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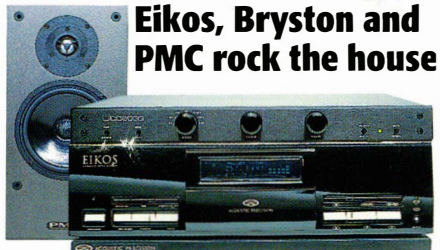
THE FINEST HI-FI MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

SMALL WONDERS

We pick the bookshelf speakers that can really kick it with the best of them!



SENSATIONAL SYSTEM!



Eikos, Bryston and PMC rock the house

SCOOP! ALEMA AMP

Valve sound without glass!



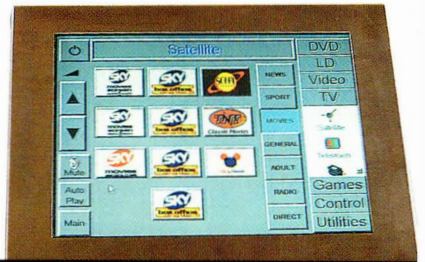
DVD PERFECTION!

Denon takes DVD sound to new audiophile heights



MULTI-ROOM HI-FI

We tell you how to get it



BUYER'S GUIDE

Our experts name the best hi-fi 3,500 Products ★ 400 Star Buys



**ISSUE 187
FEBRUARY
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99
SERIES



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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Jason Kennedy wishes all *Hi-Fi Choice* readers a Happy New Year, and reveals his resolutions.



The fact that you may be reading this in February disguises the fact that it was written very early in the new year. In this instance it was created on the first day of 1999, shortly after the word had come through that I was to take the Publisher's place on a trip to the Las Vegas CES (Consumer Electronics Show) a day after returning to the office. So I trust you'll forgive a few new year's resolutions in a February cover dated issue.

These things are less easy to get to grips with than the personal variety, a magazine can't give up smoking or make a concerted effort to lose weight – in fact it would rather do the opposite. But it can attempt to provide more and clearer information for its readers. I eagerly await the results of the reader survey for some form of confirmation, but it would seem that in this age of rapid change, what most of us need is concise and digestible information or entertainment. I don't know about you, but the scarcity of reading time means that it takes a couple of months to read a book these days, so magazine articles have to be quite compelling to warrant attention. *HFC*, therefore, will endeavour to produce clear and informative reviews and features, with subject matter that we hope will be exactly what you are looking for.

The big issue with this, of course, is figuring out what you want to read about. The annual readership survey tends to provide the opinions of the most dedicated and enthusiastic readers. What we have to second guess are the requirements of the other 95 per cent of you – some of whom may not even read this page!

One approach is to follow our own interests within the field, but the longer you play this game the more esoteric your tastes become – how many of you for instance would consider the £6k B&W N802s that have become a major source of sonic revelation in my system, to be of more than passing interest? We could dwell on these jewels of the hi-fi world – it used to work with car magazines – but it hasn't done our competitors much good. So we need to stay within the realms of attainability for the most part, seeking out building blocks for your system that offer insight into the music and encourage you to spend far too long sifting through the software. And subsequently risk giving you the means to find audio satisfaction and thus be able to cast us aside – or at least in the direction of others that need the solace of great sound, and there's no shortage of those!

HOMES AND HI-FIS

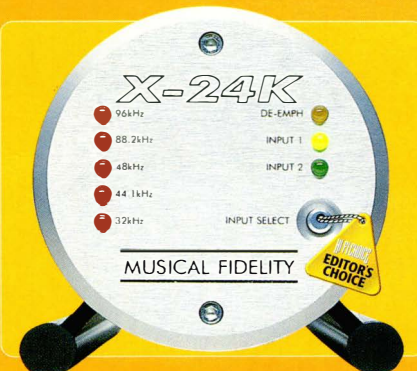
For your infotainment this month I have revived a part of the magazine that used to

give a lot of pleasure in the past, *Inspirations*, our 'through the keyhole' style look round the home and hi-fi of a committed enthusiast. This month's candidate has a system that's as individual as his living room decor, and proves that stylish interiors can incorporate serious kit.

Somewhat more radical approaches to the increasingly prevalent problem of integrating hi-fi into the home can be found in our in-depth feature on multi-room systems. These are basically a means of having music throughout the home, but in the least intrusive manner, which usually means sonic compromise. However, with brands such as Linn and Revox producing the equipment this is no longer the case.

Kenedy

THIS MONTH'S EDITOR'S CHOICE



MUSICAL FIDELITY X-24

With the popularity of DVD-Video and the existence, albeit small scale, of high resolution 24-bit/96kHz discs from audiophile labels, a couple of manufacturers have cottoned on to the idea of producing DACs that can optimise results with both this and the existing CD format. One such is Musical Fidelity whose ubiquitous X-series tube has been used to house the latest 24-bit chipsets and can convert the output of any existing digital transport. Alan seems to have been rather taken with it, the wallet friendly £300 price tag no doubt reinforcing the impression.



DENON DVD-5000

This is the most ambitious DVD player to come our way yet. Weighing more than many amps at the price, it features twin Burr-Brown DACs and a plethora of features for both the audio and videophile. As Mr Sircom comes into both of the latter categories, it's no surprise that he was so keen on this classy piece of kit.



HIGH-END TEST P52

AMP Flux System 2: a heavyweight three-box amp representing the beast of British hi-fi.



MULTI-ROOM P36

Make your 'res' more 'des' with hidden hi-fi throughout the house.

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Alan Sircom is re-aquainted with an '80s throwback. The DAC is back on track.

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Tim Bower declares that this hernia-inducing combo packs some serious punch. Fantastic!

55 DENON DVD-5000

Denon's high-end player is a heavyweight with attitude. Alan Sircom is suitably impressed.

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NEWS & VIEWS

Catch up on the top hi-fi stories with resident newshounds, Charlotte Ricca and Tim Bown.

NEWS IN BRIEF



TEAC has launched a new pro-DJ CD player (above), at £199.99. The CD-P1440 features a centre mounted drive mechanism, 16-bit DAC, multi-function eight-digit display and variable pitch control. It is also suitable for home use, and has vivid orange trim for night time use! ☎ (01923) 819630

PRIMARE has slashed the prices on some of its most popular products. The A20 mk II amplifier, Recommended in HFC 181, has been reduced from £799.99 to £599.99, while the more upmarket A301 integrated amp has been reduced from £1,699.99 to £1,499.99. The D20 CD player is now £699.99, and the D302 CD player is £1,499.99. ☎ (01992) 573030



CLARION has launched two new car audio systems, the £359 PAC5316 (above) and the £289 PAC3406, which combine radio cassette and CD. ☎ (01628) 890505

CSE has taken up distribution of Primare products in the UK, and plans to secure some exclusive dealerships of about 30 retailers. ☎ (01423) 359054

NEW SENSOR CORPORATION has acquired a large stock of US military 'new unused' sub-miniature tubes. These are said to offer benefits over normal tubes – their small mass and military grade construction allegedly makes them practically immune to microphonics. These tubes are now available at a fraction of the cost of lower-grade standard tube types. ☎ (001) 212 526 0466

MAPLIN ELECTRONICS is distributing a CD/DVD player said to be able to play both UK and US-coded DVD discs. The SMC Universal DVD player is priced at £399.99, and also features two microphone inputs! ☎ (01702) 554000

LINK HOUSE EXHIBITIONS has postponed the Northern Hi-Fi Show '99. Due to take place on March 20-21 1999, the organiser claims that worsening market conditions are the cause for the postponement. The company is currently looking to relaunch the show in 2000. Link House ☎ (0181) 686 2599

Aphelion's alarm call



Devon-based Aphelion Audio claims its new Siren speaker has much in common with B&W's awesome Nautilus 801 – and at £1,500 it's a fraction of the price!

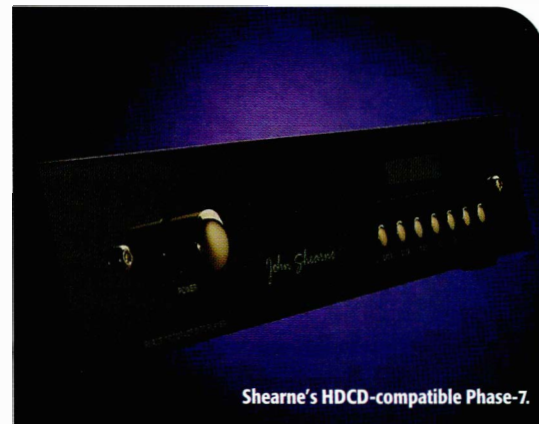
The similarity is down to the cabinet. Two separate, mechanically decoupled enclosures are used, the main unit housing a 15cm aluminium bass driver, while the 'head unit' contains two 5cm mid/treble drivers, also aluminium, with the second unit pointing skywards. The main enclosure also incorporates a second decoupled inner cabinet, all in aid of reducing resonance, bringing total weight up to a hefty 45 kilos per speaker. Sensitivity is rated at 86dB/W/m and impedance is eight Ohms.

Aphelion says customers can specify their own finish on the Siren's real wood cabinets – paint, leather or au naturel – anything goes! The model pictured here is wrapped in suede and is available from stock.

Aphelion Audio ☎ (01237) 422772



☉ Aphelion Audio's Siren loudspeaker.



Shearne's HDCD-compatible Phase-7.

Shearne CD is Marble-ous!



The Phase 7 is a new HDCD-compatible CD player from British brand Shearne Audio. Priced at £1,499, designer John Shearne claims it is the result of two years research and development.

The player's master clock system has been the focus of much attention, culminating in a bespoke design based around a Tricord Research crystal oscillator module. The transport is a Sanyo OEM product, complete with 'three beam laser sled', and twin 20-bit DAC chips configured to operate in dual differential mode. Also featured are a 'unique' passive low-pass filter and an output stage based on Shearne's Phase 6 integrated amplifier.

In true Shearne Audio style, the Phase 7 is available finished in either blue marble or piano black.

Shearne Audio ☎ (01438) 740953

Sherwood waves its AV flag high



Sherwood's AV receiver range is to be joined by a new flagship model. The two-box design costs £1,000 and comprises the AVP-9080RDS preamp, complete with Dolby Digital, DTS and an RDS tuner, and the AM-9080 power amp, delivering five channels of sound at 130 Watts a-piece.

Socketry is as comprehensive as one would expect, with nine audio inputs (including one for MM/MC phono), four audio outputs, two monitor loops, S-Video in and out, three digital outputs, six pre-outs and a front-mounted input for a camcorder or video game system. Blimey. On-screen display and multi-brand universal remote control are also included, and if you're into DVD-V it's supposed to be just the thing. Richer Sounds ☎ (0171) 940 2240



Sherwood's AVP-9080 RDS preamplifier (top) and AM-9080 power amplifier, for block busting beats.

Technics stays in control



Ready for the advent of DVD-Audio, Technics has announced the arrival of a new two-box amplifier. Priced at £2,997, the SU-C3000/SE-A3000 pre/power combo is alleged to "look beyond CD to higher definition hi-fi horizons".

A key factor in the amp's performance, Technics claims, is the Variable Gain Control Amplifier (VGCA), which reduces noise to one eighth of the normal level. Also vital is the use of a MOS Class AA circuit, which blends the best of bipolar transistors and MOSFETS



and enables the SE-A3000 to cope with fluctuations in speaker impedance. There is also a lead-type battery pack at the heart of the power supply, which is designed to isolate the audio circuits from the mains input and reduces noise even further.

Additional features include an R-Core transformer and TAKE II electrolytic power supply capacitors "for an ultra-stable performance across the full audio range." *Technics* ☎ (0990) 357357

Wharfedale gets busy



Wharfedale has announced the introduction of a new self-powered loudspeaker to its Diamond range. The Active Diamond, based upon its best-selling Diamond 7.1, is a two-way rear-ported bookshelf model.

It includes an internal 20 Watt per channel amplifier, enabling any source component to be plugged directly into it and making it ideal for personal stereos and computers. As for the cabinet, its front and rear panels are made from Wharfedale's "acoustically dead" AudioStealth moulded rock polymer.

The Active Diamond's rear port is symmetrical so that air can flow equally well in either direction, and rear firing to allow maximum downward extension of bass output.

With power switch, volume control and power LED located on the front panel of the master speaker in each pair, the Active Diamond costs £179.95.

Wharfedale ☎ (01480) 431 737



Wharfedale's lively Active Diamond.



Jamo's secret seven



After five years in the marketplace, Jamo has revised its 7 series, with engineers concentrating on two main areas — the speaker unit and bass response.

The new models now feature a proprietary bass/midrange unit, with a diaphragm made from a woven and treated glass fibre material and a diecast ABS chassis.

Another common denominator in the new 7 series is a 25mm soft dome tweeter with ferrofluid cooling/damping of the voice coil. Other features include internally braced cabinets and gold-plated four-way terminals with bi-wiring/amping facilities.

The floorstanding Jamo 7.6 and 7.7 models are equipped with two glass fibre cone midrange units mounted above and below the dome tweeter. They also incorporate a subwoofer mounted at the bottom of the cabinet, augmented by a rear mounted reflex port.

In addition to these upgrades of existing designs, Jamo has added a new 7 Series model — the Centre 7.2 centre channel loudspeaker.

All models are available in black ash, mahogany or cherry and prices range from £200 to £800.

Also new in the Jamo range is its all-in-one surround speaker system, the Apollo. Five Omega satellite speakers are included, along with the SW 410E subwoofer, the complete package retails at £400.

Jamo ☎ (01327) 301300

NEWS IN BRIEF



INIGO JONES & CO recently had its Sculpture Two speakers (above) featured on BBC2's The Essential Guide to Rocks. Made partly from prehistoric slates, the speakers cost £2,350 a pair, and the company claims they will reproduce classical music beautifully. ☎ (01286) 830242

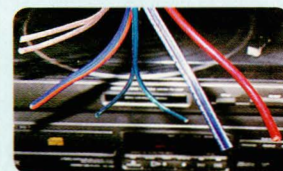
CAMPAIGN AUDIO DESIGN is now on the Internet, and can be found at <http://business.virgin.net/cad.cables/>. The site includes a glossary, FAQ section, news and some useful links. ☎ (01222) 779401

AUDIO T has opened two new stores in High Wycombe and Epsom. The new telephone numbers are: High Wycombe ☎ (01494) 558585, Epsom ☎ (01372) 748888.

