tempered with the refinement of Sony's *TA-F246E*, there's little to beat Pioneer's *A-300R* – a trimmed-down version of the *A-400X* with remote volume. This little beauty sounds engagingly innocent without ever really losing its grip. And that quality is built upon by the low-cost NAD *310*. This cracking little amplifier is more than an exercise in ingenious cost-cutting, because its dramatic and penetrating sound thrusts NAD back into the budget limelight.

One amplifier, however, muscles its way clear of the throng with a vivid sound, that spills both fore and aft of the speakers to recreate a depth and spaciousness so conspicuously missing with the majority of its peers. This is Harman's *HK610*, a no-nonsense, no-frills design that has earned every molecule of its Best Buy swing-tag.



UNDERSTANDING THE GRAPHS

Understanding the Distortion Intensity plots

Vanishingly low distortion is not a pre-requisite of very high sound quality. In practice, the amount of THD (Total Harmonic Distortion) is much less important than how its composition varies with the changing power output of the amplifier.

Broadly speaking, so long as distortion rises and falls in sympathy with the music, most listeners quickly become accustomed to its presence. Naturally, some types of distortion are more tolerable than others, but using the new Distortion Intensity plot, we can now examine all types of distortion in one shot.

Rather than use a single test tone, this method taxes the amplifier in a more realistic fashion by feeding in a combination of signals. These signals are colour-coded on all the Intensity plots and include a sweep from 0-20kHz (6, in red), a fixed 20kHz tone (7, in red) and a further sweep (some -24dB lower in level) from 0Hz-50kHz-0Hz (8, in green).

The amplifiers are raised to a 1W output into a standard four Ohm load where, as with real music, both harmonic and intermodulation (IM) distortions occur simultaneously.

In our example we can see simple second harmonics of (6) and (7) being indicated by the markers (9) and (10) respectively. Intermodulation or 'beating' between (6) and (7) is represented by one half of the 'V-pat-

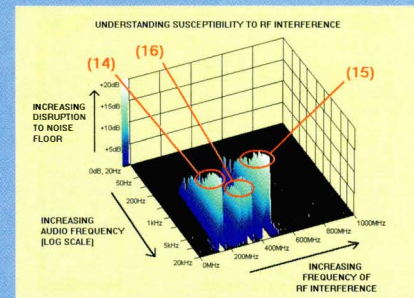
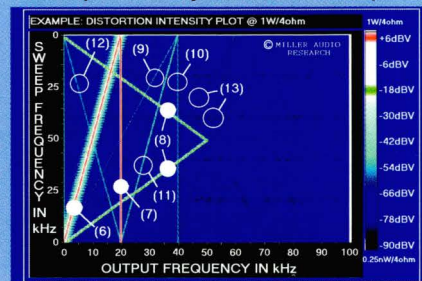
tern' (11), whose 'other half' reflects directly into the audioband (12). Higher-order IM patterns (13) – which are subjectively more distracting – can also occur.

Understanding the new 3D RF susceptibility plot

These busy lattices of distortion are further complicated by electrical noise leaking in from central heating systems, dimmer switches, fluorescent lights, CD players and all manner of domestic or external appliances. This is called Radio Frequency (RF) noise and, once inside an amplifier, will often mask subtle detail by disrupting the natural background of hiss. Even if background noise seems inaudible, RF interference can still make music sound fatiguingly hard, gritty or just plain muddled.

The magnitude of this effect shows up as raised areas on the new 3D RF susceptibility plot which, in this example, draws attention to the amplifier's sensitivity to RF noise at 160MHz (14) and 420MHz (15). By looking across to the audio frequency scale we can see clearly that the audibility of this effect will be most obvious beyond 5kHz or so – the treble region.

The plot also shows a slightly milder susceptibility at 270MHz and 320MHz (16). Importantly, if the amplifier is exposed to any electrical interference within these ranges, it's unlikely to give of its best.



MARANTZ PM-55SE			PIONEER A-300R			NAD 310			ROTEL RA-930AX MK2			SONY TA-F246E			TECHNICS SU-A600 MK2			YAMAHA AX-490		
20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz	20Hz	1kHz	20kHz
56W	56W	56W	50W	53W	51W	24W	27W	26W	45W	48W	45W	60W	60W	60W	51W	54W	53W	110W	112W	103W
86W	92W	91W	75W	81W	70W	31W	40W	38W	62W	72W	64W	83W	88W	86W	72W	80W	78W	155W	169W	134W
+1.0dB (71W)			+0.9dB (65W)			+1.5dB (38W)			+1.2dB (64W)			+1.1dB (77W)			+1.1dB (70W)			+1.4dB (155W)		
17.6A			8.7A			12.0A			12.7A			13.8A			14.5A			17.7A		
0.038ohm			0.070ohm			-0.133ohm			0.0034ohm			0.115ohm			0.068ohm			0.021ohm		
208.6			114			See Text			2370			69.5			117.1			376		
CD/Aux	MM		CD/Aux	MM		CD/Aux			CD/Aux	MM		CD/Aux			CD/Aux	MM		CD/Aux	MM	
88dB	87dB		81dB	78dB		71dB			81dB	79dB		65dB	64dB		58dB	58dB		64dB	65dB	
63dB	62dB		66dB	54dB		66dB			56dB	53dB		40dB	39dB		37dB	34dB		39dB	41dB	
0.5dB	0.6dB		0.5dB	0.6dB		0.4dB			0.0dB	0.1dB		0.6dB	0.6dB		1.2dB	1.1dB		0.2dB	0.0dB	
0.4dB	0.5dB		0.6dB	0.7dB		9.4dB			0.1dB	0.2dB		0.8dB	0.8dB		1.0dB	0.9dB		1.2dB	1.0dB	
-94dB	-94dB		-76dB	-77dB		-68dB			-75dB	-86dB		-88dB	-97dB		-102dB	-88dB		-90dB	-91dB	
-94dB	-92dB		-75dB	-75dB		-67dB			-73dB	-79dB		-95dB	-98dB		-103dB	-88dB		-93dB	-94dB	
-91dB	-87dB		-75dB	-74dB		-62dB			-92dB	-88dB		-90dB	-84dB		-99dB	-88dB		-90dB	-88dB	
-88dB	-87dB		-72dB	-72dB		-62dB			-96dB	-85dB		-96dB	-84dB		-102dB	-89dB		-92dB	-90dB	
-89.6dB	-84.1dB		-87.7dB	-80.2dB		-91.2dB			-81.1dB	-77.9dB		-82.7dB	-80.3dB		-82.6dB	-81.1dB		-94.0dB	-81.7dB	
-98.8dB	-86.6dB		-97.6dB	-81.8dB		-98.9dB			-93.6dB	-83.2dB		-90.6dB	-87.7dB		-91.1dB	-90.5dB		-102.8dB	-86.4dB	
-78.5dBV	-78.7dBV		-78.7dBV	-78.7dBV		-81.8dBV			-67.4dBV	-67.4dBV		-77.0dBV	-76.9dBV		-75.5dBV	-75.5dBV		-86.6dBV	-78.0dBV	
23.7mV	394uV		35mV	557uV		47.0mV			17.7mV	444uV		19.6mV	321uV		15.8mV	277uV		17mV	312uV	
180mV	3.0mV		257mV	4.1mV		250mV			193mV	3.1mV		154mV	2.5mV		182mV	3.2mV		184mV	3.3mV	
	186mV			149mV		5.4V				178mV			146mV			195mV			134mV	
	1545mV			1325mV		5.1V				1590mV			1279mV			1620mV			1033mV	
	2003mV			2525mV		4.6V				3175mV			1420mV			2790mV			1030mV	
11.2V (disc) / 236ohm			9.3V (disc) / 1.4kohm			8.5V (line) / 2.05kohm			11.0V (disc) / 2kohm			9.1V (disc) / 1.24kohm			10.6V (disc) / 2.3kohm			8.1V (disc) / 1.9kohm		
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-8mV/-7mV			0mV/0mV			0mV/0mV			+78mV/+80mV			+28mV/+44mV			-5mV/-4mV			-1mV/+7mV		
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ON TEST

Dream systems

Lifestyle systems ooze sophistication and simplicity, but do they sound equally seductive? **Paul Messenger** tests seven of the best.

It's become something of an annual *Hi-Fi Choice* ritual to check out the packaged system market, not with the aim of finding bargain-priced audiophile equipment, but instead to recognise that some of these cute components should reproduce music to a reasonable standard. All are aesthetically pleasing, but we wanted to find out how many of them fulfilled the promise of their slick appearance in terms of ease of use, features and sound quality.

We assembled seven systems all told. Of these, three correspond fairly closely to the upmarket mini system stereotype, their primary appeal being to the disenfranchised millions who are utterly and irredeemably Bored By Black, and are prepared to pay a little over the odds to avoid such a fate. As Henry Ford

eventually discovered, you can charge a premium price by offering an alternative to black, and the favoured option is a return to various shades and textures of silver.

The separate-box construction of these upmarket examples confers a degree of hi-fi credibility, though some priority is also given to the handy ergonomic tricks available within a complete integrated system – widgets like full system remote control and a degree of intelligence in how components communicate with each other.

In two important respects these minis genuinely resemble real hi-fi systems, and they are clearly seen by their makers as viable alternatives to midis and separates. Unlike the more outré lifestyle packages assembled in this test, all three minis models offer vinyl

replay and a free choice of speakers — two admirable factors from a purist standpoint.

Of the four integrated lifestyle systems, the Sony and Pioneer stick closely to the conventional, stacked, cuboid style, though their approaches are executed differently. The B&O and Marantz, meanwhile, are far more daring and intriguing in both design and execution – and more expensive to boot.

STYLING

Bang & Olufsen Century	★★★★★
Denon D77	★★★★☆
Marantz Arch	★★★★★
Onkyo R-811 RDS	★★★★☆
Pioneer Impresso 7	★★★★☆
Pioneer NS-1	★★★★☆
Sony Cubic	★★★★★

You'll believe an Arch can fly

Style is the *raison d'être* for all of these systems, and they would all earn high marks for skin-deep beauty if this wasn't a group review. They're all so different from each other that choosing a favourite is difficult. The Marantz *Arch*, perhaps, stands out most of all for a bijou frivolity unmatched by the others.

Just look at the *Arch* on that! The Marantz comes with multiplay CD cartridge and tuner, but no cassette deck.



SYSTEMS

The idea of building a hi-fi system into an arch is not something that springs readily to mind. There's no particular logic that I can divine, nor any rationalisation along the 'form follows function' line. Instead it's simply a delightful shape, beautifully finished, and just the sort of thing you'd expect to find among the desktop executive toys in a big Japanese department store. Even so, the £1,500 price tag comes as a bit of a shock, especially as The Arch doesn't include a cassette mechanism. It is exceptionally pretty and remarkably compact, however, if a tad precious and self-conscious.

The little courtesy lights hidden beneath the unit are a nice touch: sited at the back of a desk the unit would double as a discreet lamp, though it would be equally well-suited to an uncluttered shelf. Though the electronics have been crammed into a tiny space, it must be said that this is not the most compact unit, as the span needs an unobstructed space 670mm wide, and more space is still needed for the loudspeakers.

Finish is a classy lacquer woodprint for the speakers and the top surface of the arch — it is actually an eco-friendly plastic, but it fooled me for a while. The remote handset fits neatly into the palm, though to make sense of the little buttons and legends you'd need higher-powered illumination than those little courtesy lights.

Let it all hang out

The B&O *Century* (£995, plus optional *Beolink 1000* handset at £100) is a little less original, but only because the basic layout is immediately reminiscent of the company's rather more expensive model *2300*. A complete one-piece package constructed in a tryptich layout, it has two speakers sitting either side of a central section that houses the various mechanisms and electronics.



This layout follows that of the large portables you'll find in any electronics chain store, but B&O has taken care to replace any suggestion of 'attitude' with its own brand of style. The 'soft' look is in right now, so the *Century* starts with deliberately hard, sharp edges, then covers up familiar hard plastics or metals with soft-coloured fabrics. It's quite a large unit in width and height, so the lack of depth adds considerable elegance and encourages you to mount it straight onto the wall (with the optional bracket). An alternative foot allows the unit to free-stand at an artful tilt on a suitable table, shelf — or even the floor.

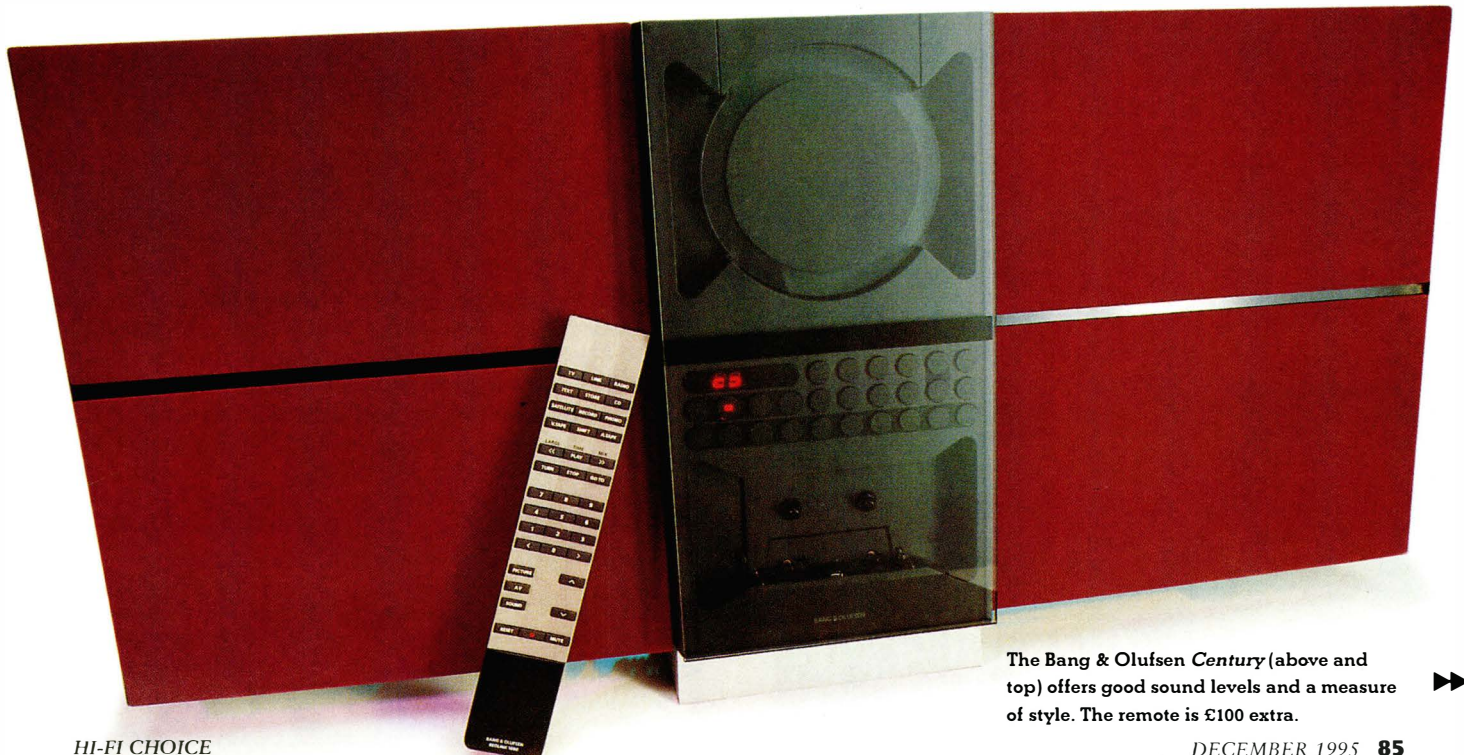
Although the *Century* will respond to remote control, it doesn't come with a handset, having been specifically designed for hands-on operation. The *pièce de résistance* is a glass door over the central mechanism. Move your hand towards it and sensors pick up the movement, causing the CD door to slide open automatically and the appropriate

operating buttons to illuminate. Select your source and the correct set of control buttons will light up for the next command. All very clever — intuition could have been its middle name.

May the cube be with you

"*Qbric*" is what Sony Japan calls its lovely micro-system-with-a-difference, but in Britain these brick-like cuboids are marketed under a more depressingly anodyne rubric — *Cubic*. As the bits came out of the boxes, with nary an instruction book in sight, I had the sinking feeling that none of it made much sense. I managed to get some sound out of it quite quickly, but remained baffled by the configuration.

It turns out that everything is done by permutations — there are at least three different system configurations available. There's the basic one-box-plus-speakers

The Sony *Cubic* offers stacks of different system permutations.

The Bang & Olufsen *Century* (above and top) offers good sound levels and a measure of style. The remote is £100 extra.

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◀ *Cubic D1* (£350), a play-only package for CD or radio, while the £500 *T1* examined here is, in effect, a *D1* with matching cassette deck. Alternatively an £800 *M1* system supplies a MiniDisc recorder in place of the cassette unit; an MD recorder can be added to the *T1* for an extra £500. This may be confusing, but it is rather more sophisticated and flexible than the micro-system norm.

Now with twenty-odd years of Walkman experience, Sony is of course a past master at the art of brushed-silver finishing, but the facias themselves are the best bit. Thick stamped alloy gives an effect redolent of casting or machining, and finely-detailed knobs, buttons, flaps and graphics all add to the expensive, classy looks. Don't forget that it's ultra-compact and discreet, too.

The piebald Pioneer

Pioneer's *NS-1* picked up one of the EISA Awards announced in our October issue, but to these eyes its styling is a touch bizarre. What I took to be a mistake on Pioneer's part led to an enquiring phone call, but this only confirmed that one black main unit was indeed supposed to go with another silver main unit. Chuck in a mid-charcoal-grey bass module and a pair of tiny silver/black satellites, and it seems the designer must be into piebald.

It's more likely that this is a deliberate attempt to flout convention, make a statement that diversity is more fun than uniformity, and assert that chaos now takes precedence over conformity. Check the widths of the *NS-1* and it's neither mini nor micro, but something in between. After spending some time using the system, its charm starts to win you over.

The identikit components used in Pioneer's *NS-1* and other minis will continue to appeal to the conventional majority, but I'm rather taken by this anarchic little beggar, and appreciate the fact that I don't keep opening the cassette door by mistake while attempting to load CDs. In terms of form following function, this is one of the more intuitive systems around. And since its bits don't match, and are suitably sized to be distributed randomly around a (deepish)

bookshelf, this outfit can be made to attempt a rather ingenious disappearing act. It doesn't quite work, though, because the amp/control module masquerades as the world's most aggressive clock radio. The overgrown display is full of surprises — a chicken, of all things, started strutting about at a five o'clock (display pictured left). It's entirely indiscreet but has a welcome measure of wit and plenty of attitude — teenagers will love it.

Three of a kind

The three silver mini-systems are much less distinctive. Each of them holds closely to established stereotypes of style and size; so closely, in fact, that one might be tempted to mix'n'match units just as if they were separate hi-fi components. This would indeed be possible with both the £900 Pioneer *Impresso 7* and £1140 Onkyo *R-811 RDS* packages, which rely on conventional interconnects.

The similarities are so great that it's easier to examine the differences. The Denon *77* (£650, or £720 with speakers) is the newest and least expensive in a range of systems offered by the company that virtually invented the silver mini. Effectively this is a fixed three-box package, with a receiver in place of an amplifier to save the necessity for a separate tuner.

The chosen Onkyo system is also a three-boxer, a compact arrangement that precludes the two-by-two stacking option — arguably the most aesthetically satisfying mini layout. Onkyo's four-box alternative involves adding a matching £340 *SR211PRO* Dolby Pro-Logic processor/amp to bring a home cinema dimension.

Frontal assault

The Pioneer's heavily chamfered facias and blacked-out display areas made the strongest first impression, giving a welcome touch of individuality. The light show could have been more coherent and subtle, however, and it's not long before one becomes conscious of the rather bland plastic surface textures that dominate the facias.

Discretion is the forte of the ultra-compact Denon: three identical slimline units keep the bulk down while a solitary back-lit liquid crystal display provides visual feedback. The lurid yellow glow seems a little out of character,



Pioneer's *Impresso 7* — strong looks and the best sound quality among the three mini systems tested here.

however, and the metal front panels have an anodised effect that is a trifle analogue.

So why is the Onkyo that much more expensive than the Denon and Pioneer? Put all three models side by side and one reason is obvious: it's that front panel finish. The Denon may be nice enough in its way, but first sight of the Onkyo components makes you want to reach out and stroke them. Cunningly hinged flaps drop down to reveal a whole variety of secondary features. It's actually rather reminiscent of those original silver Denons from a few years back, which would probably cost as much as this Onkyo does today, given the effects of inflation and currency shifts. The delicate gold displays are also the classiest by a wide margin.

FEATURES

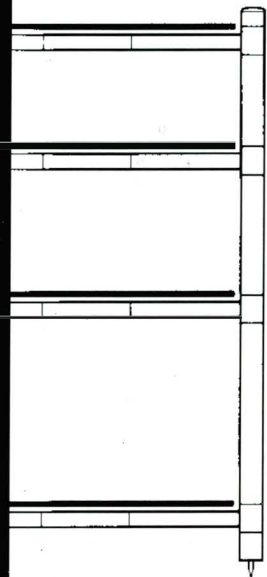
Bang & Olufsen Century	★★★★☆
Denon D77	★★★★☆
Marantz Arch	★★★★☆
Onkyo R-811 RDS	★★★★★
Pioneer Impresso 7	★★★★☆
Pioneer NS-1	★★★★☆
Sony Cubic	★★★★☆

The secret's in the speakers

The crucial distinction between the minis and the lifestyle systems is made at the speaker end of the chain. All three minis allow their users a completely free choice of enclosures, so by



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The EISA award-winning NS-1 from Pioneer.



friendly, whereas the three minis and the tiny Sony are hard work, with facia legends in typefaces as small as those on this page, and buttons better suited to probes than fingers.

Only one handset scores higher than six out of ten. Compared with today's granny-friendly TV remotes, most are disappointingly prosaic, with rows of small identical buttons and even smaller legends. And of course, you have to put down the torch and the magnifying glass in order to use the handset!

From a feel point of view the optional B&O infra-red is way ahead, but its ability to control a complete AV system inevitably involves considerable button overkill when driving the much simpler *Century*.

In design, layout and clarity of button identification, the Pioneer NS-1's handset is comfortably in

◀ all means hook them up to your Tannoy Westminster Royals if you have the mind.

Such freedom of choice isn't available with the lifestyle systems, each of which comes complete with its own decidedly non-standard speakers, and, in turn, each of these adopts a very different approach. But why integrate the speakers with the rest of the package? To make them smaller, of course. And how does that help? Because an integrated amplifier/speaker combo can incorporate active drive with electronic low frequency boost and protection, so that a very small speaker can be made to behave like a larger one.

The Marantz and Sony systems (and arguably the

economic sense, but means that midband will inevitably be handled better than bass and treble, and restricts volume levels.

The Marantz speakers are an altogether more serious proposition, each containing more serious supplies, active crossover/equalsers and stereo amplifiers directly driving the little bass/mid drive unit and tweeter. It's the right way to go if you want a system to sound like a real hi-fi; but it is, of course, the more expensive route.

Pioneer's NS-1 also adopts an active approach, but keeps its amplification with the clock radio, using three channels to drive its three-box, bass-module-plus-satellites speaker system.

The bass unit is small enough to 'slot' into a bookshelf, while the satellites have two cone drivers, one small and the other very much smaller — presumably they operate in parallel from the high-pass amp output. Driving the low frequency units separately allows Pioneer to offer three levels of bass — designated low, medium and high, and broadly translating as boomy, very boomy and utterly ludicrous.



Sony's Cubic speakers use a single full-range drive unit on each side and rely on active operation.

front. You don't have to squint, or look up things in a manual: just pick it up and use it. A pity, then, that the system itself was sometimes reluctant to respond. I guess that I could learn to put up with most of the other handsets, as all display a measure of graphic and layout creativity, and fit neatly into the hand. However, the Onkyo is a real lunger, totally out of character with the beautiful components themselves.

Pioneer's NS-1 display would probably be legible from the other side of the road, but its insistence could be wearing

B&O too) actually build the amplifiers into the speakers, which is why their source electronics have the most compact casework. This approach has the added bonus of providing useful mass loading for otherwise rather light speakers, and pumping air through the ports can help cool the power amps.

Nothing would induce me to try looking inside the *Century*. Everything's jammed in there so tight that it probably wouldn't be an illuminating experience, and there was a distinct likelihood of not being able to reassemble it. There are certainly at least four drive units under the flaps, probably actively driven. That the whole thing feels so solid and heavy should ensure freedom from the plastic rattles that have given the one-piece sound system such a bad reputation.

An active life

Both Sony and Marantz can claim active operation, but there's a big difference between them. Sony has taken the bold step of supplying a single full-range driver for each channel, building an equalising stereo amp into just one of the two boxes. Power supplies for the other electronics are built onto the back of the cube. This arrangement makes

REMOTE CONTROLS & DISPLAYS

Bang & Olufsen Century	★★★★☆
Denon D77	★★★★☆
Marantz Arch	★★★★☆
Onkyo R-811 RDS	★★★★☆
Pioneer Impresso 7	★★★★★
Pioneer NS-1	★★★★☆
Sony Cubic	★★★★☆

Buttons aren't everything...

These days, the ergonomics of consumer electronics are arguably more to do with remote handsets and status displays than control surfaces on the units. All systems except the *Arch* need to have discs and tapes changed from time to time, however, so easy hands-on use is still desirable. This is why the B&O *Century* has been designed mainly for hands-on operation (the *Beolink 1000* remote is £100 extra), and also why it is so successful in this regard.

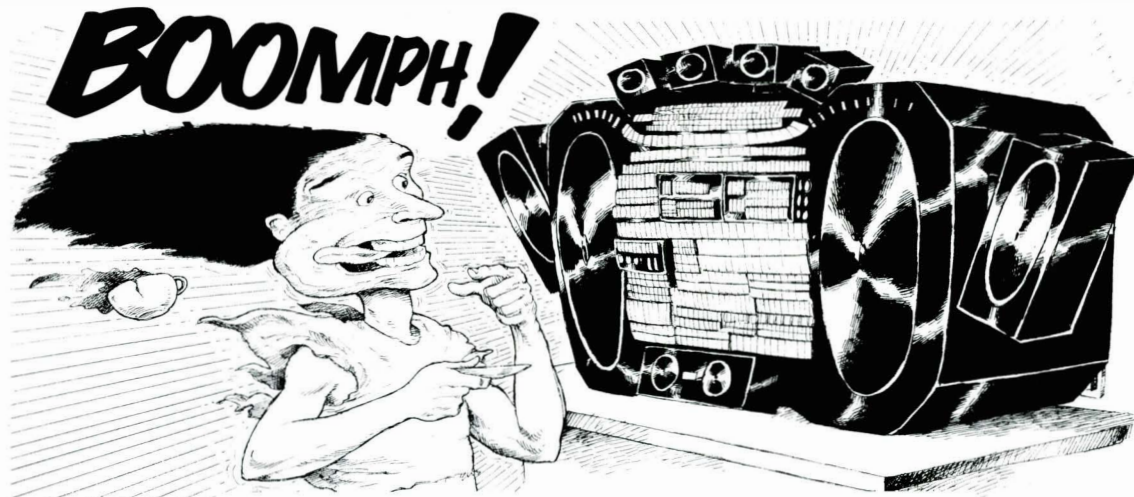
Credit where it's due: the Marantz *Arch* and Pioneer NS-1 are also hands-on

Marantz also relies on active operation for its *Arch* speakers.



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systems. Besides the free choice of speakers, all three minis (and only the minis) feature the circuitry for directly connecting a turntable. In practice, though, all can accept line input signals and therefore could be fed from a turntable fitted with a phono-stage amp.

Hardened fans of *Test Match Special* will already be aware that Long Wave AM is a lot more useful than RDS (Radio Data Service), and will no doubt be as baffled as me that LW is to be found only on the B&O, Marantz and Sony systems.

In making up tapes for in-car replay, a degree of ALC (automatic level control) compression might even be desirable, and it's certainly one less thing to think about when setting up a recording. But those users hoping to make the best quality recordings, especially of wide-range classical material, might take note that only the Onkyo and Pioneer *Impresso* systems offer manual setting of recording levels.

◀ in the long haul. The Arch display is just the right size, if rather colourful; the Onkyo is the prettiest; prolonged exposure to the Denon and Sony could trigger a squint.

EASE OF USE

Bang & Olufsen Century	★★★★☆
Denon D77	★★★★☆
Marantz Arch	★★★★☆
Onkyo R-811 RDS	★★★★☆
Pioneer Impresso 7	★★★★☆
Pioneer NS-1	★★★★☆
Sony Cubic	★★★★☆

Where's the snooze button?

I hate nit-picking over sleep timers, bass boosters and the shuffle play of preset radio stations. Most of these systems offer a whole load more features than the twenty-grand hi-fi that is my normal daily entertainment. The latter, I must add, serves my needs very well (apart from the lack of a remote-control radio with presets). The point is that I'm not really a widget buff, and prefer my electronics to be simple, straightforward and intuitive to use, rather than overburdened by every selling point the marketing department could dream up.

All of these systems make me suspect that the designers were keeping half an eye on clock-radio developments, instead of concentrating on the business of playing music. I junked my clock radio years ago in favour of a neat, compact battery alarm clock, and my home is already replete with digital time readouts on VCRs, cookers, computers and so on — I have no need for another clock on a hi-fi system.

The really important features are concerned with the sources that are available, so anyone who's heavily into recording or playing cassettes might be best advised to avoid the tape-less Marantz *Arch*. On the other hand, that system's unique combination of magazine-type CD-changer and radio will give hours of practical use without the need to go near the unit at all.

Alternative sources

Whereas the lifestyle packages are conceived primarily as second systems, for bedrooms, studies and so forth, the minis are considered potential replacements for main household

SOUND QUALITY

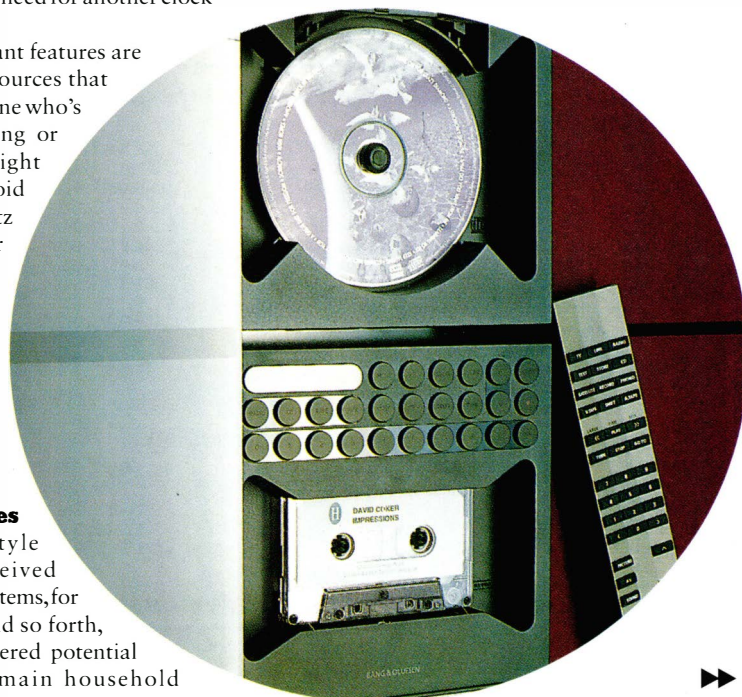
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Sony Cubic	★★★★☆

The magic of midband

It's very hard to make a concise assessment of sound quality when so many sources and permutations are involved. Fortunately, in



Denon's D77 system (above and top) has neither the finish of the Onkyo mini system nor the sound quality of the Pioneer *Impresso*, but is far cheaper than either.



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practice each lifestyle system's sound seemed to be dominated by the amp/speaker combination, while the amplifiers tended to define the minis' characters, mostly irrespective of the particular source in use.

The Sony *Cubic* is the least expensive and also the least capable, at least in conventional hi-fi terms. As anticipated, the single-drive-unit speakers give a mid-dominant sound with obvious lack of bass and top, and a fair amount of midband box honk. It's the least loud by a comfortable margin, too, but the lack of traditional hi-fi values is redressed by fine communication skills and the high fun factor.

There's an extraordinarily convincing coherence through the midband, which helps enormously when deciphering and parsing the subtle inflexions of voices, giving a beautifully precise stereo focus to boot. It's not hi-fi as we know it, Jim, but in some respects can be rather more entertaining, with an intimacy sometimes absent from broader bandwidth systems. To my surprise, the two stages of Dynamic Bass Feedback (DBFB) proved effective and tolerable.

After the Sony's up-front precision, the much heavier, richer Pioneer *NS-1* came as a considerable contrast. The changeover was a shock at first, with the phase-imprecision of the three-box speaker sacrificing stereo focus, while the bass was clearly over-full and the midband a little shut in.

As I got into the balance and grew used to the time-smear, however, the fun factor started sneaking up on me again, and with the bass set at minimum I started to enjoy the music and stopped worrying about sonic imperfections. This may not sound too appetising, but it did leave me feeling well satisfied. And the *NS-1* can do some things which are well beyond the Sony, like filling a decent-sized room with a full, rich sound – not to party levels, mind, but enough to irritate those who don't want to hear your music.

Looks can be deceptive...

Keen party throwers should perhaps be thinking about B&O, because the *Century* is unlikely to give up before you do. It sounds (and measures) pretty neutral in overall balance if placed close to the wall, and it doesn't muddy the pool with midbass excess. The midband isn't particularly smooth, but is quite even overall, though low bass and upper treble are somewhat lacking.

For all its good balance, the *Century* is challenged on two counts. The physical lack of separation between the two channels



Onkyo *R-811* RDS options include an add-on Dolby Pro-Logic unit (not shown).

with the CD magazine and finding an RF lead. When I did try the *Arch* complete a significant chunk of the mag had slipped away. It has the generosity of a proper hi-fi rig, but not the transparency of an audiophile one.

Maximising the mini

Among the minis, it was quite clear that the Pioneer *Impresso 7* was ahead of the competition by a fair margin. It's not a particularly delicate or beautiful sound, but crucially it doesn't seem to get in the way of the music, and doesn't process away all the detail and dynamic shading. The top end sounds a little dull, but the bass and midband has an integrity and coherence that communicates as well as many a 'real' hi-fi system.

The Denon's strength is a rather sweet and seductive midband, which makes it notably pleasant when listening at low levels. But it does lack fundamental grunt, guts and drive, and consequently gets a bit strident and congested when the going gets tougher, either in musical complexity or level. The optional speakers provide a good match in total balance terms. Our cassette mechanism seemed unduly mechanically noisy, but this was probably a sample fault.

Onkyo's *R-811* RDS System is rather more generous at low frequencies than the Denon, and is arguably the most neutral of the minis too. But a rather dead and processed character seems to flatten dynamic contrasts and lose the tautness of the timing. The Onkyo has a marvellous cassette deck, and this justifies its hefty price by delivering a performance with a stability and solidity not found elsewhere.

conspires with the early bass and treble roll-offs to rob the sound of any real space and scale, so the result is a bit small, if beefy with it. More seriously, there's an overall processed quality that inhibits transparency and dynamic expression, plus an overall temporal laziness that I found rather tedious. It goes loud with aplomb, but lacks delicacy and sounds sat-upon.

The *Arch* is a vindication of the lifestyle system idea, mainly because those little active speakers sound so good, if a little sharp with it. They bring a dynamic verve and grip that few passive miniatures can match, with the result that the *Arch* (with extension leads to give some proper stereo width and subject to a favourable wind) sounds at least on a par with a decent hi-fi system.

Caveats are that the speakers are a little too bright, especially, I suspect, for British tastes that would probably prefer the tweeter level set 2-3dB lower. The boxes are also a little too good for the front end of the system. I started off plugging my own gear into the line input, and had quite fallen in love with the speakers by the time I got round to fiddling



OVERALL RATINGS

Bang & Olufsen <i>Century</i>	★★★★☆
Denon <i>D77</i>	★★★★☆
Marantz <i>Arch</i>	★★★★☆
Onkyo <i>R-811</i> RDS	★★★★☆
Pioneer <i>Impresso 7</i>	★★★★☆
Pioneer <i>NS-1</i>	★★★★☆
Sony <i>Cubic</i>	★★★★☆

Horses for courses

A hi-fi magazine, by definition, is obliged to regard sound quality as the major criterion, but that is unlikely to be the priority for many purchasers of these pretty little systems.

Assessing the style appeal is therefore more important, though

far more difficult, as personal taste and lifestyle are crucial here. Further, the price span makes meaningful value judgements almost impossible.



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◀ Comparing the complete 'lifestyle' packages against the mini systems illustrates fundamental differences between two alternative approaches that could easily be vying for the same sale. The minis don't come out too well, tending to fall between stools. They offer neither the performance of real hi-fi nor the convenience of the lifestyle alternatives.

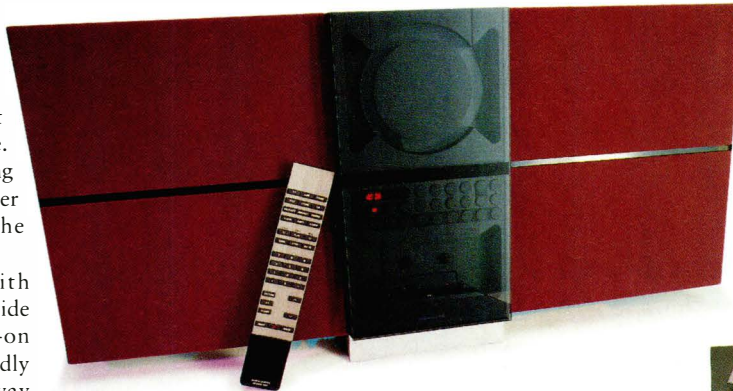
The mini system's obsession with physical uniformity and the need to provide every possible feature makes hands-on operation a real struggle, and is undoubtedly one reason why sound quality falls a way short of that from proper hi-fi components. The Pioneer *Impresso 7*'s saving grace is that it sounds very respectable indeed, but the Denon and Onkyo are both prettier and the Denon has a substantial price advantage.

The freedom to play tricks with loud-speaker drive and boldly go into uncharted styling territory are what gives the lifestyle systems their edge, making them more fun to listen to and easier to use than their mini rivals. The differences between them are so much greater too, in performance, price and approach, that each product is likely to appeal to a mutually exclusive niche of potential purchasers and applications.

From a personal point of view I admire the Sony less for its slick, conservative styling than its sonic daring. It doesn't pretend to be a full bandwidth hi-fi, but provides an alternative that in its immediacy resembles headphones more closely than speakers. Arguably, this is all to the good. On the other hand, I'm sure my teenage son would rather have the Pioneer *NS-1* — he'd rate its funky ergonomics and display far more highly than any lack of sonic subtlety.

If price is unimportant, the *Arch* gets closer to real hi-fi than anything else here — an achievement in itself. The shape is maybe a little too self-conscious, but as Marantz points out, a major plus is that no-one else you know will have one. B&O's *Century* is an absolute delight in hands-on operation. The wall-mount option makes it arguably the most discrete of all when installed, while the neutral balance is equally self-effacing.

Any or none of these lifestyle systems might suit your pocket and preferences, but their sheer variety and imaginative design are starting to leave the mini-style stereos looking bulky and dated. ▲



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Bang & Olufsen UK Ltd, Unit 630, Winnersh Triangle, Wharfedale Road, Winnersh, Wokingham, Buckinghamshire RG41 5TP. ☎ (01734) 692288.	
<i>Beolink 1000 remote-control costs £100 extra</i>	
Denon	£650
D77 Personal Component System	
Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire SL9 9UG. ☎ (01753) 888447.	
<i>Pair of SC-M2 speakers costs £70 extra</i>	
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Arch Music Life System	
Marantz Hi-Fi UK Ltd, Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 575-583 Bath Road, Longfield, Middlesex UB7 0EH. ☎ (01753) 680868.	
Onkyo	£1140
R-811 RDS System	
Onkyo UK, 401-405 Nether Street, London N3 1QG ☎ (0181) 343 2082. <i>Comprises R-811 RDS receiver, C-711 CD player, K-611 cassette deck.</i>	
Pioneer	£899
Impresso 7	
Pioneer High-Fidelity (GB) Ltd, Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Slough, Berkshire SL2 4PQ. ☎ (01753) 789789. <i>System comprises A-C5 amplifier, PD-C5 CD player, T-C3 cassette deck, F-C5 RDS tuner.</i>	
Pioneer	£550
NS-1	
<i>Comprises PDC-Q180 CD player/cassette deck, SX-Q180 receiver, S-Q180LRW speakers.</i>	
Sony Cubic	£500
CMT-T1 Disc Age Unit System	
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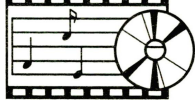
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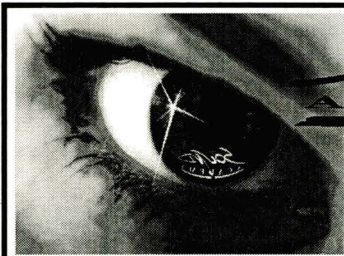
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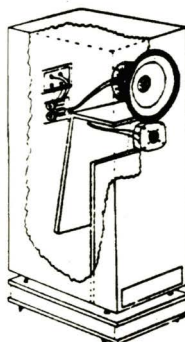
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The satellites by virtue of their very lightweight, fast aluminium cones, and long throw suspension, coupled to a stiff air spring, and rigid enclosure, cover the entire 20KHz down to 120 Hz range without the need of a crossover. The Bass speaker contains a single aluminium coned 8" drive unit with sonic qualities to match, and therefore integrate with the satellites. This unit has two voice coils which sum the low frequency information and an acoustic loading which acts as a low pass filter, thus negating the need for any crossover components. The bass speaker operates from 120Hz down to 35Hz.

Both the satellites and the bass speaker have gold plated binding posts which take bare wire or 4mm plugs. Wires can either be taken to the bass speaker and then on to the satellites, or both may be independently wired back to the amplifier.



THE "TRIDENT" IN USE.

Capable of breathtaking transparency and wide bandwidth, from tiny enclosures, maximum loudness is necessarily limited. However whilst not being suitable for driving high levels in a hall, they are capable of filling most domestic sized rooms with realistic levels on most programmes. Amplifier Recommended 20 - 60 watts per channel and capable of driving 4 ohms. Larger amplifiers will also work well if used with care. DESIGN (J. Powell - 1995)



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Pictures are slim, wall-mounted loudspeakers, only 2 inches thick. Each Picture contains an advanced driver, with an anodised, spun aluminium cone, 2 inches in diameter, fitted into a cabinet with a ceramic front.

They have three principal applications:

- 1) For moderate listening levels, where exceptional transparency, smoothness and rendition of detail are valued above high sound levels, or extreme bass extension.
- 2) As very high quality rear speakers in 4-channel or surround sound systems, where their slim proportions enable them to be installed further back than most.
- 3) As extension speakers for small rooms such as kitchens or bathrooms, where their resistance to high humidity is a further attribute.

DESIGN (J. Powell - 1994) The combination of a rigid, ceramic cabinet front, carefully terminated into a solid wooden frame which acts as an energy sink, and a damped driver mounting connected to the rear panel, allows the single BANDOR driver to produce uncoloured phase coherent sound. The bass response is enhanced by wall mounting.

SPECIFICATION Connections: -- Gold plated 4mm sockets / binding posts. Impedance: -- 8 ohms. Bandwidth: -- 80Hz - 20kHz. Suggested Amplifier per channel - up to 30 watts (RMS).

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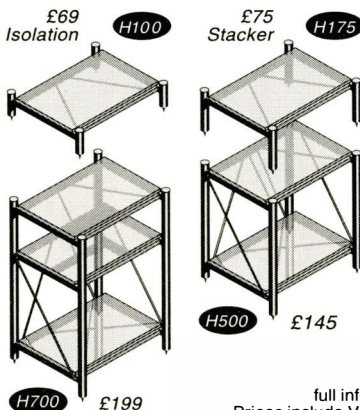
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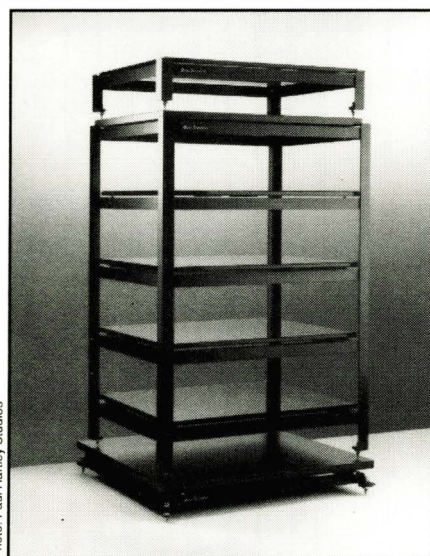
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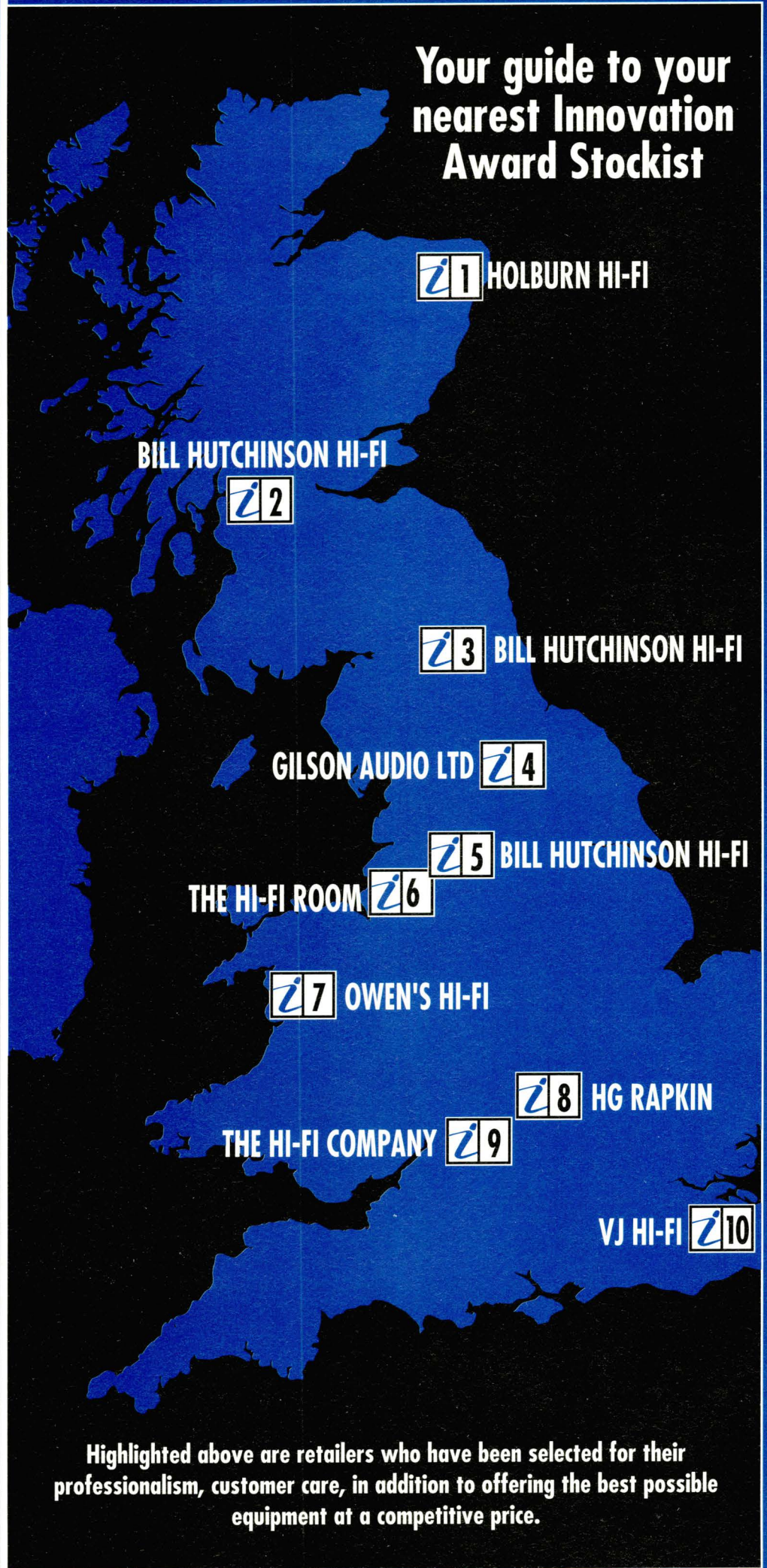
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14 HUDDERSFIELD HI-FI CENTRE

15 HI-FI CORNER

16 BILL HUTCHINSON HI-FI

19 OWEN'S HI-FI

17 FORUM HI-FI

18 SHROPSHIRE HI-FI

20 UNILET SOUND & VISION

Highlighted above are retailers who have been selected for their professionalism, customer care, in addition to offering the best possible equipment at a competitive price.



Bill Hutchinson's **INNOVATION** A W A R D

KEY TO RETAILERS

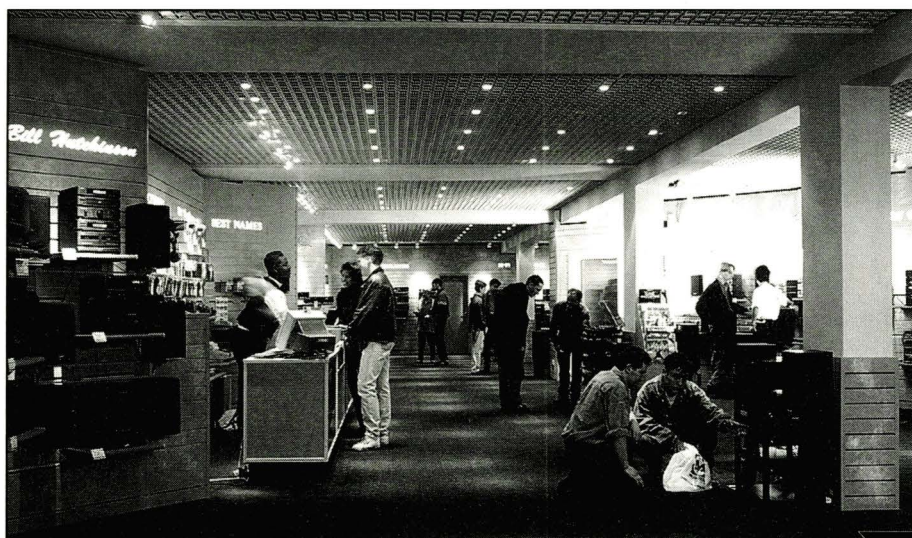
- 11** THE MUSIC STATION, 49 CHURCH STREET, INVERNESS. TEL: 0146 322 5523
B D K M M S P S
- 12** BILL HUTCHINSON HI-FI LTD, 43 SOUTH CLERK ST, EDINBURGH. TEL: 0131 667 2877
A B C D J K K W M M S P R S T Y Y
- 13** AUDIO TIMES, 47-49 FOUNTAIN STREET, BELFAST. TEL: 01232 249117
A C D K W M M S P S T Y Y
- 14** HUDDERSFIELD HI-FI CENTRE, 4 CROSS CHURCH ST, HUDDERSFIELD. TEL: 01484 544 668
A B D K W M M S P R T Y
- 15** HI-FI CORNER, AT THE VIRGIN MEGASTORE, ASTON QUAY, DUBLIN 2, IRELAND. TEL: 00 353 1-671 4343
A B C D J K K W M M S P S T Y Y
- 16** BILL HUTCHINSON HI-FI LTD, 50/52 DEANS GATE, MANCHESTER. TEL: 0161 832 1600
A B C D J K K W M M S P R S T Y Y
- 17** FORUM HI-FI, 600-602 MANSFIELD RD, SHERWOOD, NOTTINGHAM. TEL: 01159 622 150
A B C M M S P T Y Y
- 18** SHROPSHIRE HI-FI, ST MICHAEL'S STREET, SHREWSBURY. TEL: 01743 232 317
A B C D J K K W M P R S T Y
- 19** OWEN'S HI-FI, UNIT B2, COLWYN SHOPPING CENTRE, COLWYN BAY, CLWYD. TEL: 01492 530 982
A C D K W M P S T
- 20** UNILET SOUND & VISION, 35 HIGH STREET, NEW MALDEN, SURREY KT3 4BY. TEL: 0181 942 9567
B D K M S P S T Y Y

A AIWA	K KEF	R REVOLVER
B B&W	KW KENWOOD	S SONY
C CANON	M MARANTZ	T TECHNICS
D DENON	MS MISSION	TY TANNOY
J JVC	P PIONEER	Y YAMAHA

PIONEER

BEST PRICES GUARANTEED

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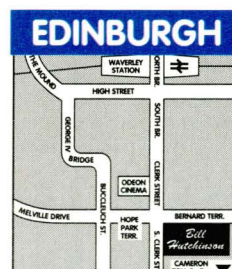
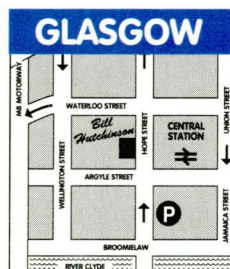
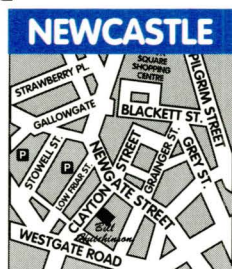
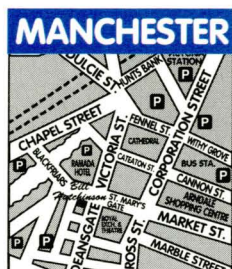
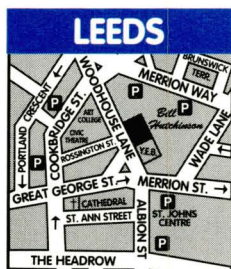
Bill

PRICE PLEDGE

Should you find any local dealer offering a better price for goods currently in stock at Bill Hutchinson and the alternative quoting retailer, we will better that deal.

LICENSED CREDIT BROKERS ASK FOR DETAILS

THE LARGEST SELECTION OF QUALITY HI-FI AND AUDIO VISUAL SYSTEMS



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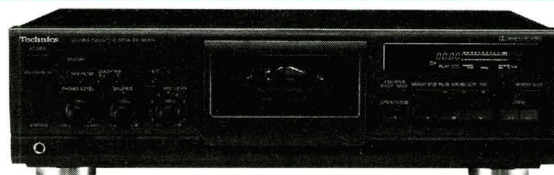
87A CLAYTON STREET
0191-230 3600
OPEN MONDAY - SATURDAY
9.30AM - 5.30PM

43 HOPE STREET
0141-248 2857
OPEN MONDAY - SATURDAY
9.30AM - 6.00PM

43 SOUTH CLERK STREET
0131-667 2877
OPEN MONDAY - SATURDAY
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HEAR TECHNICS'S INNOVATION WINNING STEREO CASSETTE DECK - RS BX501



- YAMAHA DSP-2070 - AV AMPLIFIER - INNOVATION WINNER '94
- PIONEER PDS-703 - CD PLAYER - INNOVATION WINNER '94
- MARANTZ- 1020 - LYFE STYLE SYSTEM - INNOVATION WINNER '94
- KEF-100 - SPEAKERS - INNOVATION WINNER '94
- DENON DF-10 - CD PLAYER - INNOVATION WINNER '94
- MISSION 731 - SPEAKERS - INNOVATION WINNER '95
- SONY TV-KVS 3432 - TELEVISION - INNOVATION WINNER '95

TANNOY

MISSION

PANASONIC

TEAC

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DENON

YAMAHA

MARANTZ

JVC

SONY

TECHNICS

ROTEL

ALL WITH 2 YEAR GUARANTEE

AIWA

THE ALL NEW HI-FI CHOICE - DIRECTORY -



Best Buys & Recommendations

The most influential symbols in our Directory are the **B'BUY** and **REC** commendations found at the end of the entries for particularly fine products.

■ **B'BUY** A product carrying the Best Buy swingtag is of excellent quality and good value for money in its price category.

■ **REC** Recommended products are runners up, but they are still definitely worth considering within their price bands.

Please note, however, that an expensive Recommended product will nearly always sound

better than an inexpensive Best Buy.

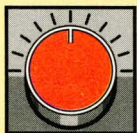
An ideal situation would be to choose suitably priced **B'BUY** or **REC** products from relevant categories and create a Best Buy system. However, due to the varieties in tonal balance that exist in many audio products, and differences in taste, system building is unfortunately not that simple. These ratings make a useful guideline for short-listing components, but only by experiencing the actual combination in a dealer's listening room will you be able to decide whether it works for you.

BUYING HI-FI EQUIPMENT

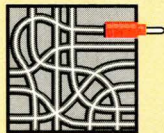
The key to putting together a great hi-fi system is finding a dealer with whom you can communicate, and who is sympathetic to your requirements. So the first stage in your quest is to look up your local dealers in our Dealer Directory, at the end of the product Directory, and go to see the people behind the counters. Listen to the sound they make, check out their record collections, sip their coffee and find the store with the right attitude. Then take your records in and listen to them through a variety of components within your budget. Use our Recommendations and Best Buys to narrow options down, but bear in mind that dealers have a lot of experience in putting systems together, so don't worry if parts of the system are not Best Buys. It's the end result that counts. Listen for the system that shows you the greatest differences in your software, (regardless of musical content, records should sound distinctly dissimilar). This is a good way of assessing which system is the most revealing.

If you can borrow equipment to try at home, do this before you buy. Loudspeakers in particular can sound very different according to the room they are in. Don't forget that cables and supports play an important part in the sound of a system: if you take your bits home and plonk them on the sideboard with a bit of mains flex to connect them up, don't expect sonic ecstasy!

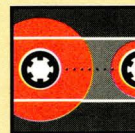
PRODUCT CATEGORY INDEX



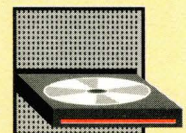
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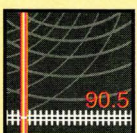
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DON'T BUY ANYTHING!

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PREMIER CHOICE

The very best home cinema and hi-fi brands on show, SEVEN days a week.

DEMONSTRATION FACILITIES

Amongst the best in the country – we have 6 demonstration rooms at our store in New Malden.

SPECIAL OFFERS

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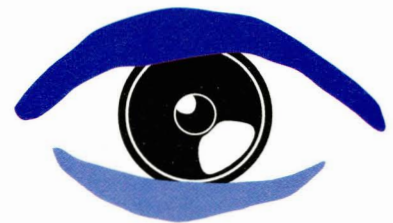
HELPFUL & KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF

Sound advice before and after sales!

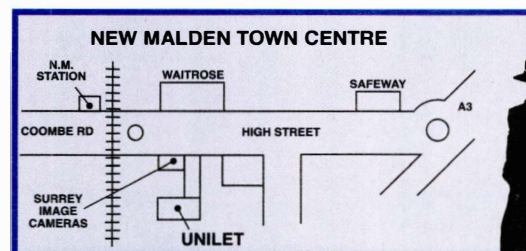
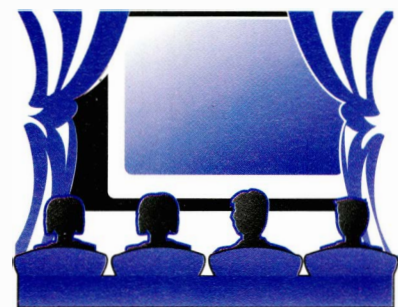
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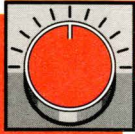


UNILET
SOUND & VISION



UNILET SOUND & VISION,
35 HIGH STREET,
NEW MALDEN, SURREY KT3 4BY

*Subject to status, written details upon request.



Amplifiers

The amplifier sits at the heart of the system, processing the outputs from the various music sources as necessary and then driving the loudspeakers. These two (quite separate) functions are integrated into a single box at the low-to-middle price points; but separated pre and power amplifiers, even separate power supplies, become increasingly common as one moves upmarket.

■ Bear in mind that output power and sound quality are not necessarily related. Some of the finest amplifiers around have outputs as low as 12 Watts, but team them with high efficiency loudspeakers and you can achieve loudness aplenty. Only when using loudspeakers of low sensitivity (below 87dB/W) or difficult load do you need lots of power. ■ As general rule, the more widgets an amplifier has (ie

tone controls, remote control, DSP) the more money will have to be spent on it to match the sound quality that can be achieved with a minimalist design. The sort of facilities that are useful include tape monitor switching and a source direct button on models with tone controls.

■ An increasing number of amplifiers are supplied without vinyl disc stages, or with the phono stage as an optional extra. If you use a turntable, make sure that the amp has an MM or MC stage to suit your cartridge

A/V amps

In practice an A/V amplifier provides all the standard CD, tuner, tape, aux and phono inputs offered by a standard stereo amplifier. In addition many also incorporate an AM/FM tuner section, making them A/V receivers.

■ More importantly an A/V amplifier includes a Dolby Pro Logic decoding chip along with extra circuitry to effect the rear channel delay. Naturally there are at least four channels worth of amplification under the bonnet to feed the five loudspeaker outputs.

Key

integrated, preamp, power amp amplifier type
 A/V includes surround sound capability
 50W power output per channel in Watts RMS
 MM, 5L, 2T number of inputs of each type (L - line, T - tape, MM - moving magnet cartridge, MC - moving coil cartridge
 hdph headphone output available

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

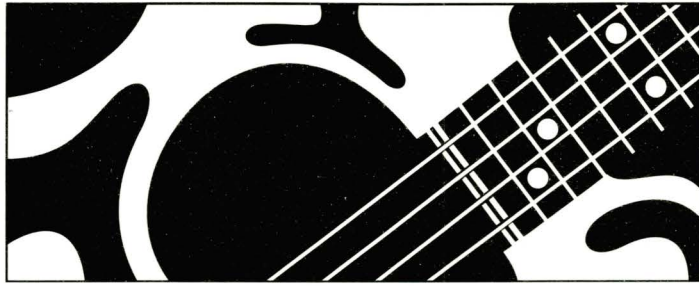
AMPLIFIERS					
Analogue Saturn	75	preamp • MM			
Analogue Saturn MC	75	preamp • MC			
Creek OBM-8	99	preamp • MM • 10,6,11cm • Phono stepup			
Sherwood AI 1110	100	integrated • 55W • MM, 4L, 1T • hdph			
Creek OBM-9	110	preamp • MC • 10,6,11cm • Phono stepup			
Grundig V210	130	integrated • 50W • MM, 5L, 1T • hdph • rem • 36,12,30cm • Pre-main split			
Pioneer A-103	130	integrated • 30W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 42,11,31cm			
Aiwa XA-003	140	integrated • 40W • MM, 2L, 1T • hdph • 2 speaker circuits			
Kenwood KA-1060	140	integrated • 140W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,13,25cm • 'Logical Flow' construction			
Moth 30 Passive	149	109 preamp • 4L, 1T • 5,10,35cm • A modular system capable of cracking results. (tested with 30 Stereo /60).			B'BUY
Grundig Fine Arts V1	150	integrated • 50W • MM, 5L, 1T • hdph • rem • 43,14,30cm • Tone defeat			
Marantz PM-34	150	integrated • 40W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 42,14,28cm • Source direct			
Pioneer A-203	150	integrated • 45W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 42,11,31cm			
Sony TAF211B	150	integrated • 30W • MM/2L • hdph • 43,14,31cm • Source direct			
Technics SU-V300	150	integrated • 25W • MM, 2L, 1T • hdph • 43,13,32cm • A/B speaker select			
Denon PMA-250 III	160	121 integrated • 30W • MM, 3L, 1T • hdph • 44,10,28cm • Pretty high resolution for the price, occasionally loses its grip but is generally engaging			REC'D
Grundig V310	170	integrated • 70W • MM, 5L, 1T • hdph • rem • 36,12,30cm • Pre-main split			
Kenwood KA-2060R	170	integrated • 65W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 44cm • System control			
Sansui AU-X117	170	integrated • 30W • MM, 3L, 1T • hdph			
Sherwood AI 5010	170	integrated • 70W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph			
Rotel RC970BX MkII	175	144 preamp • 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,8,29cm			REC'D
Teac A-X1030	180	integrated • 40W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,13,36cm • Mic input			
NAD 302	189	116 integrated • 25W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • A spritely and uplifting performance. Sounds loud, but never intrusive or fatiguing.			B'BUY
Moth 30 RIAA	199	preamp • MM/MC, • 5,10,35cm • Stand alone phono stage			
QED Vector One	199	preamp • 4L, 1T			
Grundig Fine Arts V2	200	integrated • 80W • MM, 5L, 1T • hdph • rem • 43,14,30cm • Tone defeat			
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200	integrated • 50W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,14,35cm • UK Special Edition			
Luxman A-312	200	integrated • 40W • MM, 4L, 2T • hdph • 13,44,36cm • CD direct, A/B speakers			
Marantz PM-44 Mk IIse	200	134 integrated • 40W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 42,14,28cm • Marantz's £200 contender provides a disappointingly grey view of the music.			
Marantz PM-43	200	integrated • 55W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 42,14,30cm • Twin speaker sockets			
Nakamichi IA4s	200	integrated • 30W • 3L, 1T • 43,7,32 cm • 'Harmonic Time Alignment'			
Onkyo A801	200	integrated • 40W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 46,12,33cm			
Philips FA930	200	integrated • 65W • MM, 2L, 3T • hdph • rem • 44,14,30cm			
Pioneer A-303R	200	134 integrated • 45W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 42,13,36cm • A fresh and uncomplicated sound that bests much of its audiophile competition.			REC'D
Sony TAF244B	200	integrated • 40W • MM/2L • hdph • 43,14,31cm • MOSFET power stage			
Technics SU-A600 MkII	200	integrated • 37W • MC/MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 43,13,32cm • MOS, R-Core transformer			
Teac A-X3030	220	integrated • 60W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,13,36cm • Mic input			
Rotel RB970BX MkII	225	144 power amp • 60W • 44,8,29cm • New upgrade			REC'D
NAD Monitor 1000	229	preamp • MM/MC, 3L, 2T • hdph			
Rega Brio	229	integrated • 30W • MM, 3L, 1T • 43,7,15cm			
Denon PMA-350 II	230	134 integrated • 50W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,12,28cm • A powerful up-front and compelling performance.			REC'D
Denon PMA-480R	230	integrated • 50W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 44,12,29cm			
JVC AX-V6BU	230	integrated • 95W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 44,13,46cm			
Kenwood KA-3060R	230	142 integrated • 45W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 44,13,30cm • Classy engineering, but sound is over-dry, often frustratingly restrained and rather unsophisticated.			
Pioneer A-300X	230	116 integrated • 40W • MM, 3L, 2T • 42,13,36cm • This revamped version of the A300 sounds more confident via CD than MM, yet our panel was still left unmoved.			
Moth 30 Series Power	239	power amp • 30W • 5,10,35cm			
Yamaha AX-490	239	integrated • 85W • MM, MC, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 44,15,39cm • UK specified, system remote			
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	240	134 integrated • 40W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 43,8,30cm • A pared down version of the Alpha 6 that offers little penalty in power, but a forfeit in sound quality.			
Magnum IA120	249	integrated • 50W • MM, 5L, 2T • hdph			
Moth 30 Active	249	preamp • 4L, 1T • 5,10,35cm			
NAD 304	249	121 integrated • 35W • MM, 4L, 2T • hdph • Equally effective with CD and vinyl, this is another successful and entertaining NAD amplifier.			B'BUY
Creek A42	250	power amp • 50W • 42,6,20cm • 150 watts in mono			
Grundig Fine Arts V3	250	integrated • 120W • MM, 5L, 1T • hdph • rem • 43,14,30cm • Pre-main split			
JVC AX-A472BK	250	142 integrated • 65W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,15,36cm • An unpredictable performer that can sound impressive but often ends up sounding starchy and tiring.			
Luxman A-331	250	integrated • 60W • MM, 4L, 2T • hdph • 13,44,36cm • Inc CD direct			
Marantz MA-500	250	power amp • 125W • 9,15,45cm • D-bus, monoblocks, bridgable			
Marantz PM-53	250	integrated • 65W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 42,14,30cm • Remote control			
Rotel RA935BX MkII	250	integrated • 50W • 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,10,35cm • Separate listen/rec selectors			
Sony TAF444E	250	142 integrated • 50W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 43,15,38cm • Sheds all frillery for an audiophile approach. Still sounds grubby and stilted, however.			
Technics SU-A700 MkII	250	integrated • 45W • MC/MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 43,13,32cm			
Pro-ject Model 7	259	142 integrated • 40W • MM, 3L, 2T • A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its performance to be reliably predicted. Either MM or MC.			
Onkyo A803	260	142 integrated • 60W • MM/MC, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 46,12,33cm • This amp looks the part but, sounds surprisingly lifeless, vague and disinterested in the music.			
Teac A-X5030	260	integrated • 75W • MM/MC, 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,16,36cm			
Creek P42	270	preamp • 50W • 4L, 2T • hdph • 42,6,20cm • Plug-in modules available			
Creek 4240	270	134 integrated • 40W • 3L, 1T • hdph • 42,6,20cm • Bearing no relation to earlier Creek designs, this radical rethink is very much more successful via MM than CD.			
Denon PMA-450SE	280	142 integrated • 60W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • 44,14,36cm • A racy little number that offers a similarly fast, furious but undeniably entertaining sound.			REC'D
Kenwood KA-4060R	280	integrated • 70W • MM, 3L, 2T • hdph • rem • 44,14,35cm • System control			
Pioneer A-400	280	92 integrated • 60W • MM/MC, 3L, 2T • hdph • 42,13,36cm • Snaps into focus with music that seems to bubble with detail. A budget benchmark.			B'BUY

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
AMC AV81 Control	289		preamp • A/V • 8L,2T • rem	
AMC 2445	299		power amp • 45W • 4 channels	
Moth 30 RIAA 100VA	299		preamp • MM/MC • 5,10,35cm • Stand alone phono stage	
Musical Fidelity E10	299	144	integrated • 40W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • 44,10,34cm • Optional phono/DAC modules	REC'D
QED Vector Reference	299		preamp • 4L,1T	
Yamaha AX-590	299		integrated • 100W • MM,MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,15,39cm • UK specified, system remote	
Denon PMA-715	300		integrated • 60W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,16,40cm	
Kenwood KA-V3700	300		integrated • A/V • MM,4L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,14,30cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Marantz PM-63	300		integrated • 70W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 42,14,30cm • Remote control	
Mission PSX-R	300		22,8,36cm • Outboard PSU	
NVA P-50	300		preamp • 3L,1T	
Onix OA30	300		integrated • 40W • 5L,1T • hdph • 43,77,33cm	
Pioneer A-400X	300	138	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,4,2 • hdph • 42,13,36cm • <i>This erstwhile B'Buy was tonally unchanged but less compelling on audition.</i>	REC'D
Pioneer A-503R	300	138	integrated • 70W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 42,13,36cm • <i>At its best via MM disc, the claustrophobic sound of this amp is otherwise deeply uninspiring.</i>	
Rotel RA970BX	300	138	integrated • 60W • 4L,2T • hdph • 44,7,35cm • <i>Sounds lively and fresh with plenty of power. Not so clever with complex recordings, however.</i>	REC'D
Sony TAF542E	300		integrated • 90W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • 43,15,38cm • UK optimised sound	
Naim Flat-Cap	317		43,56,30cm • Power supply	
Moth 30 Integrated	320		integrated • 30W • 8L,T • 8,18,35cm	
Lumley Reference PP70	325		preamp • 6L,1T • 36,46,6cm • Passive, bolts to ST70	
Lumley Reference PP40	325		preamp • 6L,1T • 29,40,6cm • Bolts to ST40	
Lumley Reference PP1	325		preamp • 6L,1T • 29,44,6cm • Passive, stand alone	
Audio Innovations Alto	329	138	integrated • 35W • 4L,2T • 43,8,30cm • <i>Despite a shortfall in the very deep bass, this amplifier still sounds beautifully open, natural and relaxed.</i>	B'BUY
Magnum Quartet	329	121	integrated • 36W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • <i>An integrated model that incorporates four monoblocks optimised for bi-wiring, but sound is sandy in the treble.</i>	
Analogue Jupiter	330		integrated • 30W • MM,4L,1T	
JVC AX-A662BK	330		integrated • 90W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • 44,13,31cm	
EMF Audio Sequel	349	109	integrated • 50W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • 43,65,28cm • <i>A minimalist amp with a very refined but mildly restrained sound.</i>	
Harman-Kardon PA2100	349		power amp • 45W • 45,11,37cm	
Moth 30 Active 100VA	349		preamp • 4L,1T • 5,10,35cm	
NAD Monitor 1000S	349	124	preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • <i>Sounds a little restrained.</i>	
NAD 306	349		integrated • 50W • MM,4L,2T • hdph	
Arcam Alpha 6 Plus	350	129	integrated • 50W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,8,30cm • <i>A subtle and melodic sound that takes a conservative view of powerful dynamics.</i>	REC'D
Audiolink Sterling II	350		integrated • 60W • MM/MC • 43,7,270cm • Available in chrome	
Aura VA100 il	350	138	integrated • 70W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • 43,6,31cm • <i>The big, smooth yet slightly disjointed sound was equally familiar.</i>	
Kenwood KA-5050R	350	129	integrated • 95W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,15,40cm • <i>Neither particularly communicative nor captivating amplifier that puts features ahead of sound.</i>	
Luxman A-353R	350		integrated • 60W • MM/MC,4L,2T • hdph • rem • 13,44,37cm • Motorised vol control	
Onkyo A-911	350		integrated • 70W • MM,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 28,12,33cm • Mini component, 40hm rating	
Pioneer A-602	350		integrated • 80W • MM/MC,3L,3T • hdph • 42,17,44cm	
Rotel RC980BX	350	109	preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • 44,7,33cm • <i>Plenty of watts, sound is expansive but lacks a sense of poise, control and fine detail - disappointing</i>	
Technics SU-A800 Mk2	350	134	integrated • 55W • MC/MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,14,37cm • <i>On quick audition the '800 can sound special, but longer term listening shows it's a bit bluff.</i>	
Creek 4240SE	358		integrated • 50W • 3L,1T • hdph • rem • 42,6,20cm • Optional MM/MC	
Quad 306	364		power amp • 50W • 33,7,21cm • Stereo power amp	
Audio Innovations P1	369		preamp • MM • 25,10,30cm • Phono stepup	
Audio Innovations L1	369	145	preamp • 3L,1T • 25,10,30cm	
NVA AP-30CD	370		integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,1T	
Onkyo A850	370		integrated • 60W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 46,15,35cm	
AMC 1030	379		preamp • MM	
Audio Innovations Alto Chr	379		integrated • 35W • 4L,2T • 43,8,30cm	
Orelle SA-100	379	140	integrated • 50W • 6L,1T • 44,7,23cm • DC coupled MOSFET	REC'D
Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380	124	power amp • 60W • 32,9,25cm • <i>Quirky Class A number with an equally warm and colourful sound.</i>	REC'D
Alchemist Kraken/mono	380		power amp • 60W • 32,9,25cm	
Crede PMP003	385		preamp • 22,6,24cm • Phono amp MM/MC, & PSU	
Crede HMP003	388		preamp • hdph • Class A headphone amp	
Alchemist Kraken	395	116	preamp • 5L,1T • 25,9,25cm • <i>Class-A objet d'art that's far too sensitive to RF interference. Can sound cold and fierce as a result.</i>	
Rega Elex	398	116	integrated • 50W • MM,3L,1T • 43,7,25cm • <i>Minimalist amplifier that sounds too forward, hard and unforgiving for its own good. Shows promise, however.</i>	
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399	124	integrated • 60W • 3L,2T • 32,9,25cm • <i>Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless.</i>	REC'D
EAR 834P	399		preamp • MM/MC • 40,40,15cm • Valve phono stepup	
Harman-Kardon HK1400	399	129	integrated • 40W • MM/MC,3L,2T • 45,11,37cm • <i>Exudes a relaxed but confident sound that is only troubled by the most dense recordings.</i>	REC'D
Musical Fidelity A1 FE	399		integrated • 40W • MM/MC,3L,1T • 41,6,25cm • Separate PSU, limited edition	
Arcam Delta 290P	400	141	power amp • 75W • hdph • 43,9,30cm • <i>Can biamp with Delta 290</i>	B'BUY
Luxman A-373	400		integrated • A/V • 80W • MM/MC,4L,2T • hdph • rem • 13,44,37cm • Also has AV inputs	
NVA P-90	400		preamp • 5L	
Onix OA24	400		preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • 75,23,37cm • Internally switchable MM/MC	
Onix OA401	400		power amp • 50W • 75,23,37cm • With internal supply for OA24	
Sony TA-AV570B	400		integrated • A/V • 70W • MM,4L,5T • hdph • 43,15,36cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Technics SU-A900 Mk2	400	138	integrated • 90W • MC/MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,14,37cm • <i>A dismal-sounding phono stage but delightfully transparent and engaging CD input.</i>	REC'D
Michell Iso	412		preamp • MM or MC • smallcm • Phono stage	
Quad 34	414	44	preamp • MM,2L,T • 33,7,21cm • <i>Well built preamp, with good filtering and above average tone controls, but lacks in sound quality (viz: detail/dynamics)</i>	
Naim NAP90/3	416		power amp • 30W • 43,56,30cm • Latest style. Suits 92	
Audio Innovations T2	425		preamp • MC • 12,16,8cm • MC stepup transformer	
Onix OA21S	430	97	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,1T • 75,23,37cm • <i>Via MM disc, this amp comes alive with a fresh and vibrant sound, but its CD input sounds comparatively dead</i>	
Naim NAC92	435		preamp • 5 (L or T) • 43,56,30cm • Latest style. Suits 90/3	
Crede MPM002	439		preamp • Mic amp, phantom power	
NVA AP-30	440		integrated • 80W • 3L,1T	
AMC 2030	449		power amp • 30W	
EAR 834L	449		preamp • 5L,1T • Valve, line-only	
Crimson CS610C	450		preamp • MM/MC,3L,1T • 9,10,35cm	
Crimson CS620C	450		power amp • 40W • 9,10,35cm	
Marantz PM-700AV	450	125	integrated • A/V • 45W • MM,5L,2T • hdph • rem • 42,16,34cm • <i>Sounds just great through front and centre channels but surround sound is very weak.</i>	
Rose RV-23	450	77	preamp • MM,2L,1T • 33,9,26cm • <i>Beautifully built British hybrid. You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise.</i>	REC'D
Rotel RB980BX	450	109	power amp • 120W • 44,12,33cm • <i>Plenty of watts per pound, sound is expansive but lacks a sense of poise and fine detail - a disappointment</i>	
Moth 30 Mono/40	459		power amp • 40W • 5,10,35cm • 2x monoblocks	
Audiolink P400	467		preamp • 4L • 43,7,270cm • Available in chrome	
NVA Control Tube CD	470		preamp • 5L,1T	
NVA A70	470		power amp • 70W • Mono	
AMC S84	479		preamp • A/V • 8L • rem • Multiroom, bal/unbal inputs	
Arcam Delta 290	480	116	integrated • 75W • 4L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,9,32cm • <i>Combines the dryness and restraint of older models with detail, dynamics and musical colour.</i>	REC'D
Denon AVC-1530	480		integrated • A/V • 70W • MM,2L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,14,34cm	
Onix OA31	480	140	integrated • 60W • MM/MC,4L,1T • hdph • 43,77,33cm	
Grant CD10	482		preamp • 4L	
Alchemist Kraken Anniv	489		preamp • MM,3L,2T • 25,9,25cm • Stainless steel/gold finish	
NVA A60	490		power amp • 60W	
DPA DSP200S	495	124	preamp • 5L,1T • 22,30,8cm • <i>The very dramatic but exceptionally detailed and transparent sound belies its modest power rating.</i>	REC'D
Unison Research Simply P	495		preamp • MM/MC • For Simply series	
Alchemist Kraken Anniv	499		integrated • 60W • MM,3L,2T • 25,9,25cm • Stainless steel/gold finish	
Alchemist Kraken Anniv	499		power amp • 60W • 32,9,25cm • Stainless steel/gold finish	

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

AMC AV81 H.T. Control	499	preamp • A/V • 8L,2T • As AV81 plus Dolby Pro Logic	
Art Audio Minuet	499	preamp • 5L,1T	
CR Developments Kalypto	499	integrated • 15W • 5L	
Credo IMP702	499	integrated • 70W • 6L • 44,6,31cm	
Harman-Kardon AP2500	499	preamp • MM/MC,6L,2T • 45,11,35cm	
LFD Integrated Zero	499	integrated • 50W • 5L,1T • 30,6,37cm • Hand made, custom parts	
LFD Linestage LSO	499	preamp • 5L,1T • 30,6,37cm • Zero feedback	
LFD Powerstage PAO	499	power amp • 50W • 30,6,37cm • Stereo MOSFET	
Audiolab 8000A	500	integrated • 60W • MM/MC,2L,3T • hdph • 45,8,36cm • <i>The 8000A remains a highly disciplined and mature sounding amp.</i>	REC'D
Mission Cyrus III	500	integrated • 50W • MM,5L,1T • hdph • 22,8,36cm • <i>Cyrus II is given a new lease of life with remote control. Convincing, masterful and musical.</i>	B'BUY
Pioneer VSA-701S	500	integrated • A/V • 55W • MM,2L,2T,5V • hdph • rem • 42,17,42cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Rotel RC990BX	500	preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,7,33cm	
Sentec PP9 RIAA MM	500	preamp • MM • 5,12,23cm • Phono step-up - MM	
Thorens TTP2000	500	139 preamp • MM/MC,4L • Minimalist, shoebox form	
Magnum MF125	515	power amp • 140W • Monoblocks	
Audiolab 8000C	520	97 preamp • MM/MC,2L,3T • hdph • 45,8,36cm • <i>Very distinctive, almost stark neutrality that will not appeal to all. Good value engineering, nevertheless.</i>	
NVA AP-50CD	520	integrated • 60W • 5L,1T	
Linn Majik-1 (Line)	524	integrated • 33W • 4L,2T • hdph • 32,8,33cm • Works as pre/int multi room	
Rose RV-23S	525	preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • 33,9,26cm • Tube, separate PSU	
AMC CVT3030	529	116 integrated • 30W • 6L,1T • hdph • <i>A well meaning attempt to mix transistors with valves, albeit one that only really shines with simple musical styles.</i>	
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	535	preamp • MM/MC • 24,7,16cm • Adjusts to match cartridge	
Credo IMP703	538	integrated • 70W • MM/MC, 6L • rem • 44,6,31cm • As above, with remote	
Rose Scion	545	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,2T • 42,7,30cm • 2-box, purist design	
Linn LK100	549	power amp • 50W • 32,8,33cm • Stereo	
Moth 30 Stereo/60	549	109 power amp • 60W • 5,15,35cm • <i>Tested with 30 Passive - see comments</i>	
Stemfoort Audio SF60	549	integrated • 60W • 4L,1T • 43,8,35cm • Passive line amplifier	
Thule IA50	549	140 integrated • 50W • 4L,1T • <i>Best used as part of Thule's balanced-line system, otherwise its performance lacks any meaty substance.</i>	
KAL Magician	550	preamp • 3L,1T • hdph • Tube	
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	550	power amp • 75W • 33,9,30cm • Low feedback monoblock mode	
Thorens TTA2000	550	139 power amp • 35W • Matches TTP2000, neo-Class A	REC'D
Heybrook Integra	555	integrated • 75W • MM/MC • hdph • 77,44,30cm	
Adyton PSU	569	PSU for Chorus, Temper, Modus	
Shearne Phase 3	569	power amp • 55W • Can biamp with Phase 2	
Tube Tech Seer Line	575	preamp • 5L,1T • 35,8,25cm • Entry level, 10 yr guarantee	
Harman-Kardon PA2200	579	power amp • 70W • 45,14,38cm	
Audiolink PR401	583	power amp • 100W • 43,10,37cm • Available in chrome	
NVA AP-50	590	integrated • 60W • MM/MC,5L,1T	
Linn Majik-1 (Phono)	593	129 integrated • 33W • MM,MC,3L,2T • hdph • 32,8,33cm • <i>Cornerstone of Linn's modular system has many innovations, but its sound is vague and confused.</i>	
DPA Renaissance	595	140 integrated • 40W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • 40,28,8cm • <i>DPA's first integrated amp is typically innovative, but a little too 'crisp 'n dry' for our tastes.</i>	
Magnum MF300	595	power amp • 180W • Monoblocks	
Monrio ADN	595	preamp • MM/MC • 14,8,36cm • Phono preamp, ext PSU	
AVI S2000MA	599	power amp • 90W	
Fullers Pre 1	599	preamp • MM/5L,2T • 48,9,30cm • Optional MC stage	
Magnum Class A	599	116 integrated • 60W • MM/MC,3L,1T • <i>Lashings of rich and compelling music, trading a hint of lushness for stark accuracy. Phono optional.</i>	REC'D
Musical Fidelity E200	599	145 preamp • 5L,2T • hdph • rem • 44,12,35cm • Optional phono/DAC modules	
Musical Fidelity E100	599	140 integrated • 70W • MM,4L,1T • hdph • rem • 44,12,35cm • <i>A vibrantly colourful, almost dramatic sound that's uninterested in technical niceties.</i>	REC'D
Shearne Phase 2	599	integrated • 55W • 5L • MM/MC phono i/p £87 extra	
Art Audio Headline	600	preamp • hdph • Single ended triode Class A	
Kenwood KA-V7700	600	integrated • A/V • MM,11L,1T • hdph • rem • 44,13,30cm • Pro Logic, learning remote	
Nakamichi IA2	600	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,12,36cm • 'Harmonic Time Alignment'	
Pioneer VSA-D802S	600	125 integrated • A/V • 55W • MM,2L,2T,5V • hdph • rem • 42,17,42cm • <i>Grey sound lacks attack and confidence, undermining the tension of movie soundstage.</i>	
Sentec PP9 RIAA MC	600	preamp • MC • 5,12,23cm • Phono step-up - MC	
NVA Power Tube	620	power amp • 60W	
NVA The Tube	620	integrated • 60W • 5L,1T	
Meridian 501	625	145 preamp • MM,4L,T • hdph • 33,9,34cm • MC option, system handset	
Meridian 555	625	145 power amp • 60W • 33,9,32cm • Stereo	
Bryston 4	641	preamp • A/V • 4L,1T • 48,5,25cm	
Fullers Pre 1+	649	preamp • 6L,2T • 48,9,30cm • No phono option - hard wired	
Heybrook SIG CA	649	preamp • MM/MC,5L,2T	
Naim Hi-Cap	649	21,76,30cm • Power supply	
Tube Tech Seer Phono	649	preamp • MM,4L,1T • 35,8,25cm • Tube phono stage	
Quad 77	650	139 integrated • 50W • 2L,T • 33,6,30cm • System remote £279	
Triangle TE60SE	650	integrated • 70W • MM/MC,3L,1T • hdph	
Lecson Quattra Plus	655	integrated • 50W • MM/MC + N/A • 44,6,27cm • Separate PSU	
Naim NAC72	670	preamp • 2MM/MC, L,2T • 21,76,30cm • Upgradable with PSU, MC I/P	
NVA Control Tube	670	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T	
Bryston BP1	673	preamp • A/V • MM or MC • 48,5,25cm • Phono stepup, bal & unbal	
LFD Int. Zero (Ph)	679	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,5L,1T • 30,6,37cm • Phono version of Int. Zero	
Lynwood Opal	685	integrated • 80W • 7L,1T	
Meridian 562	685	preamp • MM,8L,T,6D • 33,9,34cm • Digital main out. MC option	
Meridian 551	695	integrated • 55W • MM,4L,T • hdph • rem • 33,9,34cm • MC option	
Heybrook SIG MNEX	698	power amp • 140W • Mono, uses ext SIG/DCPS PSU	
Electrocomp't ECP-1 SF	699	preamp • MM/MC • 24,7,16cm • auto-adjusts, blue stone fascia	
Exposure XX Super	699	integrated • 55W • 4L,2T • 43,85,35cm • Upgraded model	
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	140 integrated • 12W • 3L • 33,23,8cm • <i>Single ended, triode</i>	REC'D
Marantz AV-500	699	preamp • A/V • MM,7L,2T • rem • 42,10,34cm • Dolby Pro Logic	
Musical Fidelity E300	699	145 power amp • 100W • 44,12,35cm • Mono/stereo switch	
Naim NAP140	699	power amp • 45W • 21,76,30cm	
Onix OA601	699	power amp • 70W • 75,46,36cm • Regulated PSU	
Audiolab 8000P	700	power amp • 100W • 45,8,36cm • Bi-wire speaker terminals	
Micromega Tempo 1	700	integrated • 50W • 6L,1T • hdph • 43,9,28cm • Optional MM/MC	
Technics SU-C2000	700	preamp • rem • 45,13,35cm • Rotary resistor attenuator	
Woodside SC27 Line	705	preamp • 2L,1T	
Michell Argo	715	preamp • 3L,1T • 33,7,19cm • 2 pairs outputs	
Quad 606	718	124 power amp • 140W • 33,14,24cm • <i>Amplifier with classic lineage but compromised by an equally dated, soft and undynamic sound (tested with 66).</i>	
Sonic Link DM30	725	integrated • 25W • MM/MC,3L,1T • 23,8,43cm	
NVA A80	730	power amp • 70W • Mono	
Rega Elicit	730	integrated • 70W • MM,MC,3L,1T • 43,7,25cm • Full dual mono	
Art Audio VPL	741	preamp • 6L,2T	
Audio Innovations L2	749	preamp • 4L,1T • 50,12,30cm	
Audio Innovations P2MM	749	preamp • MM • 50,12,30cm • Phono stage	
Arcam Delta 110	750	preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,7,30cm • On-board DAC, 2 inputs	
Art Audio Conductor Phono	750	preamp • MM/MC • Separate PSU, upgradable	
Audiolab 8000M	750	145 power amp • 125W • 45,8,36cm • Single monoblock	
Bryston 2B-LP	750	power amp • A/V • 75W • 48,5,25cm • Bridgable	