ONKYO'S TX-DS555 is the latest Dolby Digital amp to hit these shores following the rapid rise of DVD-V. Incorporating "the latest 24-bit Motorola chip," it delivers 100 Watts per channel into six Ohms and costs £550. Also available is a new CD/MD receiver, the Model FR-V5. Combining an amp, MD recorder, CD player and AM/FM tuner it is available at £599.95 with loudspeakers or £529.95 without. ☎ (01296) 482017

THOMAS TRANSDUCERS has changed its brand name to Beahorn. This covers all the company's Virtuoso horn speaker range and its Obligato valve amplifier. ☎ (01424) 813888

VIVANTE has reissued JJ Gale's first solo recording, Naturally, on 180g vinyl. Mastered by Polygram and pressed by Pallas records, this new issue is said to be a huge improvement on the original. ☎ (0181) 977 6600

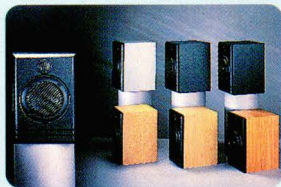


MILLIFLEX Ltd has launched a new cable range (above). The Soundmaster 1 loudspeaker cable uses Grade A copper, while the Soundmaster 2 boasts 99.99 per cent oxygen free copper. The Soundmaster 1 is priced at 35p/m for 0.25mm² width, while a 6mm² conductor width is £2.99/m; the Soundmaster 2 is 42p/m or £3.45/m for the same widths respectively. ☎ (01962) 868424

PACIFIC MICROSONICS INC has announced that the total number of

NEWS IN BRIEF

HDCD encoded CDs has doubled, growing to over 2,000 at the end of November 1998. Over 200 record labels around the world have released HDCD recordings covering all types of musical genres, including the Bee Gees, Chris Isaak and Dire Straits.
☎ (001) 510 475 8000



FORBO-CP has enhanced its Cova SR stock range of loudspeaker finishes. It has introduced six new designs (pictured above), which include champagne cherry, bright silver and matt black, and plans to add a further four effects to the range later in 1999.
☎ (01670) 718222

SENNHEISER has had the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts studio theatre named after itself, in recognition of the company's sponsorship. It is now to be called the Sennheiser Studio Theatre, and was established by Sir Paul McCartney. ☎ (01494) 551 531



CELESTION has a new centre channel loudspeaker (above). The C4c uses the C series titanium/neodymium tweeter and two of its 130mm bass drivers. The drive units are mounted on an MDF front baffle, and have a 90dB sensitivity. The C4c is also designed to accommodate bi-wiring and costs £299.99.
☎ (01622) 687442

ERRATUM NO 1: The Dynaudio Audience 50 was incorrectly described as the Dynaudio Applause in the Best Buy Guide, issue 186. *Hi-Fi Choice* would like to apologise for this mistake, and any confusion it may have caused.
☎ (01732) 451938

ERRATUM NO 2: In the review of the B&W Nautilus 801 the build quality rating was written as four, when it actually received five stars. Many apologies for this – we hope it did not colour your overall impression of this rather marvellous speaker.
☎ (01903) 750750

CHARIO'S much acclaimed Academy Millennium 1 has been joined by the new compact, high-end speaker the Millennium 2, priced at £1,999. Its solid walnut cabinets comprise 130mm bass driver with a carbon fibre/paper cone and Chario's Scanspeak 'Revelator' tweeter. With a 4 Ohm load and a sensitivity of 90dB, the Millennium 2 claims it is "user friendly and will suit any room."
☎ (01992) 573030



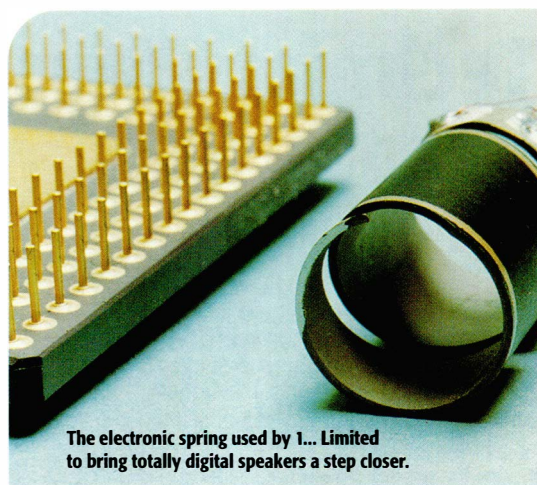
Digital speaks out

 The world's first truly digital hi-fi speaker is now a little closer to reality, thanks to a breakthrough by 1... Limited. The company claims to have invented the first electronic spring, a device necessary to create the 'push-pull' action in a digitally-driven drive unit.

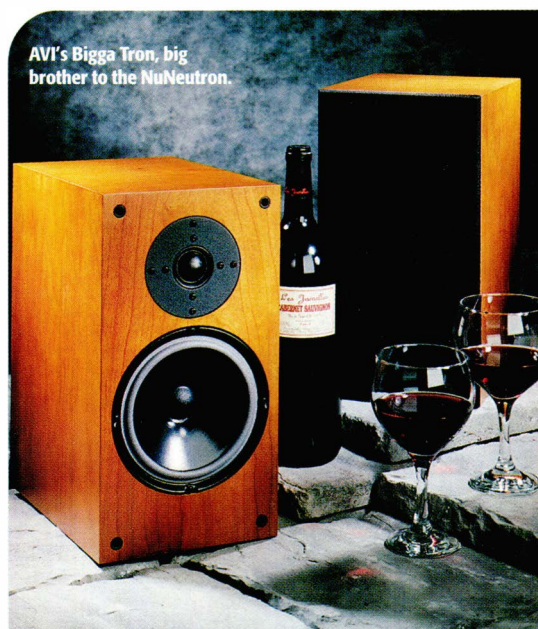
The technology, as described by Jason Kennedy in *Choice* 182, will potentially allow the use of CD transport and speakers alone, without the need for a DAC or amp, and could theoretically provide greater fidelity in the process. The new electronic spring, termed a helical PZT ceramic bender, contracts and expands when voltage is applied, and will be used with diaphragms of just 10mm diameter in numbers of up to 1,000 to produce sound pressure levels similar to conventional speakers.

According to 1... Limited, the first commercial digital loudspeaker products should be ready to roll within one or two years.

1... Limited ☎ (01223) 575398




The electronic spring used by 1... Limited to bring totally digital speakers a step closer.



AVI's Bigga-Tron, big brother to the NuNeutron.

Big is beautiful

 AVI has announced the birth of the NuNeutron's big brother, the Bigga-Tron. Priced at £599 it is a compact two-way, standmounted speaker which allegedly has "even more of the liquid clarity and three dimensional stereo imagery of its smaller brother."

Enclosed in an 18mm MDF, wood veneered, 15 litre sealed cabinet is a 15cm paper diaphragmed bass driver and a 28mm soft dome tweeter. It is heavily damped with 'bitumastic' sound deadening pads and loaded with acoustic wadding.

According to AVI, a 13 element crossover is fundamental to its design. It uses ferrite cored inductors and multiple, low value polystyrene capacitors and has been designed to give absolute phase accuracy.

The Bigga-Trons aim to be "loudspeakers that literally disappear to leave pure musical enjoyment", and they are available now.

AVI ☎ (01453) 752777

Gyro cashes in

 Vinyl fans rejoice – a new version of Michell's ever-green Gyrodec turntable is about to hit town!


The Gyro 'SE', or 'Spider Edition', replaces the Gyrodec's substantial acrylic plinth and cover with a smaller three pronged acrylic base Michell calls a 'spider'. Also featured is revised bell suspension to make set-up easier, and a new free-standing motor akin to the one used by the more costly Orb.

With less acrylic involved in the design, Michell has been able to set a lower price point of £775, excluding arm and cartridge. Availability of the original Gyrodec continues, albeit with the inclusion of the same new free-standing motor and a price-hike to £975.
Michell ☎ (0181) 953 0771



Michell risks arachnophobia with its 'Spider Edition' turntable.

Roy's new toys

 The first two models of RA Labs' new range are the RA5 and RA10 two-way, bookshelf/stand-mount ported systems comprising 25mm copolymer tweeters and 130mm paper woofer and 165mm doped paper woofer respectively. They also use a vertical-wrap baffle technique for greater rigidity.

Priced at £150 and £220 respectively, they are finished in black vinyl with light wood vinyl side panels.
Allison UK ☎ (01484) 603333



RA Labs' RA5 and RA10.

Ask the Oracle



Canadian vinyl specialist Oracle has launched a new £7,415 CD transport. The CD-Drive is a top-loader based around Philips' CDM12.4 PRO transport and sports an elaborate 'tower suspension system' adapted from the company's turntables.

Also new is an integrated CD player called the CD-Player! Priced at £9,500, its design is similar to the CD-Drive, with a single-bit Crystal DAC. However, at the time of writing any plans for a UK launch have been scotched by the lack of a balanced output option. According to UK distributor, Esoteric Audio Imports, this "precludes it from being attractive to the UK market at this time", though the specification may still be open to change.

On the vinyl front, Oracle has an upgraded MkV version of the Delphi, now the company's only analogue turntable. Improvements include changes to the main bearing, power supply, suspension mechanism and a simplified set-up. Existing owners should contact their nearest Oracle dealer if they're after an upgrade.

Esoteric Audio Imports ☎ (01243) 533030



Oracle's CD-Drive digital transport.

B&W boom



B&W has extended its award winning ASW subwoofer range, with the ASW4000 and ASW500.

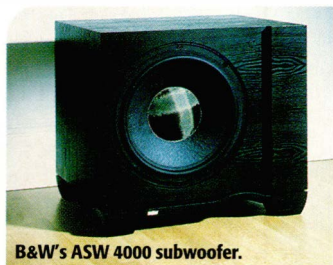
The £1,999 4000 has a 100 litre cabinet, 450 Watt amp and a 380mm long-throw driver, as specified in the Nautilus 801.

Double rear suspension is said to improve the alignment of the coil in the magnetic gap, which increases power handling. It also has audiophile quality electronics and includes third-order high-pass and fourth-order low-pass filters with selectable crossover frequencies. There is a first-order passive speaker level filter for systems without preamp outputs.

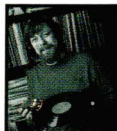
Alternatively, the 500 is for those more budget conscious, at £349.95. Its dimensions are 401x415x353mm (WxHxD), yet it uses its 35 litre capacity, single long-throw 10in pressed fibre cone and integral 70 Watt MOSFET amp to deliver deep bass.

B&W has added to its Casa multi-room system with a sub-zone module and keypad. Supplied in pairs, the modules allow the installation of an additional pair of speakers.

B&W ☎ (01903) 750750



B&W's ASW 4000 subwoofer.



PAUL MESSENGER

With M-S and Rogers in peril, is it the end of an era?

In normal times, late autumn usually serves as a happy hunting ground for hi-fi manufacturers as it gives them a chance to catch up after the traditionally leaner times of the summer. But these aren't normal times. Demand from most Far East markets fell off significantly throughout 1998; the summer witnessed the collapse of the Russian rouble, and the global financial system succumbed to a bad bout of the flu.

The fallout was probably inevitable, but that doesn't make it any less painful when famous British hi-fi names like Rogers and Mordaunt-Short are involved.

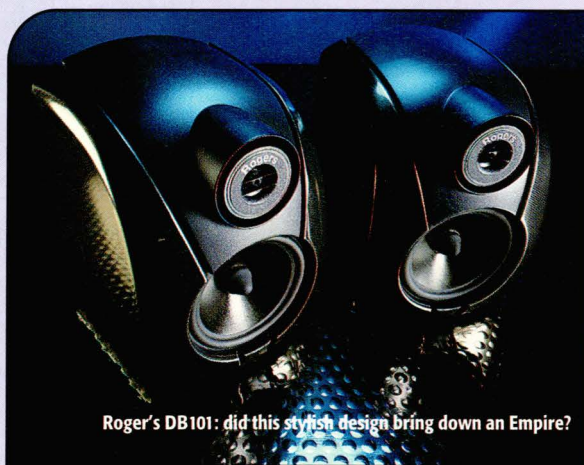
The Rogers brand, owned by Hong Kong-based Wo Kee Hong, will continue, but since the UK manufacturing base Rogers International (UK) Ltd went into receivership in October, the future direction for this famous old name is unclear.

"Demand from most Far East markets fell off significantly throughout 1998; the global financial system succumbed to a bad bout of the flu."

It's easy to forget just how far back the Rogers tradition goes. Its current reputation stems from the early '70s when Jim Rogers decided that building BBC Monitor loudspeakers like the LS3/6 and LS 3/5A under license would be a useful adjunct to an electronics brand with roots going back to the '50s. Back in the '60s, the Rogers Cadet III amplifier was the NAD 3020 or Arcam Alpha of its day.

Rogers ran into trouble in The Big VAT Slump of 1974 and was bought out by Swisstone, which soon decided to concentrate on the speaker side of things. Swisstone sold out to Wo Kee Hong in the mid-'90s, but the dramatic initiatives that followed, such as the db101 with its pretty moulded enclosure, failed to cover the heavy investment involved.

But we were in for even more of a shock in November, when parent group



Rogers's DB101: did this stylish design bring down an Empire?

TGI (Tannoy, Goodmans et al) announced its intention to close down the Mordaunt-Short/Epos side of the operation. It's to be an orderly affair, phased back over the next few months, and commitments to staff, suppliers and customers will all be honoured. That's assuming that the close-down goes ahead, of course, as it's likely that a buyer may be found for either or both brands.

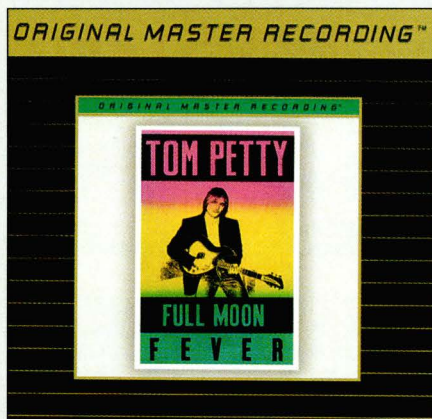
The Mordaunt-Short brand can be traced back to the early '60s when ex-Tannoy and Decca engineer Norman Mordaunt founded his own speaker company, but the 1967 addition of the Short family's management and marketing expertise created the value-oriented mass market brand we know today. The turning point came in the mid-'70s, when the Carnival/Festival/Pageant trio became a prime choice for first-time buyers. Indeed, in *Hi-Fi Choice* No2 (1976), Angus McKenzie described the Pageant 2 as "Very strongly recommended indeed at its cost".

Mordaunt-Short has often led the way with new technology. Not long after it went public as part of the TGI group in 1987, it took over Epos (founded by Robin Marshall in 1983) and introduced the highly successful Series 3 models, the first in the UK to use structural injection mouldings. However, it's too early to write obituaries for the brands as at the time of writing the rumour mill is rife with possible rescue scenarios.

And if some famous British speaker names have had a tough autumn, the biggest of them all, B&W, seems to have timed its Nautilus 800 series launch to perfection. Orders for 801s and 802s have been so great that the company has already put in an extra production line, although by the end of 1998 it had yet to get round to making any 803s.

PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD

Phil Strongman digs out rare and classic tracks appearing on CD or virgin vinyl for the first time. Give your hi-fi a treat...



TOM PETTY

Full Moon Fever (Mobile Fidelity) (above) This was a hit at the fag end of the '80s and mainstream new waver Tom Petty took on the composing and production chores himself — with just a little help from George Harrison, Jeff 'ELO' Lynne and the late Roy Orbison. It was always a solid set — *Feel A Whole Lot Better* sounds like the best single the Beatles never released, *Zombie Zoo* sums up every sad Marilyn Manson wannabe and Petty's own *Runnin' Down A Dream* really is a bona-fide rock classic. Now Mobile Fidelity has issued it on a gold CD mastered on its new Gain 2 system which apparently increases depth and warmth by using the latest hi-tech in combination with a Studer A-80 tape deck and, I have to admit, this disc actually does sound better than before with guitars ringing, kick drums really kicking and more stage width than you've a right to expect. A full moon and a half, in fact. ★★★★★

J.J. CALE

Naturally (Vivante Productions LP) (below) Singer-songwriter Jean Jacques Cale cut

this for A&M in 1971 — the title then was *Naturally, Really* — after Eric Clapton had already covered *After Midnight*; and now it's back on 180 gram vinyl, pressed by Germany's Pallas records and mastered by Polygram's Willem Makee. Cale packed *Naturally* with more gems than a diamond mine and numbers like *Best I Ever Had* and *Call A Doctor* really do sing out now that they've finally been smeared over a slab of quality plastic. Cale's breathy voice and lazy guitar were built for analogue recording and the sort of subtleties it captures, and this limited edition does justice to both. Four stars, natch. ★★★★★

MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES

GENO WASHINGTON

Geno! Geno! Geno! (Sequel) (below) Three CD box includes *Funky-Butt...* the definitive live UK soul album — and the No.3 LP of 1967. Raw excitement. ★★★★★

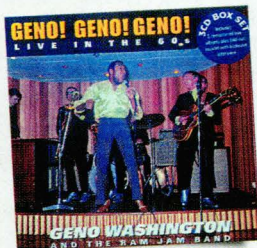
IVAN DREVER & DUNCAN CHISHOLM

The Lewis Blue (Iona) (below) Crisply recorded folky guitar songs of the highest order, soulfully sung by Drever himself. ★★★★★

CURTIS MAYFIELD

Back To The World (Sequel) The ex Impression's 1973 follow-up to *Superfly*, a moody, magnificent collection of hard soulsters and sad ballads. ★★★★★

Phil Strongman's novel about music business corruption, Cocaine, is reissued by Abacus Books this month.