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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
DPA DPA200S	750	124 power amp • 60W • 22,30,8cm • <i>The dramatic but detailed and transparent sound belies its modest power rating (tested with DSP-200S).</i>	REC'D
KAL Harlequin	750	preamp • MM/MC,2L,1T • hdph • Tube	
Nakamichi IA1	750	integrated • 80W • MM/MC,3L,2T • hdph • rem • 43,12,36cm	
Rotel RB990BX	750	power amp • 200W • 44,12,38cm	
ECA Vista S	760	145 preamp • 4L,1T • 39,10,39cm • <i>Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system (tested with Lectern).</i>	B'BUY
Grant G100P	764	preamp • MM,2L,1T	
Meridian 501V	785	preamp • A/V • MM,4L,T • hdph • 33,9,34cm • As 501, plus video switching	
Michi RHC-10	795	preamp • 5L • 47,8,34cm • Passive	
AVI S2000MI	799	integrated • 100W • 4L, 1T • rem • 31,25,9cm • Includes S200RC handset	
AVI S2000MP	799	preamp • 5L,1T • 31,25,9cm • includes S2000RC handset	
Credo CMP004	799	preamp • 6L • 44,6,31cm • 3 outputs	
Exposure XIX	799	preamp • 5L • 43,85,35cm • Line only version of XVII	
Exposure XV Super	799	integrated • 55W • MM,MC,3L,2T • 43,85,35cm	
LFD Int. Zero LE	799	140 integrated • 60W • 5L,1T • 43,7,33cm • <i>A basic amplifier at a not-so-basic price. Provides a rather fierce and generally uncomfortable sound.</i>	
PS Audio 6.1	799	preamp • 4L,1T • 43,6,19cm • Outboard PSU	
Chimera X-150C	800	preamp • 4L,1T • Balanced CD in, balanced out	
Chimera X-80	800	139 integrated • 80W • 4L,1T • MOSFET, s/steel & chrome	
Crimson CS630C	800	power amp • 90W • 9,10,35cm	
Sentec SC9	800	preamp • 4L,2T • hdph • 34,7,15cm	
Sherwood AM/AVP8500	800	A/V • 230W • hdph • rem • A/V Pre/power amp	
Bryston BP4	802	preamp • A/V • 4L,1T • 48,5,25cm • Balanced out	
Heybrook SIG CAP	829	preamp • 6L,2T • Line only	
Exposure XVII	849	142 preamp • MM,MC,3L,2T • 43,85,35cm • MM/MC optional	REC'D
Exposure XVIII Super	849	142 power amp • 70W • 43,85,35cm • Upgraded model	REC'D
Onix OA801	849	power amp • 190W • 75,46,36cm • 2x monoblocks, massive PSU	
Stemfoort Audio SF100	849	integrated • 100W • 4L,1T • 43,8,40cm • Passive line amplifier	
Audiolab 8000PPA	850	preamp • MM/MC • 45,8,36cm • Phono preamplifier	
Michell Iso HR	879	preamp • MM or MC • smallcm • Phono stage	
Moth 30 Mono/100	879	power amp • 100W • 5,15,35cm • 2x mono, separate PSU	
ECA Vista HD	880	preamp • 4L,1T • 39,10,39cm • High definition version	
ECA Lectern S	880	145 power amp • 50W • 39,10,30cm • <i>Tested with Vista S - see for comments.</i>	B'BUY
ECA Prisma	880	preamp • MM,MC • 39,10,23cm • Phono stepup	
Woodside SC27 MM	881	preamp • MM,2L,1T	
Bryston BP5	889	preamp • A/V • MM/MC,3L,1T • 48,5,25cm • MM or MC, balanced out	
Dawn Audio Cmd 2 by 200	890	power amp • 200W • 38,11,26cm • Single monoblock	
Meridian 562V	895	140 preamp • A/V • MM,8L,T,6D • 33,9,34cm • As 562, plus video switching	REC'D
Monrio Primus	895	preamp • 6L,1T • 26,8,36cm • Line only preamp	
Quad 66	897	124 preamp • MM,4L,2T • rem • 33,8,26cm • <i>Amplifier with classic lineage but compromised by an equally dated, soft and undynamic sound (tested with 606).</i>	
Alchemist Forseti	899	integrated • 100W • 4L,2T • 47,10,39cm	
Harman-Kardon PA2400	899	power amp • 120W • 45,16,41cm	
PS Audio 6.2	899	preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • 43,6,19cm • Outboard PSU	
PS Audio Phono Link	899	preamp • MM/MC • 43,6,19cm • Outboard PSU	
Woodside ISA230 Disc	899	116 integrated • 30W • MM,2L,1T • <i>Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, if one that lacks the sparkle and euphony required for a truly entertaining sound.</i>	
Woodside ISA230 Line	899	integrated • 30W • 4L,2T	
Concordant Exhilarant	900	preamp • 5L • 6 tube pre, wood case option	
Marantz SC-22	900	preamp • 4L,1T • 25,9,22cm • Audiophile micro component	
Micromega Tempo 2	900	integrated • 75W • 6L,1T • hdph • 43,9,28cm • Optional MM/MC	
Minstrel Ultra Linear	900	integrated • 26W • 3L,1T • 38,310,16cm • Low feedback hybrid	
Heybrook SIG /SP	922	power amp • 140W • Stereo power amp	
Audio Innovations P2MC	949	preamp • MM/MC • 50,12,30cm • Phono stage	
LFD MC1 Phonostage	949	preamp • MC • 30,7,36cm • Discrete circuit	
Thule IA100	949	integrated • 100W • 4L,2T • Fully balanced operation	
Woodside ISA 240	949	power amp • 40W	
DNM 3 Start	950	preamp • MM/MC,2L,1T • 27,13,16cm • Solid core, slit foil caps	
Monrio MC-200S	950	integrated • 60W • 6L,1T • 43,10,37cm • Simplified version of MC-20S	
Dawn Audio Prelude +50	951	preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • 38,9,26cm • Pre out line driver	
Art Audio VP1	952	preamp • MM,5L,2T	
Lynwood Ruby	985	power amp • 120W	
Naim NAP180	987	power amp • 60W • 43,76,30cm	
Electrocompaniet EC1-2	990	integrated • 50W • 3L,1T • 46,11,38cm	
Conrad-Johnson PV10AL	995	preamp • 5L • Line version of PV-10A	
Counterpoint Solid 1EM	995	power amp • 100W • 25,6,27cm • Mono	
Metaxas Ikarus II	995	integrated • 40W • MM/MC,3L,1T • 40,7,40cm	
Michi RHB-05	995	power amp • 100W • 47,8,36cm	
Michi RHQ-10	995	preamp • MM,MC • 47,8,34cm • Phono equaliser	
Michi RHA-10	995	preamp • 5L • rem • 47,8,34cm • Active	
Monrio MC-25	995	power amp • 80W • 43,10,36cm • Dual mono construction	
Roksan ROK-L2.5	995	preamp • 4L,1T • 43,8,33cm • Revised	
Unison Research Simply 2	995	integrated • 12W • 4L,1T • 25,16,40cm • Single ended triode Class A	
CR Developments Romulus998	998	integrated • 35W • 5L	
Linn Kairn Pro	998	preamp • 4L, 2T • 32,8,33cm • Multi-room compatible	
Arcam Xeta One	999	integrated • A/V • 50W • MM,5L,2T • hdph • 43,13,32cm • Video switching, 5ch Dolby	
Audio Innovations Ser 800	999	145 power amp • 25W • 41,15,34cm	
Copland CSA14	999	139 integrated • 60W • MM,3L,1T • 43,13,38cm • Hybrid tube/transistor	REC'D
Gamma Acoustics Era Std	999	preamp • MM,3L,1T • 44,17,30cm • Triode, fully regulated	
LFD LSI Linestage	999	preamp • 4L,1T • 48,7,33cm • Zero feedback	
LFD PA1 Powerstage	999	power amp • 60W • 48,7,33cm • MOSFETs, custom parts	
LFD PPS	999	preamp • 2L,1T • 13,6,27cm • Switched attenuator, passive	
Musical Fidelity F22	999	preamp • 5L,1T • rem • 49,12,33cm • Optional phono/digital boards	
NAD Monitor 208	999	124 power amp • 250W • <i>One of the beefiest amplifiers we've ever tested.</i>	
Teac A-BX10	999	integrated • 100W • MM/MC,3L,2T • Balanced input	
Woodside SC27 MC	999	preamp • MC,2L,1T	
YBA Integre Line	999	integrated • 45W • 4L,1T • 43,9,33cm	
Audiolab 8000Q	1,000	145 preamp • 3L,2T • hdph • rem • 45,8,36cm • 'Pure Direct' signal path	
Lumley Reference LVI	1,000	preamp • 6L,1T • 29,44,6cm • Active valve circuit	
Marantz PH-22	1,000	preamp • MC,MM • 25,9,22cm • Phono stepup	
NVA TSS (Pre)	1,000	preamp • 5L,1T	
Sentec PA9	1,000	power amp • 60W • 20,8,30cm • Monoblocks	
Alchemist Freya	1,020	preamp • 6L,1T • 31,7,30cm	
Alchemist Odin	1,020	power amp • 80W • 31,14,30cm • Stereo	
Arion Eros Line	1,050	preamp • 4L,1T • Dual mono construction	
Technics SE-A2000	1,050	power amp • 100W • rem • 45,19,44cm • Meters, R-Core, MOS AA	
Electrocompaniet EC1-2SF1,095	1,095	integrated • 50W • 3L,1T • 46,38,11cm • As EC1-2 + Blue Stone fascia	
Metaxas Charisma	1,095	preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • 36,6,29cm • Separate PSU	
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1	1,095	preamp • MM/MC • 45,12,28cm • Tube/J-FET phono stage	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
Arion EOS Export	1,099		power amp • 18W • With volume control
Audio Innovations Class25	1,099		integrated • 25W • 4L,1T • 46,15,34cm • Enclosed valves
AVI S2000MM	1,099		power amp • 150W • 2x monoblocks
LFD Integrated 1	1,099		integrated • 65W • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,7,37cm • More powerful Int Zero
Musical Fidelity FX	1,099		power amp • 90W • 49,12,38cm • Bal/unbalanced in
Shearman Phase 1 Pre	1,099		preamp • MM/MC,5L,2T • Bi-amp upgradeable
Tube Tech Unisis	1,099		power amp • 30W • 35,17,27cm • Stereo power amp
Art Audio Conductor	1,100		preamp • 6L,2T • hdph • Upgradeable
Credo CMP005	1,119		preamp • 6L • rem • Remote controlled pre
Bryston BP20	1,126		preamp • A/V • 8L,1T • 48,5,25cm • Balanced in/out
Grant G50A	1,128		power amp • 60W • Monoblocks
Michell Alecto Stereo	1,150		power amp • 50W • 32,20,36cm
Bryston 3B-NRB	1,159		power amp • A/V • 150W • 48,13,23cm • Bridgable, bal & unbalanced
Counterpoint SA-1000E	1,195		preamp • MM/MC,3L,1T • 49,12,32cm
Counterpoint Solid 8E	1,195		preamp • 3L,1T • 49,6,27cm
Arion Elektra Export	1,199		integrated • 18W • 4L,1T • Class A valve amp
Audio Innovations Ser 500	1,199		integrated • 25W • MM,3L,2T • 41,15,34cm
Audio Innovations Ser 7001	1,199	116	integrated • 25W • 4L,1T • 41,15,34cm • Turns the roughest of digital sounds into music, understated and graceful. Sensitive speakers are a must. REC'D
Tube Tech Prophet	1,199		preamp • 4L,1T • 35,8,25cm • Two box pre, separate PSU
YBA 3 Power	1,199	72	power amp • 45W • 43,9,33cm • Tested with 3 Pre - see for comments.
YBA Integre	1,199	121	integrated • 45W • MM,4L,1T • 43,9,33cm • Audiophile spec French integrated with good resolution and nice phono stage.
Chimera X-150P	1,200		power amp • 150W • MOSFET, balance, bridgable
Chimera X-100	1,200		integrated • 100W • 4L,1T • Outboard PSU, s/steel & chrome
Fullers A10	1,200		power amp • 10W • 48,13,30cm • Single ended Class A
Woodside MA50 Class A	1,224		power amp • 50W • 1 channel monoblock
Arion Triton	1,250		power amp • 10W • Triode, volume control
Arion Eros Phono	1,250		preamp • 3L,1T • Dual mono construction
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	1,250	139	preamp • MC,4L • Fabulous preamplifier. Beautiful imaging, superb detail, plenty of gain on the phono input; classy build quality too. REC'D
Copland CTA-301	1,250		preamp • MM,3L,1T • 43,13,38cm • Tube, soft start
Lumley Reference ST40	1,250		power amp • 40W • 30,40,17 • Pentode
Micromega Amp	1,250		power amp • 100W • 43,9,28cm
Micromega Tempo P	1,250		preamp • 7L,1T • hdph • 43,9,28cm • Optional MM/MC
YBA 3 Pre	1,250	72	preamp • MM,3L,1T • 43,9,33cm • See-through, ethereal stereo images, but more convincing towards centre of soundstage (tested with 3 Pwr).
McIntosh MC7100	1,259		power amp • 100W • 45,9,54cm • System controller
Bryston THX3B	1,262		power amp • A/V • 150W • 48,13,23cm • 2 channels, THX approved
Adyton CHORUS	1,295		preamp • MC • 44,3,25cm • RIAA phono stage
Magnum MA500	1,295		power amp • 280W • Monoblocks
NVA TIS	1,300		integrated • 60W • 5L,1T
Electrocomp't EC-4 Line	1,315		preamp • 5L,2T • 48,9,23cm • inc XLR balanced in/out
Classe Audio Audio 3D	1,320		preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,7,28cm
Woodside STA35	1,323	100	power amp • 35W • Synergistic pairing with SC26, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency. More about poise than grunt (tested with SC26).
Michell Argo HR	1,339		preamp • 3L,1T • 36,8,22cm • 2 pairs outputs
Arion Talos Line	1,350		integrated • 10W • 4L,1T • Triode Class A valve amp
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	109	power amp • 15W • Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest watts around. Surprisingly gutsy. REC'D
Sonic Frontiers SFL-1	1,395		preamp • 4L,2T • 45,12,28cm • Tube/FET hybrid line stage
Linn Kairn Preamp	1,398		preamp • MM, MC 3L,2T • 32,8,32cm • Multi-room compatible
Classe Audio Audio 70	1,399		power amp • 75W • 48,12,30cm • Single ended, balanced
Musical Fidelity A1000	1,399		integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,1T • 49,13,36cm • Separate PSU
Tube Tech Unisis Super L	1,399		integrated • 30W • 4L,1T • 35,17,27cm • Line level version of Unisis
Tube Tech Unisis	1,399		integrated • 30W • MM,3L,1T • 35,17,27cm • One tube phono stage
Exposure XIV	1,400		preamp • MM,MC,3L,2T • 48,8,30cm • Needs 9 power supply
Copland CTA-501	1,420		power amp • 30W • 2L • 43,18,38cm • Tube, has vol control
Woodside SC25 Line	1,420		preamp • 2L,2T
Papworth TVA50	1,425		power amp • 50W • 43,19,33cm • Tube stereo
McIntosh C712	1,479		preamp • 6L, 2T • hdph • rem • 45,9,45cm • System controller
ECA Lectern HD	1,480		power amp • 50W • 39,10,23cm • High definition version
Electrocompaniet EC-3MM1	1,485		preamp • MM,4L,2T • 48,9,23cm • Balanced XLR in/out
Copland CTA-401	1,495		integrated • 30W • MM,3L,1T • 43,18,38cm • Tube push/pull ultra-linear
Counterpoint SA100E	1,495		power amp • 100W • Hybrid
Counterpoint Solid 1E	1,495		power amp • 100W • Mono
Dynavector P100	1,495		preamp • MM,MC • 44,6,22cm • Phono stepup
Roksan ROK-S1.5	1,495		power amp • 70W
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Sig	1,495		preamp • MM/MC • 45,12,28cm • Tube/J-FET phono stepup
Unison Research Simply4P1	1,495		integrated • 24W • 4L,1T • 35,16,40cm • Single ended Pentode
Art Audio Integra	1,499		integrated • 30W • 5L,2T • Class A Pentode
LFD Phonostage MC2	1,499		preamp • MC • 30,7,36cm • Hand tuned MC1
Minstrel Partridge	1,499		integrated • 26W • 3L,1T • 38,31,16cm • Zero feedback hybrid
PS Audio 100 Delta	1,499		power amp • 120W • 42,15,35cm
Audio Note Oto SE	1,500	126	integrated • 24W • MM/MC,4L,1T • Transparent, very dynamic, excellent clarity and subtlety with limited power make for a very clear sounding amp. REC'D
DNM 3A Start	1,500		preamp • MM/MC,2L,1T • 27,13,16cm
GT Audio Pre	1,500		preamp • MM,3L,1T • Regulated HT/LT PSU
Lumley Reference PV1	1,500		preamp • MM,5L,1T • Phono version of LV1
Tesseract TAADA	1,500		preamp • MM/MC
Tesseract TALA	1,500		preamp • 5L,1T
Thorens TRP3000	1,500		preamp • MM/MC • Phono stepup, valve
Alchemist Genesis	1,525		power amp • 110W • 25,14,30cm • Pair monoblocks
Grant G100AMS	1,528		power amp • 100W
Naim NAP135	1,529		power amp • 70W • 43,76,30cm
Naim NAP250	1,529		power amp • 70W • 43,76,30cm
Unison Research Simply4T	1,545		integrated • 11W • 4L,1T • 35,16,40cm • Single ended triode Class A
A Innovations 1st Audio	1,549		power amp • 7.5W • 41,15,34cm
Arion Talos Phono	1,550		integrated • 10W • MM,3L,1T • Triode Class A phono amp
Triangle Nemo Allion QF 2	1,550		integrated • 80W • 5L,2T
Electrocomp't EC-4 SF L	1,565		preamp • 5L,2T • 48,9,23cm • XLR in/out, blue stone facia
EAR 859	1,595		integrated • 13W • 6L • 40,40,15cm • Single ended valve
Monrio MC-205	1,595		integrated • 80W • 6L,1T • 43,10,36cm • Inc pre-out sockets
EAR 834	1,599		integrated • 50W • 6L • 40,40,15cm • Valve
Exposure XVIII (pr)	1,599		power amp • 65W • 43,85,35cm • Upgraded 2x monoblocks
LFD Linestage LS2	1,599		preamp • 4L,1T • 48,7,37cm • Hand tuned LS1
LFD Powerstage PA2	1,599		power amp • 75W • 48,7,33cm • Hand tuned PA1
Marantz MA-22	1,600		power amp • 50W • 23,9,22cm • Audiophile monoblock x2
Arion Tycho Pwr	1,650		power amp • 50W • Pure Class A
Michi RHB-10	1,650		power amp • 200W • 47,19,37cm
Art Audio Concerto	1,669		power amp • 50W • 2x mono triode/pentode
Audio Research PH-1	1,690		preamp • MM/MC • 48,14,26cm • Phono preamp

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Audio Research LS-3	1,695	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,26cm • 1 direct input	
Counterpoint SA-2000E	1,695	preamp • 4L,2T • 49,12,33cm	
Monrio Cento HP	1,695	power amp • 135W • 43,10,36cm • Dual mono, high current	
Sonic Frontiers SFS-40	1,695	power amp • 40W • 40,18,32cm • Stereo tube power amp	
Classe Audio Audio 4L	1,697	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,9,34cm • Remote option	
Credo PMP154	1,699	power amp • 150W • 44,16,31cm	
Credo PMP303	1,699	power amp • 30W • Class A power amp	
YBA 2 Pre	1,699	56 preamp • MM,3L,1T • 43,9,33cm • Superbly finished, good space and transparency. Needs transformer for MC cartridges (tested with 2 Pwr).	REC'D
Classe Audio Audio 4	1,735	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,9,34cm • Remote option	
Copland CTA-504	1,750	power amp • 50W • 43,18,38cm • Switchable tetrode/triode	
DNM PA1	1,750	power amp • 45W • 27,13,18cm • Triwire output	
LFD Linestage LS2P	1,750	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,7,37cm • As LS2 with phono stage	
Bryston 4B-NRB	1,756	power amp • A/V • 300W • 48,13,39cm • Bridgable, bal & unbalanced	
Adyton TEMPER	1,795	preamp • MC,2L • 44,3,25cm • Phono & line source preamp	
Sonic Frontiers SFC-1	1,795	126 integrated • 50W • 4L,2T • 45,19,43cm • Smooth, sophisticated Canadian valve amp with a decent direct input and more features than average.	
Sonic Frontiers SFL-1 Sig	1,795	preamp • 4L,2T • 45,12,28cm • Tube/FET hybrid line stage	
Audio Innovations S1000	1,799	power amp • 50W • 41,15,34cm • Monoblocks	
Shearne Phase 1 Power	1,799	power amp • 100W • Dual mono	
Tesserac TAHA	1,800	preamp • MC, • hdph	
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC	1,810	preamp • MC,4L,2T • 48,9,23cm • XLR in/out, adj MC input	
Bryston 7B-NRB	1,815	power amp • A/V • 500W • 48,13,39cm • Single monoblock	
Bryston THX4B	1,858	power amp • A/V • 300W • 48,13,39cm • 2 channels, THX approved	
Linn Klout	1,895	power amp • 80W • 32,8,33cm • Stereo, tri-wire connectors	
Arion Tycho Int	1,899	integrated • 50W • 4L,1T • Pure Class A integrated	
Musical Fidelity F15	1,899	power amp • 100W • 49,19,38cm • Bal/unbalanced in/hybrid	
Naim Super-Cap	1,909	43,76,30cm • Power supply	
Bryston THX7B	1,917	power amp • A/V • 500W • 48,13,39cm • 1 channel, THX approved	
Woodside SC26 Phono	1,931	100 preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • Synergistic pairing with STA35, cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency. More about poise than grunt (tested with STA35).	
Concordant Exquisite	1,950	preamp • 5L • 10 tubes, 2 line out, ext PSU	
Lumley Reference ST70	1,950	power amp • 70W • 36,46,18cm • Switchable triode/pentode	
Michell Alecto Mono	1,989	power amp • 100W • 32,20,36cm	
Counterpoint NPS-100E	1,995	power amp • 100W	
Dynavector L100	1,995	preamp • 3L,2T • 44,6,24cm • Line preamp	
Electrocomp't EC-3MM SF	1,995	preamp • MM,4L,2T • 48,9,23cm • XLR in/out, blue stone facia	
Naim NAC82	1,997	preamp • 6 (L or T) • rem • 43,76,30cm	
LFD Linestage LSB	1,999	preamp • 4L,1T • 48,7,37cm • Balanced LS2	
LFD Powerstage PA2M	1,999	power amp • 90W • 30,7,37cm • Mono PA2	
Art Audio Conductor Export	2,000	preamp • 6L,2T • hdph • rem • Separate PSU, mono	
GT Audio Pwr	2,000	power amp • 30W • Triode switchable (15w)	
Thorens TRA3000	2,000	power amp • 90W • Valve	
Electrocomp't AW100DMB	2,030	power amp • 100W • 48,13,36cm • High current (80A)	
Electrocomp't EC-3MC SF	2,075	preamp • MC,4L,2T • 48,9,23cm • XLR in/out, blue stone facia	
Adyton MODUS	2,095	preamp • 4L,2T • 44,5,25cm • Line control amp	
McIntosh C38	2,095	preamp • MM, 5L,3T • hdph • rem • Multi-room, balanced out	
McIntosh C22	2,099	preamp • 8L • hdph • rem • Retro style valve pre	
Electrocomp't EC1-1	2,100	integrated • 100W • 5L,2T • 45,13,36cm • High current (80A)	
YBA 2 Power	2,150	56 power amp • 70W • 43,9,33cm • Superbly finished, but with slightly softened bass (tested with 2 Pre).	REC'D
Electrocomp't AW100DMB	2,175	power amp • 100W • 48,13,36cm • High current, blue stone facia	
Credo PMP102	2,181	power amp • 100W • 44,21,31cm • Class A power amp	
Bryston 8B-NRB	2,195	power amp • A/V • 150W • 48,13,39cm • 4 channels, bridgable	
Counterpoint SA-3000E	2,195	preamp • MM/MC,4L,2T • 49,12,33cm • Separate PSU	
Exposure IV	2,199	power amp • 80W • 48,13,35cm • Fully regulated	
McIntosh MC7108	2,249	power amp • A/V • 40W • 45,16,51cm • 8 channel (5-way) 8x45 watts	
Audio Research LS-3b	2,250	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,26cm • 1 direct input	
Conrad-Johnson PV-12L	2,250	preamp • 5L • Line version of PV-12	
Roksan ROK-L1.5	2,250	preamp • 4L,1T • 43,8,33cm	
PS Audio 200 Delta	2,279	power amp • 200W • 42,15,45cm	
McIntosh MC7150	2,295	power amp • 150W	
Classe Audio Audio 10	2,299	power amp • 125W • 48,17,42cm • Single ended, bal bridgable	
Matisse Fantasy	2,300	preamp • A/V • 6L,2T • Line stage	
NVA TCS	2,300	integrated • 70W • 5L,1T	
Electrocomp't EC1-1 SF	2,350	integrated • 100W • 5L,2T • 45,13,36cm • High current, blue stone facia	
Adyton OPERA	2,395	integrated • 50W • MM/MC,3L,2T • 21,33,13cm • Optional phono	
Classe Audio Audio 5L II	2,395	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,15,43cm • Remote option	
Bryston THX8B	2,400	power amp • A/V • 150W • 48,13,39cm • 4 channels, THX approved	
Marantz MA-24	2,400	power amp • 30W • 21,17,36cm • Class-A monoblock x2	
Audio Research VT60	2,430	power amp • 35W • Single ended tube mono	
PS Audio 200b Delta	2,490	power amp • 200W • 42,15,45cm	
Counterpoint Solid 2E	2,495	power amp • 200W • 49,17,49cm • Hybrid	
Art Audio Tempo	2,499	power amp • 30W • 2x mono Class A triode	
A Innovations S1000SE	2,499	power amp • 50W • 41,15,34cm • Silver circuit board	
Gamma Acoustics Rhythm	2,499	integrated • 22W • MM,3L • 38,30,53cm • Single ended phono integrated	
Credo PMP252	2,509	power amp • 250W • 44,21,31cm	
EAR 802MC	2,599	63 preamp • MM/MC,2L,2T • Tested with 509 Mk II - see comments	REC'D
Tube Tech Genesis	2,599	power amp • 100W • 35,15,27cm • 2x monoblocks	
Papworth M100	2,645	power amp • 100W • 25,17,38cm • Tube monoblock	
Classe Audio Audio 5 II	2,657	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,15,43cm • Remote option	
McIntosh MC7104	2,729	power amp • A/V • 100W • 45,16,51cm • 4 channels	
Conrad-Johnson PV-12	2,750	preamp • MC,4L • Tube	
Meridian 601	2,750	preamp • MM,4L,T • hdph • rem • DSP tone control, MC option	
Audio Research D-200	2,800	power amp • 110W • 48,14,31cm • Single ended, balanced	
Audio Research SP9 II	2,850	preamp • MM/MC,4L,2T • 48,14,26cm • Hybrid	
McIntosh MC150	2,855	power amp • 150W • 45,14,45cm • Blue meters	
Audio Research PH-2	2,895	preamp • MM/MC • 48,14,26cm • Balanced	
Sonic Frontiers SFS-80	2,895	power amp • 80W • 45,22,35cm • Stereo tube power amp	
PS Audio 250 Delta	2,980	power amp • 250W • 42,15,45cm • Monoblocks	
Counterpoint NPS-200E	2,995	power amp • 200W • Rated at 4ohms, hybrid	
Unison Research Sm't 8452	2,995	power amp • 24W • Single ended triode monoblocks	
Audio Research LS-2 II	2,997	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,26cm • 1 direct input/hybrid	
A Innovations 2nd Audio	2,999	power amp • 15W • 41,15,34cm • Monoblocks	
DNM 3B Twin E	3,050	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 27,13,16cm	
McIntosh C39	3,129	preamp • A/V • MM, 10L (6 Vid) • hdph • rem • 45,17,45cm • Two zone, THX compatible	
McIntosh MC7300	3,195	power amp • 300W	
Lumley Reference M120	3,200	power amp • 120W • 29,44,18cm • 2xmono, triode/pentode	
NVA TDS	3,200	power amp • 70W • Mono	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
McIntosh C40	3,239	preamp • MM, 6L, 3T • hdph • 45,14,45cm • Balanced in/out	
Krell KSL-2	3,331	preamp • 4L,1T • 48,7,36cm • Opt. MM/MC stage	
Audio Research V35	3,355	power amp • 30W • 48,18,37cm • Balanced in, hybrid	
Audio Research LS-2b II	3,398	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,26cm • 1 balanced direct input/hybrid	
Adyton CORDIS 1.6	3,399	power amp • 120W • 45,9,35cm • Stereo power amp	
Classe Audio Audio 15	3,399	power amp • 175W • 48,19,42cm • Single ended, bal bridgable	
McIntosh MC7106	3,425	power amp • A/V • 100W • 45,16,51cm • Six x 100w THX amp	
Mark Levinson 29	3,450	power amp • 50W	
Grant G350A	3,455	power amp • 350W	
Classe Audio Audio 6L II	3,469	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,15,43cm • Remote option, sep PSU	
EAR 509 Mk II	3,499 63	power amp • 100W • 36,20,25cm • Well made, combines the sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with 802).	REC'D
Conrad-Johnson Prem 11A3	3,500	power amp • 70W • Baby Premier 8	
Matisse Reference	3,500	preamp • A/V • MM/MC,5L,2T	
Art Audio Maestro	3,524	power amp • 100W • 2x mono triode/pentode	
Counterpoint SA4	3,575	power amp • 140W • Hybrid	
McIntosh MC275	3,595	power amp • 75W • Classic valve amp	
Electrocomp't AW2500MB	3,620	power amp • 250W • 48,22,45cm • High current (100A)	
DNM 3B Primus E	3,630	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 27,13,16cm	
KAL Empress	3,660	preamp • MM/MC,2L,1T • hdph • Tube	
Krell KSA-50s	3,690 141	power amp • 50W • 48,22,40cm • Sustained Plateau Bias	B'BUY
NVA TSS (Power)	3,700	power amp • 70W	
McIntosh MA6800	3,735	integrated • 150W • hdph • rem • 45,18,51cm • Blue meters	
YBA 1 Pre	3,750 62	preamp • MC,4L,1T • 43,9,33cm • Tested with 1 Pwr - see for comments.	REC'D
Grant G200AMS	3,760	power amp • 200W • Monoblocks	
McIntosh MC300	3,765	power amp • 300W • 45,16,46cm • Bridgable to 600w, blue mtrs	
Jadis DEFY-P60	3,774	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 43,17,30cm • Tube	
Sonic Frontiers SFL-2	3,795	preamp • 4L,2T • 45,12,33cm • Tube, dual mono, balanced	
Classe Audio Audio 6 II	3,817	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 48,15,43cm • Remote option, sep PSU	
Papworth M200	3,825	power amp • 200W • 46,20,31cm • Tube monoblock	
Conrad-Johnson Prem 10	3,900	preamp • 5L • Line version of Premier 7B	
Electrocomp't AW2500MB	3,980	power amp • 250W • 48,45,22cm • High current stereo	
Counterpoint SA-5000E	3,995	preamp • MM/MC,4L,2T • 49,12,27cm • Separate PSU	
Counterpoint SA-9	3,995	preamp • MM/MC • 49,12,37cm • Phono stepup	
Dynavector HX1.2	3,995	power amp • 130W • 44,13,37cm • High current capability	
Mark Levinson No 38	3,995	preamp • 6L,2T • rem • Fully remote, balanced	
Gamma Acoustics Space R	3,999	power amp • 18W • 3L • 43,22,31cm • Line integrated	
Gamma Acoustics Era Ref	3,999	preamp • MM,3L • 44,17,30cm • Si Triode	
Musical Fidelity F18	3,999	power amp • 220W • 49,19,67cm • Bal/unbalanced in/hybrid	
Tube Tech Synergy 1	3,999	integrated • 150W • 5L,1T, • rem • 47,18,47cm • Bias monitor, soft-start	
Exposure XVI	4,000	power amp • 125W • 48,13,35cm • Pair regulated monoblocks	
Counterpoint Nat Progress	4,125	power amp • 150W • Mono, hybrid	
Krell KRC-2s	4,190 141	preamp • 6L,1T • rem • 48,7,36cm • Opt MM/MC stage	B'BUY
Electrocomp't AW180MB	4,200	power amp • 180W • 28,29,48cm • High current, price per pair	
DNM PA2BE	4,250	power amp • 90W • 27,13,18cm • Triwire output	
YBA 1 Power	4,250 62	power amp • 85W • 43,14,33cm • Well finished with front rank imaging and transparency, and can drive any loads (tested with 1 Pre).	REC'D
KAL Emperor	4,375	power amp • 9W • Single ended tube Class A	
Counterpoint NPS-400E	4,395	power amp • 400W • Rated at 4 ohms, hybrid	
Electrocomp't AW180MB	4,430	power amp • 180W • 28,29,48cm • High current, price per pair	
Audio Research V70	4,480	power amp • 60W • 48,18,40cm • Balanced in, hybrid	
LFD Disc Preamp	4,499	preamp • MC • 30,5,36cm • Battery powered	
Roksan ROK-M1.5	4,500	power amp • 160W • 48,11,34 • Pair monoblocks	
Classe Audio Audio 25	4,639	power amp • 250W • 48,20,53cm • Single ended, bal bridgable	
EAR 519	4,699	power amp • 100W • 43,14,20cm • Valve monoblock x1	
Jadis JPL	4,720	preamp • 5L,1T • 43,17,30cm • Tube	
Jadis JPP-200	4,778	preamp • 4L,1T	
DNM 3B Six E	4,780	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • 27,13,16cm	
Audio Research D-300	4,800	power amp • 160W • 48,18,33cm • Single ended, balanced	
Naim NAC52	5,006	preamp • 6 (see note) • rem • 43,76,30cm • Optional phono board	
DNM PA2BS	5,250	power amp • 90W • 27,13,18cm • Triwire output	
Audio Research LS-5 II	5,290	preamp • 5L,1T • 48,14,30cm • Full balanced in/out	
Jadis DEFY-7	5,290	power amp • 100W • 49,23,63cm • Tube	
Tesseract TAP-A	5,300	preamp • MM,3L,2T	
McIntosh MC2600	5,395	power amp • 600W	
Mark Levinson 27.5	5,399	power amp • 100W	
Jadis JP-30MC	5,444 60	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T • Beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange transcend limitations at frequency extremes (tested with JA30).	REC'D
Sonic Frontiers SFS-160	5,495	power amp • 160W • 45,22,35cm • Twin tube monoblocks	
CAT SLL1 Sig line	5,500	preamp • 3L,1T • 31,48,14cm • 2 outputs, valve	
Audio Research VT130	5,600	power amp • 65W • Stereo tube, balanced	
DNM PA2BS-1	5,650	power amp • 90W • 27,13,18cm • Triwire output	
Jadis JA-30	5,760 60	power amp • 30W • 21,21,46cm • Beautiful build and delightful mid transcend limitations at frequency extremes (tested with JP30).	REC'D
Krell KSA-100s	5,843	power amp • 100W • 48,22,50cm • Sustained Plateau Bias	
CAT SLL1 Sig phono	6,000	preamp • MM,2L • 31,48,14cm • 2 outputs, valve	
Audio Research D-400II	6,200	power amp • 200W • 48,23,33cm • Single ended, balanced	
McIntosh MC500	6,265	power amp • 500W • 45,27,51cm • Blue meters	
Mark Levinson No 38S	6,495	preamp • 6L,2T • rem • Special Edition, balanced	
Conrad-Johnson Ev20 SP	6,700	preamp • MC,4L • Poor man's Premier 7B - SPED version	
Krell KRCS	6,949	preamp • 6L,1T • rem • 48,7,36cm • Opt MM/MC stage	
EAR 549	6,999	power amp • 200W • 43,27,22cm • Valve monoblock x1	
EAR G88	6,999	preamp • MM/MC,3L,2T • Valve	
Conrad-Johnson Prem 12	7,000	power amp • 140W • Monoblock pair	
Tesseract TAMP-60	7,350	power amp • 60W • 2x Monoblocks	
Mark Levinson 23.5	7,399	power amp • 200W	
Classe Audio Audio M-700	7,690	power amp • 700W • 48,19,44cm • Single ended, bal monoblock	
Jadis JP-S2	7,900	preamp • 6,1T	
Krell KSA-200s	7,987	power amp • 200W • 48,22,54cm • Sustained Plateau Bias	
Audio Research V140	8,960	power amp • 120W • 48,22,30cm • Monoblocks, hybrid	
Counterpoint NPM-E	8,995	power amp • 150W • 49,18,49cm • Twin monoblocks	
Krell KSA-300s	9,500	power amp • 300W • 48,22,62cm • Sustained Plateau Bias	
Jadis JA-80	9,912	power amp • 60W • 23,26,58cm • Tube, 1x monoblock	
Classe Audio M-1000	9,968	power amp • 1KW • 48,22,53cm • Single ended, bal monoblock	
Conrad-Johnson Prem 7B 11,000Col	11,000	preamp • MC,4L • The 7 is designed without compromise, and is clearly one of the finest (valve) preamplifiers money can buy.	REC'D
McIntosh MC1000	11,215	power amp • 45,27,51cm • Pair 1KW monoblocks, blue mtrs	
Jadis JP-80MC	11,250	preamp • MM/MC,4L,1T	
Adyton CORDIS 3B	11,950	power amp • 290W • 49,39,43cm • Reference 2x dual mono	
Gamma Acoustics Aeon	11,999	power amp • 26W • 29,21,53cm • Single ended Class A, mono	

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Lumley Reference M500	12,000	power amp • 35,80,30cm • 2xmono, triode/pentode
KAL Conqueror	12,500	integrated • 30W • MM/MC,3L,1T
CAT JLI	13,500	power amp • 200W
Audio Research VT150	14,940	power amp • 130W • 37,31,56cm • 2 x monoblocks, tube
Jadis JA-200	15,518	power amp • 160W • 26,23,58cm • Tube, monoblock (four boxes)
Mark Levinson 20.6	15,790	power amp • 100W • Monoblocks, Class A
EAR P52	15,999	preamp • MM/MC,4L,2T • Valve
EAR Yoshino P52	15,999	preamp • MM/MC,4L,2T • Valve
Conrad-Johnson Prem 8A	16,000	power amp • 275W • Monoblocks, price per pair
Krell K.A.S. 2	18,804	power amp • 200W • 2x mono
Jadis JP-200MC	19,000	preamp • MM/MC,5L,1T
Gamma Acoustics Rhythm	19,999	preamp • MM,5L,1T • 44,24,39cm • Triode preamp, regulated
Jadis JA-500	21,900	power amp • 400W • 28,36,79cm • Tube, monoblock (four boxes)
Krell K.A.S.	29,500	power amp • 350W • 48,34,64cm • Monoblocks



Cables

Cables are not accessories, but an integral part of a system.

Inevitably some cables are greater than others. The best cable for your system will only be found through trial and error, but hopefully by combining our Recommendations with those of a dealer, you will end up with something suitable. Generally speaking, budget to spend about ten per cent of the total system cost on cables.

■ Analogue interconnects are the leads that connect source components to amplifiers and pre to power amps. The cables in this section are priced for a one metre terminated pair.

■ Symmetrical indicates where a twisted pair of conductors are used. Coaxial means that there is a central 'hot'

conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal. Stranded cables have multiple strands and solid core use individually insulated strand(s).

■ Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs, and are traditionally coaxial with a 75 Ohm impedance. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass and the latter in coaxial or alternative configurations. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.

■ Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are for a terminated five metre pair unless otherwise indicated.

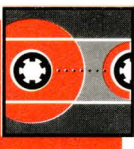
Key

loudspeaker; interconnect; digital, electrical, digital, opticalthese are the differenttypes of cable
this information is followed by: ...
for loudspeaker cablesconstruction type, materials used,capacitance (high, med. or low)
for analogue interconnectsconstruction type and topology,materials used
for digital interconnectstype of cable (elec. or optical),materials used, impedance in Ohms

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

CABLE		
QED 42 Strand	1	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • med • low • copper • PVC outer, figure-of-8
Cable Talk Theatre 2	2	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper
Cable Talk The Flat One	2	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper
Ixos 603	2	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper
QED FI-4	2	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • med • low • copper • Flat construction, poly outer
QED 79 Strand	2	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • low • copper • PVC outer, fig-of-8
QED Qudos	2	145 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • low • OFHC copper • Polyethylene cover
Cable Talk Talk 3	3	133 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • <i>No-nonsense loudspeaker cable that is very compatible, good value and both easy on the ear but never lazy</i>
Ixos 601	3	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • OFC • 6 core
QED RI-4	3	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • med • low • copper • 4-core, round construction
Cable Overture 2	4	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • 6N copper
Heybrook Heywire	4	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • <i>This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven.</i>
Cable Talk Talk 4	5	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • 6N copper
Cable Talk Talk 3 Bi-wire	5	133 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • <i>Bi-wired version of Cable Talk's best-selling Talk 3 loudspeaker cable — excellent value</i>
Ixos 604	5	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • Bi-wire
Ixos 602	5	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • OFC • 12 core
QED Qudos Profiles	5	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • OFHC • Flat 8-core OFHC poly
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	7	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • <i>Very enjoyable and open sounding cable with fine soundstaging. This is only marred by a hint of treble glare.</i>
Cable Talk Talk 4 Bi-wire	9	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • <i>Bi-wired version of Canle Talk Talk 4 cable</i>
Chord Flatline Gold	9	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • solid core • low • copper
Mission Quartet	9	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • 4-conductor OFC solid core
Sonic Link First Mains	10	Mains cable • stranded • 12A • silver plated copper • PTFE insulated
Arion LSO.5	12	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver • Priced per meter
Cable Talk Concert 2.1 B	14	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • 6N copper • <i>Bi-wired version of Canle Talk Concert 2.1 cable</i>
Chord Flatline Twin	16	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • solid core • low • copper
DNM DIG75	18	Digital, electrical • copper • Non-coaxial
QED Digiflex	19	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • copper • <i>Top performance, low-loss 75ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality</i>
DNM DIGS100	20	Digital, electrical • coaxial • copper
DNM DIG100	20	Digital, electrical • copper • Non-coaxial
DPA Opti-link	20	108 Digital, optical • plastic • <i>Very similar to Bandridge AL560.</i>
Ixos 104	20	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • OFC • 24 karat plugs
Ixos 603/10	20	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • Unterminated
Mission Stranded	20	109 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • <i>This Swedish made cable proved a real fit with our listeners — a slick performer and Best Buy upgrade.</i>
Sonic Link Pure Mains	20	Mains cable • stranded • 3A • HPMC • PTFE insulated
QED P2 Gold	22	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • OFHC copper
QED Incon P1 Gold	23	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • OFHC copper
Arion LS1	25	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver • Priced per meter
DNM MLI25UK	25	Mains cable • solid core • 13A • High purity copper
Ixos 105	25	Digital, electrical • 75ohms • copper • OFC screen
QED Optiflex	25	Digital, optical • plastic fibre
QED Incon P2 Seold	25	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • OFHC copper
Cable Talk Improved 2	26	Interconnect • Semi-symmetrical • stranded • 6N copper
QED Incon P1 Seold	26	Interconnect • Symmetrical • coaxial • stranded • OFHC copper
DPA Digi-link	28	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • copper • <i>Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound.</i>
Chord Chrysalis	30	Interconnect • stranded • copper
Sonic Link Super Mains	30	Mains cable • stranded • 30A • silver plated copper • PTFE insulated
Sonic Link Light Brown	30	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • PTFE • <i>A solid-core, twisted pair that deviates from the 75 Ohm standard and provides an equally unbalanced sound.</i>
vdH MV Videolink 75	30	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • copper • <i>An AV-cum-digital cable that comes very close to besting QED's Digiflex. Still some vocal sibilance</i>
Chord Codac	32	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • copper • <i>A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration.</i>
QED Qudos Terminated	33	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • low • OFHC copper • Various lengths, terminated
Cable Talk Advanced 2	35	Interconnect • Semi-symmetrical • stranded • 6N copper
Sonic Link Pink	35	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • silver plated copper
Kimber Cable PSB DigiLink	37	108 Digital, electrical • copper • <i>An analogue interconnect inappropriately pressed into digital service. A visible deterioration in the digital signal results.</i>
Chord Cobra	39	Interconnect • stranded • copper
Ixos 103	40	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • OFC • Double shielded, locking plugs
Sonic Link AST150	40	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • copper
Naim NAC05	44	109 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • <i>A 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff rod of wire has little application outside a Naim system.</i>
Audioquest F-14	45	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • <i>Ideal for laying under c.arpets, F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound</i>

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Monster Interlink LS100	45	108 Digital, optical • plastic • Well constructed stepped-index fibre with polished ends. Slightly lean, fuzzy but engaging performance.	REC'D
Monster Datalink 100	45	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • copper • A colourful coaxial interconnect with an equally colourful and up-beat sound. Very compatible.	REC'D
Sonic Link Red	45	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • HPMC	
Chord Prodac	49	Digital, electrical • 75ohms	
Chord Cobra-mono	49	Interconnect • stranded • copper	
Kronos Konnekt 3	49	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • copper	
Arion LS-2	50	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver • Biwire, priced per meter	
Audioquest Video 2	50	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • copper • The very best available with an expressive sound, but generous price to sweeten the pill/B'BUY	
Cable Talk Monitor 2	50	143 Interconnect • Semi-symmetrical • stranded • 6N copper • Neutral and detailed interconnect, that sets a tough standard to beat at the price.	
Sonic Link Green	50	Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • PTFE	
Sonic Link Derwent	50	Interconnect • stranded • silver plated copper	
vdH The Clearwater	50	109 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver/copper • Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly marky sounding cable.	
Kimber Cable KC-1 Digilink52	108	Digital, electrical • copper • This cable adopts a woven construction with the addition of a conductive screen. Music lacks detail and spirit.	
Chord Blue Heaven	58	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • solid core • low • silver	
Kimber Cable Opti-link	59	108 Digital, optical • plastic • Hardly cheap for what appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet it sounds a little brighter and livelier than most.	REC'D
Ixos 102	60	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • OFC • Double shielded, locking plugs	
Cable Talk Studio 2	65	143 Interconnect • Semi-symmetrical • stranded • 6N copper • Smoother, with better focus and tighter bass than Monitor 2. Excellent value.	
Chord Siren	65	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • Silver plated copper	
Chord Chameleon	68	Interconnect • stranded • copper	
Arion SA0.5	75	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • silver	
Audioquest Type 4	75	109 Loudspeaker cable • copper • Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains the cable's 'bite'.	
Sonic Link AST150X2	80	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • copper • Biwire	
DNM Rainbow	84	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • Can curtail treble response, but this was an out-and-out winner on sound per pound.	B'BUY
Cable Talk Professional 2	85	Interconnect • Semi-symmetrical • stranded • 6N copper	
Sonic Link Violet	85	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • HPMC	
Audioquest Digital PRO	90	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • silver • A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear cut transparency.	
Sonic Link Grey	90	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • silver plated copper • A thin cable composed of silver plated OF-copper and PTFE insulation. Lacks bass impact and treble 'air'.	
Chord Blue-heaven	95	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • solid core • silver	
Kimber C'ble KCAG Digilink	95	108 Digital, electrical • silver • An asymmetric cable using silver conductors that deviates from the 75ohm standard. Not ideal for digital applications.	
Arion DAC1	99	Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • silver	
Arion SA1	99	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • silver	
Kronos Konnekt 2	99	Interconnect • coaxial • solid core • copper	
Audio Note AN-D	100	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that should be twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward.	
Audioquest Optilink Z	100	108 Digital, optical • glass • Good level of midband detail but frequency extremes lack depth and extension.	
Electrocomp 1 EC-K3 Mk 2	100	Mains cable • stranded • 13A • copper • Terminated, woven conductors	
Ixos 101	100	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • silver plated OFC • Double shielded, locking plugs	
Sonic Link AST75X2	100	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper • Biwire	
Sonic Link Blue	115	Interconnect • solid core • HPMC	
Cable Talk Broadcast 2	1305	Interconnect • Semi-symmetrical • stranded • 6N copper	
Chord Solid	130	Interconnect • coaxial • solid core • copper/silver	
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	108 Digital, electrical • coaxial • 75ohms • copper • A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a warther hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive.	
Sonic Link Care Music	150	Loudspeaker cable • stranded • low • silver plated copper	
Audio Note AN-B	165	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • A very high capacitance Litz-type cable whose sound may well act as a taming influence in many systems.	REC'D
Sonic Link Black	165	Interconnect • stranded • silver plated copper	
Cable Talk Reference 2	180	Interconnect • Semi-symmetrical • stranded • 6N copper	
Arion DAC2	199	Digital, electrical • coaxial • stranded • 75ohms • silver	
Arion SA2	199	Interconnect • Symmetrical • stranded • silver	
Kronos Konnekt 1	199	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • copper	
Sonic Link Blue	200	Loudspeaker cable • solid core • high • HPMC • Biwire	
Sonic Link Derwent/spkr	200	Loudspeaker cable • low • silver plated copper • Biwire	
Audioquest Midn't Hyp'litz	260	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • copper • Very similar to Type 4, but with a delicate smoothness that contrasts with the brighter sound of cheap cables.	
vdH The Magnum	265	109 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • copper/silver • vdH's most prestigious twinlead speaker cable, the Magnum sounds surprisingly soft and old fashioned.	
DPA IS19	275	109 Loudspeaker cable • solid core • silver/copper • Clear, neutral and transparent sound of the older 8S without the tremendous clarity of Gortex Black 16.	
vdH The Wind	330	109 Loudspeaker cable • stranded • silver/copper • 'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!	REC'D
Kimber Cable D-60	513	Digital electrical • coaxial • 75ohm • Silver • Teflon jacket	
Kimber C Illuminati DV-50	552	Interconnect • coaxial • stranded • solid core • 110 ohm XLR balanced • Woven shield + drain wire	
Kimber Cable Orchid	1,183	Interconnect • coaxial • 55ohms • silver • AES/EBU, Teflon dielectric	
Audio Note AN-SP	1,270	Loudspeaker cable • silver • Some 15 individually insulated silver strands go to make up this very civilised but exceptionally detailed sounding cable.	REC'D



Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Buffs may wrinkle their noses, but are happy to use cassette decks to make up tapes for the car. ■ There should be no problems in connecting a cassette deck to any normal amplifier, but some care needs to be taken in choosing the best tapes for a specific machine.