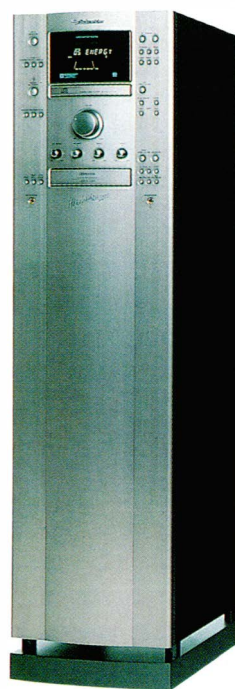


New products, old name

German electronics giant Schneider is set to unleash a full range of audio and video products in the UK for the first time in its 101 year history.

Digital TV sets are to spearhead the launch, backed up by a range of pre-packaged audio systems with a distinctly 'lifestyle' flavour. Products are many and varied, stretching from budget micros to huge stacking systems and Bang & Olufsen/Bose lookalikes.

Top of the lot is the Manhattan 2000, a slender tower-style system delivering 50 Watts per channel and incorporating CD, tape, RDS tuner and an integrated subwoofer. It's out now at £899, and Schneider expects it to "take British retailers by storm".



The company now exports to more than 20 European countries, and claims to be responsible for the "first compact audio units" in 1971. So now you know who to blame! Schneider ☎ (0161) 374 0102

☎ Schneider's Manhattan 2000, a UK first.

The Bristol show — lucky for some

The Bristol Hi-Fi Show is to make its 13th appearance in 1999, with record bookings and, its organisers anticipate, more visitors than ever.


It is to be held on Friday 19th February to Sunday 21st February 1999, from 10am to 5pm at the Marriott Hotel. Over 70 brands have been booked with 30 major new hi-fi and home cinema products on show. These include the Arcam Alpha 10 digital radio tuner, Naim Audio's new Pound 5000 NBL loudspeaker, the aCA7/aPA7 high performance pre/power amplifier combo from Cyrus and Mission's brand new 800 series DVD player, together with two new digital subwoofers and the new 564 digital radio tuner.

There will also be the launch of TAG McLaren's new, upmarket AV32R audio-visual processor, in addition to the company's F3 Series, which includes a range of A/V processors, players and amplifiers.

Tickets for the show cost £5 for adults and £3 for student concessions. This is a great opportunity to pick up some fantastic new gear at reduced prices.

Bristol Hi-Fi Show ☎ (01865) 760844

Tiny TEACs

 TEAC's gorgeous-looking 300 and 500 Reference Series of mini-sized separates continues to grow with the addition of two new MiniDisc recorders.

The MD-H300 is a fully specified model for owners of 300 Reference Series systems. All the usual recording and editing facilities are included, yet it measures just 11x21.5x30.2cm (HxWxD) and costs £300.


For those with Reference 500 components there's the slightly wider MD-H500i, measuring 10x28.5x30.2cm. Priced at £350, it includes gold-plated RCA jacks and a 10mm thick front panel. Both recorders are available now.

TEAC ☎ (01923) 819630

TEAC's MD-H300 MiniDisc recorder, part of the 300 Reference Series.



The Kestrel takes flight

 Musical Technology has been working for three years on improving its popular Kestrel loud-speaker. The result is the Kestrel Evolution.

The main changes have taken place in the speaker's cabinet. A separate panel has been added close to the bottom, altering the frequency and magnitude of the main internal standing wave. Careful re-damping and the addition of a second piece of HQa foam have allegedly removed the final vestiges of resonance. Meanwhile the port has also been repositioned to the side, which Musical Technology claims improves midrange response.

In addition, the Kestrel Evolution's tweeter has a slight reduction in output (less than 0.5dB) to bring it in line with the improved bass and midrange.

Prices range between £315 and £475, depending on the choice of finish. Optional baseplates are also available in steel at £30 or resin rock at £80.

Musical Technology
☎ (01656) 842000



☉ The new improved Kestrel Evolution.



JIMMY HUGHES

When it comes to music, Jimmy wants to be alone.



There's a story from the '50s involving a recording session with conductor Victor de Sabata. Curious to hear how the orchestra sounded from the back of the hall, de Sabata asked the young Herbert von Karajan (who just happened to be there) to direct for a few minutes while he went walk about. Unfortunately, the sound of the orchestra changed completely as soon as Karajan started to conduct!

Perhaps this isn't so strange. The way an orchestra plays — and sounds — relates directly to gesture and the conductor's body language. Karajan once remarked that he could give a downbeat that would result in either the strings, winds, or brass entering fractionally late — or all three groups precisely together. It has something to do with the way these different instruments make their sound, and their proximity to the conductor.

A woman I once knew, who was a regular concert-goer for over 40 years, could invariably tell who was conducting a concert on the radio. How? She could 'see' in her mind's eye the gestures and body language of the conductor reflected in the music. Look at a video of Sir George Solti conducting, and you'll perhaps agree that his brusque physical gestures on the podium are mirrored by the clipped way the orchestra phrases.

Of course, it goes further than just body movement, and relates to the conductor's personality as much as his stick technique. It's as though a great conductor has mental control over the players. Yet it remains a fascinating and ultimately intangible thing; even conductors and orchestral musicians seem unable to explain how the process works.

“Since I changed from carpet to wood flooring in my listening room last autumn, the overall sound has been better and more consistent.”

On a more mundane level, I've noticed how the sound of my hi-fi system seems to vary according to who's there in the room with me. Not down to their body movements, I hasten to add. But simply by their presence in the room. With certain friends the sound always seems to be good; when others visit, the system suddenly and inexplicably has one of its off-nights.

Now, if this just happened once, it could be put down to serendipity. But, with some friends, it's happened time and time again. And I'm blown if I can explain why. Perhaps it's purely psychological, but generally my system sounds best when I'm relaxed, and listening alone.

I've found that as things improve and the system achieves a higher standard, it's harder to get it to have an off-day. For example, since I changed from carpet to wood flooring in my listening room last autumn, the overall sound has been better and more consistent. So much so, I've largely forgotten about the hi-fi and simply concentrated on the music.

Indeed, a friend mildly rebuked me for not having made any changes or tweaks for the past few months! But why should I when it's working so well? I only feel the need to tweak when the sound disappoints. When things are sounding good, it's tempting fate...

HIGHLY professional

This month we bring you a system with a twist: it hails from a manufacturer rather than a dealer.

Tim Bown reports.



In each of *Choice* we deliver you, our dear readers, a System of the Month — a fine fusion of potent kit commonly chosen for review by a reputable hi-fi dealer. This time we've got a set-up offering a somewhat different spin. Instead of asking a dealer for recommendations, we've gone direct to a manufacturer to consider the permutations for a rather unusual combo.

The outfit in question is PMC, or The Professional Monitor Company, to give the Hertfordshire-based manufacturer its original, extended name. As monikers go it's a mite bullish but undoubtedly accurate, as PMC spends much of its time developing monitor speakers for the professional recording industry. These are used for mastering in studios around the world (too many to

count, according to PMC), including every top BBC location and several blockbusting Hollywood studios (PMCs were used to create the soundtracks for the likes of *Titanic* and *Jurassic Park*). An impressive pedigree indeed.

As we said, PMC's chosen system is unusual, though that has little to do with the configuration of the company's own direct contribution — the TB1 loudspeaker. An average-looking two way standmount designed and priced for the domestic market, its 40cm high MDF cabinet, 12.5cm doped paper mid/bass cone and 25mm metal dome tweeter are hardly unusual. Engineering quality is exemplary, however, including effective use of transmission-line bass loading, and as a full review in *HFC 160* revealed, it came complete with excellent sonic results. Frankly, to find such articulate and musical speakers on the wallet-friendly side of £500 is rare indeed.

MAPLE SYRUP

Now here's the rub. A second facet of PMC is acting as the UK distributor for Canadian amp specialist Bryston, another outfit with firm foundations in the world of professional recording. The two companies have formed a close working relationship, with considerable cross-referencing between their respective product ranges, so it's hardly surprising PMC recommends the Canadian's product as a perfect match in the current-shifting department. More of a shock to the system is the form PMC's suggested amp partnership takes — a preamp and two small mono power modules which bolt onto the back of the speakers!

Called Powerpac 60s, these £423 a-piece 60 Watt modules are so designed for two reasons. First, there's the convenience factor. By hooking them to the speakers piggy-back style they vanish from sight, unlike most monoblocks which are ugly affairs that'll take up acres of valuable rack space. If you prefer you can attach them onto (or into) a wall, which also

THE SYSTEM

Acoustic Precision Eikos/ Lithos A&D	£2,350
Bryston BP-20 preamp	£1,125.65
Bryston Powerpac 60 monoblocks	£423.00 (each)
PMC TB1 loudspeakers	£481.75

makes them ideal for home cinema use. Second, there are sonic advantages in keeping cable length between amp and speakers to a minimum, the VDC 42-strand OFC cable supplied with the amps is just a few inches long.

Of course, that means interconnect cable runs are likely to be much longer between each power amp and Bryston's BP-20 preamp — a £1,126 model with a distinctly pro-oriented design. Rugged build quality ensures it weighs in at a surprising 7.5 kg, with a slim, 4.3cm high front panel designed for simplicity, not glittering aesthetics. Three large controls handle volume, balance and source selection, together with four small switches for muting, polarity inversion, mono/stereo selection and tape monitoring. Inputs stretch to seven at line-level, including four XLR jacks providing two balanced inputs, and pre-outs are also supplied

in both balanced and unbalanced form. We used the former, for which PMC supplied some three metre long VDC 'pro' XLR cables.

SPELLBOUND

With the amp/speaker interface sorted, PMC's choice of source would form the final, critical piece of the puzzle. We couldn't have been happier with the decision – Acoustic Precision's Eikos CD player was once described by our esteemed Editor as "the best source component I've heard to date". A Pioneer PD-S904 at birth, it has since been enhanced beyond all recognition by hi-fi miracle workers Tom Evans and Patrick Hanscombe to become a £2,350 player of supreme resolution and musical precision.

On paper this should add up to an impressive collective indeed: the CD player's musical energy, the amps' authoritative power and the speakers' clean, natural air should go together like champagne and strawberries. Indeed, first impressions are of a wonderfully clear and lucid sound, like dipping your ear into a pool of crisp, fresh sound. Bass is perhaps a touch indistinct and the mid-balance

"Its resolution and dynamic qualities ensure instruments emerge with full-blooded textural character, attacking leading edges with relish and providing that sense of 'inner detail' sought by any true audiophile."

a little forward, but there's no sign of grain or gristle – just cool, liquid treble and vivid transparency through the middle frequencies. Pace and timing are right on the button, keeping rhythm with metronome precision, and imaging is precise and open enough to help give music a sense of true, palpable presence. One thing's for sure – we're talking 'fi' with real 'hi'.

Play the right material, particularly music of a more laid back or acoustic nature, and this system is almost breathtaking. Its resolution and dynamic qualities ensure instruments emerge with full-

blooded textural character, attacking leading edges with relish and providing that sense of 'inner detail' sought by any true audiophile. Space and definition are foremost among its talents, able to conjure attention-grasping ambience from the digital code on any well-recorded disc, while those with a penchant for vocals will be impressed by their bold yet unstressed presence.

With a track like Kristin Hersh's *Your Ghost* coursing through the system it's hard not to be spellbound. Plucked guitar sounds clean and resilient, a vibrant contrast against the blackest of sonic backgrounds, while Hersh's voice projects cleanly into the room and takes its place centre stage... if only ears could smile, I'd have been grinning from lobe to lobe.

There are times, however, when the total effect becomes somewhat dry and hard, particularly with more dense or aggressive material. Though definition is undeniably impressive, the full-tilt rasp of brass during Mahler's *Fifth Symphony* proved a little too sharp for our ears, and slinging on the ear-slapping beats

embedded into DJ Punk Rock's *Chicken Eye* CD resulted in an almost wince-inducingly flinty sound.

Nonetheless, this remains a system worthy of accolade and would probably relax with more extended running in. It combines novel design with thoroughbred resolution, knife-edge imaging and well-endowed dynamics, and is well suited to the smaller listening room. It's a touch tense at times, but with the right music it'll hold you captive from the first note to the last.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

SYNERGY ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£4,254**

Here's a system that challenges the traditions but certainly cuts the mustard when it comes to the all important sonics. A touch temperamental in character, yet undoubtedly talented.

■ **BRYSTON: 20 YEAR GUARANTEE**

■ **PMC: FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE**

Acoustic Precision
 ☎ (01483) 267516
 Professional Monitor Co
 ☎ (01707) 393002

THE SYSTEM COMPONENTS

PREAMPLIFIER

BRYSTON BP-20 £1,125.65

A slim and rugged control amp with a distinctly 'pro' feel. It's a touch pricey, but flexibility is good and quality of engineering very high. Output to power amp(s) is by XLR only.

Alternatives: Exposure XVII £850, Meridian 502 £1,295



CD PLAYER

ACOUSTIC PRECISION Eikos/Lithos A&D £2,350

A highly modified Pioneer original, re-tuned to an immensely impressive level of performance. It's neutral balance will not suit everyone, but resolution and pace are exemplary. Sizzling sonics in a shiny, black box.

Alternatives: Naim CD2 £2,000, Revox Exception E426 £2,250

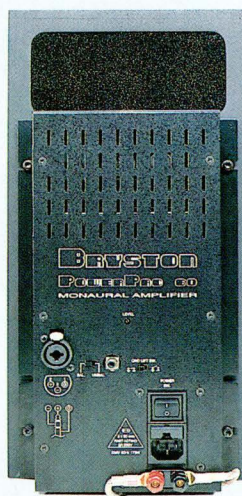


MONOBLOCKS

BRYSTON Powerpac 60 pair £846.00

Neat 60 Watt mono power amp modules with a clever bolt-on design. Sound is a touch mid-dominant but generally good, and their discreet nature is a novel bonus.

Alternatives: Musical Fidelity X-A200 £1,000, Moth Series 30 Monoblocks £879



CABLES & SUPPORTS

PMC supplies a few inches of 42-strand VDC speaker cable with the Bryston power amps for piggy-back mounting. The interconnects we used between pre and power were VDC professional XLR cables, supplied by PMC, speaker stands were Soundstyle and equipment supports Mana.

SPEAKERS

PMC TB1 £481.75

Superbly clean and refined-sounding loudspeakers. Meticulously built using high quality components, their articulate and musical balance is precisely judged, and at the price they're something of a bargain.

Alternatives: Dynaudio Audience 50 £577, AV1 NuNeutron £500



Caspian

- Integrated CD player
- Integrated amplifier
- Tuner
- Power amplifier

Finish: silver
or matt black.

★★★★★
WHAT HI-FI?

Roksan Caspian system —
January '99
Best Buy
CD player/amplifier/speakers



Caspian —
'98 winner
Best Buy
Integrated/Power
amp from £1000



Caspian —
'97 winner
Best amplification
component up
to £1000



Now available...