(Trial and error is one effective technique, but many decks have manual bias adjustment and some match up to the tape automatically.) Lab performance and sound quality often go hand in hand, and are frequently somewhat dependent upon factory alignment. The mechanical integrity of the mechanism is another crucial factor, this will be reflected in the price. ■ Twin deck offers the option to dub tapes and play two

cassettes sequentially. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but usually with some mechanical compromise.

Key	
single, twin	.....type of cassette deck
Dolby B, C, HX-Pro	.....noise reduction and other circuitry
2 head	.....number of heads

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
CASSETTE DECKS			
Sherwood DS1150	80	single • Dolby B, C • 2 head	
Goodmans Delta 700W	100	123 twin • Dolby B • 2 head • 36,13,28cm • Compact and ultra-basic twin deck which is rough and bass shy, with a less than stable tape path.	
Sherwood DS1010C	100	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Mic input	
Sherwood DD1030C	100	twin • Dolby B • 2 head	
Sony TC-FX211B	100	single • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 43,12,29cm	
Aiwa AD-F450	120	136 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Basic but well designed budget deck, astonishing value, only the poor metering gives the game away.	B'BUY
JVC TD-W106BK	120	twin • Dolby B • 2 head • 44,13,24cm • Twin, one recording deck	
Sherwood DS3010C	120	117 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Good range of facilities, let down by poor transport and iffy electronics.	
Goodmans GSW650	130	twin • Dolby B • 2 head • 43,12,27cm • Both auto-reverse	
Sony TC-K215B	130	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,31cm • Tape calibration	
Sony TC-K311B	130	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,31cm • Auto calibration	
Grundig CCF210	150	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B • 2 head • 36,12,30cm • AMS, CD copy, hi speed dub	
Sony TC-W445B	150	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,31cm • Full logic control	
Teac V-600	150	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,15,29cm • Fine bias	
Denon DRM-540	160	146 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Exceptionally stable and well focused and no serious shortcomings at a bargain price.	B'BUY
Yamaha KX-380	169	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,29cm • Play Trim, manual bias	
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	146 twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • There's everything in this high class twin. For those who want bells, whistles - and music.	B'BUY
Grundig Fine Arts CCF2	170	twin • Dolby B • 2 head • 44,13,30cm • AMS, remote, display off	

PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

JVC TD-218BK	170	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,33cm • 'Compu' auto tape calibration	
JVC TD-W208BK	170	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,33cm • Twin, one recording deck	
JVC TD-X372BK	170	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,33cm	
Kenwood KX-W4070	170	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Auto bias function	
Kenwood KX-3060	170	139 single • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,12,37cm • Based on the same DAC/filter as Marantz's CD-53, but with a more transparent and highly insightful sound. B'BUY	
Pioneer CT-S330	170	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,28cm • Audio tape setup, FLEX	
Sony TC-K461S	180	146 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,13,31cm • Transport is good and sound quality is fine, if not especially dynamic. Marginal with metals. REC'D	
Sony TC-K415B	180	136 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,12,31cm • Mainly UK designed with audiophile intent, but spoiled by erratic output, at worst with metal tape.	
Technics RS-IR373	180	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 43,14,29cm • Play transport unidirectional	
Grundig CCF310	190	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 36,12,30cm • Elapsed time, CD copy, AMS	
NAD 602	199	127 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Minimalist deck for the audiophile market. Unfortunately engineering is minimalist too.	
Yamaha KX-W282	199	twin • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Twin auto-reverse, 1 records	
Yamaha KX-480	199	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Auto-tape tuning, Play Trim	
Denon DRW-580	200	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Music search, hi speed dub	
Dual CC8000 RS	200	twin • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 44,13,25cm • Remote via 9000RS	
Grundig Fine Arts CCF3	200	146 twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,30cm • Unstable sounding twin thanks to a primitively engineered transport mechanism.	
JVC TD-318BK	200	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,34cm • 'Silent' mechanism	
JVC TD-W308BK	200	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,33cm • Twin, one recording deck	
Kenwood KX-W6070	200	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • Auto-bias function	
Luxman K-322	200	146 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 13,44,18cm • Gives best value results with lower bias tapes, helped by a successful Dolby C installation.	
Marantz SD-53	200	146 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,14,30cm • Consistent with different tape types but has a rough transport, and dull prerecorded quality.	
Pioneer CT-W503R	200	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,25cm • Auto NR, FLEX	
Pioneer CT-S430S	200	136 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,28cm • Against the odds — a 2-head Dolby S deck that works. Well set up and fully equipped. B'BUY	
Sony TC-WRS45B	200	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,29cm • Auto calibration	
Teac R-550	200	Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,29cm • Blank scan	
Teac W-750R	200	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,15,29cm	
Technics RS-TR474	200	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,14,29cm • High speed FF/REW	
Denon DRS-640	210	140 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,31cm • Drawer loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well adjusted sound. B'BUY	
JVC TD-V562BK	220	123 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,33cm • Ultra-sophisticated transport at a silly price; sound quality is stable but slightly opaque. REC'D	
Aiwa AD-F850	230	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • Super DX head; win capstan	
Pioneer CT-W603RS	230	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,25cm • Auto tape setup, FLEX, Dolby S	
Technics RS-BX601	230	146 Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,13,29cm • Well equipped with remarkably fast wind, good all-round sound. REC'D	
Kenwood KX-5060S	235	140 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,12,30cm • Well engineered transport and Dolby S star in this refined and detailed design. REC'D	
Yamaha KX-W482	249	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Twin recording auto-reverse	
Yamaha KX-580	249	146 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm • Sounds stable and clean, if slightly bright. Play Trim helps wake up recalcitrant recordings. B'BUY	
Grundig Fine Arts CF4	250	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,30cm • Manual bias, AMS, monitor	
JVC TD-718BK	250	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,14,34cm • Tape calibration, stabiliser	
JVC TD-W708BK	250	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,33cm • Twin record/play	
Marantz SD-535	250	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,14,32cm • Synchro record	
Onkyo TA-RW313	250	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 46,12,31cm	
Sony TC-WR645S	250	twin • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,12,31cm • UK optimised sound	
Sony TC-K511S	250	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,12,31cm • UK optimised sound	
Teac V-1010	250	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,15,29cm • Fine bias adjust	
Technics RS-TR575	250	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,14,29cm • Optical quick reverse	
Denon DRW-760	260	twin • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,28cm	
Denon DRM-740	270	136 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,28cm • Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment offers good, if somewhat detached sonics.	
JVC TD-V62BK	270	146 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,33cm • Assured, clean and agile sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class. B'BUY	
Marantz SD-63	270	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,14,30cm • D-bus	
NAD 614	270	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,13,32cm • Play Trim, CAR compression	
Technics RS-BX701	270	136 Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,13,30cm • Extremely well built deck, moderately well equipped, and a pleasure to operate and listen to. REC'D	
Kenwood KX-W8070S	280	twin • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • Auto bias function, power load	
Aiwa AD-S950	300	140 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • High-spec package featuring Dolby S, 3 heads, tape calibration — well set up and musically well sorted. B'BUY	
Pioneer CT-W803RS	300	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,13,25cm • Twin record, mic /p	
Pioneer CT-S630S	300	140 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 42,13,38cm • 3 heads and Dolby S feature in an excellent deck that is underbiased with Type IV tapes. REC'D	
Sony TC-K611S	300	127 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,12,30cm • Good Dolby S deck — slightly let down by lack of attention to detail. REC'D	
Technics RS-BX747	300	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 43,13,30cm • Fine bias adj, THC lo-red base	
Denon DRS-810	310	127 single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,32cm • Drawer loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition.	
Kenwood KX-7060S	329	146 single • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,13,30cm • Although slightly dull sounding with prerecorded tapes, this is a well equipped and fine sounding deck. REC'D	
Onkyo KR-609	350	Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 28,12,31cm • Mini component	
Onkyo TA250	350	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 46,12,31cm	
Teac V-3010	350	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,15,36cm • Remote control, pitch adjust	
Onkyo K-W606	370	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 28,12,32cm • Mini component	
Pioneer CT-M601R	380	Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,14,38cm • Six tape record/play, r/cntrl	
Technics RS-TR979	380	twin • auto reverse • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,13,28cm • Both decks record, quick rev	
Luxman K-373	400	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 13,44,35cm • System bus, mic inputs	
Marantz CP-230	400	single • Dolby B • 2 head • DC portable, semi-pro	



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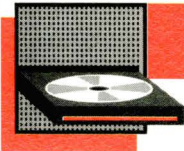
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PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Marantz SD-635	400	twins • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 43,9,32cm • Drawer loading	
Nakamichi DR3	400	123 single • Dolby B, C • 2 head • 43,10,32cm • Refined, exquisitely detailed and solid sounding 'budget' Nakamichi 2-header.	REC'D
Onkyo K-611	430	146 Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 28,12,32cm • Cute drawer loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport.	REC'D
Marantz DC-1010	450	single • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 42,8,31cm • Inc CD player module	
Teac W-6000R	450	twins • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,15,33cm • Pitch control, remote	
Marantz CP-430	500	single • Dolby B • 3 head • Portable, dbx NR, anti-roll	
Pioneer CT-S830S	500	146 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 42,14,38cm • Beautifully engineered deck, with high class mechanism and superb sound to match.	REC'D
Teac R-9000S	500	105 Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 3 head • 49,15,36cm • Much better than average auto-reverse deck, well worth considering, Nicely engineered too.	
Teac V-6030S	550	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • Dual capstan	
Yamaha KX-W952	599	twins • Dolby B, C • HX Pro • 2 head • 44,16,37cm • Twin record, opt remote	
Nakamichi DR2	600	127 single • Dolby B, C • 3 head • 43,10,32cm • Accomplished design with simple features (manual tape select!) but superb sound/serviceability.	B'BUY
Teac V-8030S	650	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • Quartz locked, dual capstan	
Teac V-8000S	699	105 single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 48,15,36cm • Superb stability and real subtlety, the best Teac yet. The only disappointment was Dolby C.	REC'D
Nakamichi DR1	850	117 single • Dolby B, C • 3 head • 43,10,32cm • Idiosyncratic Nakamichi with everything. Good azimuth adjustment and dynamic, authoritative sound.	REC'D
Arcam Delta 100	899	111 single • Dolby B, C, S • 3 head • 43,12,34cm • Superb transport and a ripe, spacious sound. Some replay incompatibility.	REC'D
Pioneer CT-95	1,000	single • Dolby B, C, S • HX Pro • 3 head • 44,15,38cm • Copper plated chassis	
Nakamichi Dragon	2,350	Dolby B, C • 3 head • 45,14,30cm • Auto azimuth correct	



CD Players, Transports & DACs

Now established as the prime audio source, the CD player continues to evolve. Manufacturers have accepted that 'Perfect Sound Forever' (an early Philips slogan) was a trifle optimistic. Now the medium is being slowly transformed into something worthy of the audiophile's enthusiasm.

■ All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD

players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see below). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical persuasion; sonically the former is preferable.

Transports & DACs

A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which turns the digital bitstream coming off the disc into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue converter, or DAC. Although most players are contained in a single

box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs.

■ The first thing listed for a DAC is the type of converter chip employed. However, in much the same way that an amp's output is not indicative of its sound quality, the DAC chip is only one factor in a CD player's sound.

Key

multibit, 1-bit	.....DAC type
electrical/optical out	.....digital output(s)
rem	.....remote control

PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

CD PLAYERS			
Eclipse CD101a	80	144 multibit • rem • 36,8,29cm	
Eclipse CD420	100	multibit • rem • 42,8,29cm	
Pioneer PD-77	100	1 bit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,13,33cm • Satin gold finish	
Goodmans Delta 700	110	128 multibit • rem • A 16-bit alternative to the CD650II that furnishes a colourful and animated sound.	REC'D
Goodmans GCD360R	120	multibit • rem	
Grundig CD210	120	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 36,8,30cm • 30 mem, random repeat	
Philips CD710	120	multibit • rem • 16 bit continuous technology	
Technics SL-PG370	120	mash • Remote control ready	
Philips CD740	130	139 multibit • electrical out • rem • One of several Philips players using hybrid DAC technologies. Still sounds insufferably boring, however.	
Philips CD720	130	multibit • rem • 16 bit Continuous Calibration	
Sherwood CD3020R	130	119 bitstream • Although this budget wonder has little respect for musical convention, what emerges is still remarkably entertaining.	B'BUY
Sony CDP-M302	130	1 bit • rem • 36,10,33cm • Midi-size, full remote control	
Dual CD1135RC	140	multibit • electrical out • rem • 42,8,28cm • Var. headphone out	
Grundig Fine Arts CD1	140	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,9,30cm • 30 track memory, auto-space	
JVC XL-V284	140	147 1 bit • rem • 44,11,28cm • Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player also boasts a refined, if occasionally unpredictable sound.	REC'D
JVC XL-V174BX	140	1 bit • rem • 44,10,28cm	
Pioneer PD-103	140	1 bit • 42,11,28cm • Display off	
Technics SL-PG470AK	140	mash • optical out • rem • CD edit	
Aiwa XC-300	150	1 bit • optical out • rem	
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	147 electrical out • rem • 43,9,29cm • Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and at 'em sound quality.	REC'D
Cambridge Audio CD200 II	150	1 bit • rem • 42,9,29cm	
Cambridge Audio CD200	150	multibit • rem • 42,9,29cm • Can play in reverse order	
Denon DCD-315	150	bitstream • rem • 44,11,28cm	
Dual CD1150RC	150	multibit • electrical out • rem • Var. headphone out	
Sony CDP-312	150	139 1 bit • rem • 43,10,29cm • Something of a rough diamond, offering a raft of features and good build but a decidedly Technicolor sound	
Teac CD-P3200	150	147 multibit • rem • 44,12,28cm • A primitive looking CD player, housing primitive 16-bit electronics which deliver an equally primitive and uninspiring sound.	
JVC XL-V274BK	160	139 1 bit • rem • 44,10,28cm • This appears to be a re-badged version of JVC's XL-V264, retaining an over-heavy bass and generally gaudy sound.	
Kenwood DP-2060	160	147 1 bit • rem • 44,10,26cm • A player that bears absolutely no relation to the DP-3060, despite appearances. Sounds vague and thoroughly uninteresting.	
Pioneer PD-203	160	1 bit • rem • 42,11,28cm • As 103, variable output & rem	
Technics SL-PG570AK	160	mash • rem • Digital servo, THCB base	
Yamaha CDX-480	169	147 bitstream • rem • 44,10,28cm • A dispassionately calm sounding player that delivers the musical goods with little or no apparent enthusiasm.	
Dual CD1000RS	170	bitstream • electrical out • Remote control via CR9000RS	
Dual CD1180RC	180	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,9,29cm • Var. headphone out	
JVC XL-F116	180	1 bit • rem • 44,13,40cm • 5-disc carousel	
NAD 501	189	139 bitstream • A thoroughly typical frills-free player with a slightly too cautious, even restrained musical outlook.	
Grundig Fine Arts CD2	190	128 bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,9,30cm • A stylish looking player, with a disappointingly vague approach to music making.	
Philips CDC745	199	bitstream • electrical out • rem • Multi-disc tray	
Philips CD750	199	137 bitstream • electrical out • rem • The costliest model in Philips range and the last to use its BS DAC lacks a sense of integration and stereo focus.	
Yamaha CDC-555	199	multibit • rem • 44,11,39cm • Entry level	
Denon DCD-825	200	137 multibit • electrical out • rem • Despite extensive revisions, this latest player still sounds like a typical 18-bit Denon, which is no bad thing!	REC'D
Denon DCD-625	200	147 multibit • electrical out • rem • 44,11,29cm • The replacement for DCD-615 is just as generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear.	
JVC XL-F216	200	1 bit • rem • 44,13,40cm • 5-disc carousel	
Kenwood DP-R4070	200	1 bit • rem • 5-disc tray loading	
Kenwood DP-3060	200	139 1 bit • rem • 44,10,26cm • Based on the same filter/DAC as Marantz's CD-53, but with a more transparent, sober and highly insightful sound.	B'BUY
Luxman D-322	200	147 bitstream • rem • 44,10,28cm • A well bred CD player featuring an unusual digital filter technology. Sounds smooth and cultured without appearing grey	
Marantz CD-53	200	139 bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,9,30cm • CD-63's looks, but component costs are cut, exposing a slightly ragged but enthusiastic performer.	REC'D
Onkyo DX710	200	1 bit • optical out • rem • 46,11,31cm	
Pioneer PD-S504	200	147 bitstream • electrical out • rem • 42,11,29cm • Capable of recreating a tremendous sense of atmosphere and occasion.	B'BUY
Ritel RCD-930AX	200	1 bit • rem • 44,9,29cm	
Sansui CD-117K II	200	multibit	
Sansui CD-X217i	200	multibit • electrical out	
Sherwood CDC5030R	200	132 1 bit • rem • 44,10,38cm • This replacement for the successful 5-disc CDC-5010R sounds messy, disjointed and generally unpleasant. A great disappointment.	
Sony CDP-561E	200	147 bitstream • optical out • rem • 43,11,30cm • Plenty of features with an open, transparent and sparkling sound.	B'BUY
Technics SL-PS670AK	200	mash • optical out • rem • 45,12,29cm • Virtual Battery operation	
Yamaha CDX-580	229	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,28cm • UK specified o/p stage	



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- Denon DCD 825 £219.00
 Linn Mimik CD Player £839.00
 Linn CD Players - Full range? **YES!**
 Marantz CD63 £199.00
 Marantz CD63se £349.00
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 Naim CD3 (F/L) £949.00
 Naim CD Players - Full range? **YES!**
 Pioneer PD 703 £199.00
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 Quad FM4 Tuner (F/L) £429.00
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 NAD 613 (New) **£229.00**
 Nakamichi DR3 (Was 399) **£349.00**
 Nakamichi DR2 (F/L x 2) **£598.00**
 Nakamichi DR1 (F/T) **£799.00**
 Nakamichi Dragon (E/D) **£1890.00**
 Yamaha KX380 (F/T) £169.00
 Yamaha KX480(F/L) £199.00
 Yamaha KX-W482 £249.00

LOUDSPEAKERS

- (FREE C.T.3) = FREE CABLETALK 3.
 Castle Durham 900(Free C.T.3) £279.00
 Heybrook HB1 (Free C.T.3) £279.00
 KEF Coda 7 £129.00
 KEF Q10 (Free C.T.3) £199.00
 Linn Full range stocked & on Dem? **YES!**
 Mission 731 £129.00
 Mission 751 (Free C.T.3) £299.00
 Mission 752 (Free C.T.3) £499.00
 Mission 753 (Free C.T.3) £699.00
 Musical Technology - Kestral ... £249.00
 ProAc Response One £999.00
 Quad ELS63 on Demonstration? **YES!**
 Rega Kyte (Bik or Wal) £198.00
 Rega Ela (Black) £498.00
 Rowler Purdey £199.00
 Rogers LS2a/2 (Free C.T.3) ... £249.00
 Ruark Swordsman 2 £299.00
 Ruark Talisman (Free C.T.3) .. £699.00
 Tannoy 631 Speakers £149.00
 Tannoy 632 (Free C.T.3) £189.00
 Tannoy 633 (Free Pllnth) £319.00

AUDIO VISUAL

- A/V AMPLIFIERS**
 Arcam Xeta One £999.00
 Denon AVC1530 £479.00
 Yamaha DSP970 £799.00
LASER DISC PLAYERS
 Pioneer CLD-900 £399.00
 Pioneer CLD-950 £499.00
 Pioneer CLD-2950 £699.00
PROJECTION TV
 Pioneer SD-M1407 £3599.00
 Pioneer SD-T5000 £3999.00
SURROUND - SPEAKER SYSTEMS
 KEF Q30/90/70s System £899.00
 KEF 90 (Centre) £249.00
 Mission 73C (Centre) £149.00
 Mission 73S (Surround) £99.00
 Polk RM5000/2 System £899.00
 Pioneer V201 Sat/Sub System £249.00
 Tannoy 621 (Centre) £99.00
 PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF PRESS E&OE

PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Harman-Kardon HD7225	230	bitstream • rem • 45,10,33cm	
Sony CDP-C325M	230	1 bit • rem • 36,10,39cm • Midi size, 5-disc player	
Sony CDP-C345	230	1 bit • rem • 43,13,39cm • <i>Sony's Hybrid Pulse DAC sounds great in the CDP-311 but in this 5 disc carousel it provides a mere skeleton of a performance.</i>	
NAD 502	239	119 mash • electrical out • rem • <i>Updated version of the 5425 has traded spontaneity of its forebear for a more precise, but mechanical style of music.</i>	REC'D
Denon DCB-825	240	multibit • electrical out • rem • 44,11,28cm • UK design	
Grundig Fine Arts CD3	240	bitstream • rem • 44,9,30cm	
Grundig CD3	240	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,9,30cm • FTS, display off, fade, DAC7	
Onkyo DX703	240	1 bit • optical out • rem • 46,11,31cm	
Yamaha CDC-655	249	bitstream • optical out • rem • 44,11,39cm • Tray load multi-player	
Kenwood DP-M5570	250	1 bit • rem • 6+1 disc changer	
Kenwood DP-5060	250	1 bit • optical out • rem • 44,12,31cm • D.R.I.V.E.	
Marantz CC-45	250	bitstream • optical out • rem • 44,12,40cm • 5 disc carousel	
Marantz CD-63	250	137 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,9,30cm • <i>New technology has enabled Marantz to regain the upper hand.</i>	REC'D
Pioneer PD-M603	250	1 bit • rem • 42,11,30cm • Six disc	
Rotel RCD-940BX	250	137 multibit • rem • 44,10,32cm • <i>A change in transport and DAC technology lies behind the most untidy-sounding player to emerge from Rotel.</i>	
Sansui CD-X317	250	107 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • <i>Not in the same class as older CD-X311 Mk II. Sound is neither as responsive nor as engaging.</i>	
Sony CDP-761E	250	147 bitstream • optical out • rem • 43,11,40cm • <i>The CDP-561E with less widgets and a slightly overcooked musical performance. Damn good however!</i>	REC'D
Teac PD-0880	250	multibit • rem • 44,11,38cm • 5-disc carousel	
Teac CD-3	250	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 45,13,28cm • Central mechanism	
Technics SL-PS770A	250	147 mash • optical out • rem • 43,13,29cm • <i>AA mellow sounding player that never quite rouses from its slumber to really tackle the music at hand.</i>	
Onkyo Onkyo DX-7210	260	147 bitstream • rem • <i>A well-bred player featuring an unusual digital filter technology. Sounds smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring.</i>	REC'D
Teac CD-P4500	280	107 multibit • electrical out • rem • 44,12,29cm • <i>Its sound was described as having a certain 'organic warmth', very composed and easy going.</i>	REC'D
Onkyo C-711	290	1 bit • optical out • rem • 28,8,30cm • Mini component	
Harman-Kardon HD7325	299	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,10,33cm	
Musical Fidelity E60	299	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,34cm	
Arcam Alpha One	300	137 delta sigma • electrical out • rem • 43,8,29cm • <i>The first UK-built player under £300 is hampered by a tidy but rather grey and uninspiring sound.</i>	
Denon DCD-1015	300	141 multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,11,28cm • <i>Excellent, middle range player - fast, fluid and lean</i>	REC'D
JVC XL-2674	300	1 bit • rem • 44,11,28cm	
JVC XL-M408BK	300	1 bit • rem • 44,13,32cm • Six disc	
Marantz CD-1010	300	1 bit • optical out • rem • 42,8,31cm • Slim Series component	
Nakamichi MB4s	300	132 multibit • rem • 43,9,27cm • <i>Music-Bank player that sounds like it's come from a studio; plenty of dynamics and detail but little stereo depth.</i>	REC'D
Pioneer PD-S703	300	137 1 bit • optical out • rem • 42,13,27cm • <i>Legato Link and bitstream are combined in a player that sounds as manipulative and intriguing as ever.</i>	REC'D
Pioneer PD-M703	300	1 bit • rem • 42,13,30cm • Six disc, DSP soundfield cntrl	
Rotel RCD-965BX	300	100 bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,32cm • <i>Exceptionally refined; transparent, exquisitely detailed and powerfully emotive. A landmark player.</i>	B'BUY
Sony CDP-915E	300	141 1 bit • optical out • rem • 43,11,36cm • <i>UK optimised sound</i>	B'BUY
Audio Innovations Alto Chr	329	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,8,30cm • Dual diff clock	
Marantz CD-1020	334	1 bit • optical out • rem • 42,8,31cm • Slim Series, motorised cover	
Yamaha CDX-880	339	141 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,10,29cm • UK specified components	
AMC CD6	349	124 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • <i>Based on the same circuit as Rotel 965BX, but with a raunchier, beefier and less transparent sound.</i>	REC'D
Harman-Kardon HD7425	349	141 multibit • electrical out • rem • 45,10,33cm	
Onkyo DX750	350	141 1 bit • optical out • rem • 46,11,31cm	B'BUY
Sansui CD-X617	350	112 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • <i>'double-DAC' version of CD-X317 is impressive, slightly light and tizzy with pop, but dull with classical CDs.</i>	
Rotel RCD-970BX	375	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,8,30cm	
Rotel RCD-965BX D	375	141 bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,32cm • Discrete output	
Kenwood DP-7060	380	141 1 bit • optical out • rem • 44,12,31cm • D.R.I.V.E.	REC'D
Audio Innovations Alto	399	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,8,30cm • Dual diff DAC	
Aura CD50	400	119 bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,7,34cm • <i>Based on an older Philips board with the new CDM9 transport, this is a slim player with an innocuous sound.</i>	
NAD 517	400	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,108,40cm • 5-disc carousel player	
Rotel RCD-965BX LED	425	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,10,32cm • Discrete & slit foil caps	
Harman-Kardon HD7525	449	multibit • electrical out • rem • 45,10,33cm	
Pioneer PD-DM802	450	1 bit • rem • 42,14,31cm • Dual magazine 12-disc	
Technics SL-PS840	450	mash • optical out • rem • 43,13,34cm • Advanced MASH converter	
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	470	139 multibit • electrical out • rem • 43,8,27cm • Upgradable DAC, display off	
Pioneer PD-S901	499	1 bit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,13,33cm • SPM, Legato Link, Twin DAC	
Aiwa DX-C100M	500	1 bit • optical out • rem • 100+1 disc autochanger	
JVC XL-Z1050TN	500	119 1 bit • electrical out • rem • 45,11,34cm • <i>Technically advanced and luxuriously equipped, this player remains rather bland and unsatisfying on audition.</i>	
Nakamichi MB3s	500	multibit • rem • 43,9,38cm • 6+1 Music Bank, 18 x 8 o/s	
Orelle CD-100	500	multibit • electrical out • rem • 44,10,28cm • DC coupled	
Pioneer PD-TM3	500	1 bit • rem • 42,18,35cm • Triple magazine, 18-disc	
Harman-Kardon HD7625	549	multibit • electrical out • rem • 45,10,33cm	
Luxman D-373	550	multibit • optical out • rem • 44,11,35cm • System bus remote	
Micromega Stage 1	550	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable	
Musical Fidelity E600	599	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 44,12,35cm • Balanced XLR output	
Teac VRDS-7	599	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,15,34cm • Twin BS, VRDS mech	
Arcam Alpha 6	600	electrical out • rem • 43,8,27cm • Upgradable from 5/5 Plus	
Kenwood DP-J2070	600	1 bit • rem • 44,19,38cm • 100 disc autochanger	
Marantz CD-72 Mk II	600	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,13,30cm • DAC7	
Pioneer PD-F100	600	1 bit • rem • 42,19,40cm • 100 disc, Legato Link	
Micromega Stage 2	700	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable	
Nakamichi MB2s	700	multibit • electrical out • rem • 43,9,38cm • 6+1 Music Bank, 18 x 8 o/s	
Teac VRDS-10	770	119 bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,15,34cm • <i>Superb engineering and digital electronics. Lacks bass energy.</i>	
Linn Mimik	798	delta sigma • electrical out • rem • 32,8,33cm • BNC digital	
Harman-Kardon HD7725	799	124 multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,10,33cm • <i>Sounds impressively bold and dynamic - a genuine rock 'n roller!</i>	REC'D
Arcam Delta 270	800	124 hybrid • 2 electrical out • rem • 43,9,28cm • <i>The dry and supremely detailed sound of this player will either beguile or aggravate, depending on taste!</i>	
JVC XL-MC100	800	1 bit • rem • 36,37,38cm • 100 disc player	
Sony CDP-CX100	800	1 bit • optical out • rem • 43,13,38cm • 100 disc autochanger	
Thule CD100	849	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • Balanced out, Crystal chipset	
Meridian 506	875	delta sigma • electrical out • optical out • rem • 33,9,34cm • Recently improved sound	
Quad CD67	875	124 delta sigma • electrical out • rem • 33,8,26cm • <i>Deceptively sleek in appearance but with a powerful, fluid and captivating sound.</i>	B'BUY
DPA Renaissance	895	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 40,28,8cm • DPA DP16 DAC	
Micromega Stage 3	900	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable	
Mission DAD7	900	145 multibit • electrical out • rem • 22,8,36cm	
Nakamichi MB1s	900	multibit • electrical out • rem • 43,9,27cm • 6+1 Music Bank, 20 x 8 o/s	
Naim CD3	949	multibit • rem • 43,56,30cm • 1 box	
AVI S2000 MCII	999	119 bitstream • 31,25,9cm • <i>A stylish, mid-width player with an exceptionally refined and comfortable sound. Lacks passion.</i>	
Onix CD33	999	bitstream • 43,8,33cm • DAC7	
Technics SL-P2000	1,000	mash • optical out • rem • 45,13,33cm • THCB base, R-Core transformer	
Sentec Diana	1,100	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 12,5,23cm • 20 bit	
AVI S2000MC	1,149	multibit • electrical out • rem • 31,25,9cm • 20 bit Burr Brown DACs	
Marantz CD-10	1,200	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 46,14,36cm • Twin DAC-7, heavy build	
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,299	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 25,14,39cm	
Teac VRDS-20	1,299	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 50,15,34cm • Twin DAC7, balanced output	
Meridian 606	1,350	1 bit	
Marantz CD-16	1,400	bitstream • electrical out • rem • 25,29,13cm • Twin DAC-7	
Audiomeca Kreature SE	1,450	141 multibit • electrical out • rem • 25,14,39cm • Trichord clocked	

PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

REC'D

Meridian 508	1,475	140	delta sigma • electrical out • optical out • 33,9,34cm	
Roksan ATT-DP2P MkII	1,495		delta sigma • electrical out • rem • 46,12,35cm • Player, four level isolation	
Linn Karik	1,497	144	delta sigma • electrical out • optical out • rem • 32,8,33cm • Based on Linn's original transport, this sounds dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing.	
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,499		bitstream • 2 electrical out • optical out • rem • 49,12,33cm • XLR balanced out, tube o/p	
Mission Disc/Dacmaster	1,900		multibit • electrical out • rem • 22,8,36cm • Two box, inc Dacmaster DAC	
Naim CD1	1,997		multibit • rem • 43,56,30cm • One box	
NVA T.E.S.	2,000		bitstream • electrical out • rem	
McIntosh MCD7008	2,195		multibit • electrical out • rem • 45,14,45cm • Seven disc multiplayer	
Pioneer PD-95	2,500		1 bit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,16,34cm • Balanced out, Legato, SPM	
Teac X-1	2,500		multibit • rem • 46,14,40cm • Balanced out, 4x20bit	
McIntosh MCD7009	2,635		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 45,14,38cm • VRDS CD player	
YBA 2	2,999		multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,10,33cm • Outboard power supply	
Marantz CD-15	3,000		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 46,14,36cm • Twin Star Mark DAC-7	
NVA T.T.S	3,200		bitstream • electrical out • rem	
Naim CD5	3,642		multibit • rem • 43,56,30cm • Two box	
Micro-Seiki CD-M2DC	3,695		multibit • electrical out • rem	
Marantz CD-23	4,000		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 25,29,13cm • CDM-9/DAC-7 DAC	
Luxman D500XS	4,500		multibit • optical out • rem • 44,12,39cm • Top loading	
Micro-Seiki CDM2000X	4,689		multibit • electrical out • rem	
Krell CD-DSP MK II	5,000		rem • 42,13,28cm • Digital in puts facility	
Krell CD DSPII 5000	5,000		multibit • 2 electrical out • rem • 42,13,28cm • Has digital in, balanced out	
Micromega Trio	6,450		bitstream • electrical out • rem • 34,48,31cm • AES/Toslink digital output	
Wadia 16	7,395		multibit • Glass, plastic, BNC & AES/EBU	
Jadis JS-1	8,068		multibit	
Krell KSP20i	9,950		electrical out • rem • Balanced out, top loader	
Krell KPS20i	9,990		electrical out • rem • Balanced out, Bit String conv	

CD TRANSPORTS

Teac VRDS-T1	499	144	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,15,33cm • Superb engineering with a performance that's equally tidy and composed (tested with D-T1).	
DPA Enlightenment	635		transport • rem • 40,28,8cm • Clock locks to DPA DACs	
Micromega Drive 1	700		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable, AES/EBU out	
Thule TR200	749		transport • rem • Balanced AES/EBU input	
Arcam Delta 250	750	130	transport • rem • 43,9,28cm • Arcam's best effort yet is a new design based on Philips CDM9 transport, specification includes Sync Lock facility.	REC'D
Pink Triangle Cardinal	795	144	transport • 46,8,36cm • Soud quality is warm and communicative, but over-polished compared to PT Ordinal (tested with DaCapo and DC PSU).	
Orelle CD10-T	799		transport • electrical out • rem • 44,10,32cm • Isolated PSU, silver wiring	
Meridian 200	895	96	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 32,32,10cm • Offering a light, fresh and very bubbly sound that is natural, engaging and unfatiguing.	REC'D
Teac P-700	899	120	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 23,14,40cm • Tested with D-700, may lack resolution, but still sounds warm, bubbly and entertaining. B'BUY	
Audiomeca Damnation	950		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 29,10,32cm	
Micromega Drive 2	1,000		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,28,88cm • Upgradable, AES/EBU out	
Meridian 500	1,095	133	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 32,33,9cm • Used with the 563 DAC, the combination sound disappointingly thin, brash and uncomfortable.	
Audiomeca Damnation SE	1,100		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 29,10,32cm • Trichord clocked	
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,199		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 25,14,39cm • Heavily modified CDM	
Micromega T-Drive	1,200		transport • electrical out • rem • 22,28,88cm • Tray loading, AES/EBU out	
Roksan ATT-DP2 MkII	1,295		transport • electrical out • rem • 46,12,35cm • AT&T optical, AES/EBU optional	
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,300		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 45,8,36cm • Precision master clock	
Micromega Duo CD3.1	1,500		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 34,9,31cm • Top loading, AES/EBU out	
Meridian 602	1,750	120	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 32,33,10cm • With matching 606 DAC, Meridian's top player sounds distinctive and elegant.	REC'D
Counterpoint DA-11.5E	1,895	130	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • Should be highly incompatible yet it delivers a remarkably vivid and natural sound.	REC'D
Theta Data Basic	1,997	130	transport • electrical out • rem • 42,8,34cm • Includes a budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case: too expensive for the performance	
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,100	144	transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,15,33cm • Tested with Trichord Pulsar, the duo provide a highly composed and tactile sound.	REC'D
PS Audio Lambda tr	2,250	133	transport • electrical out • rem • 38,8,34cm • With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail.	REC'D
Micromega Duo CD2.1	2,750		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 34,9,31cm • Top loading, AES/EBU out	
Wadia 8	3,195	130	transport • rem • 35,16,41cm • Includes a budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; just too expensive for the performance on offer.	
Theta Data II NTSC	3,290		transport • electrical out • rem • 42,12,40cm • AT&T, AES/EBU option	
Theta Data II PAL	3,490		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,12,40cm • AT&T, AES/EBU balanced in	
ATD Drive 1	3,499		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,9,34cm • Top load, 2-box acrylic	
Teac P-2S	4,299	130	transport • rem • 23,14,49cm • The latest version of Teac's luxury P-2 transport sounds as over-engineered as it looks.	
Wadia 20	4,370		transport • Glass, plastic, BNC, AES/EBU	
Krell MD-20	4,999		transport • rem • 42,13,28cm • Top load, AT&T optical out	
Krell MD-10	7,990		transport • 2 electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,13,28cm	
Jadis JCDT	8,000		transport • rem • Top load	
Krell KPS 20T	8,490		transport • electrical out • optical out • rem • AT&T, AES/EBU balanced in	
Krell DT-10	9,090		transport • 2 electrical out • optical out • rem • 42,13,28cm • Front loader	
Wadia 7	9,995		transport • rem • 35,16,46cm	

DACS

QED Positron	89		Upgrade PSU for Digit	
QED Digit Plus	139	113	bitstream • electrical out • Bearing in mind its expensive but very forgiving performance, the Digit is almost embarrassingly cheap.	B'BUY
Cambridge A DACMagic 1	150	136	hybrid • Ridiculously under-priced, this DAC is better suited to high end transports than the budget players it was intended to partner.	REC'D
Audio Alc DAC-in-the-Box	230	127	multibit • electrical out • Despite its slightly veiled sound, this giveaway DAC may still rescue the oldest of players from obsolescence.	REC'D
Counterpoint AD20	255		multibit • DACCard for DA-10E	
QED Digit Reference	299	136	bitstream • No great advance on the basic QED dDigit yet its enthusiastic sound is more than competitive at the price.	REC'D
Mission DAC5	300	113	bitstream • 7,11,29cm • Another modest DAC, but one capable of a lean but clean and detailed sound that's typical of the DAC7 breed.	REC'D
NVA Dacon	320		bitstream • electrical out	
Micromega Microdac	349	113	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 22,5,15cm • A modest but entertaining performer, achieving its sweetest balance with Arcam's D170.3 transport.	
Counterpoint CS18	395		multibit • DACCard for DA-10E	
Audio Alchemy DDEv1.1	399		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • Upgradable external PSU	
Orelle DA-188	399		multibit • 22,7,23cm • DC coupled, optical & coax in	
Teac D-T1	450	144	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,10,33cm • Teamed with VRDS-T1 this has superb engineering and performance that is equally tidy and composed.	
Arcam Black Box 50	480	127	hybrid • electrical out • optical out • 43,7,28cm • A very measured and sophisticated sound, plenty in reserve to accommodate future upgrades.	B'BUY
EMF Audio Crystal	500		bitstream	
Woodside DAC2	509	101	multibit • electrical out • optical out • Sharp and dynamic sound, all the more captivating for its lack of graininess and 'tizz'. A reliable upgrade.	REC'D
AVI S2000MD	549	136	multibit • 31,25,9cm • Despite using a very different chipset, the S2000MD sounds as civilised and refined as AVI's other digital separates.	
Roksan ATT-DA2	549		delta sigma • 22,10,33cm • DAC 4 inputs, optional AT&T	
DPA Renaissance	550		bitstream • 20,28,8cm • Unique DPA DX16 DAC	
Teac D-700	599	120	multibit • electrical out • optical out • 23,14,40cm • With P-700, it lacks the resolution of high-end colleagues, but sounds bubbly and entertaining. B'BUY	
Audio Note DAC1	600	127	multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • An oddball DAC with manual deemphasis switching. Needs a high preamp input impedance if bass is not to suffer.	
Micromega Duo BS2	650	101	bitstream • 8,28,9cm • Has a tendency to sound light, airy and 'fast' but it can also become a little hard or fatiguing with some digital outputs.	
Counterpoint BB69	655		multibit • DACCard for DA-10E	
PS Audio Digilink II	688		multibit • 38,8,16cm	
Perception DAC	695		multibit	
Audio Alchemy DDEv3.0	699		multibit • Upgradable external PSU	
Sonic Frontiers Transdac	699		multibit • 24,5,17cm	
Sonic F UltraJitter Bug	699		multibit • 24,5,17cm • Jitter reduction interface	
Micromega DAC	700		bitstream • 43,28,88cm • AES/EBU input	
Audiomeca Elixir	745	141	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 25,39,9cm	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
Arcam Black Box 500	750	136	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • rem • 43,9,28cm • <i>Sophisticated unit equipped with Sync Lock. Early samples sounded grubby and restrained.</i>
Meridian 563	750	127	delta sigma • 3 electrical out • optical out • 33,9,34cm • <i>Warm but detailed, really comes into its own with top-flight transports.</i>
DPA Enlightenment	795		multibit • 20,28,8cm • Unique DPA DX32 DAC
Audiolab 8000DAC	800	127	bitstream • 45,8,36cm • <i>Just as smooth and refined as its predecessor yet, sadly, still manages to obscure the passion or fire of music.</i>
Micromega T/DAC	800		bitstream • 22,28,88cm • Four inputs
Pink Triangle Ordinal	837	136	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 23,8,35cm • <i>Dual-differential DAC7 converter. Interchangeable digital filters and top-flight sound quality.</i>
Thule DAC-200	849	87	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • <i>A good first effort from Thule, even though its fizzy and over-eager sound could do with some house-training.</i>
Woodside DAC1	909	87	multibit • electrical out • optical out • <i>Fine but slightly dated and costly package in performance terms - but flexible, musical and well built.</i>
Monrio 18B	925		multibit • electrical out • optical out • 14,8,36cm • Inc outboard PSU
Sentec Diana	993		multibit • electrical out • optical out
Linn Numerik	1,075	144	multibit • 32,8,33cm • <i>A new 20 bit DAC and revised transport have cleaned up; this pair have a performance that is perhaps a little too dry and humourless.</i>
PS Audio SuperLink 2	1,230		multibit • 38,8,16cm
Counterpoint UA20	1,295		multibit • DACCard for DA-10E
Counterpoint DA-11E	1,495	144	electrical out • optical out • rem • 49,6,27cm • <i>(Tested with DA-11E). Harsh and fatiguing.</i>
Micromega Duo Pro 2	1,500		bitstream • 34,48,31cm • AES input
Wadia 12	1,530		multibit • electrical out • optical out • Balanced and AT&T input
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,536	144	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 46,8,35cm • <i>With Cardinal and DC PSU with its 22bit option. It sounds warm but over-polished compared to Ordinal.</i>
Pink Triangle DC Supply	1,590	144	46,8,35cm • Massive battery PSU for DaCapo
Audio Note DAC3	1,650		multibit • rem
Theta Pro-Prime II	1,800		bitstream • electrical out • 42,5,23cm
Counterpoint DA-10E	1,895	144	electrical out • optical out • rem • Interchangeable DACs, optional
Theta Probasic II	2,299		multibit • 42,5,29cm
Sonic Frontiers SFD-1II	2,495		multibit • 48,10,33cm • HDCD compatible, tune output
Teac D-2	2,499	133	multibit • 23,14,49cm • <i>Assessed with the P-2s, Teac's VRDS statement looks great, but sounds rather thin and uninvolving. A great disappointment.</i>
PS Audio UltraLink 2	2,650	133	multibit • 38,6,20cm • <i>With Lambda transport the sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail.</i>
LFD DAC3	2,699		multibit • 48,7,37cm • Optional balanced output
DPA PDM1256	2,995	133	bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 20,28,8cm • <i>Highly advanced, with adjustable dither. Sadly the different settings only usher in different compromises.</i>
Krell Studio 2	3,198		multibit • 42,13,27cm • AT&T in
Wadia 15	3,790		multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 35,9,41cm • Software upgradable
Audio Research DAC2	3,940		multibit • 48,14,26cm • 20bit, 8x o/s
Mark Levinson No 36	3,995		multibit • electrical out • 20 bit, FIFO input buffer
Krell Studio	4,450		multibit • 42,6,32cm • AT&T in
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550		multibit • 38,8,36cm • AT&T input
Wadia 64.4	4,750		multibit • electrical out • optical out • 35,8,28cm • Balanced output
Sonic Frontiers SFD-2 Mk25,295			multibit • 48,10,33cm • HDCD compatible, tune output
Theta Pro Gen III	5,690		multibit • 42,8,34cm • AT&T input option
DPA PDM10924	5,995		bitstream • electrical out • optical out • 40,30,8cm • Unique DPA DX128 DAC
Theta Pro Gen V	8,500		multibit • electrical out • 42,8,34cm
Wadia 9	12,790		multibit • electrical out • optical out • rem • 44,9,36cm • Digital volume, separate PSU
Krell Reference 64	14,900		multibit • 42,13,39cm • AT&T in



Digital Recorders

Digital recorders come in a variety of different guises, but have yet to make much of an impact on the domestic market. At present there are four types to choose from: DAT (digital audio tape), MD (Mini Disc), and DCC (digital compact cassette) and CD-R (CD Recordable). DCC is backwards compatible in-as-much as the machines can play regular audio tapes. MD's claim to fame is its

optical disc format, which offers instant track access and can't be worn out like a tape. DAT has been on the market for quite some time now, but has never really 'made it' as a consumer medium. In the last year or so it has begun to carve itself a niche at the top end of the market, replacing reel to reel tape recorders as the audiophile's tape-based medium. CD-R is just coming into its own with the release of Pioneer's PD-R05.