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 - Gold plated Speaker Outputs
- **DSP Surround sound processor**
 - Dolby Pro Logic, Dolby AC-3 and DTS
 - 4 Analogue Inputs, 2x Bypassed
 - 4 Digital Inputs, 1x AC3/RF, 2x Coaxial, 1x Optical
 - Video Switching Capability, 4x S-Video, 4x Coaxial
 - Digital and Tape Output
 - Downmix for Pro Logic, AC-3 and DTS
 - Full Function Remote Control
 - FL Tube Display

Roksan was formed in 1985 to offer sound reproduction systems of the highest quality for the most discerning of music lovers.

Today... nothing has changed, except of course the products... same standards — but now more affordable.

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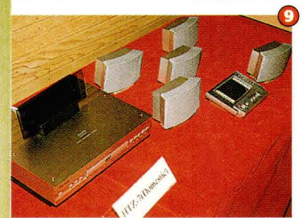
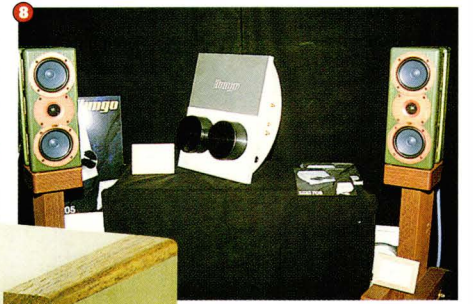
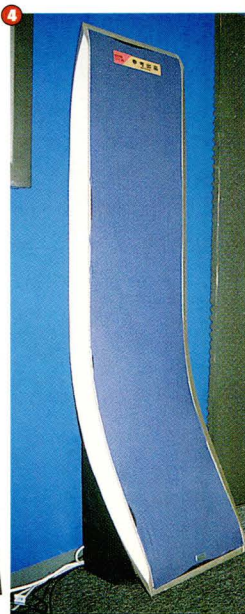
JASON KENNEDY

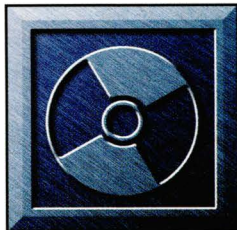


In this, his second exposé on the Tokyo show, the Editor brings you a selection of hardcore Japanese audiophilia!

While the Tokyo show is full of fascinating kit, most attendants had little grasp of English and most of the literature was in kanji script. So this report is brought to you in technicolour!

1) FW800N subwoofer from Fostex flanked by KEF Reference 3s for sale, 2) prototype Philips SACD player, 3) John Bamford (left) of Pioneer and Alvin Gold, 4) NXT Concept-1 four panel design exercise, 5) the tiny Fostex G-750 'handheld' speaker, 6) TEAC Esoteric CD transport and DAC in black crackle finish, 7) another pair of mad horn hybrids, 8) Ilungo Model 705 DAC and Ray Audio KM1V speakers, 9) Pioneer HTZ-7 surround system, 10) Sakura Systems 4700 CD player and DAC, 11) pick a tweeter, any tweeter.





PAUL MILLER'S OASIS OF SANITY

Technical editor **Paul Miller** clarifies the technology behind CD, and explains why there's no such thing as a 24-bit CD player.

Judging by our postbag, there seems to be some confusion over the merits – or otherwise – of so-called '24-bit' CD players. Elsewhere in the world, the situation is further detached from reality. In the Far East, for example, many manufacturers are discovering that their CD players will not sell *unless* they've got '24-bits' plastered over their facias. Sadly, this is nothing more than a triumph of marketing hype over honest reality because – in practice – there's *no such thing as a 24-bit CD player!*

Which brings us onto the subject of this *Oasis*: 16-bit CD audio versus the 'numbers game', and some history of digital audio for good measure.

It's important to remember that the amount and nature of the data squeezed onto a CD was determined in the late '70s which, by today's standards, was the Digital Dark Ages. Even the 120mm diameter of the disc itself was extrapolated from the size, corner to corner, of the compact cassette. Everything from the minimum pit size that could be practically stamped onto the disc, to the minimum laser wavelength that could be reliably (and cheaply) produced, influenced the CD standard we live with today. The 44.1kHz sample rate, for example, was a convenient choice for compatibility with the existing 625-line PAL video format while 16-bits of resolution matched the top-end DAC technology available from Sony in 1980. How times have changed!

I think it's worth taking the time to remind ourselves of the basics of CD's 44.1kHz sampling and 16-bit quantisation, because this defines the ultimate accuracy of what is

recorded on the disc. Regardless of the digital trickery, claimed to lie behind so-called '24-bit CD players', any musical nuance lost to the rude inaccuracy of this 16-bit technology can never be faithfully recovered or reconstituted.

FIGURE ONE

This double graph shows a continuous, analogue musical curve or waveform (in blue). Sampling is the first key step during our digital representation or recording of this waveform. A single sample is like a snapshot of the waveform frozen in time. CD's sample rate is 44.1kHz or 441,000 samples per second, which means that each snapshot is 1/44,100 or 22.68 microseconds wide.

The top waveform shows a greyed-out area where 10 imagi-



○ Musical Fidelity's E624 is one of the new so-called 24-bit CD players.

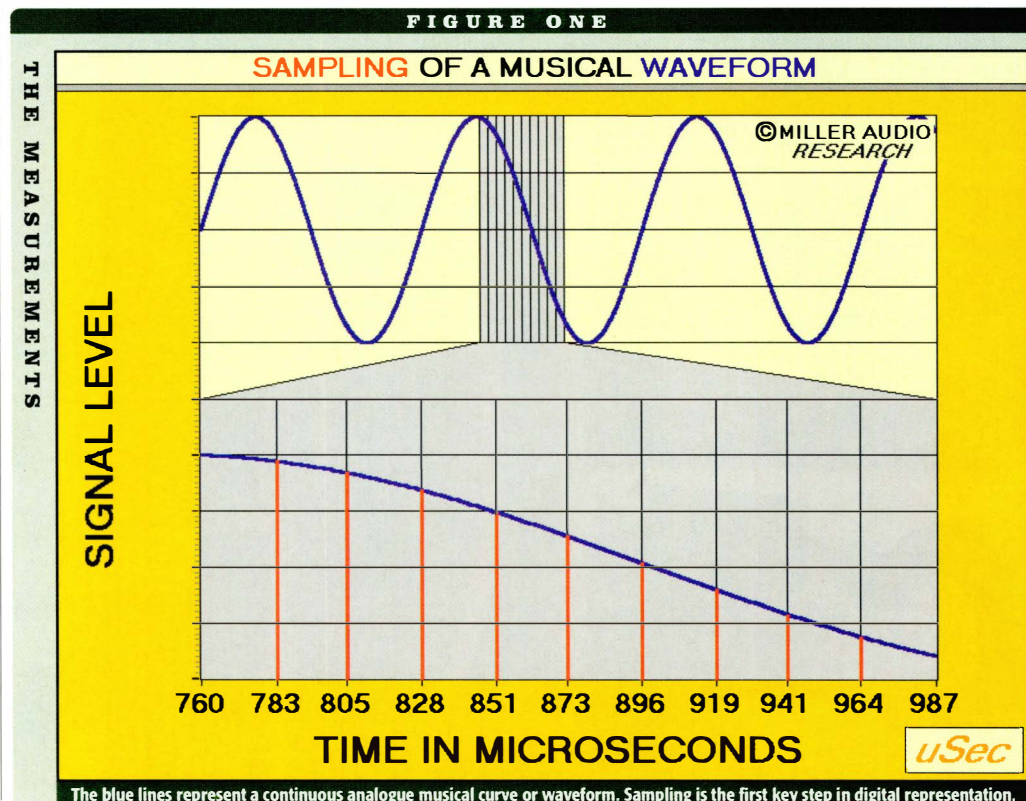
nary samples, or snapshots in time, have been taken at intervals of 22.7 microseconds. This area is then expanded on the lower half of the graph where the beginning of each sample is marked out by a vertical red line. At this stage we've not lost any information provided the sample rate is at least twice as high as the highest frequency we are trying to capture. And 44.1kHz is a bit more than dou-

ble the audio range (20kHz). Indeed, if it were entirely represented by a regular series of 'pulses' (the red lines), the original musical waveform could be recovered intact by feeding it through a low-pass filter.

FIGURE TWO

It's only when the sampled waveform is described by a stream of digital numbers, a process called quantisation, that music goes missing and distortion is added. For example, let's describe our blue waveform with a resolution of just 4-bits. This gives us 2-to-the-power-4 or 16 quantisation steps or intervals (ranging from +8 to -7). These steps are uniform in size but, as we see from the graph,

"A notional 24-bit audio DVD disc will not be accepted by a CD player, regardless of whether the offending article proudly declares '24-bits'."



can only offer an approximate description of the waveform's level at each sample point.

Each of the 16 different levels available (only 12 are shown on the graph) are coded using a binary number or 'digital word'. Because we have 4-bits of accuracy, each word is four digits long. Positive-going signals begin with '0' while negative-going signals begin with '1'.

Because the signal level within each sample (snapshot) can only be approximated, our digital representation of the waveform contains quantisation errors which, during D/A conversion, are realised as distortion. Obviously, finer quantisation steps will produce a more accurate description of the waveform while a higher sampling rate will allow progressively higher (audio) frequencies to be captured.

CD has a 16-bit quantisation accuracy, which offers 2-to-the-power-16, or 65,536, equally-spaced steps. The 16-bit code is made up of digital words containing 16 binary digits and there are 65,536 of these from 0000000000000000 to 1111111111111111. This provides

a practical signal-to-noise of around 98dB (not the oft-quoted 96dB), which was way ahead of that available from any analogue technology of the time. Nevertheless, there's no doubt that if the music were sampled at 96kHz and then quantised to an accuracy of 24-bits (16,777,216 steps!) that the

“With players proudly boasting 16, 18 and then 20-bit banners, the idea of suddenly announcing a ‘3.5-bit’ logo... proved a little tricky.”

description would be far more faithful than that available on CD. This would have seemed pure fantasy in 1980 but, nearly 20 years on, it's a practical reality thanks to DVD-Audio.

Nevertheless, a notional 24-bit audio DVD disc will not be accepted by a CD player, regardless of whether the offending article proudly declares '24-bits'. If we leaf back through the pages of CD history, this

'numbers game' began with the advent of feasible 18-bit and then 20-bit D/A converters. This simply meant that if the converter was fed a stream of 18- or 20-bit digital words then it wouldn't fall over. What comes off the spinning CD is still 16-bit data but it did allow the chips in-between (oversampling filters in particular) to perform their task to a higher accuracy. 16-bit words would go in and 18 or 20-bit words of oversampled data would emerge. We'll discuss oversampling technology in a future *Oasis*.

COLOUR BY NUMBERS

Ironically, the advent of bit-stream digital technology put a temporary halt to this marketing madness. After all, with players proudly boasting 16, 18 and then 20-bit banners, the idea of suddenly announcing a '3.5 bit' logo on next year's player proved a little tricky. So the 'numbers game' quieted somewhat through the early and mid-'90s as the various multi-bit, bitstream and hybrid DAC technologies all took time to mature. And besides, there was always some new digital filter technology to keep the marketing departments busy.

In the meantime, the internal accuracy of many CD chips has topped 40-bits or more, all the while processing what is –

lest we forget – 16-bit data. More recently, DVD Audio has sparked off the '96kHz/24-bit' catchphrase and D/A converters designed specifically for the purpose (from Burr-Brown, notably) have also found themselves being implemented in conventional CD players. All this means is that if the CD player's oversampling filter were to output a 24-bit wordlength then the DAC would happily accept it. It does not mean that the music described by the CD's 16-bit data is miraculously elevated to 24-bit precision, or that the base sample rate is increased from 44.1kHz.

This is not to say that employing high-precision filters and DACs is without merit, though a sense of proportion is needed. For example, we know that CD's 16-bit code offers a theoretical 98dB range and with the advantages wrought by oversampling, for one, this may be stretched to around 106dB in practice. Using sensitive instruments, it's even possible to track very low-level and ostensibly 16-bit signals through the noise to -120dBFS or so. In practice, however, the chip's environment and associated analogue circuitry tend to yield a practical limit of 110dB or 18-bits.

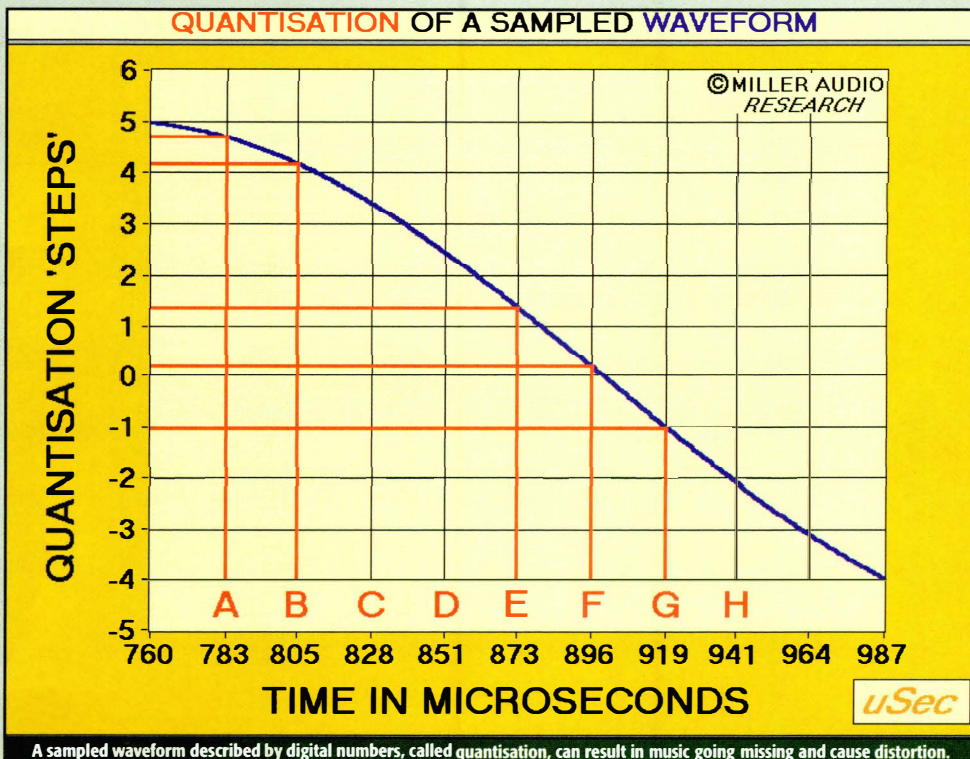
Frankly, achieving the 140dB range promised by genuine 96kHz/24-bit DVD-Audio is still a pipe dream. Those DVD players tested so far, even with 24-bit material, still rank no better than a good budget CD player. And the moral is: close your eyes and judge your next CD player on the basis of its sound quality, *not* the number of bits boasted within....

Do you have a subject matter for the *Oasis*? Please contact P.Miller via E-mail on MILLER_AUDIO_RESEARCH@compuserve.com .

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SIGNALS

Sample	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Nearest Level	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
4-bit Word	0101	0100	0011	0010	0001	0000	1111	1110

FIGURE TWO



GLOSSARY

- DIGITAL WORD:** A number composed of binary digits. A 16-bit word has 16 digits, made up of 1's and 0's.
- OVERSAMPLING FILTER:** A chip that digitally creates extra samples in between existing samples, effectively increasing the sample rate. Digital images (distortions) are pushed out to higher frequencies, allowing the use of gentler analogue filters.
- QUANTISATION:** Describing a sample's level using a digital word.
- SAMPLE:** A snapshot in time of an analogue waveform.

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WHAT HI-FI?



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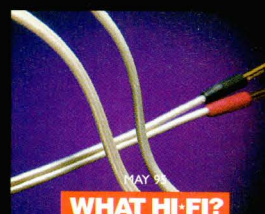
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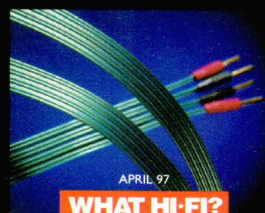
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APRIL 97

WHAT HI-FI?



DAVID VIVIAN

Visiting a hi-fi show hosted in Italy, the home of style, is a humbling experience!



Let's see... New York, Paris, Rome, Milan. Milan. Like the sound of that. Good food, fine wine, elegant fashions, beautiful women and, of course, hedonistic hi-fi. The very best kind.

So Milan it was. The Quark Hotel to be exact. It's where Italian audiophiles and home cinema enthusiasts flock every October for the Top Audio Show, now in its 11th year. And it's the place EISA chooses to hand out its best hi-fi awards, hence the invite for contributing magazine *Hi-Fi Choice*.

Imagine the Heathrow Renaissance/Excelsior experience set in a slightly larger, plusher hotel without the 747s thundering overhead and you about have it. Sure, the weather's a few degrees warmer, people aren't as scruffily dressed (even I made an effort) and the ambient babble is less distracting because it's in a foreign language. But the deal is exactly the same: hi-fi to die for being demonstrated in pokey, airless hotel bedrooms. You gasp at the styling, you gasp for oxygen, you hold your breath in anticipation of the glorious sound in store. Until you go blue in the face.

THE RIGHT PLACE

Hi-fi shows aren't the place for critical listening. They're the place for seeing/touching/dribbling on what's new, dreaming of owning the unownable and collecting brochures by the bag load. But there's only so much of this you can do. To get a feel for who was doing what on all five floors of The Quark took about an hour, revisiting the best bits another two. This was mostly Italian stuff that either hadn't been at Heathrow or I'd somehow missed...Chario, Norma, Precisa Acustica. Nearly all of it looked lovely. Except for a Dromos preamp which looked like a hotel bedroom radio.

So I was wandering around, genuinely at a loss to know what to do for the next five hours — my flight home wasn't until the following morning — when a short, swarthy man in a beautifully tailored black suit (think *Reservoir Dogs*) tapped me on the shoulder and asked if I wanted to take a bus ride. Almost without bothering to ask if he'd been sent by Mr Pink, I said yes.

In fact, his name was Silvino and he worked for a company called Aliante. The name clicked. Some months earlier I'd been shown photographs of some bookshelf Aliante speakers in connection with Quad,



“If you're prone to fainting in the presence of beauty, warn someone before you enter the Pininfarina museum; you wouldn't want to hit your head on a 1958 Ferrari.”

one of the UK's oldest and most respected hi-fi makers, these days part of the IAG. This made sense. Quad's solid reputation for cutting edge industrial design didn't sit comfortably with its sweet-sounding Spendor-made 10L, a plain Jane box if ever there was. Aliante's styling was by Pininfarina, one of Italy's greatest design houses and the name on some of the most beautiful cars ever made, including all the most famous Ferraris.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

The Aliante designs, with their mesh grilles, sculpted side panels and dazzling lacquer and metallic finishes were as stunning as the 10Ls were boring, and would have put a sexy lifestyle spin on the new 99-series electronics. But, after an amicable

courtship, Quad pulled the plug. According to IAG group boss Stan Curtis, Aliante had an inflated idea of the Pininfarina name's worth to Quad — “...if it had been 'Ferrari' then maybe,” comments Stan — and, “when all was said and done, the product didn't sound that hot.” In the end, it was a case of “thanks but no thanks” and Aliante was left to exploit the commercial potential of its contract with Pininfarina on its own — to re-group and consolidate its resources.

Hence the two and a half hour bus ride from Milan to Pininfarina's HQ on the outskirts of Turin. We'd been gathered together to witness the launch of what Aliante describes as “the most exciting lifestyle hi-fi speakers for the next century”. And there they were, nestling evocatively between the buffed alloy Pininfarina concept cars, gleaming in the neutral light of a design studio stage, causing a momentary change in the room's air pressure as 100 journalists caught their breath: the best looking range of box-style loudspeakers I'd ever seen — from gracefully bowed floorstanders to timber-cheeked miniatures.

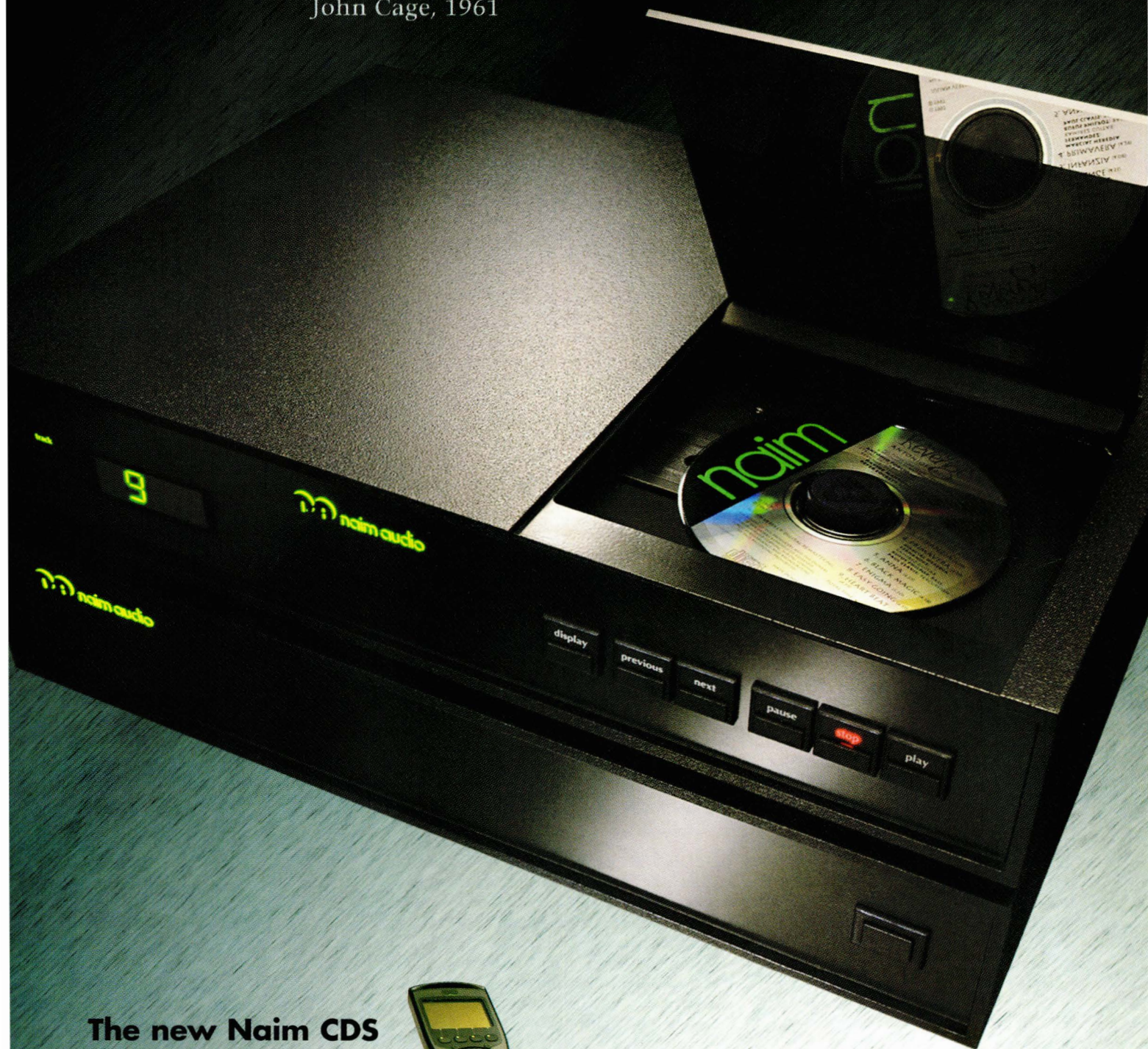
Alright, I admit it. Being so close to so many fabulous cars helped. If you're prone to fainting in the presence of beauty, warn someone before you enter the Pininfarina museum; you wouldn't want to hit your head on a 1958 Ferrari. As to the speakers' sonic ability, it must remain a mystery for now, though I hope to audition the baby Stile model soon. My guess is it's no audiophile bargain. Then again, it would have to be pretty ordinary for me not to want it in a secondary 'lifestyle' application. Hi-fi that looks this good should be the norm but, unfortunately, it's all too rare. Style matters. Italians understand.

Looks to take you breath away — the Aliante Zeta (above) and Moda (below), styled by Pininfarina.



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John Cage, 1961



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LETTERS

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?

I was most interested to read Paul Miller's 'shock exposure' in the September 1998 issue, relating to encoding errors on the dynamic peaks of certain CDs. More power to him if he can persuade the record industry to improve the quality of CD software.

I wonder if perhaps some of the dissatisfaction with CD may relate to the lower rather than the higher end of the analogue dynamic range.

We read that at normal volumes FM hiss and tape hiss are virtually inaudible below -70dB, and if venue atmosphere/acoustic is encoded below this level on CD then it will be lost in black silence on replay – which destroys much of the realism.

I think I understand your assertions of the difference between the 0dBfs end stop for CD and the 0dB guide (that may be exceeded) when recording on tape – but I'm very unclear as to the

relationship between the 96dBfs digital dynamic range and analogue dynamic range.

I hear that much of the record company lethargy in relation to sound quality may be founded upon their knowledge that some 95 per cent of discs sold will be replayed on a midi system, so they just don't try for higher standards.

S C R Smyth, Porthmadog, Gwynedd

Technical Editor replies... A 'digital' dynamic range is of academic interest only, because it's only when the data is converted back into a recognisable 'analogue' signal that the range between the loudest and quietest sounds is 'heard'. For example, 24-bit data might have a theoretical dynamic range of 144dB, but there's no practical DAC/analogue filter stage available that will realise this span upon replay. See this month's Oasis (page 16) for a look at 16 vs. 24-bit data and related topics.

reverb, applied to each musical component during the final two-track mix. The same situation would apply to any multi-mike recording, live or otherwise, ie that the 'soundstage' is artificially created in the first place.

My understanding is that the only situation where a true stereo soundstage can be recorded is when a single stereo microphone is used 'clean' directly on to two-track for the entire recording. Thus, the only way a piece of hi-fi equipment can be judged in terms of its ability to recreate a convincing soundstage is one where it is using such a recording as a source. Am I right, or am I missing something?

M J Blackmore, Brading, Isle of Wight

The Editor replies... When a voice or an instrument is recorded in stereo, however it is mixed, it will remain in stereo and therefore should be heard as such when reproduced. Clearly the simpler the recording technique the better the chances of achieving natural imaging, but even if you listen to electronic or sampled music you will notice immediately when a genuine stereo element pops up in the recording.

DRAWING A BLANK

With the increasing number of blank MiniDiscs available, at various prices, would it be possible for you to test some of them? You could measure things like block error rate.

This would make the job of choosing which blank to buy far easier! Having had some bad experiences with cheap DAT tapes, I'm reluctant to buy the cheapest MDs if they won't last the course.

Also, thanks producing an excellent mag – the most interesting by far. Keep it up!

I Cowper, Bridport, Dorset

The Editor replies... It's been some time since we tested software, and due to the increased interest in this medium we hope to run a test soon.

SERVICE WITH A SMILE

I would like to publicly thank Damien MacNamara and John Watson of Mana Acoustics for customer service above and beyond the call of duty. They have restored my faith in human nature and I am extremely grateful to them. To manufacture an excellent product is one thing, but to combine this with a service to match is such a rarity nowadays that it deserves a mention.

David Doffin, Chorley, Lancs

ARTIFICIAL REALITY

My question concerns some of the criteria and terms used by hi-fi reviewers, namely 'soundstage width' and 'depth' and 'imaging'. I am fully prepared to be educated but surely such terms are meaningless in the context of recordings that were created in multi-track studios where the left/right position of individual instruments in the 'sound stage' is determined by the engineer/producer via the position of the 'pan' pot on the mix-down desk. Equally, the front/back imaging will be determined by the amount of level, and possibly



John (left) and Damien of Mana restoring faith and building stands.



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REALITY CHECK—the all-valve **LS25** brings down the cost of true **Audio Research** high-end performance. This line stage preamplifier can be perceived as a slightly smaller Reference 1. It is a pure Class A design with smooth detailed sound, clean focus and plenty of bass impact. It has the flexibility to integrate with high quality audio and video components.

A NEW REALITY—**Audio Research** delivered true reference sound quality with its **Reference 1 preamp** and **Reference 600 monoblocs**. A number of customers looking for Reference 600 sound quality have asked for slightly lower output power and a smaller chassis. The new **Reference 300** is the smaller, quieter and cooler answer to these customer's needs.

Good news too for existing Reference 600 customers who can opt for the **MkII factory update** while new-build **Reference 600MkIIs** are now available. Each mono chassis packs 16 power output valves through a tightly coupled output transformer to deliver an effortless 600 watt with the naturalness and ease of dynamics only associated with live performance. With its wide bias adjustment the Reference 600 can use of any popular output valves in the 6550, KT88/90/99/100 families. The all-valve Reference 1 stereo line preamp has full micro-processor remote control of volume, balance, record and input selection with both balance and single ended inputs (eight plus full tape loop) and outputs (two main, one tape). There are no mechanical switches to degrade the signal path. Awards and world-wide acclaim says it all. Find out for yourself why Ken Kessler rated these "the finest audio amplification devices ever produced" (Hi-Fi News May 1996)

REAL PARTNERS—**Audio Research** has introduced the **LS9**, a remote control solid-state preamp to replacing the popular LS3/3B. This all new, direct-coupled Class A design uses the constant-current technology of the flagship Reference 1 and features two balanced and three single-ended inputs plus a full tape monitor loop in a low profile case.

Perfect partner for the LS9 is the **100.2** solid-state power amp which we believe sets a new standard. Liquid and grain-free, it possesses a fine midrange transparency.

REAL TRADITION—the **PH3 phono preamplifier** is eagerly sought out by those enjoying the renaissance of interest in vinyl. A total of 109 part changes now see the PH3 in Special Edition guise as the **PH3SE**. We can confidently say this is the most stunning phono stage ever to bear the Audio Research logo. An upgrade will be available for existing owners.

Get a new grip on

REALITY

REAL PERFORMANCE—the **LS15** pre-amplifier is for those making an important transition into the real high-end yet who wish to retain the convenience of full remote control of all front panel functions. It offers both singled ended and balanced inputs with micro-processor controlled relays for gain control and switching. Enthusiasts looking for the traditional qualities of an all-valve line preamplifier will find them carried over into the **LS8** which replaces the much-loved LS7.

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

LS15/VT100 pre/power combination will rock you back on your heels with its resolution and dynamics. This partnership puts excitement back into your music making. Martin Colloms (Hi-Fi News April 1997) reviewed the VT100 as "having a generously balanced sound... sufficiently positive and dynamic to give a believably accurate tonal balance".

The **VT100** is now in **MkII** build with doubled power supply energy storage, cooling fan and valve damping rings. MkII enhancements are available as a factory upgrade for existing owners. The mid-power VT100 MkII is positioned between the classic VT50, at around £3300, and the mighty VT200.