Key

MiniDisc, Digital Audio Tape,	.....type of recording medium
Digital Compact Cassette	.....digital input(s)
electrical, optical in	.....digital output(s)
electrical, optical out	.....DAC type
bitstream, multibit etc	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
DIGITAL RECORDERS			
Nakamichi 10007	POA		Digital Audio Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out
Philips DCC300	179		Digital Compact Cassette • electrical in • 36,11,30cm
Philips DCC600	199	123	Digital Compact Cassette • electrical in • 44,12,30cm • <i>Simplified circuit and mechanism, but the Philips badly needs a DA converter transplant.</i>
Philips DCC951	300		Digital Compact Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • multibit • Turbodrive mech, 18 bit
Sharp MD-M11E	450		MiniDisc • 8,3,11cm • Recorder, title generator
Pioneer D-05	800		Digital Audio Cassette • 96kHz sampling
Sony MDS501	800		MiniDisc • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 43,9,35cm • Sample rate converter
Sony DTC80ES	800		Digital Audio Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 43,11,55cm • SBM
JVC XM-D1BK	900		MiniDisc • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 18,5,13cm
Pioneer D-07	1,150		Digital Audio Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • 44,14,38cm • 96kHz record, Legato Link
Teac R-9	1,200		Digital Audio Cassette • electrical in • optical in • electrical out • optical out • bitstream • 45,16,36cm • Based on TASCAM technology
Meridian CDR	4,500		CD-R • electrical in • optical in • electrical out



Equipment Supports

Hi-fi furniture is more important than you might imagine; the effect it can have on the sound of your system is far from subtle. It comes in various guises and shapes, but can be split up into two basic categories — namely equipment supports and loudspeaker stands. The former are available in a plethora of shapes and sizes, and the first entry in the specifications and comments line gives

an idea of what a table is designed for. ■ It is not entirely clear what makes a great equipment support, but some are definitely more equal than others. There's a variety of approaches and materials used include particle board, hardwood, glass and all manner of steel tube and section. The majority are built for sound quality first aesthetics second but there are some attractive ones out there.

Key to equipment supports

equipment support	.....support type
3 shelves	.....amount of tiers
MDF	.....medium density fibreboard
shelf pitch	.....gap between shelves
60, 39, 48cm	.....size width, depth, height in cm

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS			
Ixos 800	35		Equipment support • single shelf • Mini/midi pedestal
Deadrock 701	40		Equipment support • single module
Ixos 701	40		Equipment support • single module



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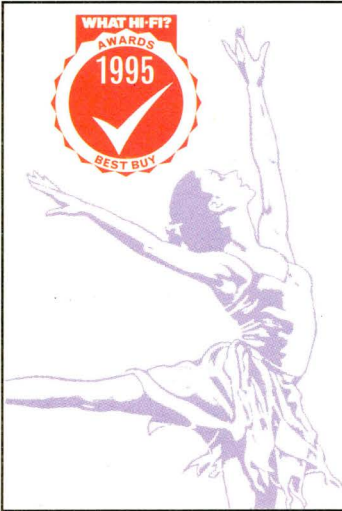
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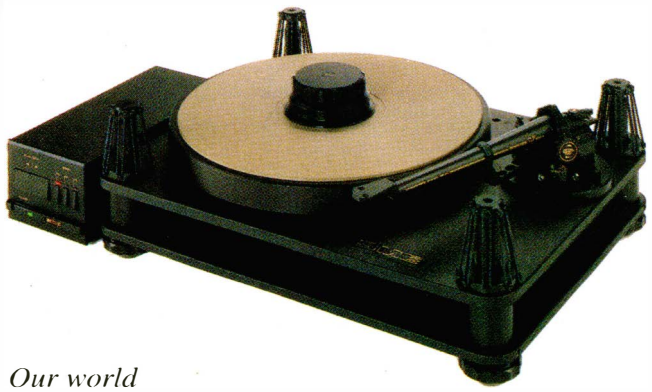
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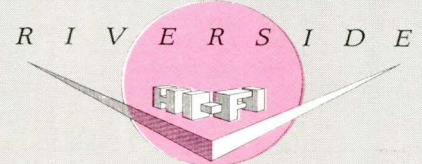
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<p>SYSTEM 2</p> <p>Marantz CD 63 SE£349.90 Audiolab 8000S£599.90 Castle Severn£499.90 Total £1449.70</p>	<p>SYSTEM 4</p> <p>Krell KPS 30i£5490.00 Krell KAV 300i£2490.00 Martin Logan SL3£3399.00 Total £11,379.00</p>

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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
JPW Add-on	50		Equipment support • Add-on shelves (x2)
Ixos 711	60		Equipment support • 1 shelf • Toughened glass shelf
Sound Organisation Z022	60		Equipment support • Wall mountable • 50w,47dcm • Removable shelf
Ixos 802	70		Equipment support • 2 shelf • Mini component, 215mm spacing
Sound Organisation Z230	70		Equipment support • 3 shelf • 50,40,43cm • Satin finish, self assembly
Sound Organisation Z021	75		Equipment support • 2 shelf • 50,40,36cm
JPW 3 tier	80		Equipment support • 3 shelf rack
Ixos 803	90		Equipment support • 3 shelf • Mini component, 125mm spacing
Sound Organisation Z030	95		Equipment support • 3 shelf • 50,40,43cm
Alphason R24/24	100		Equipment support • 3 shelf, MDF • 60,39,48cm
Alphason R17/17	100		Equipment support • 3 shelf, MDF • 60,39,34cm
Alphason R12/12	100		Equipment support • 3 shelf, MDF • 60,39,24cm
Ixos 802P	100		Equipment support • 2 shelf • mini - with pedestal/CD store
Ixos 703	100		Equipment support • 3-shelf
JPW 5 tier	100		Equipment support • 5 shelf rack
Ixos 803P	110		Equipment support • 3 shelf • mini - with pedestal/CD store
Ixos 804	110		Equipment support • 4 shelf • Mini component, 125mm spacing
Sound Organisation Z060	115		Equipment support • 4 shelf • 50,40,62cm
Alphason TV24/17	120		TV base module • 3 shelves, MDF • 67,39,41cm
DNM DOMOWS	125		Turntable wall stand • Lightweight • 37 deepcm
DNM DOMOPS	125		Turntable support • Lightweight • 37,50,46cm
Sound Organisation Z550	125		Equipment support • 5 shelf • 50,40,77cm • Satin finish, self assembly
Alphason GR24/24	130		Equipment support • 3 glass shelves • 60,39,48cm
Alphason GR17/17	130		Equipment support • 3 glass shelves • 60,39,34cm
Alphason GR12/12	130		Equipment support • 3 glass shelves • 60,39,24cm
Ixos 713	130		Equipment support • 3 shelf • Toughened glass shelf
Sound Organisation Z038	130		Equipment support • 5 shelf • 50,40,84cm
Ixos 804P	140		Equipment support • 4 shelf • mini - with pedestal/CD store
Ixos 704	140		Equipment support
Alphason TV24/175	150		TV base module • 3 shelves, MDF • 67,39,34cm • Swivel top
Mana Acoustics Mini Table	150		Equipment support • Glass shelf
Alphason VR24/24	160		Equipment support • 3 shelves, rosewood • 60,39,48cm
Alphason VR17/17	160		Equipment support • 3 shelves, rosewood • 60,39,34cm
Alphason VR12/12	160		Equipment support • 3 shelves, rosewood • 60,39,34cm
Ixos 705	170		Equipment support • 5 shelf
Soundstyle X300	170		Equipment support • 4 legs • 59,38,51cm • Glass shelves
Ixos 714	190		Equipment support • 4 shelf • Toughened glass shelves
Alphason AV24/17	200		AV base module • 5 shelves, MDF • 127,39,94cm • 'L' shaped
Soundstyle X305	200		Equipment support • 3 shelf • 77,44,51cm • Glass shelves
Soundstyle X053	200		Equipment support • 4 shelf • 64cm • 3 pillar, 16.9cm shelf pitch
Soundstyle X050	200		Equipment support • 4 shelf • 64cm high • 3 pillar, 12.8cm shelf ptch
Soundstyle X100	210		Equipment support • 4 glass shelves • 58,49,64cm • 16.9cm shelf pitch
Alphason AV24/17S	230		AV base module • 6 shelf, MDF • 127,39,94cm • Swivel base for TV
Ixos 715	230		Equipment support • 5 shelf • Toughened glass shelves
Soundstyle X058	230		Equipment support • 5 shelf • 78cm • 3 pillar, 15.3cm shelf pitch.
Mana Ac'stics Sound Table	235		Equipment support
Soundstyle X310	240		Equipment support • 3 shelves • 103,44,51cm • Glass shelves
Soundstyle X120	240		Equipment support • 6 glass shelves • 59,49,109cm • 16.9cm shelf pitch
Soundstyle X105	240		Equipment support • 5 glass shelves • 59,49,84cm • 16.9cm shelf pitch
Mana 2 Tier Amp stand	325		Equipment supports • 2 shelves • Glass shelves, steel frames, infinitely upgradeable
Mana Reference Table	350	130	Equipment support • single shelf • Glass shelves, steel frames, infinitely upgradeable • King among equipment stands
Mana 3 Tier Amp Stand	450		Equipment supports • 3 shelves • Glass shelves, steel frames, infinitely upgradeable
Mana 4 Tier Amp Stand	500		Equipment supports • 4 shelves • Glass shelves, steel frames, infinitely upgradeable
Mana 5 Tier Amp Stand	600	140	Equipment supports • 5 shelves • Glass shelves, steel frames, infinitely upgradeable • Gets the whole system organised
Mana 6 Tier Amp Stand	700		Equipment supports • 6 shelves • Glass shelves, steel frames, infinitely upgradeable



Headphones

There are a variety of different approaches to headphone design. Among the more expensive models, electrostatic drivers are used in open-backed phones. The more down-to-earth models feature dynamic (moving coil) drivers in circular open or closed-back designs. The advantage of open backs seems to be a correspondingly open sound, but one can also hear external

noise, of course. Closed-back designs are useful in situations where it is necessary to block out background noise.

■ There are three styles of headphone: circumaural models enclose the ear; supra-aural designs feature a flat pad which presses on the outer ear; and intra-aurals (in-ear) rest inside the ear itself, à la personal stereos.

Key	
open back, sealed, in-ear	.....headphone type
275g	.....weight in grams. 250
0hm	.....impedance

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
HEADPHONES			
Vivanco SR60	3		open back • Mini, fits outer ear
Vivanco SR12	3		open back • In ear, with spare plug
Maxell EB-125	4		in-ear model • 15g • 32 Ohm • Stereo ear buds
Maxell HP-100	4		in-ear model • 3g • 32 Ohm • Replacable pads, 1m lead
Maxell HP-200	5		open back • 30g • 32 Ohm • Replacable pads, 1m lead
Ross RE-233	5		open back • 25g • 8 Ohm • Micro
Vivanco SR52	5		open back • Mini headphones 3.5mm plug
JVC HA-22	6		in-ear model • 38g • 32 Ohm
JVC HA-M3	6		sealed • 33g • 32 Ohm • 1.2m dual plug lead
Ross RIH-150	6		in-ear model • 5g • 16 Ohm • Inner ear headphone
Ross RE-235	6		open back • 5g • 16 Ohm • Personal stereo
Ross RE-234	6		open back • 5g • 16 Ohm • Personal stereo
Ross RE-229	6		open back • 35g • 8 Ohm • Folding
Ross RE-2030	6		open back • 5g • 8 Ohm • Personal stereo
Ross RMH-300	7		open back • 51g • 8 Ohm • Lightweight
Ross RE-280	7		in-ear model • 10g • 16 Ohm • Vertical inner ear
Ross RE-246	7		open back • 5g • 16 Ohm • Micro stereo phones
Ross RE-223	7		sealed • 155g • 8 Ohm • Stereo/mono
Vivanco SR54	7		open back • Mini, volume control, 3.5mm

HEADPHONES £7 - £40: THE DIRECTORY

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Vivanco SR14	7		open back • In ear, micro	
Maxell EB-225	8		in-ear model • 44g • 21 Ohm • Stereo ear buds, winder case	
Maxell HBS-150	8		in-ear model • 25g • 32 Ohm • Water resistant head buds	
Maxell HP-400	8		in-ear model • 4g • 32 Ohm • With pouch, 6/3/3.5mm fit	
Sony MDR-E505	8		in-ear model • Supplied soft case	
Sony MDR-E515EX	8		in-ear model • 5g • 1m lead, mini plug	
Sony MDR-007 Mk II	8		open back • 36g • 2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Vivanco SR16	8		open back • Micro, volume control 3.5mm	
JVC HA-F15	9		open back • 6g • 16 Ohm • Mini 1.2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Maxell EBS-325	9		in-ear model • 13g • 32 Ohm • Water resistant earbuds	
Ross RMH-500CD	9		open back • 48g • 16 Ohm • Lightweight	
Ross RIH-360CD	9		in-ear model • 16g • 16 Ohm • Vertical inner ear	
Ross RE-2060CD	9		open back • 5g • 16 Ohm • Inner ear headphone	
Audio Technica ATH-P1	10		open back • 88g • 24 Ohm • 'Omniphones'	
Maxell EB-425	10		in-ear model • 13g • 32 Ohm • Stereo ear buds, winder case	
Maxell HP-700	10		open back • 56g • 22 Ohm • Adjustable locking headband	
Ross RMH-310TV	10		open back • 51g • 8 Ohm • For video and TV	
Ross RIH-550	10		in-ear model • 5g • 16 Ohm • Inner ear, with volume control	
Sennheiser HD16	10		open back • 45g • 32 Ohm • Mini, 1.2m lead, dual plug	
Sony MDR-009	10		open back • 40g • 2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Audio Technica ATH-S22	11		open back • 5g • 16 Ohm • Inner ear	
Sony MDR-W07L	11		in-ear model • 13g • 1m mini plug	
JVC HA-X55	12		sealed • 45g • 32 Ohm • 2m dual plug lead	
Ross RIH-460CD	12		in-ear model • 16g • 16 Ohm • Vertical inner ear, volume pot	
Sony MDR-A009	12		open back • -	
Sony MDR-E515V	12		in-ear model • 5g • 1m lead, mini plug	
Aiwa HP-X201	13		sealed • 230g • Dual plug	
Aiwa HP-A360	13		open back • 65g • 40 Ohm • Banded, bass resonator ducts	
Maxell HP-500	13		45g • 32 Ohm • 2.7m lead, 6.3/3.5mm fit	
Ross RDH-200CD	13		sealed • 150g • 8 Ohm • Closed back	
Sennheiser HD36	13		open back • 62g • 32 Ohm • Mini, 1.2m lead, dual plug	
Sony MDR-V50	13		sealed • -	
Audio Technica ATH-P3	15		open back • 90g • 22 Ohm • 'Omniphones'	
JVC HA-D410	15		sealed • 90g • 32 Ohm • 2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Kenwood KH-535	15		in-ear model • 32 Ohm • 3.5mm plug	
Maxell HP-1000	15		open back • 95g • 32 Ohm • 2.7m lead, digital ready	
Ross RDH-100CD	15		sealed • 144g • 8 Ohm • CD headphone	
Sennheiser HD56	15		open back • 72g • 32 Ohm • Mini, 1.2m lead, dual plug	
Sony MDR-E525	15		in-ear model • 5g • 1m lead, mini plug	
Sony MDR-24	15		open back • 7m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Audio Technica ATH-S44	16		open back • 5g • 16 Ohm • Inner ear	
JVC HA-X77	16		sealed • 40g • 32 Ohm • 2m dual plug lead	
JVC HA-F35	16		open back • 6g • 32 Ohm • Mini 1.2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Pioneer SE-5	16		open back • 60g • 30 Ohm • 2m OFC cable	
Sony MDR-25	16		open back	
Sony MDR-W12L	16		in-ear model • 1.2m mini plug	
Ross RDH-300CD	17	133	sealed • 155g • 8 Ohm • <i>In-lead controls are the highlights of this shoddy, sometimes aggressive sounding design.</i>	
Sony MDR-008TV	17		open back • 5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
JVC HA-CD88	18		open back • 38g • 32 Ohm	
Sony MDR-E535	18		in-ear model • 5g • 1.2m lead, mini plug	
Sony MDR-44	18		open back • 7m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Sony MDR-009TV	19		open back • 5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Vivanco SR250	19		sealed • Xtra bass feature	
Aiwa HP-X301	20		sealed • 230g • 3m lead, dual plug	
Audio Technica ATH-F1/TV	20		open back • 55g • 25 Ohm • 'Omniphones', vol control	
Audio Technica ATH-P5	20		open back • 70g • 40 Ohm • 'Omniphones'	
JVC HA-D525	20		sealed	
JVC HA-F65	20		in-ear model • 32 Ohm • In-ear	
JVC HA-D510	20		sealed • 110g • 32 Ohm • 3m, 6.3/3.5m jacks	
Kenwood KH-757	20		in-ear model • 32 Ohm • 3.5mm plug	
Kenwood KH-1000	20	121	open back • 30g • 32 Ohm • <i>First step up from a true mini: a near miniature which is cheap, comfortable and inoffensive</i>	
Maxell HP-2000	20		open back • 140g • 32 Ohm • Volume control digital ready	
Pioneer SE-15	20		open back • 65g • 30 Ohm • 2m OFC cable	
Sony MDR-35	20		open back	
Sony MDR-CD30	20		sealed • 2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Sony MDR-E747MP	20		in-ear model • 6g • 1.2m lead, mini plug	
Sony MDR-CD50	20		sealed • 180g • 24 Ohm • 2m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Sony MDR-5747	20		in-ear model • 6g • 1.2m lead, mini plug	
Ross RDH-400CD	22		sealed • 186g • 8 Ohm • Digital headphone	
Sony MDR-P1TV	22		sealed • 5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Sony MDR-A22L	22		in-ear model • 1.2m mini plug	
AKG K2	23		open back • 70g • 200 Ohm • Mini	
Pioneer SE-32	23		open back • 94g • 40 Ohm • 2.5 OFC cable	
Aiwa HP-VX303	25		sealed • 230g • In-line controls, dual plugs	
AKG K33	25		open back • 90g • 50 Ohm	
JVC HA-D625	25		sealed	
JVC HA-D610	25		sealed • 120g • 32 Ohm • 3m, 6.3/3.5m jacks	
Kenwood KH-959	25		in-ear model • 32 Ohm • 3.5mm plug	
Pioneer SE-52	25		open back • 104g • 40 Ohm • 2.5 OFC cable	
Audio Technica ATH-M2A	28		sealed • 115g • 22 Ohm • Mid size	
Sennheiser Vegas	28		open back • 118g • 32 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Sennheiser Manhattan	28		open back • 118g • 32 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Sony MDR-CD250EX	28		sealed • 3m, 3.5/6.3mm lead	
Maxell HP-3000	30	133	120g • 32 Ohm • <i>Solid, smooth sounding supra-aural headphone sounds congested and undynamic. Includes in-lead controls.</i>	
Pioneer SE-15V	30		open back • 65g • 30 Ohm • 5m OFC cable	
Technics RP-HT77	30		sealed • 160g • 32 Ohm • 3m lead, OFC wire	
Beyer DT211	33		open back • 120g • 40 Ohm	
Pioneer SE-330D	35		sealed • 165g • 35 Ohm • 3m cable, bass boost duct	
Pioneer SE-400D	37	133	sealed • 185g • 35 Ohm • <i>Acceptable, if unexciting all-rounder, this supra-aural phone has good long-term comfort levels.</i>	REC'D
Sennheiser HD60TV	38		open back • 118g • 32 Ohm • 6.8m lead (inc vol control)	
Sennheiser HD440 II	38	121	open back • 125g • 60 Ohm • <i>Still the one by which others at the price are measured, though now slightly leaden sounding, with a cold treble</i>	B'BUY
Aiwa HP-X705	40		sealed • 130g • Dual plug, 2m ext cable	
Kenwood KH-2020	40		sealed • 210g • 32 Ohm • 2.5m OFC lead	
Technics RP-HT86	40		sealed • 165g • 35 Ohm • 3m lead, XBS acoustic lead	
Vivanco SR606	40	133	open back • 225g • 32 Ohm • <i>Although slightly overblown at times, this model is easy on the ears and essentially enjoyable</i>	REC'D

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
AKG K44	42	99	open back • 90g • 50 Ohm • <i>Good quality personal oriented phone, could have a better sense of space but is musically quite communicative.</i>	
Audio Technica ATH-M4A	42		sealed • 139g • 28 Ohm • Mid size	
JVC HA-D727	43		sealed	
Sony MDR-CD450	45	133	sealed • 260g • 24 Ohm • <i>Fair acoustic isolation and comfortable construction, moderate sound.</i>	REC'D
AKG K135	46	63	open back • 160g • 150 Ohm • <i>The K135s doesn't live up to the usual AKG standards, though it does have the ability to convey rhythm well.</i>	
Pioneer SE-500D	48		sealed • 175g • 35 Ohm • 3m cable, dual bass horn	
Beyer DT311	49	133	open back • 124g • 40 Ohm • <i>Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone.</i>	
Sennheiser HD414 Classic	50		open back • 80g • 52 Ohm • <i>The original lives on!</i>	
Sennheiser HD455	50		open back • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Sony MDR-IF210	50		infra-red cordless • 170g • Extra h/phone w/o transmitter	
Technics RP-HT600	50		sealed • 3m lead, double headband	
Vivanco IR5700	50		Infra-red cordless	
Vivanco IR5000	50		Mono, infra red cordless	
Vivanco SR850	50		open back • Double bow design for comfort	
JVC HA-D710	55		sealed • 210g • 32 Ohm • 3m, 6.3/3.5mjacks	
Beyer DT331	59		open back • 210g • 40 Ohm	
Pioneer SE-700D	60		sealed • 180g • 35 Ohm • 3m cable, dual bass horn	
Sony MDR-CD550	60	99	sealed • 270g • 45 Ohm • <i>A very competent headphone, creates a remarkable sense of space for a closed back design and sounds natural to boot.</i>	B'BUY
Technics RP-HT700	60		sealed • 5m lead, double headband	
JVC HA-D910	65	121	sealed • 220g • 32 Ohm • <i>Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations.</i>	
Sennheiser HD465	65		open back • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Beyer DT411	69	111	open back • 120g • 250 Ohm • <i>A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price.</i>	
Kenwood KH-5000	70		sealed • 280g • 32 Ohm • 2.5m OFC lead	
Nakamichi SP7	70		open back • 150g • 45 Ohm	
Sony MDR-D33	70		sealed • 120g • 45 Ohm • 1.5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Vivanco IR6000	70		Stereo infra-red cordless	
Vivanco SR909	70		open back • 285g • 600 Ohm • Remote control lead, all plugs	
AKG K141	74		open back • 225g • 600 Ohm	
Jecklin Float Model 1	75	55	open back • 400g • 200 Ohm • <i>Whilst very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness at a reasonable price.</i>	B'BUY
Sennheiser HD475	75		open back • Single sided cable	
Audio Technica ATH-M7A	78		sealed • 210g • 40 Ohm • Mid size	
Sony MDR-IF210K	80		infra-red cordless • 170g • Seven meter range infra red	
AKG K240 Monitor	82	63	open back • 240g • 600 Ohm • <i>Something of a classic, these AKGs are very user-friendly in all respects; sonically on the warm side of normal.</i>	REC'D
Sennheiser HD25 SP	85		sealed • 115g • 85 Ohm • Monitoring headphone	
Beyer DT431	89		open back • 210g • 40 Ohm	
Audio Technica ATH911	90		open back • 280g • 600 Ohm • Dynamic, full size	
Audio Technica ATH910P	90	55	sealed • 280g • 40 Ohm • <i>The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found with headphones.</i>	REC'D
Sony MDR-D55	90		sealed • 120g • 45 Ohm • 1.5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Sony MDR-CD750	90	111	sealed • 290g • 45 Ohm • <i>Reasonably comfortable and eminently listenable, these Sonys have characteristically good bass power and relaxed HF.</i>	REC'D
Vivanco IR6500	90		Stereo infra-red with charger	
Beyer DT511	99		open back • 200g • 250 Ohm	
Jecklin Float Model 2	99	63	open back • 400g • 200 Ohm • <i>Helmet shaped and pretty unflattering, but open sounding and comfortable in long term, despite lack of adjustment.</i>	REC'D
Sennheiser HD535	100		open back • 255g • 150 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Technics RP-F10	100	121	sealed • 300g • 32 Ohm • <i>Another very comfortable sealed circum-aural model, has modest sound isolation and uneven, sound favouring bass.</i>	
Vivanco SR10001FL	110		open back • 265g • 100 Ohm • In-front localisation	
AKG K270	112		sealed • 250g • 75 Ohm	
AKG K280 Parabolic	117	63	open back • 250g • 75 Ohm • <i>A revealing twin-driver design that uses the same design principles as a satellite dish to beam sound into ear.</i>	REC'D
AKG K400	118	121	open back • 250g • 120 Ohm • <i>Comfortable over long sessions. Sound is exquisitely detailed, dynamic and uncoloured.</i>	REC'D
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	120		open back • 255g • 150 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Sony MDR-D77	120		sealed • 140g • 45 Ohm • 1.5m, 3.5/6.3mm plug	
Vivanco IR7100	120		Stereo infra-red cordless	
AKG K270 Studio	121		sealed • 250g • 75 Ohm	
Beyer DT531	129	144	open back • 245g • 250 Ohm	REC'D
Beyer IRS790	129		open back • 270g • Cordless infra-red	
AKG K500	138	111	open back • 250g • 120 Ohm • <i>Open and clear with impressive definition. Balance is on the light side but transparency is high.</i>	REC'D
Beyer DT770 Pro	139		sealed • 250g • 600 Ohm	
Beyer DT100	139		sealed • 350g • 600 Ohm • Choice of impedances	
Sennheiser HD565 Ovation	140		open back • 255g • 150 Ohm • 3m lead, 3.5/6.3mm	
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	140		sealed • 260g • 150 Ohm • Closed back	
Vivanco IR7600	140		Stereo infra-red cordless	
Vivanco SR2001FL	140		open back • In-front localisation	
Sennheiser IS450	150		160g • Infra-red cordless - hi-fi	
Beyer DT801	159		sealed • 250g • 250 Ohm	
Sennheiser HD25	160		sealed • 140g • 70 Ohm • Professional, closed back	
Beyer DT990 Pro	163		open back • 230g • 600 Ohm	
Stax SR34	169		open back • 170g • Electrostatic	
Beyer DT811	179		open back • 245g • 250 Ohm	
Sennheiser IS550	180		170g • Infra-red cordless	
Technics RP-F30	180		sealed • 340g • 32 Ohm • 3m lead, XBS double drive	
Sony MDR-610k	190		infra-red cordless • 470g • Seven meter range infra-red	
AKG K340	191	75	open back • 380g • 400 Ohm • <i>Heavyweight cans in most respects, the K340 with its electrostatic tweeter is a very revealing headphone.</i>	REC'D
Beyer IRS890	199		open back • 270g • Cordless infra-red	
Beyer DT901	199		sealed • 280g • 250 Ohm	
Sennheiser HD 580 Prec	200		open back • 260g • 300 Ohm • Flagship model	
Sony MDR-CD1000	200	111	sealed • 330g • 45 Ohm • <i>A fine sounding and comfortable headphone that's likely to work well with most sources.</i>	REC'D
Beyer DT911	219	111	open back • 275g • 250 Ohm • <i>Probably too revealing for many headphone amps, these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans.</i>	REC'D
Sennheiser Charleston	225		open back • 210g • 140 Ohm • 3m lead, dual plug, leather tr	
Sennheiser HD580 Jubilee	230		open back • Limited edition HD580	
Stax SR Gamma	239	55	open back • 300g • <i>The next model down from the Lambda, the Gamma is an excellent headphone with little to criticise bar the price.</i>	REC'D
JVC HA-D1000	250		sealed • 340g • 32 Ohm • 5m, 6.3/3.5mjacks	
Stax SR84	259		open back • 160g • Electrostatic	
Audio Technica ATH9000	273	111	open back • 240g • 32 Ohm • <i>Electrets which connect to the amp's speaker outputs. They sound a little too smooth, but would suit aggressive amps.</i>	
Stax SR Lambda	349		open back • 325g • Electrostatic	
Jecklin Float ELS	399	55	open back • 600g • 8 Ohm • <i>These electrostatics have an openness of sound that is rarely found in the breed, with good dynamic range to boot.</i>	REC'D
Stax Gamma Pro	399	63	open back • 300g • <i>With SRD-X Pro, the Gamma Pro is like a stethoscope for your hi-fi, revealing subtleties that many loudspeakers fail to resolve.</i>	REC'D
Stax Lambda Pro	449	55	open back • 325g • <i>Tested with SRD-7B PSU, frighteningly revealing, bringing across more information than loudspeakers costing twice as much.</i>	REC'D
Stax Lambda Sig	549	72	open back • 325g • <i>With SRM-T1, the Signature must be the most transparent headphone available.</i>	REC'D
AKG K1000	646	990	open back • 270g • 120 Ohm • <i>One of the best dynamics on the market, makes much of the competition sound lame.</i>	REC'D
JVC HA-F25	699		in-ear model • 32 Ohm • In ear	
Sennheiser IS850	860		330g • Digital audiophile infra-red	
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	998		open back • 260g • Electrostatic with energiser	
Stax Omega	1,695		open back • 400g • Electrostatic	
Sennheiser Orpheus	9,652		open back • 365g • Electrostatic, valve energiser	

PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS



Loudspeakers

As the last item in the hi-fi chain, the loudspeaker is merely the slave of what has gone before; it is capable only of reproducing a signal as good as it is fed. Nevertheless, the distortions (colorations and stereo effects) introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be greater than those anywhere else in the hi-fi chain, so careful selection of models is very important.

■ The average loudspeaker consists of an enclosure (much of which may have begun life as part of a tree) plus a couple of drive units hidden behind a removable grille. Inside the box lurks a simple electrical circuit known as a crossover, which divides the incoming (full range) signal into the right bits for the drivers to handle. The designer's primary task is to balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against the bass extension

(how low it goes), for the given box size. After that, such subtleties as coloration (or lack of it) and dispersion come into the equation.

■ Careful placement of the loudspeakers within the room is as important as the initial choice of model. For good stereo the enclosures need to be more or less the same distance from nearby walls.

■ There are two subsections within the overall heading of loudspeakers: these are satellites and subwoofers, and active subwoofers. The former is a combination of small mid/treble units and a single subwoofer which provides the bass. They are primarily designed for situations where the sight of loudspeakers would harm domestic harmony. Active subwoofers have built in power amplifiers and offer 'real' bass extension.

Key to loudspeakers

horn, ported, sealed etc cabinet type
 2 driver number of drive units
 108dB sensitivity @ 1metre for 2.83 volts
 8 Ohms nominal impedance
 100W manufacturer's power rating

Key to satellites & subwoofers

89dB sensitivity @ 1metre for 2.83 volts
 70 W power rating in Watts

Key to active subwoofers

stereo subwoofer type
 50W amplifier power
 THX THX-approved (where appropriate)


PRODUCT

£ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

LOUDSPEAKERS					
Apogee Grand	POA	ribbon	86dB	71,194,86cm	Three way ribbon, active sub
Martin-Logan Statement	POA	hybrid	87dB	23,140,10cm	ESL/dynamic, biwire,
Wilson X1 Grand Slam	POA 138	ported	3 driver	94dB	Three-way reference
Realistic Minimus 3.5	30	2 driver	8 Ohms	15W	9,15,5cm
Realistic Minimus 21	30	2 driver	8 Ohms	10W	15,24,13cm
Grundig MBX220	40	ported	2 driver	4 Ohms	30W • Stand/shelf use
Wharfedale Centre Cube	49	ported	87dB	8 Ohms	75W • 14,13,12cm • Shielded centre speaker
JPW Minim SGL SHD	50	ported	2 driver	87dB	6 Ohms • 70W • 19,28,20cm • Shielded, single speaker
JPW Satellite SGL SHD	50	ported	2 driver	85dB	8 Ohms • 70W • 13,24,11cm • Shielded, single speaker
Sony SS-E300	50	sealed	2 driver	88dB	8 Ohms • 160W • 73,41,20cm • Magnetically shielded
Sony SS-V77	50	2 driver	90dB	16 Ohms	19,9,14cm • Full range surround speakers
Realistic M'bus 26	56	2 driver	87dB	8 Ohms	40W • 18,28,11cm
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 D	60	ported	2 driver	87dB	8 Ohms • 100W • 16,23,13cm • Shielded, Positec protected
Realistic Minimus Pro-7	60	ported	2 driver	87dB	8 Ohms • 50W • 11,18,11cm • Revised design
Goodmans Active 75	65	active	80W		
Jamo Studio 80	70	ported	2 driver	91dB	4 Ohms • 45W • 22,35,17cm
Denon SC-M2	80	sealed	2 driver	87dB	6 Ohms • 70W • 19,28,20cm
Denon SCM2	80	sealed	87dB	6 Ohms	70W • 19,28,20cm • UK designed & built
Genexa GX330	80	6 Ohms	50W	35,21,24cm	
Goodmans M100	80	ported	2 driver	86dB	8 Ohms • 75W • 17,26,20cm • Bookshelf, close to wall
Grundig MBX310	80	ported	3 driver	4 Ohms	70W • 18,42,29cm • 3 drivers, 2 way
JPW Satellite	80	ported	2 driver	85dB	8 Ohms • 70W • 13,24,11cm • Shielded, single speaker
JPW Minim	80 82	ported	2 driver	87dB	6 Ohms • 70W • 19,28,20cm • Civilised but dynamically limited, well suited to the smaller room, limited loudness
Sony SS-E500	80	sealed	2 driver	88dB	8 Ohms • 120W • 35,47,20cm • Magnetically shielded
Teac LS-X8	80	ported	2 driver	8 Ohms	30W • 11,18,11cm • In black or white
Technics SB-CS55	80	ported	2 driver	8 Ohms	60W • 25,43,25cm • Shelf/stand, shielded
GLL Arena	89	87dB	6 Ohms	70W	26,23,14cm
JPW Minim Pair Solid	89	ported	2 driver	87dB	6 Ohms • 70W • 19,28,20cm • Shielded
Wharfedale Valduis 100	89	ported	2 driver	88dB	8 Ohms • 180W • 27,17,18cm • 2-way bookshelf
TDL Near Field Monitor	90 130	ported	2 driver	88dB	8 Ohms • 70W • 18,30,17cm • A disappointing underperformer in our tests, at a price that's not very nice either.
Advent Mini	99	2 driver	88dB	8 Ohms	120W • 16,28,14cm • Bookshelf/stand mount
Celestion Little 1	99	90dB	8 Ohms	50W	9,20,15cm
Wharfedale Diamond 6R	99	ported	89dB	8 Ohms	100W • 16,27,22cm • Stand/bookshelf mount
Yamaha NS-C80	99	2 driver	90dB	6 Ohms	80W • 14,45,17cm
Allison AL100	100 94	ported	2 driver	90dB	4 Ohms • 150W • 33,24,19cm • Loud, lively wall-mount, bigger and beefier than the competition, lacks some sparkle
Gale Ref Monitors	100	ported	2 driver	88dB	8 Ohms • 70W • Bookshelf, black finish
Goodmans HT100	100	2 driver	86dB	8 Ohms	60W • 25,53,20cm
Interaudio XL1000	100	2 driver	8 Ohms	50W	19,29,17cm
Jamo Studio 110	100	ported	3 driver	91dB	50W • 24,42,22cm
JPW Sonata Vinyl	100	ported	2 driver	87dB	8 Ohms • 70W • 23,32,22cm
JVC SPX220TBK	100	ported	3 driver	90dB	8 Ohms • 60W • 24,66,24cm
Mission 73S	100	ported	2 driver	89dB	8 Ohms • 50W • 15,26,15cm • Stand mount, shelf, w/brackets
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100	ported	2 driver	86dB	8 Ohms • 55W • 14,22,11cm • Revised design
Revolver Beretta	100	ported	2 driver	87dB	6 Ohms • 80W • 30,19,22cm • Bookshelf/stand mount
Sony SS-J90AV	100	2 driver	167 Ohms	19,12,15cm	Shielded centre speaker
Sony SS85E	100	sealed	2 driver	85dB	4 Ohms • 70W • 9,32,24cm • UK optimised sound
TDL NFM2-S	100	ported	2 driver	90dB	8 Ohms • 100W • 18,45,17cm • Priced for single speaker
Technics SB-CS75	100	ported	3 driver	8 Ohms	60W • 27,49,25cm • Composite mica cone mid
Wharfedale Valduis 200	109	ported	2 driver	89dB	8 Ohms • 180W • 38,21,22cm • Stand/bookshelf
Wharfedale Modus Micro	109	ported	2 driver	86dB	8 Ohms • 75W • 14,23,12cm • Shielded
Canon SV-15	110	ported	2 driver	86dB	8 Ohms • 50W • 24,17,17cm • Utility - wide dispersion
Jamo Sat 160	110	sealed	2 driver	90dB	8 Ohms • 50W • 14,20,88cm • Shelf/wall mount, with wall br
Jamo Cornet 30.4	110	ported	2 driver	88dB	8 Ohms • 55W • 20,32,23cm • Black ash - Mahogany £20 extra
Mordaunt-Short MS05	110 141	ported	87dB	8 Ohms	60W • 26,17,18cm • Tiny and hence bass light, but fine voicing at a competitive price; could well suit the smaller room.
Bose XL1000	115	ported	2 driver	8 Ohms	50W • 29,19,17cm
Jamo D115	115	2 driver	91dB	75W	24,42,22cm
JBL Control One	115 90	ported	2 driver	87dB	4 Ohms • 150W • 24,156,14cm • Sub-miniature with forward midrange and real bass; near-indestructible Pro build
Mordaunt-Short CS1 St	115	ported	87dB	8 Ohms	100W • 16,23,13cm • Shielded, Positec protected
Celestion 1	119 114	86dB	8 Ohms	50W	16,27,21cm • Pretty basic performance at a basic price, a bit scrappy and untidy, but its heart is in the right place.
GLL Maxim	119 122	86dB	6 Ohms	100W	10,26,17cm • Budget miniature offers well balanced strengths and few weaknesses at a very realistic price; a bit feeble.
Wharfedale Modus Centre	119	ported	87dB	8 Ohms	75W • 46,14,12cm • Shielded centre speaker
AMC WM50	120	2 driver	86dB	8 Ohms	60W • 19,28,7cm • Ceiling mount
Jamo Artina	120	ported	2 driver	90dB	8 Ohms • 50W • 29,25,8cm • Small, flat wall speaker
JPW Sonata	120 71	ported	2 driver	87dB	8 Ohms • 70W • 23,32,22cm • Well balanced, fine sound if limited bass and dynamic range, plus real tree wood
Pioneer CS-3030	120	ported	3 driver	90dB	8 Ohms • 120W • 27,54,24cm • Bookshelf
Sony SS125E	120	sealed	2 driver	86dB	4 Ohms • 90W • 22,38,38cm • UK optimised sound
Teac S-W1	120	subwoofer	6 Ohms	100W	17,44,30cm • Coaxial, shielded
Yamaha NS-E80	120	2 driver	90dB	6 Ohms	50W • 27,20,7cm