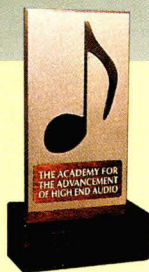
REAL INTEGRATION—enthusiasts waited a long time for the **CA50** all-valve, remote control integrated amplifier. Conservatively rated at 50 watt per channel the CA50 is designed to be stunningly musical, handsome in appearance—its styling cues come from the awesome Reference 1—and completely convenient. Audition this important **Audio Research** first and find out why Ken Kessler (Hi-Fi News February 1997) said, "So much for the superiority of separates...".

REAL QUALITY—An entirely new full 20-bit **CD player**, the **CD2**, is styled to match the CA50. As a complete player **Audio Research** is convinced the CD2 can compete with any single or two-box player in the market with its astounding resolution of detail and dynamics.

For those seeking classic Audio Research sound quality in an outboard digital converter the all valve-output **DAC3** converter is the perfect choice. It is now in **Mk II** production with improved components and important mechanical improvements to reduce vibration.

Time to get a better grip on your musical reality?—contact **Absolute Sounds** for full information and a list of dealers where you can experience the realism of **Audio Research**.

LS25 preamplifier — gripping



VT200 amplifier — nominee The Academy Advancing High Performance Audio & Video Golden Note award 1998 'Tube (valve) electronics design'

Reference 600 monoblocs — winner AAHEA Golden Note award 1996 'Best tube electronics design'

Reference 1 preamplifier — winner AAHEA Golden Note award 1997 'Best tube electronics design'



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boards to be seen, and there is apparently no active voltage gain either – the transistors are used purely for current gain.

Another design aim was to eradicate loop feedback across all the amp's operational stages. Such feedback is often intentionally used to lower distortion by making the circuit more linear, but this brings other trade-offs in terms of sound quality. Some designers like to use controlled feedback and others, like Alema, don't. "I fundamentally hate feedback," says Chessell. "Everything starts to flatten and emotion disappears." But doesn't that mean your amps will have higher distortion figures? "Yes, but loudspeakers have two or three per cent distortion anyway, so it's negligible."

BUILDING STANDARDS

Quality of build is suitably tough for a £3,000 amp combo, each unit packing the kind of hernia-inducing weight that's almost a prerequisite of such designs. Each is wrapped in 2mm thick aluminium with galvanised steel front and back plates, while front-facing stainless steel adornments give the system its distinctive appearance. To be honest, it actually looks better in the photograph than it does in the 'flesh' – it seems a little odd and overbearing when racked up as part of a complete system – and the remote and fascia controls are no different to those on kit costing a few hundred pounds.

Socketry is well stocked, however. The preamp has five line-level inputs, four of which are unbalanced via RCA jacks (together with a tape-out), and a single balanced XLR-type input. There are also two unbalanced main outputs, but for this System 2 combination the solitary balanced output is the only one you'll need. No power supply is included for the preamp: instead of plugging into the mains, it derives electricity from the power amp pairing, a method designed to keep costs down and maintain the component's identity as part of a complete amp package.

On the power amp front, each has balanced XLR inputs and a choice between four and eight Ohm speaker outputs to help obtain optimum performance. Upgrade paths are on

the cards too, with a number of options planned such as separate power supplies and a phono board for the preamp.

SOUND QUALITY

The avowed aim for the Flux design was to combine the typical sonic benefits of transistors and valves in amps using only the former. And it would appear to have been successful: System 2 delivers the kind of pace, punch and bass definition commonly associated with transistor amps, yet it also has the sort of clean, open midrange and tangible soundstage depth that comes so easily to a good valve-based design.

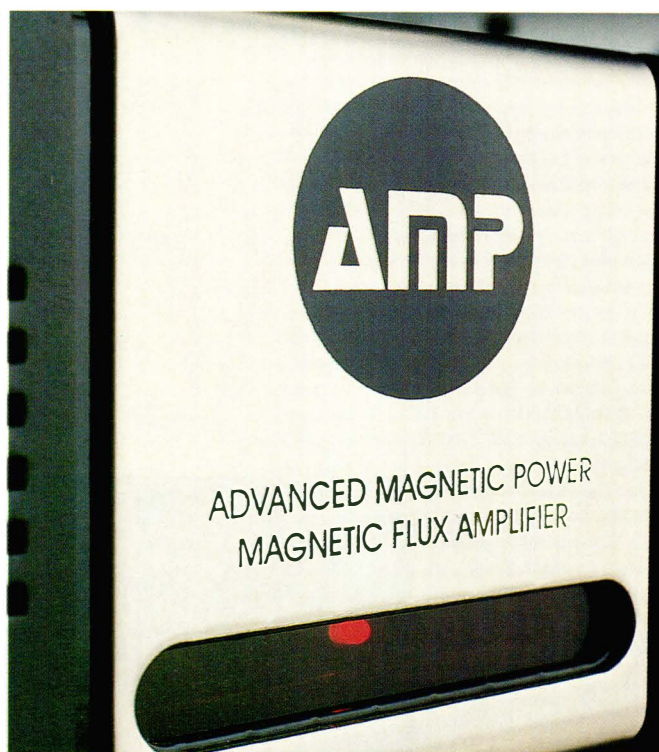
The first thing to hit you is the combo's macrodynamic quality – the degree of slam and impact inherent in certain music. It's superb at conveying the pound and crack of bass drum, while orchestral crescendos

"It's superb at conveying the pound and crack of bass drum, while orchestral crescendos swell and crash with awesome ease."

swell and crash with awesome ease. Listening to Mahler's *Fifth Symphony* with the volume cranked up is a shudderingly powerful experience, yet the overall sound remains tight and clean.

Equally impressive are the AMP's microdynamics, the level of dynamic attack afforded to individual sounds amid the overall musical picture. It's a trait that's most apparent with simple, spacious music such as the country-jazz twang of Sarah K's *Play on Words* CD. Plucked guitar possesses a sudden, tangible quality, and the degree of acoustic ambience surrounding voice and instruments is stunning.

Bass performance is particularly noteworthy, I know of few other amps that are so adept at delivering the textural qualities of a bass guitar. There's weight and welly in abundance, yet not a hint of blur; this is real bass. Clarity is pretty crystalline too, with plenty of energy in the mid and treble, and you truly get the feeling



that the amp is wringing out every detail the source component can supply.

But there is a side to the System 2 combo that won't be appreciated by some people. Despite its valve-sound pretensions, there's a slightly steely quality to the upper frequencies that can make the experience a little too intense. It's not harsh or nasty, but it is a touch fatiguing over time, particularly with material of a less subtle nature. Playing Fun Lovin' Criminal's deep-grooving *Up on the Hill*, you can't help but admire the drum thwack and rhythmic attack this amp imparts. But it's hard to relax into the track – a slightly sweeter tone would bring you closer to the music's true essence. As a direct comparison, ECA's excellent sub-£2,000 Vista/Lectern pre/power combination lacks some of the resolution and 'grunt', but somehow it sounds a touch more musical with tracks of this ilk.

That said, careful partnering should prevent such excesses from being a problem. It's not a combo to take source components lightly, and its initial partner on test, an Arcam Alpha 8SE CD player, proved unworthy of the task. The amps were highlighting grain in the treble, and it wasn't until I switched to a 24-bit Meridian 508 that things began to calm down. Similar care must be

taken in the speaker department, and a laid-back tonal balance appears to suit the best.

CONCLUSION

Revolutionary? No, not exactly. There's nothing startlingly new here, the Flux System 2 is simply a transistor amp of very high quality. It's heavyweight stuff, coupling real guts with fine resolution, and if you like your music with plenty of slam, strong dynamics and lashings of detail, it's worth serious consideration.

Oh, and if you're interested in looking up the aforementioned Website, you'll find it at www.hi-fidelity.co.uk. Don't hold your breath, though – the only way to achieve genuine enlightenment is to audition this AMP for yourself.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£3,000**

Three-box amp solution delivering sonic power and panache.

■ 2 YEAR GUARANTEE

☎ Alema UK (01903) 750755

SPECIFICATIONS

■ Dimensions 10.5x48x40.7cm (HxWxD)

■ Power Output 50 Watts/8 Ohms

■ Inputs 5 (one balanced, four unbalanced) + tape out.

FLUXING Muscle



Talk is cheap on the Internet. Not literally, of course, (have you seen the size of the average Net-head's phone bill?), but metaphorically. If you have your own site you can say what you like, so when a hi-fi designer uses his Internet 'magazine' to declare his own product "revolutionary", you're bound to take it with a rather severe pinch of salt. Then again, it depends who the designer is...

In this instance, the man in question is David Chessell. A fully-trained chef turned amplifier ace, he has a reputation for, how shall we put it, talking

Just how 'revolutionary' is Chessell's first transistor-only powerhouse? Tim Bown puts the scores on the doors.

enthusiastically about his work. The salt option may well be needed for much of his mus-ing, but rhetoric aside, Chessell's performance record speaks for itself. If this man is excited about a new amplifier, any self-respecting audiophile would be advised to cock an ear in its direction.

Until now, Chessell's amps have emerged under the

Audion banner which he launched in 1987. Five years later he was joined by former Audio Innovations designer Erik Anderson, and together they set up Alema, the parent company under which Audion now trades. Up to this point the company's amps have eschewed solid-state devices in favour of valve-based designs.

But not any more. With high market demand and "the challenge of competition from abroad" as incentives, Chessell has embarked on his very first transistor-only design, with not a single, solitary valve to be heard. For this break from convention, a new trading name has been devised to sit alongside valve-only Audion — Advanced Magnetic Power, or

AMP (!) for short. The first product from the traps is the Flux System 2, a £3,000 three-box affair consisting of a remote-control preamp and twin 50 Watt monoblocks.

TRANSISTOR CLASS

The supposedly "revolutionary" part is a device called the Flux converter' hidden inside each power amp. It all sounds very Star Trek, but a bit of digging reveals it to be no more than an output transformer. Chessell calls the result "class transistor A1" operation, and claims it delivers the sonic benefits of full class A design but without the heat and inefficiency.

As with any high-end gear worth listening room space, the Flux System 2 is designed for sonic purity from input to output. Internal components are high quality but few in number, creating a more direct path for the audio signal which, according to the spiel, needs only travel through a single transistor device in the pre-amp and two in the power amp. Hardwiring is used throughout, with no printed circuit

◉ Alema's new flux buster uses transistors with valve style output transformers for a dynamic sound.



TAKING it to the DACs

Alan Sircom gets to grips with the first 24/96 digital to analogue converters to hit the market.

After a flourish in the late '80s and early '90s, the demand for add-on digital to analogue converters more or less fell away. Of late, even the high-end manufacturers (the last sector of the market to abandon the concept of a separate converter) began to accept the inevitable. Since the rise of 24-bit, 96kHz-compatible audio discs on DVD, however, the converter has undergone a reversal of fortunes.

Now, a spate of digital converters are flooding the market. Well, to date two new devices have been launched, although more are promised. The newcomers represent the two sides of the DAC market. Musical Fidelity is well-established in this market; before the X-24K converter, MF was one of the very first companies to place a digital processor in a separate box and class it as an upgrade with the Digilog of 11 years ago. By contrast, child of the 90s, Alchemist Products, has made both analogue and digital products for some years, but its converters have always been considered part and parcel of an Alchemist CD replay system, not necessarily as an upgrade in and of itself. As such, the new TS-D-1 represents something of a departure for the company.

The two new DACs represent a toe in the water of new formats for both parties. Neither builds a DVD player as yet, and only time will tell whether either will produce a complete DVD-Video or DVD-Audio player. But, by adopting the new 24/96 converters, the two DACs throw both companies at the cutting edge of digital technology. Almost.

Like all DVD players that cater for the decoding of high-sample, high-bit datastreams

(such as the Pioneer DV-717 and DV-505), both DACs use near-identical and largely surface-mount components throughout most of the digital and analogue stages. However, there are differences in general construction and feel.

In fit and finish, it's the Musical Fidelity X-24K that has the edge. Maybe it's the familiar extruded casework with its brushed aluminium front panels, or the moulded plug-top power supply against the TS-D-1's plastic-coated can, or perhaps it's the TS-D-1's initial reluctance to lock on to a digital signal until it's warmed up, but the MF's package does appear to be more

"The veils of haze lifted to reveal a discernible improvement in the levels of imagery and detail, but the actual tempo and metre of the music remained unchanged."

professional. That said, the TS-D-1's main casework looks great and the signs are that this is just the first of a series of similarly-shaped products. There are phono stages, remote-control line preamps and even a power amp or two in the offing.

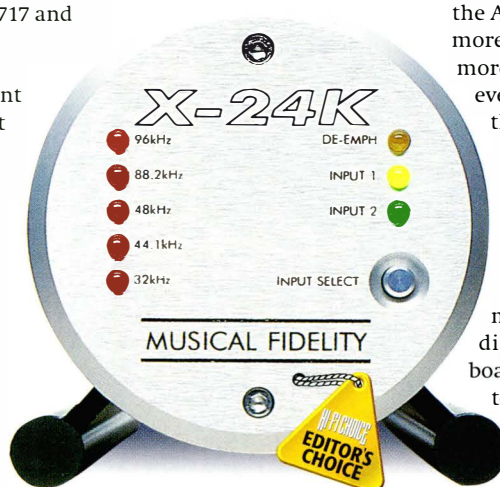
The TS-D-1 has three LEDs on its front panel to cater for

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The TS-D-1 has three LEDs on its front panel to cater for



Fit and finish lend the MF X-24K a more professional demeanour.

power, signal lock and de-emphasis — and little else. Despite the absence of a basic power-on LED, the X-24K ups the ante by virtue of a different red LED for 32kHz, 44.1kHz, 48kHz, 88.2kHz and 96kHz sampling rates. This display determines in a second whether or not the DVD player can output 96kHz digital signals on board. Somewhat more significantly, though, the X-24K allows for two digital inputs which can be switched over on the front panel.

Used as a regular 16-bit DAC with a decent but ageing Meridian player, the two DACs offer more of an alternative to the on-board sound than any direct improvement. Used with a lesser, older Marantz CD player, both enhanced the sound in audio terms, but from an outright musical stance it wasn't actually any better; the obligatory veils of haze lifted to reveal a discernible improvement in the levels of imagery and detail, but the actual tempo and metre of the music remained unchanged. In both cases, the Musical Fidelity sounded warmer and friendlier than

the Alchemist which, while more ordered and focused, was more shut-in. In fairness, however, the differences between these two essentially identical DACs was minimal; indeed, the same applies to high-bit, high-sampling discs when played on DVDs. The differences between the two were not marked, and nor were the differences between the on-board and off-board converters dramatic either. Where the benefits of both manifest themselves is on 16-bit CDs played

on a DVD player (unless that DVD player is the Denon DVD-5000). The improvement is noticeable and more than justifies the cost of either DAC.

The jury is still out as to whether these two will persuade DACs to rise out of the hi-fi graveyard. The potential is there, but it will only be realised if the DVD manufacturers improve their digital outputs and manage to persuade the buyers of DVD players to use them for CD play. Should such a change happen in the market, Alchemist — and Musical Fidelity in particular — will make a lot of users very happy.

X-24K VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£300

A tidy addition to the X-series of products and adept with all kinds of digital audio. Warm and yet detailed sounding.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Musical Fidelity (0181) 900 2866

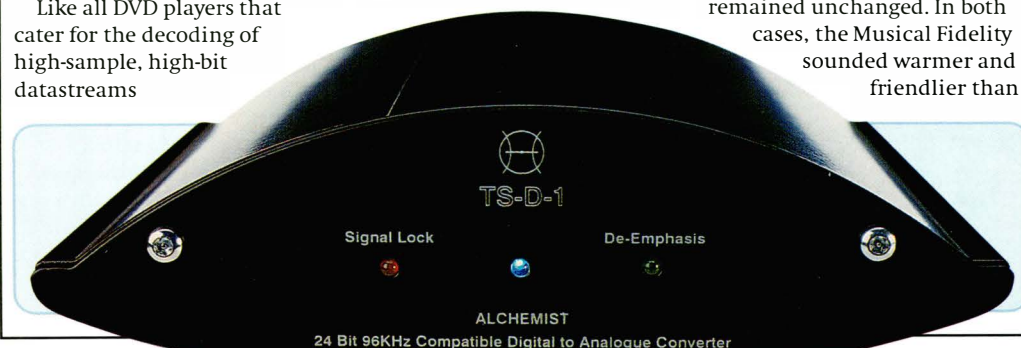
TS-D-1 VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£300

Distinctively-styled box contains near-identical 24/96 electronics to the MF, but as a concept it's not so complete. Delivers a tidy but shut-in sound.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Alchemist (01707) 664607



24 Bit 96kHz Compatible Digital to Analogue Converter



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WHAT HI-FI MARCH 97

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HI-FI WORLD JUNE 97

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REVIEW CASPIAN AMPLIFIER & CD PLAYER
HI-FI CHOICE JUNE 97

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The £1,989 Alecto power amps in their monoblock form are hefty beasts whose entire back section is made up of an aluminium casting that incorporates heatsinking, feet and socketry for a single phono plug and two pairs of speaker cables via Michell's own terminals. Mains power is delivered directly to the transformer with a supplied right-angle IEC plug, which is neat but makes for tricky upgrades on the mains cable front. The transformer is supported by a big adjustable spike which sits directly beneath it, forming the amp's third foot and adding to the sense that a lot of thought has gone into the amp's unconventional aesthetic design. While it may look like a radical design statement, the shape of the Alecto is based entirely on the theory of form following function, and from an engineering point of view it's extremely elegant.

According to its designer, the Alecto monos put out 116 Watts into eight Ohms and 214 Watts into four – not quite a doubling of power with the halving of resistance, but close enough to suggest that few speakers will give them problems.

SOUND QUALITY

I used these amps in place of a DNM 3C twin preamp and Roksan's old ROK-S1 power amp, a somewhat dearer combination but one with a similarly straight-line philosophy. The task of transducing the combo's output into sound was for the most part taken on by the B&W Nautilus 802s, but in order to see how the Alectos fared with less demanding loads I also tried the JBL 4312mkII and the Eikos FR1. The latter is in fact a cousin of the original Michell amps, as it was designed by Iso and Argo creator Tom Evans. Sources were the SME Model 20A with Wilson benesch Carbon cartridge and HR Iso/Lithos phono eq, and the Eikos CD player – no shortage of common heritage and philosophical empathy then, one might assume. Cables were Trichord, Eikos and Monolith 20/20.

Once the system had warmed to a comfortable state, my first



impressions were of a cosier balance than I had been used to. This was no doubt down to the absence of the remarkably transparent DNM preamp, a factor offset by its price which is the same as all three pieces of the Michell amp put together. However, I was struck by the fact that the

Michell's relaxed midrange wasn't the best partner for the equally unforthcoming midrange of the N802s, both at normal and low volumes. At the sort of levels that B&W engineers and I myself enjoy (and much to the disquiet of our respective neighbours), this pairing made more sense. The Alectos proved more in control than either of the other 100 Watt power amps

“They found depth and space in everything and, given the right bit of studio tweaking, stretched sounds either side of and above the speakers.”

I've tried with these speakers, both of which were more expensive options. The word 'pressure' appears in my notes from around the time I was trying to rattle things off the shelves – in fact, it appears right after the title *Inspection Check One*, a Leftfield track that tends to encourage excessive behaviour on the SPL front. These amps certainly possess authority.

While efforts have been made to allow the Michells to breathe more easily, the result is far from exposed in a bright or forward manner; it's merely very transparent and presents soundscapes in a highly convincing manner. The lack of grain or edge at higher frequencies tends to give the impression of warmth, but

play something imbued with genuine high notes and there's no sense of roll-off or dulling.

They also have a decent sense of timing, not perhaps as incisive as units which hold this parameter at the forefront of their ideals, but nor were they subjugated by the sheer grunt on tap. There's often a danger with wide bandwidth, high-power amps that the introduction of real bass extension and control introduces an effect akin to slowing the pace, but it's actually because deep bass is fundamentally slower than midrange and treble.

In many respects the amps provided a better balance with the Eikos FR1s. These showed none of the wayward tendencies that lesser amps let them get away with, and so they charmed their way back into my heart. They're far too good to be doing service on the telly – but then I do like the resolve of the N802s. It's a tough life!

After my initial suspicion that the Orca was letting the side down in terms of transparency compared to the DNM, I was surprised to find that in a direct comparison it didn't sound that different when combined with the Roksan power amp (unfortunately I couldn't get an alternative combination of DNM and Alectos to play quietly). Clearly the Michell preamp is just as capable as the power amps. One thing that did strike me, though, were the changes in perceived balance with different speakers, which suggests a pretty high degree of transparency.

The combo's strengths appear to lie in the domain of imaging; they found depth and space in everything and, given the right bit of studio phase

◉ The Orca preamp comes with a separate power supply and a beautiful circular remote control (left).

tweaking, stretched sounds either side of and above the speakers. This was always a strong point of the designs they have replaced, and I'm glad it hasn't been diluted in the quest for a more open balance – a factor that appears to be even more dependent on loudspeakers than usual.

CONCLUSION

I managed to hold onto the original Michell amps for a year after the original review, but this pair were out of the door before I could say Waka Jawaka. How's a reviewer to survive? In their latest guise, the Alectos and Orca offer exceptional value. They may not be the last word in timing, but their sheer transparency and power is on a par with alternatives at considerably higher price points. And then there's the remote, the most beautiful example I've ever encountered. That alone should be enough to make you go and listen.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £1,995 ORCA

£1,989 ALECTO (PAIR)

■ A stylish and distinctive combo with plenty of grunt and excellent transparency for the price.

■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

■ Michell Engineering (0181) 953 0771

FORM and function



John Michell is one of the more mature soldiers of the British hi-fi scene. He started making turntables in the '60s and, despite the troubled times the format has endured, continues to do so today. One of his early decks even appeared in Little Alex's stylish bedroom in Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*, a nice piece of kit for a young thug with a penchant for Beethoven's Ninth.

But around the early '90s the turntable market suffered heavy losses as a result of the digital onslaught and quite a few respectable brands sank without trace. It didn't take long for the survivors to realise that diversification would be necessary, and so Michell turned his attention to electronics. He started off proceedings with the Iso phono stage (which is something of a legend

Jason Kennedy gets starstruck with the revitalised Orca preamp and Alecto monoblock combo. Hats off to Michell!

these days), and with recent modifications it's still quite capable of seeing off the competition at almost any price. This was followed by the Argo preamp and Alecto power amp, available then as now in stereo or monoblock form.

That was five years ago, and as Michell is keenly aware that if you sit still for too long you'll be forgotten, he commissioned Graham Fowler of Trichord, the Alecto's original designer, to revitalise this distinctive pre/power combination. In the case of the Alecto power amps, the end result isn't apparently that different, but it does hide a new circuit board under its

acrylic cover (behind the 'top hat' transformer case); it also utilises Exicon MOSFETs from the pro-audio scene in an effort to create a more open sound.

The Orca preamp bears little resemblance to a killer whale and only a passing likeness

"While it may look like a radical design statement, the shape of the Alecto is based entirely on the theory of form following function."

to the preceding Argo; that preamp's acrylic block styling has since been replaced with a stainless steel-wrapped pyramidal case and a separate stainless steel-encased power supply. The latter is smaller than the supply that graced the HR versions of the Argo and Iso, and therein lies a small clue as to the total change of design within the preamp. Another give-away is the remote volume facility and its gorgeous controller, an aluminium puck with two small buttons and a transmitter bulb on the perimeter. This drives the Panasonic pot, a top-class option that costs three times as much as the original twin-ganged Sfernice unit, and which is immune to the channel imbalance that troubled Argo users wanting to listen at low levels. Internally, Orca features discrete buffered input stages and ultra low-noise discrete regulators.

The £1,995 Orca is also a more practical line preamp than its forebear, as Michell has taken heed of the extra sources we use today and fitted five line inputs and an independently monitored tape input alongside two tape and two main outputs – which is about as many inputs as I can manage.

Features are in the traditional high-end style: sparse. There's no balance or separate record-out switching, and those of you looking for tone controls are on the wrong page. It's all pretty straightforward, unless you are fooled into thinking that the input labelled 'phono' features the requisite circuitry to cope with your turntable's output; you'll need the aforementioned Iso to achieve that.



◉ Putting on the Ritz: the Alecto's 'top hat' transformer case sits in front of a covered circuit board.

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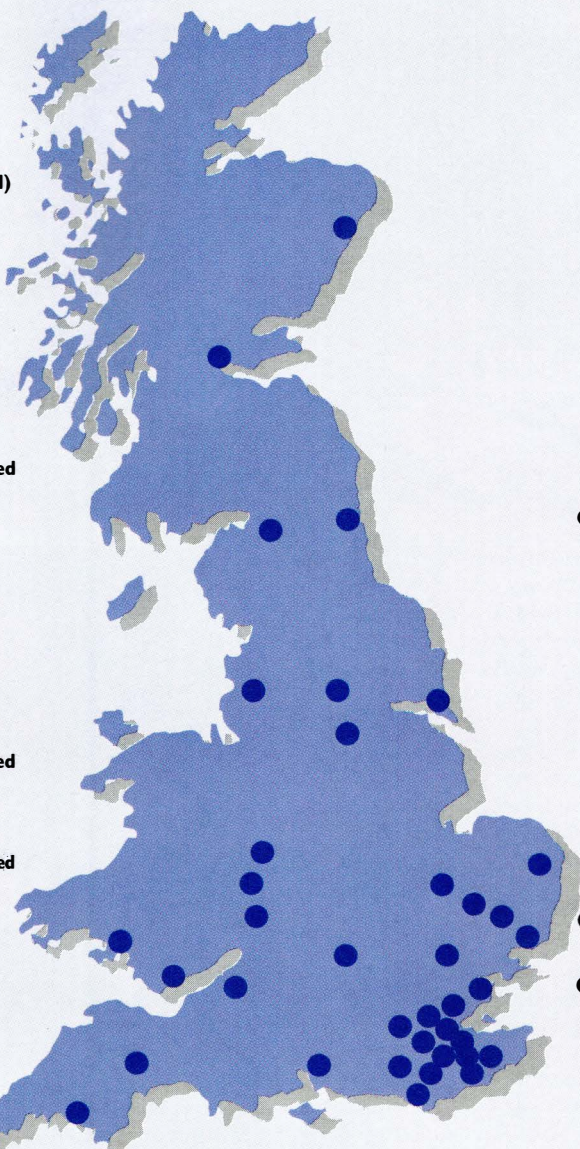
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Above: The Exposure/Garrard/Keswick Audio-equipped 'sun room' Below: David Collins does his best Peter Pan.

all the same music anyway. The little Studio 2s in the kitchen are natural oak like the cupboards and fittings. I run them off the Marantz receiver and they do a good job; you do tend to find your feet tapping when you're listening out here."

It seems to me that the Meridian 200 transport and 203 DAC in David's main system, while fine products in their day, should surely have been pensioned off by now — the Exposure CD player in the sun room system is far superior. David agrees but he believes the Meridian combo is still more than adequate.

"I did audition another Meridian which was at least twice the price," he explains. "But switching from one to the other, I couldn't discern any difference, and neither could Richard. There wasn't any point in spending the money, so I kept this one a bit longer. Now I'm waiting for something



exciting to happen on the digital front before I splash out on an expensive CD player."

Besides, David readily admits that his main system isn't as 'purist' as it might be. He expands: "My ideal music system would be, for CD, XTC pre-amp, XTC power amp, Studio 60s and a sub. And then, when I wanted home cinema, I'd have the Meridian 561 processor, one XTC driving the front speakers

and the other the rears. But I couldn't do that without a switchbox, so one XTC is running the Studio 60s while the other drives the MA CC700 centre speaker and the two Studio 6 rears. In fact, the centre speaker should be an MA Studio Centre but I managed to blow it up the other day."

We listen to the Lewis Taylor track again. The sound is bigger and more relaxed with deeper

bass and a warmer balance. Very pleasant indeed, but the imaging is more diffuse than it had been in the sun room; most of the engaging funkiness seems to have ebbed away, too. The sound fills the room all right but the music has lost some of its impact and bite. My inclination is to blame the Meridian CD combo, and David agrees that the system does sound better with the Exposure installed in its place.

But this really only applies to complex or demanding pieces of music. He carefully slips a Paul Oakenfold disc into the Meridian's tray — hard house dance music with a sharp, pacey edge — and whacks up the volume. Suddenly the system's kicking. Or should that be, 'kickin' man'? Whatever, it doesn't matter: serious volume, serious bass, serious control, serious system. David's smiling (so am I), but it's time to go. My bet is that as soon as he closed the front door he had a little dance, just him and his system. But then, isn't that what hi-fi is really all about?



hi-fi time trying to squeeze a pint-sized sound out of a quart-sized room, the sheer spaciousness of David's lounge is something of a choker.

Spanning 35 by 18ft at its widest point, there's plenty enough room for Monitor Audio's flagship Studio 60 speakers to breathe, and for the rather brutal-looking M&K subwoofer to generate the sort of bass depth demanded by David's cherished dance music. Not to mention the odd blockbuster film; the ceiling-mounted projector and stand-mounted MA Studio 6s tucked away behind the 'second row' sofa reinforces the growing impression that David likes to entertain.

I ask if the big MAs are in the system on merit. "Yeah, but also as a benchmark," David replies. "Before I bought Monitor Audio, I was using the KEF 105s with the M&K sub, Tannoys in the kitchen and Mission 720is in the kitchen. At the time I had a Chord amp with the Meridian CD, but I now use two four-channel XTC power amps for music and AV duties in conjunction with a Meridian 561 processor."

We wander through to the 'sun room' where David's secondary system lives. But not

Above: the metal-coned magic of MA's Studio 60s. Below: The Marantz receiver drives speakers in the kitchen.

before visiting the dining room. In contrast to the lounge with its Moroccan-Egyptian themes, the sun room is decorated in an Italian style (predominantly grey and black) and the limited edition, piano silver Monitor Audio Studio 20 SE Celebrations really do look like part of the furniture. Sitting at one end of the room, the Celebrations are driven by a gracefully ageing Musical Fidelity MX P180 pre/power combo from the main equipment rack in the lounge.

David explains the reasoning: "It's a typical upgrading scenario. You have a pre/power amp you've lived with for years and really like, but then it's time to move on, so you either put them in a cupboard to gather dust or sell them for nothing. Or you try to find other ways of using them. As well as driving the Celebrations, the phono stage in the preamp also takes care of the Michell Gyrodec turntable in the main system.

"The 20 SEs are the perfect speakers for this room. Because they're so pure and clean you can play them surprisingly

loud and yet still easily talk over the music when you're sitting down and eating."

Offering the best views of the garden and swimming pool, the sun room is more or less triangular in shape and has a predominantly glass front. Sources are a huge Garrard 401 turntable complete with baby bath and SME 3009 arm (on permanent loan from a friend who doesn't have the space for it), topped off by an Exposure CD1 CD player. In fact, this is the inevitable 'Exposure system', as it also comprises an Exposure XXI preamp and a couple of XVIII monoblocks driving a pair

"The sensible route would be to have Meridian CD, processor, amps and so on. But where do you go after that? I wanted to be more creative."

of Keswick Audio Figaro Evolution compact monitors (now also under the Monitor Audio banner). David describes them as "absolutely fantastic".