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
Sansui SP-X111K	125	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 50W • 18,30,20cm
Celestion CSC	129	89dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 33,13,15cm • Centre channel
KEF Coda 7	129	145 ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 70W • 18,30,24cm • 2-way stand/shelf REC'D
B&W Solid HCM2	130	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 14,20,14cm • White or black finishes
Canon S-C10	130	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 95W • 34,15,15cm • Dolby P-L centre speaker
Jamo Sat 200 II	130	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 15,22,88cm • Stereo passive sub
JPW Subwoofer	130	ported • 1 driver • 95dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 26,51,27cm
JVC SPX550BK	130	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 24,66,24cm
Mission 731	130	141 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 31,17,20cm • Good looking high-tech miniature sounds best when driven hard; could have more brio.
Vionic David 5001	132	50W • 10,17,10cm
Boston Acoustics HD5	139	110 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 25,16,18cm • Pretty miniature has an attractive lack of boxiness, but is a little short of drama and dynamic drive.
Boston Acoustics 325	139	2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 50W • 17,17,5cm • Wall/ceiling white flush mount
Celestion CS135	139	128 86dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 52,19,34cm • Compact hideaway passive subwoofer lacks serious bass extension: for high sensitivity speakers only.
Celestion 3 MKII	139	130 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 21,31,18cm • Smooth and polished by budget speaker standards, if a bit laid back for some tastes. B'BUY
Heybrook Prima	139	110 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 60W • 20,29,18cm • Delivers fine coherence, pace and timing, balance is a little forward and bass a bit tight. REC'D
Wharfedale Modus Mini	139	ABR • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 14,39,12cm • Shielded two-way
Genexxa GX650	140	90dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 23,76,26cm
Interaudio XL2000	140	2 driver • 8 Ohms • 70W • 23,36,18cm
Jamo Sat 300 II	140	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 15,21,8cm • Use with SW500
Jamo Cornet 40.4	140	130 ported • 20 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 20,32,23cm • Pretty presentation and a strong box, but poor driver fixing. Decent if bright sound.
Mordaunt-Short MS10	140	130 ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 19,31,22cm • High tech baby has fine bass/mid integrity but the top end is less appealing. REC'D
Advent Baby 2	149	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 26,39,15cm • Bookshelf/stand mount
Boston Acoustics CR6	149	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,15,20cm • Magnetically shielded
Celestion MP1	149	140 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,30,15cm REC'D
Celestion CS2	149	86dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 16,29,22cm
Harman-Kardon LS0200	149	130 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 21,35,30cm • Laid back to a fault but entertaining nevertheless, and a big box for the price. REC'D
NAD 800	149	ported • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 60W • 20,32,24cm • 10 litre enclosure
Revolver Colt	149	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 30,19,22cm • Bookshelf/stand mount
Tannoy 631	149	141 ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 70W • 19,34,15cm • Beautifully balanced, open, unboxy and quite lively, if a bit short of real muscle. B'BUY
Wharfedale Valdus 300	149	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 180W • 47,25,23cm • Stand/bookshelf
Yamaha NS-C110	149	2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 15,47,18cm
B&W CWM5	150	2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 16,22,7cm • In wall
Gale Model 2	150	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • Bookshelf, black finish
Goodmans HT170	150	2 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,70,22cm
Infinity SM65	150	ported • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 34,20,19cm • Auto reset protection circuit
Infinity Reference 1i	150	sealed • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 50W • 34,20,20cm • Pedestal
JPW P1 Vinyl	150	102 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 26,44,25cm • A lot of highly competent loudspeaker with a safe sound that's unlikely to disappoint. B'BUY
JVC SPX770BX	150	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 28,75,25cm
Mission 73C	150	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 16,20,43cm • TV top, shielded
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Dec	150	sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 23,16,13cm • 2 compact paintable speakers
Mordaunt-Short HT30	150	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 25,43,29cm • Shielded, Postec protected
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150	128 subwoofer • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 24,58,26cm • Pretty finished and inexpensive passive subwoofer is only really useful with sub-miniature speakers
Teac S-300	150	ported • 2 driver • 6 Ohms • 100W • 17,24,17cm
Technics SB-CS95	150	ported • 3 driver • 8 Ohms • 100W • 29,54,25cm • Composite mica cone mid
Vionic Sub 4	154	100W • 36,49,31cm
Wharfedale Modus One	159	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,41,29cm • Stand/bookshelf mount
AMC WM75	160	2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 22,30,9cm • Ceiling mount
Bose XL2000	160	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 70W • 36,23,18cm
Denon SC-E313	160	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,36,23cm • Shielded, red mahogany veneer
Denon SC-E313	160	ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,75,23cm • UK designed & built
Grundig BX1	160	ported • 2 driver • 4 Ohms • 60W • 23,40,30cm • 16 litre
Interaudio XL3000	160	2 driver • 8 Ohms • 70W • 29,46,23cm
Jamo D135	160	2 driver • 94dB • 90W • 28,52,25cm
Vionic David 6001	163	74 2 driver • 87dB • 60W • 13,20,12cm • Sharp styling, but the complex grillwork worsens a sound which starts off with too much top and not enough bottom.
Boston Acoustics Runab't	169	2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 22,15,16cm • White indoor/outdoor system
Celestion CS4	169	87dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 18,33,23cm
GLL Mezzo	169	141 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 21,36,25cm • Splendid midband but foxy extremes; dull treble could suit budget systems well. REC'D
Allison AL105	170	78 ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,37,21cm • Pretty enough in appearance, sonically the AL105 doesn't really make the grade at the price.
Jamo Studio 180	170	ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 80W • 22,50,26cm
Jamo Sat 500	170	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 16,21,14cm • Satellites for SW500
JPW P1	170	141 ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 26,44,25cm • Remarkable value (real wood etc) and sounds pretty too — a touch aggressive maybe. B'BUY
Pioneer CS-5030	170	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 140W • 31,53,25cm • Bookshelf
Boston Acoustics 350	179	2 driver • 4 Ohms • 50W • 24,17,6cm • Wall/ceiling white flush mount
Boston Acoustics 335	179	2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 18,9cm • Wall mount, white flush
Boston Acoustics Satellites	179	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • Also A/V spkrs, black/white
Celestion Centre 2	179	90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 17,16,42cm • Centre channel
KEF Coda 8	179	ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 20,33,29cm • Black ash finish
Wharfedale Modus Sub-b	179	ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 57,23,38cm • Two channel double tuned sub-w
Bose XL3000	180	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 90W • 47,29,23cm
Canon S-30	180	114 ported • 1 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 23,27,24cm • Moulded design has attractive lively coherence, along with 'wide imaging stereo' effect. REC'D
Jamo Converta	180	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 235,235cm • Lamp-like appearance
TDL NFM2	180	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 18,45,17cm
Celestion 5 MkII	189	89dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 25,35,21cm • Larger version of Celestion 3
Tannoy 632	189	135 ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 51,43,27cm • Cabinet promotes imaging; fine bass extension but tricky stand compatibility. B'BUY
B&W DM600i	190	135 sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 21,36,25cm • Even balance, but dynamically bland; amplifier current demands are rather high. REC'D
Bose 101 M'ble Monitor	190	1 driver • 4 Ohms • 60W • 13,23,15cm • Black finish
Mordaunt-Short MS20	190	135 ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 22,37,22cm • Hi-tech plastics deliver a notably good midband cheaply — a fine all round compromise. B'BUY
Polk RT3	190	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 19,32,22cm • Shielded stand/shelf
Rega Kyte	198	114 ported • 2 driver • 87dBdB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 19,31,19cm • Splendid timing and coherence, very explicit, if a bit bright and short of grunt. B'BUY
Royd The Herald	198	ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 31,20,18cm • Stand mount
Boston Acoustics CR7	199	2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 30,22,24cm • Magnetically shielded
GLL Magnum	199	86dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 25,42,29cm
Harman-Kardon LS0300	199	88dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 21,38,80cm
Heybrook Solo	199	90 sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 23,36,23cm • Untidy in bass and treble, handles complex rhythmic material much better than most. REC'D
Rogers LS1	199	143 ported • 2 driver • 6 Ohms • 86W • 20,20,30cm • High grade miniature REC'D
Wharfedale Modus Three	199	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,57,29cm • Stand/bookshelf mount
Wharfedale Valdus 400	199	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 80,25,26cm • Floor standing
ZYP AI	199	110 sealed • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 14,22,12cm • Metal micro-miniature is coloured but great fun, surprising dynamics and fine room balance. REC'D
B&W Solid Monitor	200	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 17,24,15cm • Various colours
Canon S-B20	200	subwoofer • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 48,39,37cm • Free standing, passive
Castle Trent II	200	122 ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 20,34,18cm • Classy finish for the price, plus a sound that passes muster without setting anything much alight. REC'D
Gale Model 4	200	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • Bookshelf, black finish
Infinity Reference 11i	200	sealed • 6 Ohms • 75W • 39,22,34cm • Pedestal
Interaudio XL4000	200	2 driver • 8 Ohms • 75W • 32,56,29cm
Jamo D165	200	2 driver • 94dB • 100W • 28,52,25cm

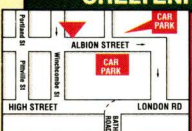
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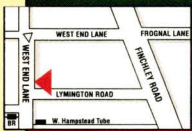
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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Jamo Cornet 60.4	200		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 23.42,27cm • Black ash - Mahogany £20 extra	
JPW AP2	200	106	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 26.44,25cm • Real wood veneer, performance is cleaner but broadly comparable to P1 Vinyl overall.	REC'D
Kenwood LS-200G	200		ported • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 21.35,30cm • European design	
Mission 732	200	141	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 41,21,31cm • <i>Attractive presentation but a rather dull and thick sounding speaker, and a tad pricey too.</i>	
Monitor Audio MA301	200		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 27,17,20cm • Gold dome tweeter	
Monitor Audio Monitor 1G	200		sealed • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 16,24,16cm • Miniature stand/shelf mount	
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Trip	200		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 16,23,13cm • Shielded, Positec protected	
Philips Legend FB720	200	122	ported • 80dB • 7 Ohms • 75W • 21,37,31cm • Liveliness, coherence and fine information retrieval justifies the odd looking baffle construction.	B'BUY
Technics SB-M20	200		ported • 2 driver • 60W	
Boston Acoustics 360 SII	209		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 22.15,7cm • Wall/ceiling, white, flush mou	
AMC WM100	210		2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26.36,10cm • Ceiling mount	
Canon V-100	210		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 75W • 25.33,17cm • Corner mount, wide dispersion	
B&O Beovox RL1000	215		3 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 60 W • 32.40,13cm • Simplified RL6000	
Advent Graduate	219		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 210W • 28,44,17cm • Bookshelf/stand mount	
ZYP A1T	219		sealed • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 14,22,12cm • Magnetically shielded	
Allison MS200	220		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 75W • 13,25,14cm • Boundary, stand mount	
Allison AL110	220	102	2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,40,23cm • Compact bookshelf model is a little dry and mid-forward, but bass is extended and solid.	REC'D
Bose XL4000	220		ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 100W • 57,32,30cm	
Polk M3 II	220		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 17,29,21cm • Multi-app, including wall brac	
Visonic David 8001	228		80W • 16,25,17cm	
KEF Q10	229		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 19,32,26cm • Uni Q, shielded	
Grundig BX2	230		ported • 3 driver • 4 Ohms • 80W • 24,49,33cm • 22 litre	
Jamo SW160 System	230		90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,34,48cm • Subwoofer, adjustable	
JPW AP3	230	46	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,52,29cm • Pretty good stereo, well balanced overall, character is well suited to vinyl replay.	REC'D
JVC SPX990BK	230		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 31,86,27cm	
Pioneer CS-7030	230		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 190W • 35,70,28cm • Bookshelf	
Boston Acoustics CR8	239		ABR • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 39,22,27cm • Magnetically shielded	
Celestion 7 MkII	239		89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 31,45,24cm	
B&W CWM6i	240		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 23,32,8cm • In wall	
Monitor Audio Monitor 7GII	245		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 17,35,17cm • Stand/shelf mount	
Boston Acoustics 380	249		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 31,24,8cm • Wall/ceiling white flush mount	
Chord Sys Audio 905	249		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 27,15,19cm • Black Ash + Kumarka (brown)	
NAD 802	249		ported • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 80W • 20,40,26cm • 11.5 litre enclosure	
Revolver Purdey	249		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 75,19,22cm • Floor stand, with plinth	
B&W Solid HCM1	250		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 17,24,17cm • White or black finishes	
B&W DM610i	250	141	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,49,31cm • <i>Fine bass extension and a smooth, well-balanced but slightly heavy and laid back sound</i>	
Bose VS100	250		2 driver • 8 Ohms • 23.15,15cm	
Canon S-35	250		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 23,27,24cm • Wide Imaging Stereo	
Cerwin Vega VS8	250		ported • 2 driver • 94dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 28,51,29cm • Bookshelf	
Infinity SM85	250		ported • 98dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 46,29,27cm • Auto reset protection circuit	
Jamo Classic 4	250		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 20,47,25cm	
Jamo Art	250		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 35,40,9cm • Shape and size of shallow 20 i	
Pioneer S-4UK	250	139	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 80W • 21,37,28cm • Balances pretty well, with a coherent if bass light sound, dull packaging.	REC'D
Polk RT5	250		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 22,39,25cm • Shielded stand/shelf	
System Audio 905	250	142	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 15,27,21cm	
Yamaha NS10M	250		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 21,38,20cm	
Linn Index	259		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 21,44,24cm • 30 watts minimum	
Royd Minstrel	259	135	ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 69,18,12cm • Slimline floorstander. Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing; a bit bright.	B'BUY
Wharfedale Modus Five	259		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 22,65,29cm • Stand/bookshelf mount	
Dali 102B	260		88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 21,32,26cm	
Celestion 9	269	102	89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 21,50,25cm • <i>Nicely presented and fair material value, with impressively flat mid to bass balance.</i>	
Heybrook HB1	269		sealed • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 29,47,23cm • Boundary, shielded option	
Keswick Audio Aria	269		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 21,42,27cm • Bookshelf	
Bose 151 Environmental	270		2 driver • 6 Ohms • 60W • 24,14,16cm • Waterproof/suitable for extrem	
Mission 780SE	270		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 18,30,26cm • Stand mount, boundary siting	
Mordaunt-Short MS30	270		ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,43,28cm • Alloy tweeter, MCS woofer	
Pioneer S-60	270		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 22,47,28cm • Bookshelf	
Bose 161 Freestyle	275		2 driver • 6 Ohms • 60W • 25,14,16cm	
Mordaunt-Short HT50	275		ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 25,87,33cm • Positec, integrated subwoofer	
Boston Acoustics CR9	279		ABR • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 50,25,29cm • Stand/shelf, shielded	
Allison AL115	280		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 28,51,26cm • Boundary, stand mount	
Monitor Audio MA100G	280		sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 16,24,16cm • Shielded for AV use	
Pioneer CS-9030	280		ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 220W • 39,75,29cm • Bookshelf	
Origin Live OL-IB	289	135	2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,30,19cm • <i>Pretty miniature delivers a punchy and dynamic midband, but costs quite a lot for the engineering on offer.</i>	
Bose 201 Ser III	290		3 driver • 8 Ohms • 60W • 38,20,25cm • Direct/reflecting technology	
Rega EL8	298	122	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 17,72,20cm • Kyle drivers in floorstander; more bass but less coherence; good for small rooms and budget systems.	REC'D
Royd Merlin	298		ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 31,20,18cm • Veneered	
Advent Prodigy	299		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 24,68,20cm • Floor standing, free space	
Boston Acoustics Voyager	299		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 26,16,17cm • White indoor/outdoor, metal	
Celestion 11	299		89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 31,57,24cm	
KEF 70S	299		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 17,25,12cm • Uni-Q, shielded, AV surround	
Wharfedale Valdis 500	299		ported • 4 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 350W • 108,25,29cm • Floor standing	
ZYP A2S	299		sealed • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 22,14,12cm • Studio nearfield monitor	
Allison CD6	300		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 29,29,29cm • Cuboid, wall mount	
B&O Beovox CX50	300		sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 12,21,21cm	
B&W Solid Powerbass	300		subwoofer • 75W • 33,39,34cm • Active sub to match Solids	
B&W CWM8i	300		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 28,38,9cm • In wall	
Bose C'puter RoomMate	300		active • 2 driver • 60W • 24,14,16cm • Self powered AC/shielded, vol	
Bose Video RoomMate	300		active • 2 driver • 60W • 24,14,16cm • Self powered AC/shielded, vol	
Bose Roomate II	300		active • 2 driver • 60W • 24,14,16cm • Self powered AC/12V DC	
Castle Durham 900	300	135	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 85W • 22,40,23cm • An upfront, coherent and exciting sound - maybe too much so for budget systems.	REC'D
Cerwin Vega SAT-6	300		subwoofer • 95dB • 4 Ohms • 125W • 22,25,32cm • 3 box satellite/subwoofer	
Infinity Inf IV Sat	300		sealed • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 80W • 16,24,18cm • Wall mount, shielded	
Jamo D265D	300		ported • 3 driver • 95dB • 150W • 44,68,32cm	
Jamo Classic 6	300		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 20,84,29cm • Inc spiked feet	
Jamo 307A	300		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 70W • 18,31,27cm • Stand mount	
JVC SX-SW9	300		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • Satellite subwoofer system	
Kenwood LS-300G	300		ported • 82dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 21.35,30cm • European design	
Mission 733	300	139	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 84,21,31cm • Stylish, represents a lot of speaker for the money, and sounds pretty good too.	B'BUY
Mission 751	300	125	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 19,32,27cm • <i>Has great sonic potential, but our review samples have been marred by sample variations.</i>	
Monitor Audio SW200 92	300		8 Ohms • 100W • 48,25,36cm	
Monitor Audio MA201	300	135	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,41,40cm • Lively and coherent with good power handling, but also a bit shut in and coloured.	REC'D
Polk RT7	300		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 24,48,29cm • Shielded stand/shelf	
Polk M5	300		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 21,33,23cm • Multi-app, inc brackets	
TDL RTL2	300		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 20,73,22cm • Reflex transmission line	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Tannoy 633	319	139	sealed • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 29,75,28cm • <i>Slammin' bass - real extension and coherence without boom, but dubious midband.</i>	B'BUY
Triangle Titus TZe	325		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 20,25,32cm • New tweeter, lifetime warranty	
Audio Innovations Alto	329		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 38,20,26cm • Biwire	
Ruark Swordsman Plus II	329		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,38,27cm • Near wall/stand mount	
Jamo Classic 8	330		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 23,90,29cm • Inc spiked feet	
Wharfedale Modus Seven	339		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 22,81,20cm • Floor standing	
Faraday SG	345		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 75W • 27,26,25cm • Matt black or granite effect	
Advent Legacy 2	349		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 38,67,22cm • Floor standing, free space	
Origin Live OL-2B	349		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,80,19cm • Floor standing	
Royd The Squire	349		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 80,18,10cm • Sand filled, shielded	
Cerwin Vega VS10	350		ported • 3 driver • 95dB • 6 Ohms • 125W • 33,70,29cm • Floor standing	
Grundig BX3 II	350		ported • 2 driver • 4 Ohms • 120W • 24,107,34cm • 53 litre, 3 drivers, 2 way	
Infinity SM105	350		ported • 100dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 53,30,30cm • Auto reset protection circuit	
Jamo BX100A	350		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 32,55,28cm • Floor or stand mount	
Jamo 407A	350		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 22,41,29cm • Stand mount	
Monitor Audio Monitor 9GL	350		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,37,21cm • Stand/shelf mount	
Sony SA-W90	350		2 driver • 70W • 22,49,51cm • Active subwoofer	
Technics SB-M300	350		ported • 3 driver • 70W	
KEF Q30	369	126	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 125W • 19,73,30cm • <i>Fine focus but lacks drive and time coherence; acoustically smaller than it looks.</i>	
Castle York	370	110	ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,43,22cm • <i>An engaging transparency: good balance and fine timing, could do with some authority.</i>	
Dali 104B	370		93dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 86,22,27cm	
Pioneer S-80	370		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 23,56,28cm • Bookshelf	
Heybrook Trio	373	118	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 24,47,25cm • <i>HBS1 drivers in real wood enclosure gives sweeter if less committed sound.</i>	REC'D
Lumley Reference LM4	375	126	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 18,36,22cm • <i>Metal diaphragm and real veneer; balance uneven - upper and forward with suspect bass timing.</i>	
Allison CD7	380		3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,70,24cm • Floor standing, free space	
Bose 301 VM	380		3 driver • 8 Ohms • 75W • 24,43,27cm • Direct/reflecting technology	
Jamo Graphic	380		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 39,44,8cm • Wall mount	
Polk RT8	380		ported • 2 driver • 80dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 19,80,26cm • Shielded floorstander	
Celestion 15	389	114	89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 21,100,25cm • <i>Big box and bang for your buck; short on subtlety and control but long on enthusiasm.</i>	REC'D
Clements 300Si	395		89dB • 90W • 24,36,36cm • Compression line	
KAL Mini-Ref MKII	395		2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 23,27,17cm	
Linn Lukan	398		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 30W • 19,30,18cm • Multipurpose	
Fullers Sultan	399		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 24,51,30cm • 3 finishes	
Origin Live OL-1AS	399		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 199W • 20,30,190cm • Floor standing	
Origin Live OL-1A	399		2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 20,30,19cm	
SD Acoustics SD3R	399	106	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,38,30cm • <i>Port firmly blocked, the SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature.</i>	REC'D
Tannoy Subsat3	399		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 11,16,9cm • Subsat system with ICI tech	
Aura SP50	400	126	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 21,40,24cm • <i>Two very tasty drivers rather outclass the cabinetwork: a capable if slightly dull compact</i>	
B&O Beovox CX100	400		sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 12,32,21cm	
B&W CDM2	400		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 32,22,25cm • Kevlar bass, metal dome treble	
B&W Solid Verticale	400		subwoofer • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • Lifestyle, 3 boxes	
Infinity Inf Micro II	400		ported • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 21,x127dcm • Two satellites and passive sub	
Jamo Cornet 90-4	400		sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 140W • 26,87,27cm	
Jamo D365D	400		3 driver • 96dB • 200W • 46,78,35cm	
Monitor Audio MA302	400		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 50,17,20cm • 2 bass units, front port	
Mordant-Short MS40	400		ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,82,28cm • Alloy tweeter, MCS woofer	
TDL RTL3	400	126	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,90,37cm • <i>Rich, heavy and bright sound with a good scale and fine basic neutrality.</i>	REC'D
Tannoy 636	419		sealed • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 29,75,28cm	
Allison AL120	420	98	2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 28,61,29cm • <i>Pretty well balanced if slightly mid-forward, but sound quality is disappointing at the price.</i>	
Jordan Watts JHFLG	420		Flagon pottery colour	
Celestion SL6Si	429	94	ported • 2 driver • 84dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,38,27cm • <i>Luxury compact can sound a bit dull, but really opens up on Slate Audio stands; favours CD.</i>	
B&W DM620i	430	126	ABR • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 24,75,31cm • <i>Compact floorstander has a beautifully voiced midband, but less happy bass tuning.</i>	REC'D
Bose 305	430	78	ported • 3 driver • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,45,28cm • <i>Fine dynamic liveliness and room match more than make up for the strange imaging and treble.</i>	REC'D
Mission 734	430		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 84,21,33cm • Floor standing, boundary	
Fullers Sultan H.E.	439		ported • 2 driver • 98dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 24,51,30cm • High sensitivity, 3 finishes	
Wharfedale Modus One-3	439		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,109,29cm • Floor standing	
Polk RT10	440		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,86,26cm • Shielded floorstander	
Epos ES11	445	94	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 20,38,25cm • <i>A remarkable combination of low colouration, transparency and speed. Bass is a bit shy.</i>	B'BUY
Faraday Siren	445	94	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 27,25,46cm • <i>Interesting if ugly concrete cabinet is let down by imbalance of ageing driver combination.</i>	
Boston Acoustics SW10	449	128	subwoofer • 2 driver • 100W • 34,17,42cm • <i>Clever powered subwoofer system integrates well and improves system loudness and power handling.</i>	REC'D
Boston Acoustics SubSat	6449		subwoofer • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • Passive subs and two satellite	
Celestion CS6i	449		90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 19,85,31cm	
Polk LS f/x Surround	449		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 22,28,16cm • A/V surround & utility speaker	
Royd Doublet	449		ported • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 91,18,17cm • Double ported	
Ruark Sabre II	449		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,37,27cm • Wall/free, on stands	
B&O Beovox RL6000	450		3 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 41,54,18cm • Simplified RL7000	
B&O Beovox 4500	450		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 45,38,8cm	
Infinity SM115	450		ported • 3 driver • 100dB • 8 Ohms • 175W • 76,34,32cm • Auto reset protection c	
Jamo SW500 System	450		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 140W • 41,38,53cm • Passive stereo subwoofer	
Jamo Silhouette	450		3 driver • 90dB • 5 Ohms • 80W • 25,122,17cm	
Jamo Atmosphere	450		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 27,37,16cm • Wall mount, doubles as lamp	
Jamo BX150A	450		ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 38,63,31cm • Floor mount	
Manticore Minaret	450		sealed • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,15,11cm • Nearfield monitor	
Monitor Audio MA202	450	139	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,89,27cm • <i>Uneven, informative and easy-listening floorstander delivers decent scale from big, box.</i>	REC'D
Sony SSA1L	450		sealed • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 19,30,32cm • Bio-cellulose tweeters	
UKD-Opera Prima	450		ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 20,33,25cm • Solid walnut, stand mount	
Acoustic Energy Aegis 1	452	118	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 21,39,26cm • <i>Slightly heavy balance doesn't mask fine mid/treble coherence and transparency.</i>	REC'D
Origin Live OL-2AS	469	122	2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 19,80,19cm • <i>Sounds open, transparent and evenly balanced; needs a big amp but enjoys hard driving.</i>	REC'D
Origin Live OL-2A	469		2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,80,19cm • Floor standing	
Pentachord A	469	139	sealed • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 21,28,20cm • <i>Direct coupled</i>	REC'D
Triangle Comete TZe	475		2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 22,28,40cm • High sensitivity	
Proac Tablet 3	479		2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 17,28,23cm • Stand mount	
Prof Monitor Co TB1	481		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 20,40,25cm • Shielded version available	
Dawn Audio Chorus BS	482		sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 26,38,21cm • Bookshelf	
Rega ELA Mk II	498	139	ported • 2 driver • 8 Ohms • 30,80,20cm • <i>Floor stand</i>	B'BUY
Advent Laureate	499		3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 21,80,29cm • Floor standing, free space	
Audio Note AN-KB	499		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 28,46,23cm • Free space, stand mount	
Celestion CS8i	499		90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 19,100,31cm	
Heybrook Heystak	499	141	ABR • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 98,22,28cm • Inc stands	
Keswick Audio Volante	499		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 85W • 21,85,27cm • Floor standing	
Lumley Reference LM5	499		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 25,46,21cm • Stand mount	
Origin Live OL-1	499	106	2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 20,30,19cm • <i>Very good overall balance, sacrificing sensitivity to achieve remarkable bass extension for the box size.</i>	
Rogers AB1 Subwoofer	499	143	ported • 1 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 50W • 57,19,16cm • <i>Designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures</i>	REC'D
Rogers Studio 3	499	118	ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 45W • 19,30,16cm • <i>LS3/5A derived miniature, excitingly coherent if a bit lightweight, no loudness capability.</i>	REC'D
Ruark Templar	499	122	sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 19,70,27cm • <i>Compact floorstander has decent bass/mid but dull treble; could tame over-bright system.</i>	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
Tannoy 637	499		sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 33,86,32cm
TDL Studio 0.5	499	94	ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 75W • 20,62,30cm • <i>Tiny transmission line has good agility but doesn't provide the coherence of Studio 1.</i>
B&W Signature 7	500		2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 28,37,10cm • In-wall monitor, Kevlar cone
Bose A'mass AM3 II	500		2 driver • 50W • 36,20,20cm • Acoustimass technology
Bose 401	500	110	3 driver • 4 Ohms • 100W • 30,30,76cm • <i>Cheaply built but distinctively styled semi-omni floorstander suffers from heavy midband but sounds lively and open.</i>
Castle Severn	500		ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 110W • 23,77,20cm • Free standing, 9 finishes
Infinity SSW-10 Sub	500		active • 34,34,33cm
Jamo BX200A	500		ported • 3 driver • 93dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 29,17,13cm • Floor mount
Jamo 447A	500	138	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 19,77,29cm • <i>Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price.</i>
JPW Ruby 1	500	139	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 120W • 32,19,21cm • <i>Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good, if slightly edgy balance.</i>
Kenwood LS-500G	500	118	ported • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 22,44,28cm • <i>An invigorating and exciting sound; an interesting contrast to some lazier models.</i>
Mission 752	500	138	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 20,84,26cm • <i>Style, great engineering plus a sound quality that gives the 753 a run for its money.</i>
Monitor Audio MA303	500		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 92,17,20cm
Monitor Audio Mon14GII	500		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,76,24cm • Floor/shelf standing
Jordan Watts JH200	510		sealed • 1 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 19,33,17cm • Bookshelf or stand mount
Pentachord B	519	139	sealed • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 52,35,52cm • <i>Active crossover, including electronics</i>
KEF Q50	529	139	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 19,83,30cm • <i>Compact twin-driver floorstander with Uni-Q treble and a rather midbass, heavy overall balance.</i>
Mordaunt-Short MS50	530	138	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 25,87,33cm • <i>Big value big box with fine engineering content and a big, laid back sound; lacks charisma.</i>
Celestion 100	539		84dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 21,42, 26cm
Boston Acoustics SubSat 7549	549		3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • PActive sub & 2 satellites
Allison CD8	550		3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 27,73,27cm • Floor standing, free space
Cerwin Vega VS12	550		ported • 3 driver • 97dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 42,81,38cm • Floor standing
Cerwin Vega DC10	550		ported • 3 driver • 96dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 29,94,35cm • Floor standing
Infinity SM125	550		ported • 3 driver • 100dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 89,37,32cm • Auto reset protection circuit
UKD-Opera Seconda	550		ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,35,34cm • Solid walnut, stand mount
KEF 101/3 Black	569		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 22,33,26cm • Uni Q, shielded, bookshelf
Heybrook Quartet	575	122	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 24,41,22cm • <i>Beautifully presented with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound.</i>
Advent Heritage	579		3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 600W • 25,89,31cm • Floor standing, free space
Polk RT12	580		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 19,93,32cm • Shielded floorstander
Clements 600si	595		88dB • 100W • 24,81,36cm • Compression line
Linn Kelidh Passive	595	114	sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 20,83,28cm • <i>Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive; sounds a bit shut in.</i>
Neat Petite	595	102	ribbon • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 20,30,18cm • <i>One of the most entertaining speakers around, colourations notwithstanding.</i>
Royd The Sorcerer	595	139	ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 31,20,18cm • <i>Front port, near field monitor</i>
Tannoy 625	595		active • 90W • 58,49,45cm • Servo, current drive subwoofer
Rogers P20	599		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 26,42,30cm • Stand mount
Tannoy 638	599	138	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 175W • 33,96,32cm • <i>Good balance and lots of loudness, but needs a good amp; bass isn't entirely convincing.</i>
B&W CDM1	600		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 37,22,28cm • Angled tweeter sub-baffle
B&W P4	600		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,81,24cm • 3 real wood veneers
Mission 735	600		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 106,21,33cm • Floor stand, boundary
Monitor Audio Studio 2	600		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 27,17,20cm • Shielded for AV use
Pioneer S-200	600		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 26,90,34cm • Biwire, floor standing
KAL Mimi-Tower	619		2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 17,90,22cm
Spendor LS3/5A	630		ported • 2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 40W • 19,30,16cm • BBC inspired location monitor
Fullers Pharaoh 1	649		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 20,30,20cm • Curved sides, various finishes
KEF LS3/5a	649		sealed • 2 driver • 82dB • 11 Ohms • 30W • 19,30,16cm • Raymond Cooke Special Edition
Linnaeus LFX Wood	649		hybrid • 90dB • 16,22,18cm • Modified ribbon/dynamic
Origin Live OL-2	649		2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,80,19cm • Floor standing
Tannoy D100	649		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 25,36,22cm • 6.5 inch Dual Concentric
Allison AL125	650		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 28,78,29cm • Open space, free standing
Cerwin Vega DC12	650		ported • 3 driver • 98dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 36,98,35cm • Floor standing
Infinity SM155	650		ported • 4 driver • 102dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 102,45,32cm • Auto reset protection circuit
KAL Compact Ref	650		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 140W • 23,36,27cm
Lumley Reference LM6	650		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 25,81,21cm • Floor standing
JVC SX911WD	660		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 38,63,35cm
UKD-Opera Operetta	660		ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 22,30,26cm • Solid walnut, stand mount
Royd Abbot	665	118	ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 81,20,30cm • <i>Engaging and dramatic dynamics and fine transient coherence, rather coloured mid-forward balance.</i>
Epos ES14	675	98	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,49,29cm • <i>Delightful midrange focus and delicacy with good bass control. System sensitive.</i>
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	675	66	sealed • 2 driver • 82dB • 10 Ohms • 30W • 30,19,18cm • <i>Still a classic miniature and none the better for the recent update under our listening conditions.</i>
Polk RT16	680		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 22,102,39cm • Shielded floorstander
Polk RT16	680		ported • 3 driver • 8dB • 90 Ohms • 250W • 22,102,39cm • Shielded floorstander
Meridian A500	695		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 100W • 83,20,28cm • Shelf/stand, shielded
Dawn Audio Chorus FS	698	11	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 26,88,21cm • <i>Compact floorstander with superb coherence but rather forward midband. Would suit smaller rooms best.</i>
Audio Note AN-K/SP	699		2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 28,46,23cm • Free space, stand mount
Harbeth HL-P3	699	118	sealed • 2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 45W • 31,19,18cm • <i>Limited loudness but full-range scale from well balanced but time-smearing subminiature</i>
Naim S-NAXO 3-6	699		21,76,30cm • Active crossover
Naim S-NAXO 2-4	699		21,76,30cm • Active crossover
Orelle Orator II	699		ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 27,40,30cm • Time aligned, biwire
Proac Studio 100	699		2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 20,40,25cm • Stand mount
Rogers LS3/5A	699	143	sealed • 2 driver • 83dB • 11 Ohms • 30W • 31,19,16cm • <i>Clever AB1 stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot.</i>
Rogers Studio 5	699	138	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,25,48cm • <i>Genuine monitoring capabilities, but can sound a little thin and unromantic.</i>
TDL Studio 1	699	78	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 23,77,33cm • <i>Genuinely extended bass, very detailed but a shade clinical in presentation.</i>
Castle Chester	700	98	horn • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,91,25cm • <i>A brilliant throwback, using a horn type approach to provide startling dynamics and coherence.</i>
Cerwin Vega VS15	700		ported • 3 driver • 102dB • 4 Ohms • 400W • 46,90,47cm • Floor standing
Jamo 507A	700		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 22,91,37cm
JPW Ruby 2	700		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 43,22,25cm • Alloy cones
JVC SX500	700		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 180W • 27,45,28cm
Mission 753	700	114	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 21,88,32cm • <i>Georgous presentation and potential for open transparency. Lots of drivers = lots of loudness.</i>
KEF Q70	729		ported • 4 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 175W • 19,105,30cm • Uni-Q, shielded, floor stand
Pentachord Pentode	729		sealed • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 20,74,20cm • Active crossover
Ruark Talisman II	749	118	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,84,32cm • <i>Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence.</i>
Mantecore Minaret F1	750		sealed • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 23,15,11cm • Nearfield monitor
Bose SE-5 Ser II System	760		2 driver • 100W • 90,100,18cm
Bose A'mass AM511	760		2 driver • 200W • 49,35,19cm • Acoustimass direct/reflecting
Spendor S20	760	102	ported • 2 driver • 84dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 22,38,26cm • <i>Peerless mid-to-treble coherence and perspectives. Bass is rather unconvincing.</i>
Naim IBL Active	776		65W • 25,80,28cm • Boundary, floor standing
Proac Tablette 3 Sig	779		2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 16,28,23cm • Stand mount
Shahinian Super Elf	790		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 100W • 21,26,37cm • Finnish birch cabinet
Faraday FS10	795		ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 27,25,93cm • Matt black or granite effect
KAL Tunejal	795		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,100,27cm
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	132	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 28,76,46cm • <i>Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance.</i>
Acoustic Energy Aegis 2	799		ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 33,106,26cm • Floor, reflex, metal cone
Audio Note AN-J/B	799	110	2 driver • 93dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 38,58,25cm • <i>Some colouration, doesn't spoil the very lively, dynamic and coherent sound.</i>
Gamma Acoustics Epoch 5	799		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,20,50cm • Time aligned, piano black
Keswick Audio Figaro	799		86dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 19,28,27cm • Features solid timbers
Allison AL130	800		2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 32,95,34cm • Open space, free standing

LOUDSPEAKERS £800 - £1,450: THE DIRECTORY

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
B&W P5	800	144	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 20,90,28cm • 3 real wood veneers	
Monitor Audio MAG901	800		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 27,17,20cm • Metal bass cone, wood veneer	
Polk LS50	800	138	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 27,83,29cm • Powerful and beautiful balance from a good looking compact floorstander.	REC'D
Celestion SL600si	820	68	ported • 2 driver • 82 dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,37,24cm • <i>Has properties that some will find irresistible, but needs careful system and room matching.</i>	
Jordan Watts JH400	820	106	sealed • 1 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 28,32,17cm • Piano finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid.	REC'D
Bose A'mass AM7	830		2 driver • 100W • 35,49,19cm • Acoustimass direct/reflecting	
Fullers Sphinx	839		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 25,91,30cm • Floor standing, various finishes	
Audiovector 2X	850		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 17,90,22cm • Black ash	
Cerwin Vega DC15	850		ported • 3 driver • 100dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 44,103,46cm • Floor standing	
Chord SysAudio Sig	850		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 27,15,25cm • Cherry, rosewood, black ash	
Meridian DSP6000	850	140	133,28,43cm • Digital active DSP based	REC'D
Acoustic Energy AE1	870	102	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 26,30,18cm • <i>Exceptional mid focus and coherence, but is pricey and could be more agile.</i>	
UKD-Opera Super Pavarotti	875		ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,55,23cm • Solid mahogany, stand mount	
Bose 601 MKIII	880		3 driver • 8 Ohms • 200W • 32,31,76cm • Direct/reflecting technology	
Spendor SP3/1	890		ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 40,22,25cm • Stand mount, free space	
B&W Matrix 805 V	895	98	ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 33,33,21cm • Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance, less successful at musical communication.	REC'D
Lumley Reference LM3	895	106	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 27,87,28cm • Indifferent bass alignment, but is fast, coherent, solid and very informative indeed.	REC'D
Naim IBL Passive	895	94	86dB • 6 Ohms • 65W • 25,80,28cm • <i>Delivers outstanding dynamics, speed and detail; marred by pronounced upper mid forwardness.</i>	
UKD-Opera Callas II	895		ported • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 34,22,32cm • Solid walnut, Focal drivers	
Pink Triangle Venetral	896	142	hybrid • 86dB • 11 Ohms • 100W • 15,80,32cm • Ribbon hybrid	
Sonus-Faber Minuetto	898		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 23,35,28cm • Compact, stand mount	
Canon S-75	899		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 25,78,25cm • Wide imaging stereo	
Rogers Studio 7	899	122	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 30,63,30cm • Latest variation on classic BBC-monitor theme, beautifully voiced, laid back sound.	REC'D
Ruark Broadsword II	899		sealed • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 29,43,38cm • Free space, stand mount	
TDL Studio 1m	899	118	ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 23,77,34cm • Lovely transparency and fine bass extension.	REC'D
Jamo 707A	900	132	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 24,104,39cm • <i>Superb styling but indifferent build; decent balance apart from detached bass.</i>	
Monitor Audio Studio 6	900	118	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 22,35,25cm • Pretty compact has clear and transparent midband but lacks vigour and drive.	REC'D
Pioneer S-400	950		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 160W • 27,96,38cm • Biwire, fl oor stand, shielded	
Posselt Alpha I	950		ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 60W • 24,44,28cm	
Jordan Watts JH400M	970		ported • 1 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 82,28,21cm	
Origin Live OL-3	975		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,83,23cm • Floor standing	
Triangle Antal	975		2 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,102,30cm	
Royd The Prior	978		ported • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 96,37,26cm • Floor standing, free space	
Magnepan SMG-C SE	990		electrostatic • 2 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 43,122,-cm • 2x Quasi-ribbon	
Linnaeum LSII	991		hybrid • 90dB • 30,150,38cm • Modified ribbon/dynamic	
ATC SCM10	995		sealed • 2 driver • 80dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 18,38,26cm • Minimum 100wpc, wall/free use	
Clements Reference 1	995		86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 20,43,29cm • Ribbon tweeter	
Infinity Kappa 6.1i	995	132	ported • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 31,95,25cm • <i>Good extension and laid back balance, but bass is fat and slow, and dynamics are unconvincing.</i>	
Roksan Ojan 3 Rosewood	995		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 28,74,46cm	
Totem Model One	995	122	ported • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 17,31,23cm • Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size.	REC'D
Prof Monitor Co LB1	998	110	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 18,53,25cm • Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited.	REC'D
Audio Note AN-J/SP	999		2 driver • 93dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 38,58,25cm • Free space, stand mount	
Keswick Audio Alto	999		subwoofer • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,70,27cm • To match Figaro	
Proac Response One S	999		3 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 18,30,23cm	
B&W P6	1,000		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 20,100,30cm • Time aligned tweeter	
JPW Ruby 3	1,000		ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 75,19,22cm • Alloy cones	
Monitor Audio MAG902	1,000		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 50,17,20cm • Dual metal cone, wood veneer	
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000	143	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 92,17,20cm • <i>A beautiful compact floorstander, but sound and content are a bit on the small side for the price.</i>	
Morel 704/2	1,000	143	sealed • 4 driver • 88dB • 150W • 80,23,21cm	
Rega XEL	1,040	132	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 40W • 20,82,30cm • Looks good, sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence & timing.	B'BUY
Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,090		sealed • 2 driver • 20,83,28cm • Floor standing, boundary	
Impulse Kora	1,095		horn • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 70W • 1,86,31cm • Floor standing	
Celestion 300	1,099	118	84dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 21,97,33cm • <i>Splendid bass and fine panel-like transparency, but dynamics and timing are suspect, balance very laid back.</i>	
KEF Model One	1,099		coupled cavity • 3 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 23,86,30cm • Uni-Q, floor stand, shielded	
Ruark Paladin	1,099		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 88,29,38cm • Floor standing	
Castle Howard S2	1,100	132	horn • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 26,104,41cm • A spacious semi-omni with a rich, laid back balance.	REC'D
Spendor SP2/3	1,100		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 28,55,33cm • On stands, free space	
Heybrook Sextet	1,129	102	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 27,90,20cm • Coherent and analytical, distinct and not always comfortable upper-mid forwardness.	REC'D
Acoustic Energy AE2	1,175		ported • 2 driver • 91 dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 24,40,32cm • Twin bass, metal cone	
Epos ES22	1,185		ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 175W • 88,21,25cm • Light cherrywood veneer	
Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,195		ported • 2 driver • 81dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 30,18,23cm • Free standing, biwire	
Infinity Kappa 7.1i	1,195		ported • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 225W • 36,108,26cm • Floor standing	
Roksan Ojan 3X Black	1,195		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 28,76,48cm • As Ojan 3, improved drivers	
B&O Beolab 4500	1,200		active • 45W • 45,38,8cm • A taches to wall, display	
Fullers Pharaoh 2	1,200		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 80W • 39,100,31cm • Pharaoh I with added bass encl	
Kenwood LS-700G	1,200		ported • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 120W • 30,90,30cm • European design	
Polk LS70	1,200	132	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 31,94,37cm • <i>Lots of loudness potential, but too much midbass boom; mid and treble are laid back.</i>	
Posselt Alpha II	1,200		ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 23,100,27cm	
SD Acoustics SD5	1,235	132	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 20,110,30cm • Bass tuning and coherence suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth.	REC'D
Electrocomp't The Qube	1,265		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 16,70,28cm • D'Apollito nearfield monitor	
Harbeth HL Compact 7	1,295		ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 52,27,32cm • Free-space, shielded, biwire	
Spica Angelus	1,295	60	sealed • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 53,117,26cm • <i>A little bass shy and soft; otherwise tidy, extremely lively and fluid, if uneven overall.</i>	
Linn Kader	1,298		ported • 3 driver • 4 Ohms • 60W • 20,28,90cm • Black ash or walnut	
Linn Kaber Passive	1,298	118	sealed • 3 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 20,90,28cm • Dry, bright, superb dynamic range and transient precision, but can sound unforgiving.	REC'D
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	106	2 driver • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 36,84,28cm • Coherence, midband dynamics and transparency, extended bass and high sensitivity - but ugly!	REC'D
Audio Physic STEP	1,299		ported • 2 driver • 84dB • 4 Ohms • 60W • 14,33,23cm • Time aligned, space frame stan	
Cerwin Vega 1515	1,300		ported • 6 driver • 103dB • 4 Ohms • 600W • 44,135,46cm • Floor standing, h i sensitivity	
JBL L90	1,300	143	sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 200W • 94,24,35cm	B'BUY
JPW Ruby 4	1,300		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 90,22,26cm • Alloy cones	
Manticore Matisse	1,300		sealed • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 100,28,22cm • Fibrelam honeycomb cabinets	
Monitor Audio MAG903	1,300		ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 92,17,20cm • Dual metal cone, wood veneer	
Philips DSS930	1,300		active • 75 Ohms • 22,58,33cm • Active digital loudspeaker	
Apogee Centaur Minor	1,345		hybrid • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 30,88,20cm • Ribbon/dynamic	
Posselt Alpha III	1,350		ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 26,102,30cm	
Magnepan MG-0.6 SE	1,370		electrostatic • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 48,127,-cm • 2x quasi ribbon	
Thiel SCS	1,379	114	active • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 2,23,41cm • Class leading standards for coherence, can sound a shade shut-in and dark	REC'D
UKD-Opera Divina	1,390		ported • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 24,39,40cm • Solid walnut, stand mount	
Roksan Ojan 3X Rosewood	1,395		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 28,74,46cm • As Ojan 3, improved drivers	
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	86	ported • 4 driver • 88dB • 7 Ohms • 160W • 41,101,27cm • <i>Elegant staggered baffle arrangement contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness.</i>	
Linnaeum LFX Corian	1,399		hybrid • 90dB • 16,22,18cm • Modified ribbon/dynamic	
Triangle Zays	1,399		3 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 99,22,28cm	
Yamaha NS-1000	1,399		2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 38,68,36cm	
Spendor SP1/2	1,430		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 90W • 30,63,30cm • Stand mount, free space	
Celestion 700SE	1,435		82dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 20,37,24cm • Aerolam lightweight enclosure	
B&O Beolab 6000	1,450		active • 80W • 20,110,21cm • Column, two amps, shielded	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,450		90dB • 6 Ohms • 225W • 86,26,35cm • Time-aligned, ResinRock enc	
Lowther Fidelio	1,465		horn • 96dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 29,100,43cm	
Tannoy D500	1,470	143	ported • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 175W • 31,93,34cm • <i>Has muscle and balance but a little short of poise. Fine stereo, but had work for amps.</i>	
Harbeth HL-5	1,495		ported • 3 driver • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 64,32,31cm • Free standing biwire	
Sonus-Faber Min Amator	1,498		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 20,34,31cm • Compact, stand mount	
KEF Model Two	1,499		coupled cavity • 4 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 23,101,30cm • Uni-Q, floor stand, shielded	
Thiel 2	1,499		active • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 22,28,63cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Thiel CS-5	1,499		active • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 20,28,80cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Audiovector 3X	1,500	143	ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,32,98cm • Superior time coherence, a wide dynamic range and exceptional bass/mid balance.	REC'D
Audiovector 3X	1,500	143	3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 19,98,32cm • Black ash + cuba	
B&W Solid 800ASW	1,500		subwoofer • 200W • 43,50,58cm • Active, Matrix enclosure	
JBL Ti 1000	1,500	118	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 20,30,13cm • <i>Beautifully crafted bookshelf model. Compromised by over enthusiastic midbass output from port.</i>	
KAL Trans-double	1,500		2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 23,112,36cm	
Posselt Alpha IV	1,500		ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 135W • 27,104,31cm	
ATC SCM20	1,505	86	sealed • 2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 24,44,31cm • <i>Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable.</i>	
Rogers LS5/9	1,531		ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 28,46,27cm • BBC monitor	
Rehdeko RK115	1,550		ported • 104dB • 8 Ohms • 34,42,28cm	
Genelec 1019A	1,572		active • 28W • 23,31,25cm	
B&W Matrix 804	1,595		ported • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 26,92,26cm • Matrix enclosure	
Impulse Lali	1,595		horn • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 25,99,36cm • Floor standing	
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,598	114	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 400W • 26,79,43cm • <i>Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, and needs a big room.</i>	
Audio Note AN-E/SP	1,599		3 driver • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 26,84,28cm • Free space, stand mount	
Audio Physic SPARK	1,599		ported • 2 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 70W • 17,40,25cm • Time align, space-frame stand	
Ruark Crusader II	1,599		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 24,92,32cm • Free space, floor standing	
KAL Warlock	1,600		2 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 250W • 25,113,36cm	
Origin Live Conqueror	1,600		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,87,23cm • Floor standing	
Proac Response Two	1,634		2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 23,45,28cm	
Pentachord P'column	1,649		sealed • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 80W • 21,108,20cm • Including active crossover	
Acoustic Energy AE3	1,650	86	ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 37,27,63cm • Solid, authoritative and impressively accurate - if a shade ponderous and slow.	REC'D
Bose 901 V1	1,650		9 driver • 8 Ohms • 33,53,32cm • Direct/reflecting technology	
Castle Winchester	1,650	90	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 42,108,23cm • Large for its bass extension but engagingly agile and attractively open and airy.	REC'D
Epos ES25	1,650	143	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 90,24,35cm • <i>Fine intrinsic sound quality but a rather uneven and bass heavy balance.</i>	
Magnepan MG-10 SE	1,650		electrostatic • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 26,173,-cm • 2x quasi-ribbon	
Shahinian Arc	1,675	110	sealed • 3 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 35,69,25cm • <i>Occasionally wonderful floorstanding omni; too bright but exceptionally coherent and revealing.</i>	
Naim SBL Active	1,692		75W • 27,89,27cm • Boundary, floor standing	
Kenwood LS-1000G	1,700		ported • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 160W • 34,110,38cm • European design	
Polk LS90	1,700		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 31,94,37cm • Floorstanding, biampable	
Jordan Watts JH1 + 1 Asp	1,730		ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 92,40,22cm	
Apogee Ribbon Wall	1,750		hybrid • 89dB • 27,120,7cm • Ribbon/dynamic	
Tannoy Sterling TW	1,750		ported • 2 driver • 93dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 48,70,31cm	
Magnepan MG-1.5 SE	1,780		electrostatic • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 48,163,-cm • 2x quasi-ribbon	
Sonus-Faber Electa	1,790		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 38,27,24cm • Compact, stand mount	
KEF 104/2 REC	1,799	60	coupled cavity • 5 driver • 92dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 28,90,41cm • A reference point for dynamics, suited to many rooms. Good sound, high SPLs.	REC'D
Lowther Academy	1,805		horn • 98dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 29,100,43cm • 16ohm option	
Naim SBL Passive	1,821	143	88dB • 6 Ohms • 75W • 27,89,27cm • Multi-box, big scale sound with small box agility. Lively - smoother but more upfront than before.	REC'D
Ruark Equinox	1,849	140	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 6 Ohms • 150W • 25,88,34cm • Free space, stands included	REC'D
Proac Studio 200	1,850		3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 23,115,28cm • Floor standing	
Triangle Aitnis	1,950		3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 104,22,22cm	
B&W Matrix 803s2	1,995		ported • 4 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 26,101,34cm • Matrix enclosure	
Clements Reference 7	1,995		88dB • 4.5 Ohms • 200W • 25,114,4cm • Ribbon tweeter	
Dawn Audio Symphony	1,995		sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 34,113,32cm • Floor standing	
Linn Kaber Aktiv	1,995		sealed • 3 driver • 20,90,28cm • Integral stands, boundary	
ATC SCM20 Tower	1,999		sealed • 2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 24,103,34cm • Floor standing SCM20	
Audio Physic TEMPO	1,999	143	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,107,47cm • <i>Tall and unusually styled floorstander has stunning stereo precision but suspect in-room bass.</i>	
B&O Beolab 8000	1,999		active • 100W • 15,132,15cm • Shielded column, int amps	
KEF Model Three	1,999		coupled cavity • 5 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 27,114,34cm • Uni-Q, floor stand, shielded	
Boston Acoustics L 300L	2,000		2 driver • 83dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 23,34,28cm • Inc stands, black	
JBL Ti 2000	2,000		sealed • 3 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 33,82,30cm • Asymmetric, double wall	
Spendor SP7/1	2,000		ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 85,30,35cm • Floor standing	
Lowther Bel Canto	2,035		horn • 97dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 28,132,44cm • Including adjustable stand	
Genelec Blamp 1031A	2,068		active • 104W • 25,39,29cm	
Tannoy D700	2,100		ported • 3 driver • 93dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 37,99,36cm • 10 inch Dual Concentric	
Monitor Audio Studio 20SE2,200	2,200		ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 20,92,26cm • Floor stand, metal cone bass	
Posselt Albatros	2,200		horn • 93dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 31,186,32cm • Ultra sensitive	
Spendor SP100	2,230		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 37,70,43cm • Classic monitor, free space	
UKD-Opera Caruso II	2,250		ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 22,97,28cm • Solid walnut, floor standing	
Martin-Logan Aeries	2,286		hybrid • 89dB • 23,122,30cm • Two-way	
Apogee Centaur	2,300		hybrid • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 33,102,25cm • Ribbon/dynamic	
Jordan Watts JH1 + 1 AspK	2,310		ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 92,40,22cm	
Helius Syrius II	2,395		ported • 95dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 36,107,16cm	
Apogee Centaurus Slant 6	2,400		hybrid • 88dB • Ribbon tweeter, dynamic bass	
TDL Studio Monitor M	2,449		ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 27,112,43cm • TLS, metal drivers, int stands	
ECA SERVO A.2	2,450		ported • 2 driver • 80dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 22,102,30cm • True ribbon tweeter	
Shahinian Obelisk	2,490		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 37,74,32cm • Omni-directional	
Fullers Pharaoh 3	2,499		ported • 4 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 46,118,45cm • Pharaoh + bass & subbass encs	
JBL Ti 3000	2,499		sealed • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 46,105,35cm • Asymmetric, double wall	
Allison I.C. 10	2,500		3 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 200W • 48,102,27cm • Floor standing, free space	
Audiovector 5	2,500		4 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 24,110,34cm • Black ash + cuba	
B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,500		active • 150W • 22,165,34cm • Line array column, display	
Celestion Kingston	2,500		ported • 2 driver • 84dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 101,24,36cm • Polymer box, inc stand	
Lumley Reference LM2	2,500		ported • 4 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 33,110,29cm • Open baffle, floor standing	
Lowther Delphic	2,525		horn • 98dB • 4 Ohms • 100W • 28,137,44cm • With adjustable stand, 16ohm o	
Magnepan MG-2.7 SE	2,650		electrostatic • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 56,180,-cm • 3x quasi-ribbon	
Impulse Ta'us	2,695		horn • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 31,121,49cm • Floor standing	
SD Acoustics SD1E	2,695	80	ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 30,125,30cm • Large scale, airy and unusually detailed, with excellent dynamics.	REC'D
Ruark Accolade	2,699		ported • 3 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 29,100,38cm • Free space, floor standing	
Tannoy Edinburgh TW	2,700		ported • 2 driver • 95dB • 8 Ohms • 180W • 66,102,42cm	
Jordan Watts JH1 + 1 AspM2,745	2,745		ported • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 92,40,22cm	
Jordan Watts JH1 + 1 Asp	2,745		sealed • 2 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 40,93,23cm • Matt - alt finishes extra	
Thiel CS2.2	2,749		active • 3 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 30,33,106cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Rehdeko RK125	2,750		ported • 102dB • 8 Ohms • 34,61,28cm	
B&W Matrix 802s3	2,795		ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 30,104,37cm • Matrix enclosure	
Helius Syrius I	2,850		ported • 93dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 36,107,16cm • Floor standing, biwire	
Triangle Altair	2,850		3 driver • 92dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 35,120,30cm • Proprietary tweeter	
Quad ESL-63	2,860	60	electrostatic • 86dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 66,93,27cm • Classic electrostatic may not be punchy in the bass, but has unique strengths.	REC'D



SPECTRA Dynamics

DEFLEX[®] acoustic PRODUCTS

Designed by Engineers - Used by Professionals

For the enthusiast &
- D.I.Y. -
The simplest and most cost
effective way to upgrade
your existing system

A. DEFLEX ACOUSTIC PANEL

You need at least 2 Deflex panels for a pair of small bookshelf speakers, 4 panels for a pair of Tannoy 6's, and at least 6 panels for larger cabinets. Deflex panels are re-usable and transferable.

Standard Panel 28cm x 21cm	£7.95 each
Small Panel (LS3/5A) 24 x 13cm	£5.95 each
Sub-woofer Panel 34cm dia.	£14.95 each

B. FOCULPODS

Foculpods are high performance vibration absorbing supports designed to be placed under Compact Disc Players, Turntables, Amplifiers, Loudspeakers and All other Audio, Video & Computer equipment. The spherical surface provides even contact and uniform energy distribution.

Foculpods £14.95 pack of 4

C. TURNTABLE PLATTER ISOLATION MAT

This turntable mat has been carefully designed to incorporate 3 layers of Deflex material, all of differing hardness. Top layer 25°A hardness (anti-static); Sandwich layer 0-1°A hardness (shock absorbing); Base layer 15°A hardness (support).

Turntable Mat 12" diameter £55.50 each

D. MAGNAPAD GOLD

Magnapads have been specifically designed to absorb unwanted vibrations directed at the speaker chassis, coils & magnets and to prevent further sound reflections of the flat surfaces.

Magnapad Gold 3 (75mm dia.)	£7.95 pair
Magnapad Gold 5 (125mm dia.)	£12.95 pair
Magnapad Gold 7 (175mm dia.)	£15.95 pair
Magnapad Gold 9 (225mm dia.)	£19.95 pair

E. DEFLEX WRAP

Unwanted vibrations transmitted from the reflex ports will distort the music. To prevent this, the only remedy is to suppress the distorted sound. Wrap's dense composition and unequalled shock absorbing properties significantly remove this unwanted colouration.

Wrap 28cm x 21cm x 15mm thick £14.95 sheet

F. DEFLEX SHEET

Sheet is for the enthusiast who wants to damp out resonances wherever they are perceived to be influencing the natural sound of the system. Ribbed sheet can be used for lining ports, etc.

Plain Sheet - 2mm thick (28cm x 21cm)	£7.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 3mm thick (28cm x 21cm)	£8.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 4mm thick (28cm x 21cm)	£9.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 6mm thick (28cm x 21cm)	£11.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 8mm thick (28cm x 21cm)	£13.95 sheet
Plain Sheet - 5mm thick (47cm x 22cm)	£27.00 sheet
Ribbed Sheet - 3mm thick (28cm x 21cm)	£8.95 sheet
Ribbed Sheet - 6mm thick (28cm x 21cm)	£11.95 sheet

G. ISOLATION BLOCKS

Isolation blocks are offered in a range of shapes and sizes, designed to accommodate all types of equipment of varying weights and sizes.

Isolation Block - 43mm dia x 26mm thick	£4.50 each
Isolation Block - 80mm dia x 20mm thick	£8.50 each
Isolation Block - 120mm dia x 30mm thk (40mm hole)	£7.50 each
Isolation Block - 75 (75mm square x 20mm)	£5.50 each
Isolation Block - 115 (115mm square x 20mm)	£8.50 each
Isolation Block - 150 (150mm square x 20mm)	£16.50 each

H. DE-COUPLING GASKETS

De-coupling gaskets not only help isolate unwanted vibrations between cabinets and drive units but because of the material composition provide a perfect air-tight seal without the need to use a mastic sealant. The range is continually expanding. Phone for details.

Gasket - KEF B110B	£3.00 each
Gasket - SEAS 17cm	£3.00 each
Gasket - MOREL MW 142	£3.00 each
Gasket - MOREL MW 160's	£3.00 each
Gasket - SCAN-SPEAK D2008	£2.50 each
Washers 20mm & 25mm dia x 6mm thick	£0.30 each
Toriodal transf. supports 120mm dia x 5mm thick	£3.50 each

I. CORNER BLOCKS

Corner blocks are designed to be fitted in rectangular areas of enclosures to prevent recurrent sound reflections - "cat's eye phenomenon."

Corner Block - Theoretical edge 50mm	£1.25 each
Corner Block - Theoretical edge 75mm	£2.50 each

J. TUNEABLE PORT SYSTEM

The port system ranges from 30mm to 100mm dia. and can be built up from 30mm length onwards, in 10mm increments. Phone for full data sheet.

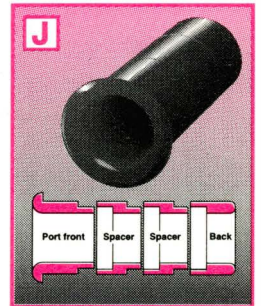
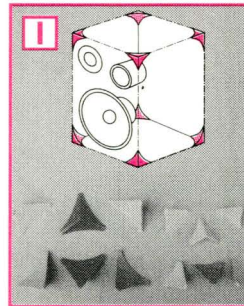
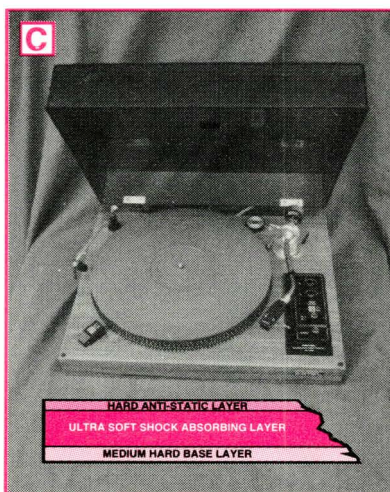
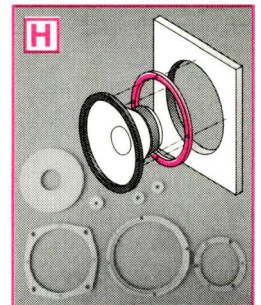
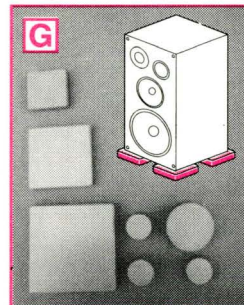
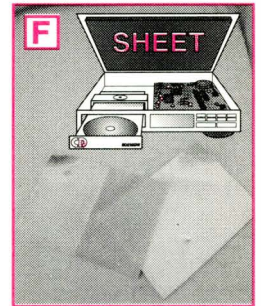
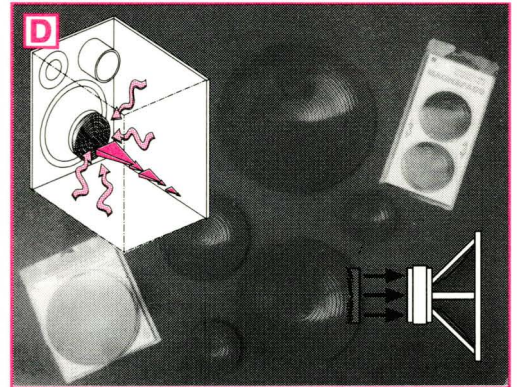
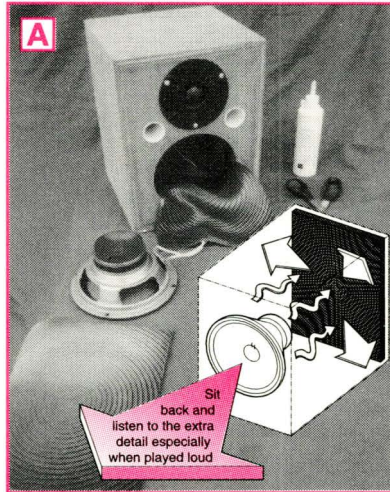
Port System Components from £0.75 each

* SPECIALIST SERVICES *

Deflex material can be used to encapsulate crossovers and other components, etc. Telephone for further information or fax your details.

Specialist Services Filling charge £12.00 per kilo

All prices inclusive of V.A.T.



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"...a marked improvement was obvious from the first few bars of REM's Automatic for the people album..."
Hi-Fi News & Record Review - March 1994

"...Deflex panels seemed to give greater tightness and control, improved internal clarity, and pitch definition - all without deadening the sound in any way..."
Audiophile - January 1994

"What the experts have to say..."

"...the result was sharper imaging, wider dynamics and a more natural sound..."

CHOICE VERDICT
Sound Quality
Value for money

Hi-Fi Choice - January 1994

"...But one thing for sure - the Deflex panels are no gimmick. They work..."

Audio Video - November 1994

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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Sonus-Faber Amator	2,992	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 37,22,35cm • Compact, stand mount	
Martin-Logan Stylos	2,993	hybrid • 2x2dB • 88 Ohms • 23,35,28cm • In wall	
Meridian DSP5000	2,995	140 225W • 90,21,30cm • Digital active DSP floor stand	REC'D
Gamma Acoustics Epoc R5	2,999	2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 95,26,26cm • Time aligned, floor stand	
Genelec Triamp S30	3,055	active • 108W • 32,50,32cm	
Jordan Watts JH2K	3,230	3 driver • 87,5dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 47,81,5,34cm • Extended hexagonal shape, piano black finish	
Martin-Logan Sequel II	3,277	hybrid • 89dB • 31,160,29cm • Dynamic bass/electrostatic	
Spendor SP9/1	3,300	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 125W • 106,37,44cm • Floor standing monitor	
Audio Physic VIRGO	3,399	ported • 4 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 150W • 16,100,42cm • Floor stand, decoupled tweeter	
Horning Agathon	3,400	horn • 96dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 36,48,115cm • Floor standing	
ATC SCM50	3,480	ported • 3 driver • 85dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 31,72,43cm • Passive/to special order only	
Apogee CDD Subwoofer	3,490	hybrid • 87dB • 63,38,55cm • Active moving coil sub	
Audio Physic TERRA	3,499	subwoofer • Active sub, adjustable	
JBL Ti 5000	3,499	sealed • 3 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 300W • 48,114,38cm • Asymmetric, double wall	
Tannoy GRFM TW	3,500	ported • 2 driver • 95dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 80,100,48cm	
MAG Audio Audio A90	3,600	ribbon • 80dB • 3,7 Ohms • 300W • 52,150,8cm • Two-way full range ribbon	
Apogee Stage Sub	3,645	moving coil • 86dB • 58,25,42cm • Active moving coil sub	
Apogee Centarus Slant 8	3,700	hybrid • 88dB • Ribbon treble, dynamic mass	
Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790	hybrid • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 350W • 44,183,41cm • Oak or walnut finish £3990	
B&W Matrix 801s3	3,795	81 ported • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 600W • 44,100,56cm • Lacks the transparency and drama of the best but acoustically a tour de force.	REC'D
Magnepan MG-3.5 SE	3,800	electrostatic • 2 driver • 85dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 61,180,-cm • 3x planar, ribbon tweeter	
Thiel CS3.6	3,899	active • 3 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 400W • 32,43,123cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Triangle Octant Tx	3,950	3 driver • 94dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 42,150,19cm • Ultra high sensitivity	
Apogee Caliper Sig	3,998	81 ribbon • 87dB • 58,127cm • Power hungry full-range ribbon panels have remarkable transparency and delicacy; limited loudness and 'grunt'.	REC'D
KEF 107/2 REC	3,999	coupled cavity • 4 driver • 90dB • 4 Ohms • 300W • 33,116,45cm • Raymond Cooke Special Edition	
Monitor Audio Studio 50	4,000	ported • 2 driver • 90dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 20,104,30cm • Floor stand, metal bass & mid	
ATC SCM100	4,033	ported • 3 driver • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 40,84,53cm • Passive/to special order only	
Apogee Stage 1 GS	4,100	ribbon • 86dB • 55,82,5cm • Two way	
Jordan Watts Class JH2KM	4,250	ported • 2 driver • 87dB • 8 Ohms • 150W • 47,82,34cm • Line tweeter array	
Rehdeko RK145	4,250	ported • 102dB • 8 Ohms • 39,66,29cm	
Martin-Logan CLS IIz	4,333	electrostatic • 86dB • 62,127,32cm • Full range panel	
Linn Keltik Aktiv	4,400	sealed • 3 driver • 26,104,37cm • Integral stands, boundary	
Boston Acoustics Lyn 500L	4,449	3 driver • 85dB • 5 Ohms • 350W • 122,23,47cm • Free stand, separate bass/top	
Audiovector 6	4,600	ported • 3 driver • 92dB • 6 Ohms • 250W • 38,115,42cm • Black piano lacquer	
Prof Monitor Co MB1P	4,681	ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 38,87,53cm • Transmission line	
Bravura Brio	4,750	horn • 1 driver • 101dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 129,39,81cm • Coaxial Lowther driver	
ATC SCM50A	4,864	active • 8 Ohms • 350W • 31,72,48cm • With int x'over and amps	
Jordan Watts Classic JH5K	4,875	sealed • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 47,126,40cm • Floor stand, line array	
Shahinian Hawk	4,950	ported • 3 driver • 90dB • 6 Ohms • 250W • 43,95,32cm • Modular, omni-directional	
Apogee Centaur Major	4,980	hybrid • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 40,141,27cm • Ribbon/dynamic	
Genelec Triamp 1037A	4,982	active • 191W • 40,68,30cm	
Martin-Logan Quest Z	4,998	hybrid • 90dB • 42,160,29cm • Dynamic bass/electrostatic, tw	
TDL Ref Standard-M	4,999	ported • 7 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 800W • 56,121,50cm • Dual TLS, metal drivers	
B&W Silver Signature	5,000	ported • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 120W • 25,45,24cm • External crossover	
Allison I.C. 20	5,500	2 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 400W • 53,122,31cm • Floor standing, free space	
Bravura Accelerando	5,500	horn • 1 driver • 103dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 129,39,81cm • Coaxial Lowther driver	
Sonus-Faber Guarneri	5,500	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 19,38,38cm • Compact, limited edition	
Tannoy Canterbury 12 ^	5,500	ported • 2 driver • 94dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 58,90,43cm	
Audio Physic AVANTI	5,599	ported • 4 driver • 86dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 19,107,40cm • Decoupled mid/tweeter	
Wilson WAP Puppy II	5,600	subwoofer • 91dB • 25,53,35cm • Passive subwoofer for WATT	
ATC SCM100A	5,660	active • 8 Ohms • 350W • 40,84,59cm • With int x'over and amps	
Jordan Watts Class JH5KM	5,860	ported • 2 driver • 89dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 47,125,40cm • Line driver array	
Sonus-Faber Extrema	5,991	ported • 2 driver • 88dB • 55,27,46cm • 'Reference Standard'	
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000	Col ported • 2 driver • 99dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • These awesome horn loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive.	REC'D
Jamo Oriel	6,500	ported • 3 driver • 87dB • 6 Ohms • 300W • 40,178,30cm • Floor standing, coupled cavity	
Prof Monitor Co BB5P	6,754	ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 600W • 43,104,79cm • Transmission line	
Sound-Lab Pristine II	6,990	electrostatic • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 72,153,69cm • Steel frame, curved panel	
Naim DBL Active	6,991	200W • 65,120,40cm • Boundary, floor standing	
Tannoy Canterbury 15 ^	7,000	ported • 2 driver • 96dB • 8 Ohms • 250W • 68,110,48cm	
Living Voice Tone Scout	7,249	horn • 104dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 64,110,70cm • Floorstanding, three-way	
Wilson WAP Puppy 5	7,375	subwoofer • 91dB • Passive sub for WATTs	
Naim DBL Passive	7,672	92dB • 4 Ohms • 200W • 65,120,40cm • Boundary, floor standing	
Rehdeko RK175	7,750	ported • 106dB • 8 Ohms • 50,96,37cm	
Shahinian Diapason	8,350	ported • 5 driver • 91dB • 6 Ohms • 300W • 58,100,38cm • Omni-directional	
Lumley Reference LM1	8,500	ported • 5 driver • 89dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 71,122,40cm • 2 box, floor standing	
Martin-Logan Monolith IIP	8,730	hybrid • 89dB • 59,163,28cm • ESL/dynamic, two-way	
Wilson WATT 5	8,800	ported • 2 driver • 91dB • 27,31,36cm	
Jordan Watts Class JH10K	9,340	sealed • 2 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 47,156,40cm • Floor stand, line array	
Martin-Logan Monolith IIX	9,354	hybrid • 89dB • 59,163,26cm • ESL/dynamic, active crossover	
Infinity ARS Epsilon	9,995	sealed • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 152,47,41cm • Includes own servo control amp	
Audio Physic CALDERA	9,999	5 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 25,111,50cm • Pneumatic baffle, 3 cabinet	
Magnepan MG-20 SE Pass	10,300	electrostatic • 2 driver • 87dB • 4 Ohms • 250W • 74,201,-cm • 3x planar, ribbon tweeter	
Thiel CS7	10,476	active • 4 driver • 88dB • 4 Ohms • 500W • 35,48,140cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Jordan Watts JH10KM	10,495	sealed • 2 driver • 92dB • 8 Ohms • 500W • 47,156,40cm • Line driver array	
Magnepan MG-20SE Active	11,000	electrostatic • 2 driver • 74,201,-cm • Active MG-20SE Passive	
ATC SCM200A	11,207	active • 91dB • 8 Ohms • 850W • 83,73,440cm • With ext x'over and amps	
Sound-Lab A3	11,990	electrostatic • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 300W • 78,187,23cm • Any finish, curved panel	
ATC SCM300A	11,995	active • 94dB • 850W • 93,88,48cm • With ext x'over and amps	
Wilson WHOW II	12,500	subwoofer • 98dB • 88/65,36cm • Active subwoofer for WATT	
Tannoy Westminster Royal	13,500	ported • 2 driver • 99dB • 8 Ohms • 200W • 98,139,56cm	
Thiel CS51	13,669	active • 5 driver • 87dB • 3 Ohms • 500W • 33,43,162cm • 15 wood veneers + black	
Sound-Lab A1	13,990	electrostatic • 88dB • 8 Ohms • 400W • 91,208,27cm • Curved panel, any finish	
Apogee Studio Grand	14,900	hybrid • 87dB • 63,160,55cm • Three way ribbon, active sub	
Living Voice Air Partner	16,400	138 horn • 108dB • 8 Ohms • 100W • 64,160,90cm • Outstanding transparency, dynamics and speed. Sheer energy levels require total commitment.	REC'D
Audio Physic MEDEA	20,999	ported • 4 driver • 91dB • 4 Ohms • 400W • 24,110,50cm • Phase linear	

SATELLITES & SUBWOOFERS			
JPW AV2	300	sub & 5 sats • 8ohms • 87dB • 51,26,27cm • Minim/Subwoofer	
JPW AV1	300	sub & 5 sats • 8ohms • 85dB • 51,26,27cm • Satellites/Subwoofer	
B&W Solid Verticale	400	Sub, 2 x sat • 89 • 19,34,45cm	
JPW AV4	400	2 sub & 5 sats • 8ohms • 87dB • 51,26,27cm • Minim/Subwoofer	
JPW AV3	400	2 sub & 5 sats • 8ohms • 85dB • 51,26,27cm • Satellite/Subwoofer	
Polk M Solution	999	sub, 4 sats • 8ohms • 89dB • 28,50,36cm	
Polk RM7000	999	8ohms • 89dB • 28,50,36cm • su, 2 x sat, 1 x centre	

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

ACTIVE SUBWOOFERS		
Aiwa TS-W5	150	Stereo • 50W
Aiwa TS-W7	200	stereo • 100W
Kenwood SW-500	250	stereo • 50W • 29,50,48cm
Kenwood SW-900	260	Stereo • 70W • 21,40,56cm
B&W Solid Powerbass	300	stereo • 75W • 33,34,39cm
Polk PSW100	499	1-box stereo • 65 W • 28,50,36cm
Triangle SAT III	650	stereo • 140W
B&W 800ASW	1,500	stereo • 200W • THX • 43,58,50cm



Tuners & Receivers

The radio medium operates at a lower profile than TV, but in areas outside pop music the BBC service is the envy of the world. Live Prom concerts rival all other sources from a hi-fi perspective. ■ Only the FM (VHF) bands give stereo hi-fi sound, though AM (MW & LW) are useful for certain transmissions in the UK. ■ Something of a hi-fi afterthought, tuners are often selected merely to match the cosmetics of a chosen amplifier. However, the task they discharge is far from simple, since it requires the skills of RF (reception) and audio (signal processing) engineering. The importance of

the former will depend on local reception conditions, but money invested in a high-quality outside aerial system is well spent. ■ Tuners come in two basic types. Analogue models tune gradually (and usually manually) across the bands, and can have analogue or digital displays; they are often preferred for sound quality, and are certainly best for AM bands. Digital tuners offer convenient automatic tune facilities and pre-set memories. ■ RDS (radio data system) is a feature originally designed for in-car applications. Basically RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, but

they offer a variety of other features as well. ■ Receivers are amplifiers with tuners built in. They are often equipped with surround-sound processing.

Key	
FM, M	.....wavebands received A/V
surround sound capability	.....75W
power output/channel in Watts RMS	
30 presets	.....number of presets offered
MM,3L,3T	.....number of inputs offered (see Amplifier category)
RDS	.....has Radio Data System compatibility

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

TUNERS			
Goodmans GST650	90	FM, M, L • 36 presets	
Sherwood TD1120	90	FM, M • 24 presets	
Goodmans Delta 700	100	FM, M, L • 36 presets • 36,11,30cm	
Sherwood TX1010C	100	FM, M • 30 presets	
Denon TU-260L	120	93 FM, M, L • 20 presets • 44,8,24cm • <i>Minimum of features. Careful design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound, so don't overlook it.</i>	B'BUY
Grundig T210	120	FM, M, L • 59 presets • Manual station name	
Kenwood KT-1060L	120	FM, M, L • 30 presets • 44,8,26cm • Preset scan	
Sherwood TX3010C	120	120 FM, M • 30 presets • <i>Lots of features and fine FM discrimination for price. Sound is communicative but inconsistently tacky.</i>	
Teac T-X4030	120	142 FM, M • 20 presets • 44,9,28cm • <i>Not much special, but still a well balanced, tolerable and capable all-rounder at a very reasonable price.</i>	B'BUY
Grundig Fine Arts T1	130	FM, M, L • 59 presets • 44,9,30cm • User station name, gain switch	
JVC FX362BX	130	129 FM, M, L • 40 presets • 44,8,30cm • <i>Disappointing all-round performance - watch out for aerial overload in strong signal areas. Tuning knob unspecial</i>	
Pioneer F-203RDS	130	FM, M, L • 30 presets • RDS • 42,8,29cm • RDS at very budget price	
Sony STS211LB	130	FM, M, L • 30 presets • 43,9,30cm • Station naming	
Yamaha TX-480L	139	FM, M, L • 40 presets • 44,9,30cm	
Grundig T310	140	FM, M, L • 59 presets • RDS • 36,8,30cm • RDS (PS, CT, RT, PTY)	
Kenwood KT-2060L	140	FM, M, L • 30 presets • 44,8,26cm • Built-in timer, RDS	
Technics ST-GT350L	140	142 FM, M, L • 30 presets • 43,7,30cm • Remote control capable	
Denon TU-215RD	150	FM, M • 20 presets • RDS • 44,8,24cm • RDS Radiotext	
Marantz ST-55	150	FM, M, L • 59 presets • 42,10,34cm • D-bus	
Onkyo T-401	160	FM, MW • 40 presets • 46,8,31cm	
Philips FT930	160	FM, M, L • 40 presets • RDS • 44,11,30cm	
Grundig Fine Arts T2	170	FM, M, L • 59 presets • RDS • 44,9,30cm • RDS (PS, RT)	
Kenwood KT-3050L	170	120 FM, M, L • 39 presets • RDS • 44,10,28cm • <i>Excellent RF performance and plenty of features including RDS; sounded rather ordinary under our conditions.</i>	
Sansui TU-X317	170	FM, M • 20 presets	
Pioneer F-303RDS	180	FM, M • 40 presets • RDS • 42,8,29cm • RDS with FON	
Onkyo T-430RDS	190	142 FM, MW • 30 presets • RDS • 46,9,30cm	
Technics ST-GT550L	190	FM, M, L • 39 presets • RDS • 43,7,31cm • Remote control capable, RDS	
Yamaha TX-580RDS	199	FM, M • 40 presets • RDS • 44,9,30cm	
Denon TU-380RD	200	FM, M • 40 presets • RDS • 44,8,24cm • RDS Radiotext/EON	
Luxman T-353	200	FM, M • 30 presets • 9,44,36cm • System bus remote control	
Sony STS311LB	200	FM, M, L • 30 presets • RDS • 43,9,30cm • RDS EON, 'Autobetical' select	
Grundig Fine Arts T4	210	FM, M • 59 presets • RDS • 44,9,30cm • RDS (PS, CT, RT, PTY)	
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	220	142 FM, M • 24 presets • 43,8,27cm • Signal strength meter	
Rotel RT-950BX	220	142 FM, M, L • 20 presets • 44,8,24cm	
Sansui TU-X519	220	FM, M • 30 presets	
Onkyo T-409	230	FM, MW • 30 presets • 28,8,30cm • Mini component	
Technics ST-GT650L	230	FM, M, L • 39 presets • RDS • 43,10,31cm • Class AA, remote control ready	
Pioneer F-502RDS	250	FM, M • 40 presets • RDS • 42,9,34cm • 2 ariel inputs	
Sony STS505ES	250	FM, M, L • 30 presets • RDS • 43,9,35cm • UK optimised sound	
Onkyo T-450RDS	260	FM, MW • 30 presets • RDS • 46,9,31cm	
Onkyo T-411RDS	280	FM, MW • 30 presets • RDS • 28,8,30cm • Mini component	
Harman-Kardon TU9400	299	142 FM, M • 24 presets • 45,8,33cm • <i>Striking sound, it comfortably exceeded our expectations. On stereo FM, it's HK's best yet</i>	REC'D
Kenwood KT-6050	300	FM, M • 39 presets • RDS • 44,10,33cm • IF switch, two antennae, RDS	
Marantz ST-72	300	FM, M, L • 59 presets • RDS • 42,10,34cm • D-bus, IF switch, local switch	
Musical Fidelity E50	300	FM • 20 presets • 44,10,34cm	
Aura TU80	350	FM, M, L • 30 presets • 43,6,27cm • Chrome finish add £50	
Nakamichi ST3s	350	FM • 30 presets • 43,7,32cm	
Arcam Delta 280	399	120 FM • 20 presets • 43,7,28cm • <i>Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. remote £60 extra</i>	
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	142 FM • 29 presets • 22,8,36cm • Remote control bus	
Onix BWD1	420	FM • 75,23,37cm • In-house front end	
Onkyo R-811RDS	420	FM, MW • 30 presets • RDS • 28,12,33cm • Mini component, incl timer	
Harman-Kardon TU9600	499	109 FM, M • 24 presets • 45,8,33cm • <i>Good bass, detail - and slightly enhanced dynamics</i>	
Musical Fidelity E500	499	FM • 20 presets • 44,12,35cm • AGC/IF switch, remote control	
Rotel RT-990BX	500	FM • 16 presets • 44,8,29cm • Remote control	
Naim NAT03	549	FM • 43,56,30cm	
Magnum Dynalab FT11	550	FM • Analogue, black finish	
Quad FM66	554	142 FM • 19 presets • 33,8,26cm • <i>Very pretty and compact but technically unadventurous. Sound is smooth, but only makes sense in Quad system context.</i>	
AVI S2000MT	599	FM • 16 presets • 31,25,9cm • R/C via system handset	
Meridian 504	625	FM • 30 presets • 33,9,34cm • System handset	
AudioLab 8000T	750	142 FM, M, L • 39 presets • 45,8,36cm • <i>Unusually combination of fine sound quality and RF performance (inc AM), and superb ergonomics</i>	B'BUY
Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	72 FM • <i>Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation.</i>	REC'D
Michi RHT-10	895	FM • 16 presets • 47,8,34cm • Remote control	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
Musical Fidelity FT	899	FM • 20 presets • 49,12,33cm • Remote control, AGC/IF switch
Naim NAT02	998	FM • 43,56,30cm
Magnum FT101 Etude	1,250	FM • Analogue, black finish
Meridian 604	1,350	120 FM • 30 presets • <i>Unique digital converter makes most sense in Meridian system context: smooth, sweet sound with fine front end.</i>
McIntosh MR7084	1,550	FM,M • 50 presets • 45,14,45cm • Interface to McIntosh remote c
Naim NAT01	1,599	142 FM • 43,56,30cm • <i>There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one.</i>
Linn Kremlin	1,995	142 FM • 80 presets • 32,8,33cm • <i>Controversially good sound at a very high price. The reviewer's saving up but you should check it out for yourself.</i>
Day Sequerra FM Ref	5,937	FM
Day Sequerra S B'dcast M	14,640	FM

RECEIVERS

Sherwood RX1010	120	FM,M • 30W • MM,2L,1T
Grundig R210	150	FM,M,L • 50W • 59 presets • MM,5L • rem • 36,12,30cm • Gain switch, remote
Denon DRA-265R	200	FM,M • 35W • 40 presets • MM,2L,1T • rem • 44,12,31cm
Dual CR9000RS	200	FM,M,L • 55W • 30 presets • MM,4L,2T • rem • 44,14,30cm • System component
JVC RX-212XBK	200	FM,M,L • 50W • 40 presets • MM,3L,1T • rem • 44,13,34cm • 4ch surround
Pioneer SX-203RDS	200	FM,M • 35W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 42,14,29cm • RDS tuner
JVC RX-308BK	230	FM,M,L • 70W • 40 presets • MM,3L,1T • rem • 44,13,34cm • 4 channel surround
Kenwood KR-A4070	230	FM,M • 60W • 20 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 44,13,33cm • RDS
Sony STRD311	230	FM,M,L • A/V • 60W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 43,14,30cm • System remote
Technics SA-GX170L	230	FM,M,L • 60W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 43,13,31cm
Denon DRA-365RD	250	FM,M • 45W • 40 presets • MM,3L,1T • rem • 44,12,32cm • System remote
Grundig Fine Arts R2	250	FM,M,L • 50W • 59 presets • MM,5L • rem • 44,14,30cm • RDS, Radio text, remote
Pioneer SX-303RDS	250	FM,M • 50W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 42,14,34cm • RDS tuner
Sansui RZ790	250	FM,M • 30W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem
Yamaha RX-385RDS	269	FM,M • 40W • 40 presets • MM,3L,1T • rem • 44,13,30cm • System remote
JVC RX-416VBK	270	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,13,35cm • Dolby Pro Logic
NAD 701	279	FM,M • 25W • 24 presets • MM,2L,1T • rem
Sony STRD511	280	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 30 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,14,30cm • Dolby Pro Logic
Technics SA-GX370L	280	FM,M,L • A/V • 80W • 40 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 43,13,31cm • Dolby Pro Logic
Yamaha RX-V390RDS	299	FM,M • A/V • 60W • 40 presets • MM,3L,2T,2V • rem • 44,14,30cm • AV amp, 'stereo' surround
Kenwood KR-V5570	300	FM,M • A/V • 50W • 20 presets • MM,L,2T • rem • 44,14,34cm • Dolby Pro Logic, RDS
Denon DRA-565RD	320	FM,M • 55W • 40 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 44,12,32cm • RDS
Sherwood RV5030R	330	FM,M,L • A/V • 80W • MM,4L,4T • rem • Dolby Pro Logic
Sony STRD611	330	FM,M,L • A/V • 60W • 30 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,14,30cm • Dolby Pro Logic
NAD 705	349	FM,M • 40W • 39 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem
JVC RX-616RBK	350	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,16,41cm • Dolby Pro Logic
JVC RX-508VBK	350	FM,M,L • A/V • 50W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,13,34cm • 5ch Dolby Pro Logic
Kenwood KR-V6070	350	FM,M • A/V • 70W • 20 presets • MM,4L,2T • rem • 44,17,34cm • RDS, Dolby Pro Logic
Technics SA-GX470L	350	FM,M,L • A/V • 80W • 30 presets • MM,4L,1T • rem • 43,14,36cm • Dolby Pro Logic
Sansui RZ-3500 II	370	FM,M • 30W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem
Kenwood KR-V7070	400	FM,M • A/V • 100W • 20 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 44,15,40cm • Dolby Pro Logic, RDS
Pioneer VSX-452	400	FM,M • A/V • 50W • 30 presets • MM,2L,2T,2V • rem • 42,14,35cm • Dolby Pro-Logic
Sherwood RV6030R	400	FM,M,L • A/V • 100W • MM,4L,4T • rem
Yamaha RX-V590RDS	449	FM,M • A/V • 70W • 40 presets • MM,3L,3T,4V • rem • 44,15,39cm • True DSP
Philips FR940	450	FM,M,L • A/V • 100W • 30 presets • MM,4L,4T • rem • 44,14,30cm • Dolby Pro Logic
Teac AG-V3020	450	FM,M • A/V • 95W • 30 presets • MM,4L,3T • rem • 44,16,38cm • Dolby Pro Logic
Technics SA-GX670L	450	FM,M,L • A/V • 100W • 30 presets • MM,4L,1T • rem • 43,16,36cm • Dolby Pro-Logic, help function
Denon AV-1000	530	FM,M • A/V • 70W • 16 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem • 44,15,33cm • Auto input balance
JVC RX-816RBK	570	FM,M,L • A/V • 70W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,16,41cm • Dolby Pro Logic
JVC RX-808VBK	570	FM,M,L • A/V • 70W • 40 presets • MM,1L,3T • rem • 44,16,40cm • 5ch Dolby Pro Logic
Marantz SR-73	599	FM,M • A/V • 75W • 30 presets • MM,3L,3T • rem • 43,15,38cm • Dolby Pro Logic
Marantz SR-82	899	FM,M • A/V • 75W • 30 presets • MM,3L,2T • rem • 43,17,43cm • Dolby Pro Logic, multi-room
B&O Beomaster 7000	920	FM,M,L • 75W • 20 presets • MM,2L,2T • rem
Harman-Kardon AVR-30	999	FM,M • A/V • 50W • 16 presets • MM,3L,3T,6V • rem • 45,13,35cm • Dolby Pro Logic
Kenwood KR-X1000	1,300	FM,M • A/V • 110W • 20 presets • MM,8L,2T • rem • 44,17,40cm • THX, Dolby PL, RDS
McIntosh MX118	3,075	FM,M • A/V • 12 presets • 5L • rem • 45,14,45cm • AV tuner control centre
McIntosh MX130	4,285	FM/M • A/V • 12 presets • 4L,6V • rem • 45,18,46cm • AV tuner controller, opt THX

Turntables & Arms

Specialist turntables are what high fidelity sound is all about. CD players may offer silent backgrounds and flat frequency responses, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative timing that serious turntable users take for granted. Turntables at the

cheaper end of the market tend to be supplied with a matching tonearm, and often include a 'starter' cartridge. Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Careful partnering and set-up is essential for these components, but many so called 'sympathetic' combinations exist.

Key to turntables

manual, automatic	.....type of operation
33/45 rpm	.....speeds offered
Key to tonearms	
SME fit	.....type of base into which arm mounts
233mm	.....effective length of arm

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
TURNTABLES		
Goodmans Delta 700	55	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 36,90,37cm • Part of Delta system
Genexxa Lab-710	60	manual • 33/45rpm • Includes MM cartridge
Genexxa Lab-810	70	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Includes MM cartridge
Sherwood PS1870	70	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Budget turntable with arm
Dual CS3700/3701	85	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 36,10,36cm • Midi-sized turntable
Sony PSXL150H	90	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 43,10,36cm • Player, with MM cartridge
Kenwood KD-492F	100	auto • 33/45rpm • 44,10,39cm • Includes cartridge
Pioneer PL-225	120	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 42,10,36cm • Belt drive, fitted cartridge
NAD 5120	129	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Includes arm
Dual CS435	130	33/45rpm • 44,12,36cm • Turntable includes cartridge
Systemdek I/920	136	manual • 33/45rpm • Semi-suspended deck
Technics SL-BD20	140	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 43,10,38cm • Belt drive, includes T4P cart
Pro-ject 0.5	145	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 42,11,3cm • With Ortofon OM5 cartridge
Pioneer PL-335	150	auto • 33/45rpm • 42,10,36cm • Belt drive, fitted cartridge
Sony PSXL431B	150	auto • 33/45rpm • 43,11,36cm • Player, auto rec size select
Ariston Pro-1200	160	manual • 33/45rpm • Semi-pro disco deck
Technics SL-BD22	160	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 43,10,38cm • Belt drive, includes T4P cart
Dual CS503-2	170	91 semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 44,13,37cm • <i>Generally coarse and woolly sound at least not inoffensive, but easily bettered by the CS-505-3.</i>
Moth Alamo	175	manual • 33/45rpm • Comes with RB250 arm
Akai AP A950	179	manual • 33/45rpm • 44,12,35cm • Inc cartridge



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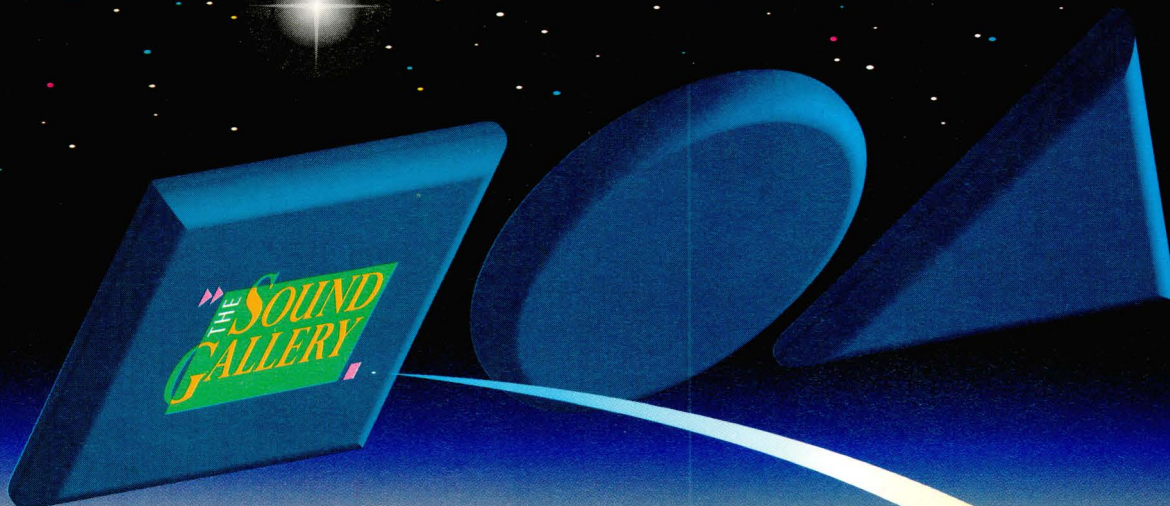
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CLASSE AUDIO. STAX. MARTIN LOGAN.
PIONEER. TANNOY. CYRUS. BOSE.
SONUS FABER. PINK. AURA. ARCAM.
EPOS. ACOUSTIC ENERGY. MONITOR
AUDIO. YAMAHA. KEF. SYSTEMDEK.
MARANTZ. APOGEE. REL. TRIANGLE.
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PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS	
Grundig TT1	180	auto • 33/45rpm • Black finish	
Thorens TD-180/AT91	180	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Belt drive	
Pro-ject 1	185	manual • 33/45rpm • 42, 11, 3cm • With Ortofon 510 cartridge	
Rega Planar 78	198	manual • 78rpm • 45,13,37cm • As Rega Planar 2, 78 only	
Rega Planar 2	198	48 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,13,37cm • <i>A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident.</i>	B'BUY
Moth Turntable	199	manual • 33/45rpm • Split-plinth design	
Dual 505-4 UK	200	103 semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • 44,15,37cm • <i>Consistent sounding and well isolated if slightly lacking in balls, but has an unmuddled presentation.</i>	REC'D
Thorens TD180/S500	200	33/45/78rpm • Belt drive, plays 78s	
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	200	semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • Electronic belt drive, AT95E	
Thorens TD-166 VI/UK/BC	200	manual • 33/45rpm • Blank armo-board, cut to shape,	
Pro-ject 1 (E)	209	semi arm lift • 33,45rpm • 42,11,32cm • Semi-auto version of Pro-ject	
Systemdek IIX/900	230	103 manual • 33/45rpm • <i>A high performance budget turntable which is particularly strong at fine detail resolution and imagery.</i>	B'BUY
Systemdek I/920/Moth	235	115 manual • 33/45rpm • <i>The motor is derivative of the Rega Planar 2 with a Moth arm. Uptempo, even bright at times but never lacks enthusiasm.</i>	REC'D
Moth Kanoot Mk I Arm	249	manual • 33/45rpm • Inc Rega RB250 arm	
Pro-ject 2	249	manual • 33/45rpm • 46, 12, 3cm • Metal/glass platter, clamp	
Rega Planar 3	260	48 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,13,37cm • <i>A leader in its category, the '3' (with excellent RB300 arm) sounds musical in a balanced and coherent manner.</i>	B'BUY
Thorens TD-166 VI/AT95E	270	manual • 33/45rpm • Inc TP50 manual arm, AT95E	
Pro-ject 2/Ortofon	275	manual • 33/45rpm • 46, 12, 3cm • With Ortofon MC1 cartridge	
Moth Kanoot Mk III Arm	299	manual • 33/45rpm • Inc Rega RB300 arm	
Thorens TD-166 VI/RB250	300	103 manual • 33/45rpm • <i>Refined and solid sound with well focussed imagery; suitable for use with good MM and budget MC cartridges.</i>	B'BUY
Linn Basic	349	103 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,14,36cm • <i>Strong midband analysis and imagery; clean if sharp treble is matched to a good if occasionally wooden bass.</i>	REC'D
Dual CS750-1	350	semi arm lift • 33/45/78rpm • 44,14,38cm • Turntable includes cartridge	
Pro-ject 6	379	manual • 33/45rpm • 46, 17, 3cm • Suspended turntable	
Systemdek IIXE/900Ap	388	103 manual • 33/45rpm • <i>The acrylic plattered IXE is one of the most capable budget decks on the market: good resolution, dynamics and timing.</i>	REC'D
Michell Mycro	397	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,14,34cm	
Pro-ject 6/Ortofon	435	manual • 33/45rpm • 46, 17, 3cm • As above, with Ortofon MC15	
Dual Golden II	500	semi arm lift • 33/45/78rpm • 44,14,38cm • Piano finish CS750-1	
Technics SL-1210MkII	500	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,17,36cm • Quartz DD, no cartridge	
Technics SL-1200MkII	500	manual • 33/45rpm • 43,10,38cm • Quartz DD, includes T4P cartri	
Michell Mycro/arm	539	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,14,34cm • Includes Rega RB300 arm	
B&O 7000	555	auto • 33/45rpm • 42,8,33cm • Inc MMC2 cartridge, RIAA pream	
Manticore Madrigal	570	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,36,12cm • Turntable, lifetime guarantee	
Roksan Radius	595	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,35cm • Motor unit	
Nottingham An. Spacedeck	600	manual • 33,45rpm	
Nottingham An. Illusion	600	manual • 33/45rpm	
Thorens TD-3001BC	630	manual • 33/45rpm • No arm, various armo-boards available	
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	699	138 manual • 33/45rpm • 46,17,3cm • With Sumiko arm	REC'D
Thorens TD-2001	700	91 semi arm lift • 33/45rpm • <i>Similar to TD320 but much dearer - why? Sound is comfortable but not very detailed.</i>	
Linn LP12 Basic	745	103 manual • 33rpm • 45,14,36cm • <i>Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still in top class, and bass tauter than of old.</i>	REC'D
Michell Gyrodek	765	55 manual • 33/45rpm • 53,19,41cm • <i>Sweet and natural, well matched with Rega RB300. Acres of clear acrylic are very distinctive.</i>	REC'D
Thorens TD-3001/UK	770	103 manual • 33/45rpm • <i>Excellent middle ranking esoterica, with strong all-round abilities rather than excellence in particular areas.</i>	REC'D
Roksan Radius/Tabriz	795	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,36cm • As above, with Roksan arm	
Townshend MkIII Rock	799	manual • 33/45rpm • Headshell end arm damping	
Alphason Sonata	835	manual • 33rpm • <i>Good in all areas - bass, clarity and neutrality all in top class and bettered by very few decks at price (tested with HR100S MCS).</i>	REC'D
Manticore Mantra	890	manual • 33/45rpm • 46,36,12cm • Turntable, lifetime guarantee	
Linn LP12 Valhalla	894	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,14,36cm • Electronic PSU, upgradable	
Roksan Radius/Tabriz	895	103 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,35cm • <i>Design is subtle, refined and easy on the eye. Musically it offers exceptional performance.</i>	REC'D
Origin Live Oasis-S	899	manual • 33rpm • Suspended turntable	
Thorens TD-520	900	semi arm lift • 33/45/78rpm • Pitch control, no arm	
Michell Gyrodek/arm	907	manual • 33/45rpm • 53,19,41cm • Includes Rega RB300 arm	
Pink Triangle Export	948	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 46,15,37cm • <i>Retains features of great transparency and neutrality. Review sample had highish motor noise.</i>	REC'D
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 51, 18, 4cm • <i>Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended. Stogi Reference is very capable.</i>	REC'D
Notts Analogue H.Spaced'k	1,200	manual • 33/45rpm	
Notts Analogue Graphic	1,200	manual • 33/45rpm	
Alphason Sonata/Atlas	1,235	manual • 33/45rpm • Motor unit inc PSU	
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,345	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,14,36cm • <i>The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains.</i>	REC'D
Wilson Benesch	1,550	manual • 33/45rpm • High-tech turntable	
Rivelin Audio Eclipse	1,595	144 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,13,38cm • Motor unit	
Audiomeca Romance	1,675	manual • 33/45rpm • With Romeo unipivot arm	
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,797	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,15,37cm • <i>Possibly the most detailed, clear and neutral sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny.</i>	REC'D
Well Temp'd Rec Player	1,800	67 manual • 33/45rpm • 45,18,36cm • <i>Intriguing design. Muically it is not ideal, but has a limpid quality and a lack of artificiality that sets standards.</i>	REC'D
Alphason Symphony	1,860	manual • 33/45rpm • Motor unit & PSU	
Michell ORBE	1,950	manual • 33/45rpm • 55,29,71cm • Inc QC power supply	
Pink Triangle Anni/DC PSU	2,173	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,15,37cm • Battery PSU version of above	
Notts Analogue Mentor	2,200	manual • 33/45rpm • 75lb alloy or graphite platter	
Roksan TMS	2,475	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,35cm • Suede black	
Audiomeca J1	2,500	manual • 33/45rpm • 50, 40, 2cm • Top of the range model	
Roksan TMS	2,750	manual • 33/45rpm • 45,12,35cm • Black lacquer	
Well Tempered Classic	2,800	manual • 33/45rpm • 48,19,39cm • The original Well Tempered	
SME Model 20	2,950	manual • 33/45/78rpm • 42,16,32cm • Precision turntable	
Kuzma Stabi Ref/PS	3,000	manual • 33/45rpm • Two motor, belt driven	
DNM Reson Rota 1	3,500	manual • 33/45rpm • 59,14,37cm • Inc arm & cartridge	
Well Tempered Super	3,500	manual • 33/45rpm • 49,19,39cm • Classic with carbon arm	
Manticore Magister	3,800	manual • 33/45rpm • 57,46,18cm • Special order only	
Voyd 0.5	3,940	144 manual • 33/45rpm • 51,16,42cm • <i>Halfway between standard and Reference Voyds with the latter's platter and bearing. Colourful and dynamic.</i>	REC'D
SME Model 20A	4,244	118 manual • 33/45/78rpm • 42,15,32cm • <i>Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval.</i>	
Audiomeca J1/SL5	4,250	manual • 33/45rpm • 50, 40, 2cm • With parallel tracking arm	
Basis Ovation II	4,800	manual • 33/45rpm • 58,42,14cm • Lead/brass, record clamped	
DNM Rota 2	4,800	144 manual • 33/45rpm • 59,14,37cm • <i>Includes arm and cartridge</i>	REC'D
Notts Analogue Mentor Ref	4,800	manual • 33/45rpm • 150lb platter, graphite top	
Well Tempered Reference	5,000	manual • 33/45rpm • 49,19,39cm • 'Fountainhead' base/carbon arm	
Voyd Reference	6,500	91 manual • 33/45rpm • 51,16,48cm • <i>Voyd's flagship, three substantial motors, a Lexan platter and brute PS. A strong contender for world's best.</i>	REC'D
Basis Debut Gold Std III	7,200	manual • 33/45rpm • 58,42,19cm • Belt drive, high mass, four po	
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	9,250	manual • 33/45rpm • 58,42,19cm • Includes suction platter	
SME Model 30	10,166	manual • /78rpm • 45,22,35cm • Flagship turntable	
SME Model 30A	11,460	manual • 33/45/78rpm • 45,22,35cm • As above, with SME Series V ar	
TONEARMS			
Decca LI Arm	49	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • 212mm • Damped	
Moth Arm	55	60 fixed armtube • <i>The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural.</i>	B'BUY
Rega RB250	95	fixed armtube • 237mm • Scaled down RB300	
Decca LIR Arm	99	changeable armtube • proprietary fit • 212mm • Rewired version of LI	
Rega RB300	139	60 fixed armtube • 237mm • <i>Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high end turntables.</i>	B'BUY
Moth Mk III	146	fixed armtube • Rebadged Rega RB300	
Linn Akito	209	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • Statically balanced	
SME Series IIS	242	changeable armtube • SME fit • 233mm • Economy version of Series III	

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE	SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	268		fixed armtube • SME fit • 231mm • Fixed headshell, low mass
Roksan Tabriz	275	91	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 240mm • Targetted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases - a touch bright though. REC'D
Alphason Xenon	286		fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • 1-piece titanium armtube
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	292		removable headshell • SME fit • 231mm • Detachable headshell, medium m
SME Series III	335		changeable armtube • SME fit • 233mm • Ultra-low mass for hi-complian
Notts Analogue Space	350		changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Optional silver wiring, unipiv
Alphason Xenon MCS	370		fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • vdH silver wiring
Manticore Musician	385		fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 230mm • Handmade, lifetime guarantee
Roksan Tabriz ZI	396		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 240mm • 'Intelligent' counterweight
SME Series II 3009-R	445		removable headshell • SME fit • 233mm • Heavier version of Ser II S2 I
SME Series II 3010-R	455		removable headshell • SME fit • 239mm • Detachable headshell, 10 inch
Zeta as	469		Pivoted
SME Series II 3012-R	489		removable headshell • SME fit • 308mm • Detachable headshell, 12 inch
Alphason HR100S	490	86	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • S-shaped arm sounds smooth, but nevertheless reproduces transients with fine attack. REC'D
Helius Orion 4 Copper	495		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 254mm
Alphason HR100S MCS	550		fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • vdH silver, top bearings
SME Series 300-309	597	79	removable headshell • SME fit • 232mm • Beautifully made and finished: fully adjustable and a highly neutral performer. REC'D
Kuzma Stogi	600		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Effective mass 13gm
SME Series 300-310	611		removable headshell • SME fit • 238mm • 10 inch (nom) version of 300-3
Helius Orion 4 Silver	645		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 254mm
SME Series 300-312	694		removable headshell • SME fit • 308mm • 12 inch (nom) version of 300-3
Manticore Magician1	695		fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 230mm • Polished armtube finish
DNM Yota	700	144	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Solid core wired REC'D
Notts Analogue Mentor	750		changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Silver wiring, unipiv
Manticore Magician2	795		fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 305mm • Polished armtube finish
Townshend Excalibur	799		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 220mm • Outtrigger headshell damping
SME Series IV	869	60	fixed armtube • SME fit • 233mm • Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low colouration. REC'D
Roksan Artemiz	895		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 240mm • Flagship arm, new style
Naim ARO	963		changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Unipivot
Wilson Benesch ACT1	975		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Carbon-fibre armtube, unipivot
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000	79	fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Large, solid and well made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness. REC'D
Notts Analogue Alien	1,200		changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Graphite tube, unipivot
SME Series V	1,294	60	fixed armtube • SME fit • 233mm • Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price. REC'D
Linn Ekos	1,297	67	fixed armtube • Linn/Alphason fit • 229mm • Superb, state of the art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths. REC'D
Dynavector 507	1,400		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Biaxial design
Helius Cyalene 2	1,495		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • 254mm • Silver wired, pivoted
Audiomeca SL5	1,999		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • Parallel tracking
Graham 1.5T	2,550		changeable armtube • SME fit • SME base, unipivot
Wheaton Tri-Planar 4	2,750		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • With terminal box
Wheaton Tri-Planar 4C	3,000		fixed armtube • proprietary fit • As 4 with Cardas cable
Air Tangent Tangent 10B	6,900		changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Air-bearing
Air Tangent Tangent R Sig.	11,000		changeable armtube • proprietary fit • Remote version of above



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs; and generally more expensive low and very low output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped

with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono input equipped valve designs need a transformer to cope with MC cartridges.

■ Cartridge/amplifier interfacing can be very subtle, but even basic high output MM designs benefit in overall balance from optimised amplifier capacitance loading. Cantilever compliance (how springy it is) needs to be

considered in the light of the effective mass of the tonearm. High compliance (ie soft suspension) cartridges are best used with low mass tonearms and vice versa.

Key

fixed stylus, moving coil, moving magnet cartridge type
1.4 mV cartridge output in millivolts

PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

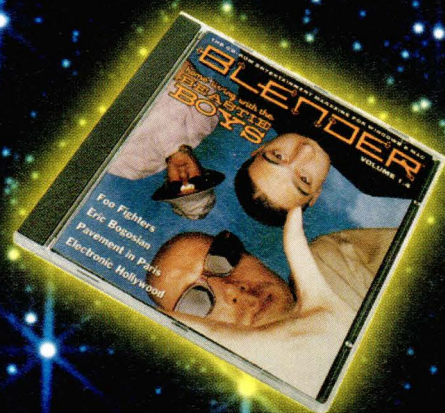
CARTRIDGES			
Ortofon VMS2	10	141	moving magnet • 5 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Entry level elliptical cart
Audio Technica AT-91	13		moving magnet • 2.8 mV • removable stylus • 5.8g
Ortofon OM-5E	16		moving magnet • removable stylus
Goldring Elan P	17		moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • removable stylus • T4P version of Elan
Goldring Elan	17	67	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • removable stylus • A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM. REC'D
Ortofon OMP-5E	17		moving coil • 4 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g
Shure ME70B	18		moving magnet • 6mV mV • removable stylus • Conical stylus
Audio Technica AT-95E	19	48	moving magnet • 2.8 mV • removable stylus • 5.7g • Clear, dynamic if richly balanced. B'BUY
Pickering TE-15	20		moving magnet • removable stylus • Tracks 1.5gm
Ortofon OM Pro S	21		moving magnet • 5 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Budget disco cartridge
Shure M92E	22		moving magnet • 5mV mV • removable stylus • Dual T4P & normal fit
Audio Technica AT-110E	24		moving magnet • 3.8 mV • removable stylus • 7.2g
Goldring Elektra	25		moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus
Ortofon OM10 Super	25		moving magnet • 4 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Elliptical stylus
Pickering VE-15	25		moving magnet • removable stylus • Tracks 1 - 3gms
Pickering T-E	25		moving magnet • removable stylus • Elliptical
Grado ZTE + 1	27		moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux, high output
Pickering V15-DJ	28		moving magnet • removable stylus • Disco model
Shure SC35C	28		moving magnet • 5mV mV • removable stylus • For broadcast use
Arcam C77	30	48	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • A sensible moving magnet package with good bounce at a competitive price. B'BUY
Sumiko Oyster	30		moving magnet • removable stylus
Ortofon OM Night Club S	32		moving magnet • 6 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Spherical stylus
Ortofon 510/P	32	85	moving magnet • 3 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • For the price, a good blend of virtues - weight, clarity and neutrality, B'BUY
Shure M44C	33		moving magnet • 9mV mV • removable stylus • Professional, spherical stylus
Rega Bias	34	67	moving magnet • removable stylus • 4.1g • Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow build, the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound.
Rega RB78	34		moving magnet • 4.0g • for 78rpm records
Stanton 500EL	34		moving magnet • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus
Stanton 500AL II	34		moving magnet • removable stylus • Spherical stylus
Pickering TL-E	35		moving magnet • removable stylus
Grado ZCE + 1	37		moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux
Ortofon OM Night Club E	37		moving magnet • 6 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Elliptical stylus
Shure ME95ED	38		moving magnet • 5mV mV • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus
Arcam C77MG	40	67	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • Punchy with plenty of extra energy to liven things up. The solid body seems well worth it. B'BUY
Ortofon Concord Pro S	40		moving magnet • 5 mV • removable stylus • 19g • Pro use, inc headshell

PRODUCT	£	ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS
Pickering XV15-350C	40	moving magnet • removable stylus • Conical stylus
Shure M55E	42	moving magnet • 6mV mV • removable stylus • Professional, spherical stylus
Shure M104E	44	moving magnet • 5mV mV • removable stylus • DualT4P & normal fit
Pickering TL-2E	45	moving magnet • removable stylus
Grado Z3E + I	47	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux
Arcam E77	50	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • Elliptical stylus
Goldring 1006	50	moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus
Pickering XV15-625E	50	moving magnet • removable stylus
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	50	moving magnet • removable stylus • Professional cartridge
Stanton 680AL/X	50	moving magnet • removable stylus • Spherical stylus
Sumiko Black Pearl	50	moving magnet • removable stylus
Rega Super Bias	52	moving magnet • 4.1g
Linn K5	54	67 moving magnet • 4.5mm mV • removable stylus • 6g • <i>Not as crisply focussed as the costlier Linn magnetics, the K5 offers a smoother presentation.</i> REC'D
Ortofon Concord NC S	55	moving magnet • 6 mV • removable stylus • 19g • Pro use, inc headshell
Ortofon 520/P	55	67 moving magnet • 3 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • <i>Very sensitive to load capacitance, a lively, effervescent sound quality.</i> REC'D
Pickering TL-2-S	55	moving magnet • removable stylus • Line contact stylus
Stanton 680EL/X	56	moving magnet • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus
Arcam E77MG	60	48 moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Sample had a disappointing stylus, but gave a coherent, rich and laid back sound, with good 'scale'.</i> REC'D
Ortofon OM20 Super	60	moving magnet • 4 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	60	moving coil • 3.3 mV • removable stylus • 4.1g
Ortofon Concord NC E	60	moving magnet • 6 mV • removable stylus • 19g • Spherical version of Concord
Pickering XV15-757S	60	moving magnet • removable stylus • Line contact stylus
Pickering XV15-625DJ	60	moving magnet • removable stylus • Broadcast cartridge
Shure ME97HE	60	48 moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 7g • <i>Won't turn a sow's ear of a turntable into a silk purse, but it will produce an acceptable result.</i> REC'D
Arcam P77	63	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • 'Profiled' stylus
Goldring 1012GX	65	85 moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Slightly harsh sound but plenty of life and quite good detail.</i> REC'D
Denon DL110	70	48 moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well in nearly all circumstances.</i> B'BUY
Pickering XV15-1800S	70	moving magnet • removable stylus • Line contact stylus
Sumiko Pearl	70	moving magnet • removable stylus
Arcam P77MG	73	48 moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 6g • <i>Preferred to its E77MG by virtue of a better tip. Channel balance could have been better.</i> REC'D
Rega Elys	74	67 moving magnet • removable stylus • 4.7g • <i>Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is both more detailed, accurate and musically convincing.</i> REC'D
Shure M110HE	74	moving magnet • 4mV mV • removable stylus • 7g • Dual T4P & normal fit
Ortofon OM30 Super	80	moving magnet • 4 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g • Fine line stylus
Pickering TL3S	80	moving magnet • removable stylus
Grado ZF1 +	82	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux
Stanton 890AL/X	82	moving magnet • removable stylus • Professional cartridge
Goldring 1022GX	85	85 moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>A touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved, though, and it goes well with electric guitar!</i> REC'D
Ortofon MC10 Super	85	48 moving coil • 0.3 mV • fixed stylus • 7.0g • <i>'What a delightfully sweet-sounding cartridge this is....' we said.</i> B'BUY
Ortofon 530/P	85	moving magnet • 3 mV • removable stylus • 6.0g • T4P fit
Denon DL160	90	43 moving coil • fixed stylus • 6g • <i>Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here proved a twin lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'.</i>
Pickering XEV-3001E	95	moving magnet • removable stylus • Elliptical stylus
NOtts Analogue Tracer I	98	moving magnet
Denon DL103	100	103 moving coil • fixed stylus • 9g • <i>Good performance in bass and good 'life' is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail.</i>
Goldring Eroica LX	100	84 moving coil • 0.5mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative.</i> REC'D
Goldring Eroica	100	moving coil • 2.5 mV • fixed stylus • Gyger II stylus
Pickering XLZ-3500	100	moving magnet • removable stylus
Pickering TL-4-S	100	moving magnet • removable stylus
Sumiko Blue Point	100	moving coil • fixed stylus • High output MC
Goldring 1042	105	91 moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively though.</i>
Linn K9	109	Col moving magnet • 4.5mm mV • removable stylus • 7g • <i>Linn put this in the limelight by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus.</i> B'BUY
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	110	103 moving coil • 3.3 mV • fixed stylus • 4.1g • <i>Not terribly subtle, but doesn't aim to be. Bright, cheerful and bouncy - take it as it comes.</i> REC'D
Ortofon MC15 Super II	110	103 moving coil • 0.35 mV • fixed stylus • 7.0g • <i>Outstanding performance in detail retrieval, even if it can be very slightly bright and close up.</i> B'BUY
Ortofon 540/P	110	moving magnet • 3 mV • removable stylus • 5.0g
Roksan Corus Black	130	91 moving magnet • 6.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but more civilised and smoother.</i> REC'D
Pickering TL-3003	145	moving magnet • removable stylus
Audio Technica AT-OC5	146	103 moving coil • 0.4 mV • fixed stylus • 8.0g • <i>Unusually effortless and detailed, but it tends to become rather relentless and tiring eventually.</i> REC'D
Grado Signature Junior	149	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux
DNM Reson Mica	150	moving magnet • removable stylus
Pickering XLZ-4500	150	moving magnet • removable stylus • Line contact
Dynavector 50X	159	moving coil • 2 mV • removable stylus • 4.5g • High output, exchange scheme
Ortofon MC25E	160	139 moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.5g • High output, elliptical stylus
NOtts Analogue Tracer II	175	moving magnet
Pickering TL-4004	175	moving magnet • removable stylus
Dynavector 10X	189	moving coil • 2 mV • fixed stylus • 4.6g • High output, exchange scheme
Linn K18/II	197	moving magnet • 4.5mV mV • removable stylus • 8g • Metal body
DNM Reson Aciore	199	moving coil • fixed stylus
London Decca Maroon	199	67 moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever.</i>
Denon DL304	200	moving coil • fixed stylus • Elliptical stylus
Goldring Elite	200	103 moving coil • 0.5mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound possesses a certain dirtiness.</i>
Pickering XSV-5000U	200	moving magnet • removable stylus • High output
Pickering XLZ-7500	200	moving magnet • removable stylus • Hybrid, low impedance
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	200	moving magnet • removable stylus
Ortofon MC25FL	210	139 moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.5g • High output, Fine Line stylus
DNM Reson Recca	225	moving magnet • removable stylus
London Decca Gold	239	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Elliptical stylus
Audio Technica AT-OC9	245	moving coil • 0.38 mV • fixed stylus • 8.8g
Audioquest MC5	250	moving coil • 1.4mV mV • fixed stylus • High output MC, line contact
Grado Signature 8MZ	250	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	250	moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.7g • High output MC
Sumiko BPS	250	moving coil • fixed stylus • Nude stylus
vdH MM-1	250	103 moving magnet • 5.5mV mV • removable stylus • <i>Woody midrange colouration but excellent imaging and admirable security.</i> REC'D
London Decca Maroon Dp	259	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Deccapod mounting
Shure V15V-MR	265	38 moving magnet • 3mV mV • removable stylus • 6.6g • <i>Initially promising but extended familiarity gave the feeling of a lack of energy and a 'shut in' sound.</i>
DNM Reson Etile	299	moving coil • fixed stylus
London Decca Gold Dpd	299	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Elliptical stylus, Deccapod
Militek Aurora	299	moving coil • 2.0mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>An overall feeling of relaxed ease characterised this clear and atmospheric Kiseki-built cartridge.</i> REC'D
vdH MM-2	299	moving magnet • 5.5mV mV • removable stylus
London Decca S Gold	339	84 moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>Immediate and detailed, but very coloured, very nonlinear and questionable effect on records. Devotees swear by it.</i>
NOtts Analogue Tracer III	350	moving magnet
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	350	moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.7g • High-output elliptical MC
Dynavector 23RS	375	moving coil • 0.15 mV • fixed stylus • 5.3g • Jewel cantilever, exchange
Grado Signature MCZ	375	moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux
London Decca S Gold Dp	399	moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Deccapod mounting
Militek Olympia	399	moving coil • 2.0mV mV • fixed stylus • As Aurora, sapphire cantilever
Linn Klyde	449	moving coil • 150uV mV • fixed stylus • 8g • Alloy body

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PRODUCT £ ISSUE SPECIFICATIONS & COMMENTS

Dynavector 17D2	450	91	moving coil • 0.15 mV • fixed stylus • 5.3g • <i>Clear, detailed, neutral and generally informative - excellent.</i>	REC'D
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	450		moving coil • 0.5 mV • fixed stylus • 10.7g • High output	
Kiseki Blue GS	499		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus	
NOTts Analogue Tracer IV	550		moving magnet •	
Audioquest 404L	599	84	moving coil • 0.5mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>Slight harshness detracted from the performance of this otherwise clear-sounding and detailed cartridge.</i>	
Benz-Micro The Glider	600		moving coil • 1mV mV • fixed stylus • Semi-nude design	
Audio Technica AT-OC30	619		moving coil • 0.4 mV • fixed stylus • 7.8g • Nude micro linear stylus	
Grado Signature TLZ	650		moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
Ortofon MC2000H	650		moving coil • 0.12 mV • fixed stylus • 9.6g	
Lyra Lydian	699		moving coil • removable stylus	
vdH DDT-II	699		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus • Silver coils	
Benz-Micro H200	700		moving coil • 2mV mV • fixed stylus	
Benz-Micro M090	700		moving coil • 0.9mV mV • fixed stylus	
Benz-Micro L040	700		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus	
Kiseki Purpleheart	749		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus	
vdH MC-10	799	60	moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus • <i>A neutral, balanced performer, transparent midrange, fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass.</i>	REC'D
Audioquest 404iMH	899		moving coil • 1.4 mV • fixed stylus • Boron cantilever	
DNM Reson Lexe	899	144	moving coil • fixed stylus	REC'D
Kiseki PHS	899		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus	
Audio Technica ART-1	944	72	moving coil • 0.4 mV • fixed stylus • 8.8g • <i>Delicate and very fluid MC that tracks well, offers very low distortion and exceptionally good separation.</i>	REC'D
Ortofon MC3000H	950	84	moving coil • 0.12 mV • fixed stylus • 9.5g • <i>Low levels of body resonance are a real eye-opener. Nothing to criticise elsewhere, one of the very best.</i>	REC'D
Grado Signature XTZ	975		moving magnet • removable stylus • Moving flux	
Roksan Shiraz	975		moving coil • 0.2mV mV • fixed stylus • 3-pt generator mount, no glues	
Dynavector XX-1L	998	84	moving coil • 0.25 mV • fixed stylus • 12g • <i>Very clear, very detailed, no troubles with tracking; response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm.</i>	REC'D
Dynavector XX-1	998	84	moving coil • 2 mV • fixed stylus • 12g • <i>Good, but not immensely competitive at the price, and not helped by comparison with the low output version.</i>	
Linn Arkiv	998		moving coil • 150uV mV • fixed stylus • 7g • Three point mt, machined body	
London Decca Jubilee	999		moving magnet • 5.0mV mV • fixed stylus • Line contact, 0.5 inch mount	
vdH MC-One	999	60	moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>This extended all the positive qualities of the '10, but added greater authority and scale - worth all the extra money.</i>	REC'D
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069	143	moving coil • fixed stylus	B'BUY
Benz-Micro Wood Ref	1,100		moving coil • 0.3mV mV • fixed stylus • Bruyere housing, boron	
vdH MC-One/Hi	1,149	84	moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>Slight softening on transients was the only real flaw, but it didn't quite seem to have that special touch one expects.</i>	
vdH MC-Two	1,349	72	moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>Connected directly to any MM input, it rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal.</i>	REC'D
Audio Note Io IIV	1,395	100	moving coil • fixed stylus • <i>One of the best, giving an extraordinarily relaxing midrange clarity. Needs a transformer.</i>	REC'D
Benz-Micro Ruby Ref	1,400		moving coil • 0.3mV mV • fixed stylus • Bruyere housing boron	
Audioquest 7000NSX	1,495	91	moving coil • 0.4 mV • fixed stylus • <i>Stunning stereo imaging and good detail at low levels are spoiled by less than perfect tracking and high sensitivity to arms.</i>	
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	91	moving coil • 0.12 mV • fixed stylus • 9.5g • <i>Not be fully run-in, limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, though imaging is excellent.</i>	
Koetsu Red T	1,550		moving coil • fixed stylus • High-output MC	
Transfiguration AF-1 Mk II	1,595		moving coil • 230uV mV • fixed stylus • 7g • MC, transformer & preamp	
Kiseki Blackheart	1,995		moving coil • 0.3mV mV • fixed stylus	
Transfiguration Supreme	1,995		moving coil • 200uV mV • fixed stylus • 7g • Yokeless ring magnet system	
Koetsu Red K Sig	1,998		moving coil • fixed stylus • Selected, re-tuned Red T	
Ortofon MC7500	2,000		moving coil • 0.13 mV • fixed stylus • 11g • 75th Anniversary model	
vdH Grasshopper IIISLA	2,200		moving coil • fixed stylus • Silver coils, Alinco magnet	
vdH Grasshopper IIISLN	2,200		moving coil • fixed stylus • Silver coils, Neodymium magnet	
Lyra Parnassus	2,295		moving coil • removable stylus	
Koetsu Urushi	2,297		moving coil • fixed stylus • Metal alloy body	
vdH Grasshopper IIICMN	2,750		moving coil • fixed stylus • Copper coils, medium output	
Audio Note Io Ltd V	2,950		moving coil • fixed stylus • Needs PSU	
vdH Grasshopper IIIGLN	2,999		moving coil • fixed stylus • Gold coils, Neodymium magnet	
vdH Grasshopper IIIGLA	3,200	122	fixed stylus • <i>Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available, it has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse.</i>	
Koetsu Signature	3,218		moving coil • fixed stylus • Rosewood body	
vdH Grasshopper IIICHN	3,400		moving coil • fixed stylus • Copper coils, high output	
vdH Type IVGLA	3,450		moving coil • fixed stylus • Silver coils, Alinco magnet	
Kiseki Lapis Lazuli	5,000		moving coil • 0.4mV mV • fixed stylus • Gemstone body	

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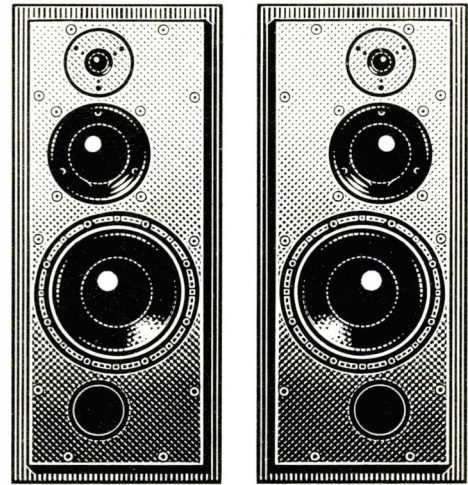
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LONDON

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DEALER Directory

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HI-FI EXPERIENCE, Lion House, 227 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P -HX. Tel Help Line 0171-580 3535 24 hour, fax 0171-436 4733. Agencies include: Arcam, Audiolab, Bang & Olufsen, Castle, Celestion, Chord, Cyrus, Denon, Heybrook, Harman, IMF, KEF, Marantz, Mission, Musical Fidelity, Meridian, Nakamichi, NAD, Pioneer, Quad, Rotel, Shearman, Tannoy, TDL, Yamaha. 8 listening rooms, 3 years guarantee. Free delivery and simple installation (M25 periphery), home cinema specialist.

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MUSICAL IMAGES LTD, 173 Station Road, Edgware HA8 7JX. 0181-952 5535, fax 0181-951 5864.

MUSICAL IMAGES LTD, 45 High Street, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 1IR. 0181-569 5802, fax 0181-569 6353.

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BASICALLY SOUND, The Old School, School Rd, Bracon Ash, Norwich NR14 8HE. (01508) 570829. Audio Alchemy, Arcam, Micromega, Naim, Denon, Sendor, Audiolab, Sound Organisation, Epos, Rotel, Royd, Heybrook, TDL, Nakamichi, etc. 2 comprehensive dem rooms. Home trial. Free installation. Visa, Access, HP facilities. Tues-Sat 9.30-1, 2-5.30.

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LISTEN INN, 32A Gold Street, Northampton. (01604) 37871 (Fax) (01604) 601430. Linn, Naim, Rega, Epos, Royd, Mission, Cyrus, Arcam, Audiolab, Neat, Creek, Quad, Denon etc. 2 Dem Rooms

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Denon, Epos, Kef, Infinity, Marantz, Mission, Monitor Audio, Nakamichi, Naim, Quad, Rega, Rotel, Royd, Solid, TDL, Yamaha. Open 10-5pm. Dem room. Closed Thur. Access/Visa

SHROPSHIRE

AVON HI-FI, 12 Barker Street, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 1QJ. (01743) 355166. NAD, Quad, B&W, Kenwood, Aiwa, Bose, Nakamichi, Onkyo. Dem room. Home trial. Free install. Service dept. Access, Visa. £1000 instant credit. Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri, Sat 9-5.30.

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SUFFOLK

AUDIBLE DIFFERENCE, Near Diss, Norfolk - see main entry under Norfolk.

BASICALLY SOUND, The Old School, School Rd, Bracon Ash, Norwich. (01508) 570829. For full details see entry under Norfolk.

BURY AUDIO, 47 Churchgate St, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 1RG. Tel (01284) 724337. Arcam, Castle, Heybrook, LFD, Marantz, Meridian, Monitor Audio, Michell, Musical Fidelity, Orelle, Pink Triangle, Proac, Quad, Rotel, Ruark, Target, van den Hul, etc. Single Speaker Room. No appointments necessary. Home trial fac. Free installation. Access, Visa, Switch. 9.30-6pm Mon-Sat. Closed Wed

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SURREY

INFIDELITY, 9 High Str, Hampton Wick, Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey. Tel: (0181) 943 3530. Arcam, Creek, Epos, Heybrook, Micromega, Naim Audio, Roksan, Rega Research, Shaninian, TEAC. Single speaker listening room. Appts pref, free installation, service dept. Major credit cards. Closed Mon, Tue-Fri 10.30-7, Sat 10-6.

PJ HI-FI, 3 Bridge Street, Guildford, GU1 43Y. Tel (01483) 504801/304756. Mon-Sat 9-6pm. Authorised dealer for: Linn, Meridian, Rega, Mission/Cyrus, Arcam, Quad, Audiolab, KEF, Rotel, NAD, Marantz, Musical Fidelity, TDL, Nakamichi, EPDS, Target, Stands Unique. Home Cinema & HiFi Demonstration rooms. Free parking, Delivery & Installation service. Service department on the premises.

RIVERSIDE HI-FI, 422 Richmond Road, East Twickenham. TW1 2EB. Tel: (0181) 892 7613. Fax: (0181) 892 7749. See main entry under Middlesex.

ROGERS HI-FI, 13 Bridge Street, Guildford, Surrey. (01483) 61049. Castle, Creek, Denon, Marantz, Micromega, Pioneer, Rogers, Ruark, Systemdek, Tannoy, TDL. Demonstration facilities available, no appointment necessary. Free installation. Service department. Access/Visa. Instant credit up to £1,000 subject to status. Monday-Saturday 9.30-6pm, later by appointment.

SPALDINGS HI-FI, 352-4 Lower Addiscombe Rd, Croydon, Surrey CRO 7AF. 0181-654 1231/2040. Linn Naim, Quad, Meridian, Audiolab, Mission, Marantz, Denon, Ruark, Tannoy, Arcam. 3 dem rooms including AV room. Service dept, free install, home trial facilities, appointments advisable. Access, Visa, Amex, Interest free credit, instant credit. Mon-Sat 9-5.45. Tues-8. Closed Wed. Service dept.

SURBITON PARK RADIO, 48 Surbiton Rd, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey. (0181) 546 5549. Quad, Castle, Dual, Denon, Kenwood, Mordaunt-Short, Rotel, Pioneer, QED, B&W, Tannoy. Demo facilities. Access, Visa. 9.30-5.00 Mon-Sat. Service dept.

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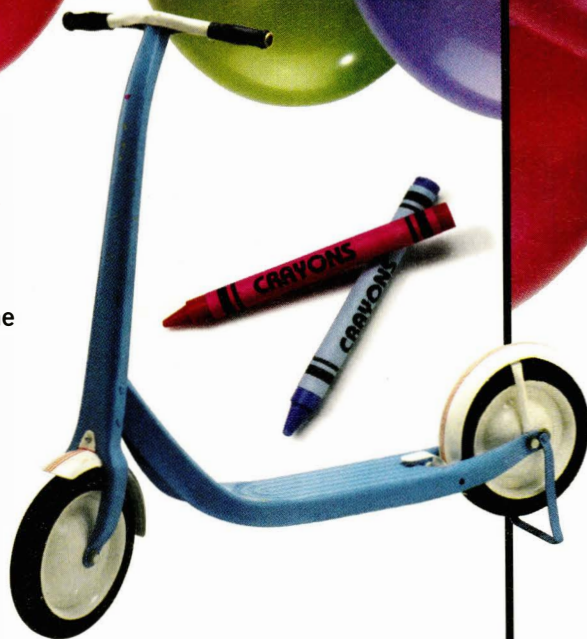


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January's issue of Hi-Fi Choice is on sale on Friday, December 1, 1995. Don't forget to ask your parents first!

Personal Is sensitivity over-hyped, and how much does it tell you about a speaker anyway? Paul Messenger investigates.

Messages

Precious few measurements have any real relevance to speaker assessment, so it's all the more regrettable when those that do matter are undermined by hyperbole.

Over and beyond box and driver size, sensitivity is the one parameter which ought to have some meaning, being a measure of how loud a speaker will sound (that's the decibel/dB bit) for a given voltage input. It's a solid, meaningful fact, seized upon by customers perusing a pile of leaflets and attempting to make a rational choice between rival brands. And I speak from personal experience. Thirty odd years back I was just such a customer.

The passage of time and the benefit of experience have left me sceptical. In the quest for commercial advantage, it's all too easy for a manufacturer to pick a figure a couple of dB above the competition. The chances of it being challenged are slim, and if the truth pops out in a column such as this, it won't matter much – the myth has already been created.

I wasn't really planning to write anything more on the KEF *Coda 7*. It's an estimable little speaker which I awarded a Best Buy flag last month, and it quite possibly deserves its current status as Britain's best-selling budget miniature. But just after sending in my review, I ran across a comparison between the *Coda 7* and Mission's new *LE* version of the *731* in one of the other hi-fi mags. I always enjoy reading alternative opinions, but the conclusions drawn there really made me see red.

The reviewer singled out the KEF's 91.5dB sensitivity rating as its major advantage over the 89dB Mission. If this was the case, I'd be tempted to agree: 2.5dB is a very worthwhile bonus, almost the difference between one or two speakers. You can easily hear for yourself what 3dB sounds like. Just switch your system to mono and then unplug one speaker, or mute one channel with the balance knob and the result will be 3dB quieter.

However, when measuring the KEF, I gave it an 88dB rating, so where did the 91.5dB come from? I asked the reviewer, who pointed to the manufacturer's spec, where KEF was actually quoting 91dB – that's a half dB accounted for. The company also admitted to rounding up a rating that tested out at around 90-91dB, so that's another half dB. But that still leaves a 2.5dB discrepancy between my figure and the company's.

The heart of the problem lies, I suspect, in

the way the measurement is normally taken, using a single 1kHz spot frequency and a 1m axial microphone position. This may indicate just how efficiently a speaker will reproduce a 1kHz sine wave, but not necessarily how loud it will sound when playing music with any given amplifier.

In order to give greater real-world relevance, the sensitivity ratings I calculate for the *Choice* reviews are worked out rather differently. I measure the speakers as pairs in a real room, averaging the results through a number of microphone positions distributed across the typical far-field listening zone. I also measure across the broad mid-band of the speaker's output, rather than any one specific frequency, and then apply appropriate scale correction to extract a figure that corresponds to the accepted industry norm.

There's just no way that a seven-litre £140 miniature with a typical 100mm paper cone and magnet will deliver more than 90dB of genuine sensitivity. The figure simply doesn't compute. The traces for my *Coda 7* review samples do indeed approach 90dB or thereabouts in the upper midband, but by the same token they're down to around 86dB or thereabouts through the lower mid, hence my 88dB overall rating. This is pretty much what one would expect for the engineering ingredients and amplifier load.

I haven't yet tried Mission's *731 LE*, but gave the standard *731* an 87dB rating in issue 141. Going back and comparing the curves directly, I guess that the gap between the *LE* version and the *Coda 7* is about 1.5dB overall. The KEF is brighter and bassier, as well as less even overall, but it still ends up with a somewhat higher sensitivity. However, as soon as you put the impedance differences into the equation, everything just about evens out.

Impedance is a crucial factor that makes matters a lot more complicated. In strictly formal terms, sensitivity should be specified in decibels per watt (dB/W), but in practice it's measured by applying an amplifier signal of 2.83V. Why 2.83V? Because when you apply it across an 8 Ohm load, 1W of power is dissipated (Ohm's Law and all that).



The *Coda 7* – sensitivity figure manipulated?

If you set up a pure 8 Ohm loudspeaker, leave the volume setting the same and then connect a pure 4 Ohm speaker in its place the 4 Ohm speaker will draw twice the power, work much harder and sound 3dB louder. So it's hardly surprising that manufacturers are tempted into dropping the impedance, putting the onus on the amplifier manufacturer to supply the extra current.

In the case of the *731* and *Coda 7*, the Mission is very close to a genuine 8 Ohm load throughout, while the KEF is down to around 5 Ohms through much of the low frequency region. When the Mission is drawing 1W, the *Coda*'s probably taking 1.7W or so. To adjust the KEF's sensitivity to a genuine/W (per Watt) rating, knock off 1.5-2dB. Hey presto, the sensitivity differential has disappeared. Set both speakers to reproduce the same level and the amplifier will be supplying the same power to each – a few more volts to the Mission, a little more current to the KEF.

All of which goes some way towards explaining why sensitivity ratings are at best dodgy, and why leaflet collectors shouldn't take manufacturer's figures at face value.

The irony is that when I first started to test my own sensitivity ratings against the manufacturers' claims, KEF and B&W were the two makes I always agreed closely with, while I often found Mission indulging in a little playful exaggeration. Now it seems that B&W and Mission are the good guys, while KEF is stretching credulity. Plus ça change. ▲

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