And I can see (and hear) precisely what he means. For looks, build, finish and sound, the £1,000 Keswicks are easily the equal of any similarly sized/priced Italian exotica. In fact, the system sounds tremendous: vivid, alive, tactile and, considering the modest dimensions of the speakers, wonderfully dynamic. Bass extension is obviously limited (David gets

his bass fix in spades from the main system), but the combination of weight, speed and tunefulness in the lower registers is nothing short of enthralling. Lewis Taylor's *Lucky* from his debut album funks sensuously from the little Keswicks with a broad, deep soundstage, bags of energy and serious resolution.

I like this system: it's intimate, involving, exciting and delivers the goods at loud volumes with consummate ease. That's the other thing David digs — decibels. And he can really crank up the Exposure system: "The two doors and small hallway into the kitchen isolate the sound from the rest of the house," he says.

Back in the lounge, David enthuses about his Gyrodec: "It was my one must-have purchase because it looks so great. I said to Richard Keys, 'I need a Gyrodec, I've got to have a Gyrodec.' I didn't listen to vinyl very much at the time but I do listen to more now, so I suppose that says something about the way the Gyrodec sounds. But I have to confess I bought it for its looks. It sets the system off."

So much music, so many rooms. I'm intrigued to know why David didn't go for a pukka multi-room system.

"The sensible route would be to have Meridian CD, processor, amps and so on," he admits. "But then where do you go after that? I wanted to be more creative. The way I've got the system set up means it's possible to adjust individual levels. Generally, when we're cooking or if we have people round, it's





recalls David. “Real middle-of-the-road, easy-listening stuff: Frank Sinatra, James Last, that sort of thing.

“When I went to university, my parents bought me a system as a going away present. It was a big music centre and I kept it in a small bedroom. It lasted me about four years.”

It may not have been hi-fi but it was certainly well used, not least for cassettes which still form part of David’s music collection. Hi-fi fever only took hold after his return from uni when, via a friend, he acquired a Marantz ‘Esoteric Series’ system circa 1982, featuring the battleship 2330B receiver.

“I’d never heard music like it,” says David. “I was living with my parents and set the whole thing up in my bedroom that night. In my eagerness, I tripped over and cut my leg open, but I was so excited about getting the stereo up and running I ignored it. I finally went to bed at six o’clock in the morning, only to get up later and discover I needed stitches.”



The receiver lives on in David’s system, partly for nostalgic reasons, partly for its decent tuner, and partly as an amplifier to drive the Monitor Audio Studio 2s in the kitchen. It still sounds good, but he especially likes the separate bass and treble controls for left and right speakers.

David went on to work for his father who by then had sold his plastics business and set up a

manufacturing facility for sports equipment. He bought one of the first Marantz CD players — “Beautifully designed, really gorgeous” — but surprisingly, little else from that period sticks in his memory.

He puts this partial amnesia down to being too easily satisfied: “I can’t remember the various upgrades but, back then, I never really wanted anything

Main system racks: Meridian 200/203 CD player and 561 processor, Michell Gyrodec and two XTC power amps.

better than I’d actually got. Then I went to see Richard Keys at The Sound Academy. He sorted me out with some KEF 105 speakers and a Meridian 200/203 transport/DAC. We became buddies; he’s still a kind of guru for me when it comes to matters hi-fi.

“He really triggered the Monitor Audio thing. I didn’t have much room to manoeuvre career-wise as by this time I was chairman of a sports firm. Richard noticed Monitor Audio was for sale, but I didn’t give it much thought at first. Then I decided to investigate. An accountant friend checked the books and they were fine. The company hadn’t done anything stupid — it was still a very pure brand, in business for 25 years with a worldwide reputation.”

By then, David had been living in his current house for about a year. For anyone (like me) who spends their quality

NORTHERN Exposure

David Vivian heads for the Midlands to pay a housecall on David Collins, new owner of Monitor Audio and Exposure, and a man who is clearly in tune with his business.

David Collins is the new proprietor of Monitor Audio and Exposure. He's 38 but looks at least ten years younger in a lean, David Beckham-ish kind of way. Cynics might say this is no bad thing, as buying into the British hi-fi industry right now is liable to age even the most resilient entrepreneur by at least a decade in a mere matter of months. The demise of Rogers and Mordaunt-Short was shocking enough, but

rumours of further receiver-ships being hushed up coincide with IAG boss Stan Curtis' recent luncheon address claiming six hi-fi companies were queuing at his door begging to be bought out.

Worrying times. Yet as photographer Richardson and I are ushered into the spacious hallway of David's desperately 'des res' in Sutton Coldfield on the outskirts of Birmingham, he looks anything but anxious. Perhaps it's presumptuous to

think he should; Rogers and MS are out of the frame so more customers for Monitor Audio. And he intends to get them too. Energy won't be a problem — in fact, he has so much of it he often stays up all night burning it off in clubs and at raves. Dance music is a passion.

"When you've been exposed to it all night and into the early hours," he says, "it's all you can listen to for days afterwards. Nothing else cuts it."

Yes, folks, this is the boss of Monitor Audio speaking. So can we expect a few tweaks for this revered 25-year-old brand, perhaps? Oh, here and there... Although David isn't ruling anything out, he's equally wary of upsetting the apple cart. MA's reputation for build quality, finish, eye appeal and sonic

ability is global. David is only too well aware that he ignores this at his peril.

But then he does know hi-fi. His business acumen and financial muscle were developed in the sports equipment industry. His sensibilities are very much those of a 'real world' music lover and hi-fi enthusiast — not unlike his father. "There was always music in the house,"

"When you've been exposed to dance music all night and into the early hours it's all you can listen to for days afterwards. Nothing else cuts it."



David's lounge, fully kitted for music and movies: Meridian, Michell, XTC, M&K and, of course, Monitor Audio.

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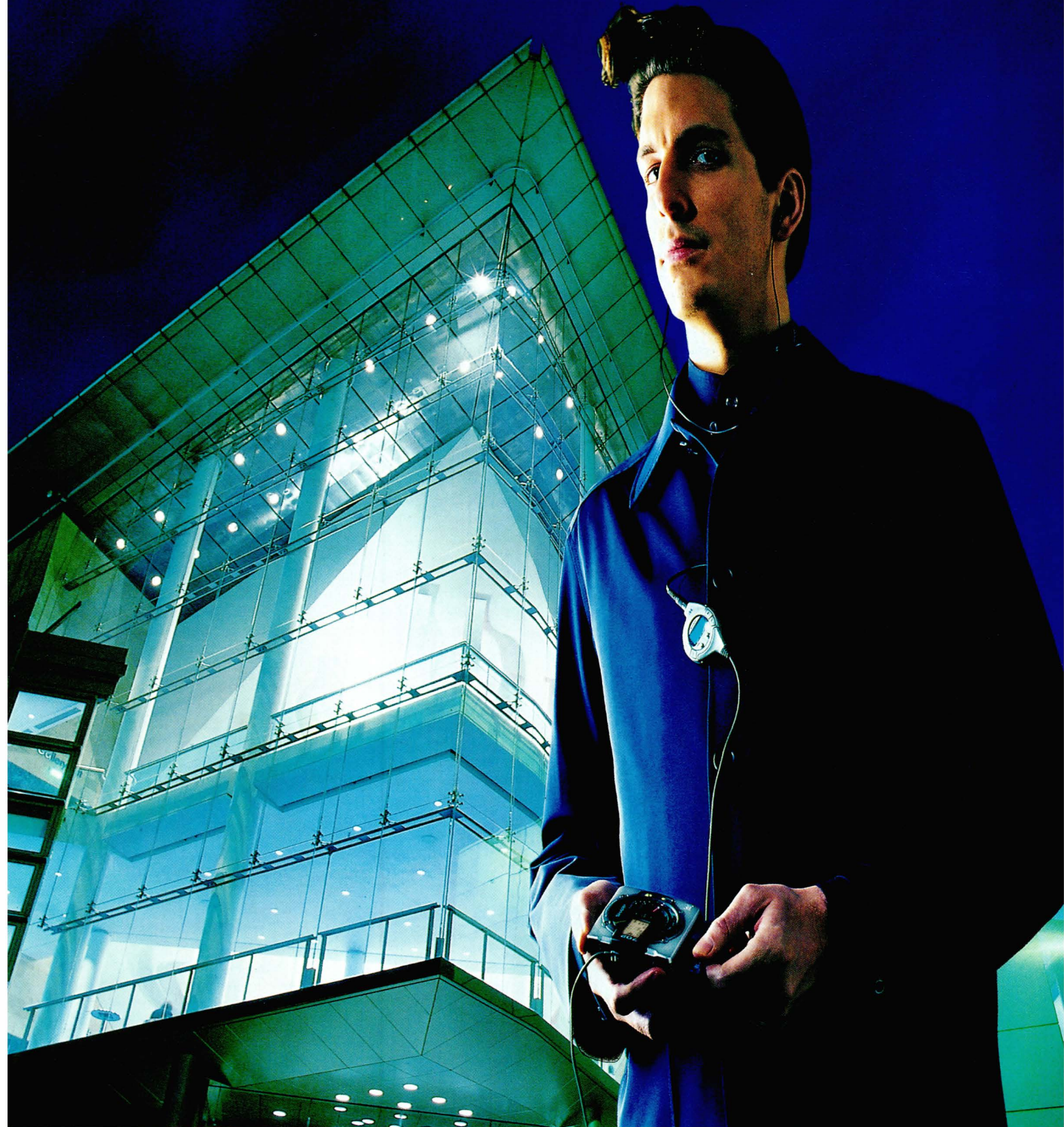


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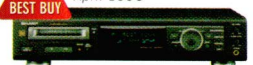
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THE LINN LIFESTYLE

A businessman in West London was having his Edwardian house gutted and converted. However, when he asked his architect to ensure that he would be able to listen to his hi-fi in the kitchen (as he had in his last house), he got rather more than he bargained for. The architect put the client in touch with specialist installer Steve Moore and, as a result, he now enjoys music all around the house, with a home cinema system in the family room for good measure.

The system employs Linn's KNEKT multi-room control system, with source equipment from Linn, as well as a Denon multiplay CD and cassette deck. The householder has retained his original Linn equipment as his main system. The home cinema set-up includes a Fujitsu plasma display panel monitor, Denon DVD player and Dolby Digital amplifier, Sony VCR, Linn speaker system and a Crestron touchscreen remote control. Lighting for the whole house is controlled by a Lutron Homeworks lighting system which gives over 60 channels of lighting.



Having now lived with the system for three months, the householder says he's delighted that he took the plunge and let Steve loose on the place. "It's magnificent," he says. "My initial concern was that I would be compromising on sound quality, but that hasn't been the case at all. The system sounds great and anyone can listen to it virtually anywhere in the house.

"I think we did it at the right time, though," he adds. "If you came to a house after the event and tried to put one of these systems in, I think the wiring could be a bit of a pain. As it is, we've been able to wire up a couple of rooms and install the speakers ready to add the amps as and when we need them."

in the keypads as well as the controller," he points out. "This can cause real problems if you have a fault in the software and you have a system with 20 zones where you have to reprogram each keypad individually."

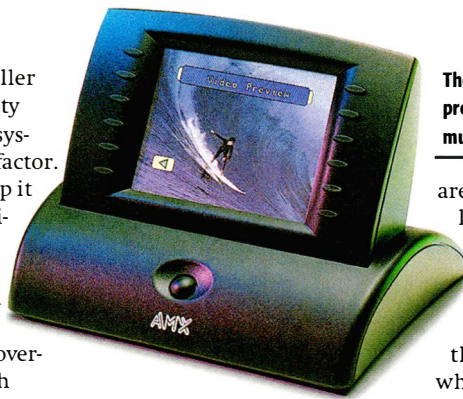
Ultimately, though, Weller believes that, sound quality aside, in any multi-room system there is one decisive factor. "The bottom line is to keep it simple," he says. "The typical multi-room customer will come in late from work wanting to just hit a button and hear some music. Some systems are over-engineered with too much functionality. They can do some clever things, but it's not how people really use them."

HIGH-END MULTI-ROOM

Once you go beyond straight audio distribution, you enter the domain of some serious all-embracing systems that cover much more than just music — systems that can look after most of a building's control systems (as well as your second mortgage!). In addition to high-quality hi-fi, they invariably embrace a media room with a dedicated home cinema set-up, complete with a hidden projector and screen and a rack of gear concealed out of site. Press a button on the system remote control (which can itself cost several thousand pounds) and a macro command is executed which lowers the screen and projector, closes the curtains, dims the lights to the pre-programmed 'Movie' setting, fires up the hardware and starts playback on the DVD player. It could also send an e-mail to the local Indian to order a take-away, providing of course it's been pre-programmed to do so.

Once the customer's requirements have been ascertained, the equipment for these high-end installations is selected on a 'mix-and-match' basis and often includes high-end gear from the States, particularly on the home cinema front. Installation is handled by a specialist who will call in whatever sub-contractors are needed to achieve the desired end result.

As the concept of multi-room (or in this context, the 'smart' or automated home) becomes more widely established, so building firms, interior designers and architects are starting to make provision for such systems in their designs. New homes are now pre-wired for



The AMX touchscreen keypad can be programmed to control all manner of multi-room functions.

are ready to accept advice and let you do your job, rather than going off and trying to strike their own deals." Moore is obviously keen to spread the message about the potential of multi-room, which is why he installs systems in show houses on new building developments so that prospective buyers can see and hear the results. At Earls Terrace, a luxury West London development of houses costing around £3 million apiece, SMC has installed a system worth some £60,000, including a dedicated home cinema room in the basement, security cameras linked in to the TV system, lighting control throughout the house and, of course, music wherever you go. The 23 houses on the terrace are all wired for multi-room and, as a result of the show house installation, Moore has already taken orders for four more systems on the development. But while such installations are undoubtedly an attractive showcase for the capabilities of the hardware and the talents of the specialists who make it all happen, QED's Bob Abraham cautions that there is more to multi-room than just the high end.

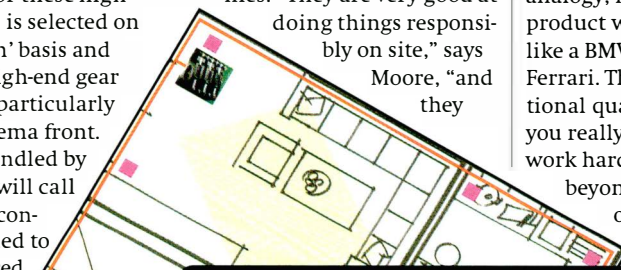
"There is a danger of conveying the message that this sort of stuff is only available to millionaires," he says. "But that just isn't the case. A lot of our installations come in at well under £10,000. To use a car analogy, I like to think of the product we offer as something like a BMW 3 Series, not a Ferrari. There's a strong aspirational quality involved, but if you really want it enough and work hard to achieve it, it isn't beyond the realms of a lot of people."

"To use a car analogy, I like to think of the product we offer as something like a BMW 3 Series, not a Ferrari", Bob Abrahams, QED.

multi-room systems, making it much easier for the owner to have a system installed either before moving in or later.

"It makes much more sense to do it this way," says Steve Moore, whose installation company, SMC, specialises in mid/high-end multi-room installations where integration is required between audio, video, lighting, security and other systems. "People want the gear but they don't want to see it. They don't want it to mess up their house."

According to Moore, the idea of pre-wiring homes is one that is gradually gaining ground among architects and building companies. He cites Barratt Homes as one of the more forward-thinking building companies. "They are very good at doing things responsibly on site," says Moore, "and they



DO IT YOURSELF

At the far end of the multi-room spectrum, where a system might control the entire infrastructure of a house and cost £100,000 or more to put together, you would clearly be mad to try to install it yourself. Some of the simpler systems, however, do lend themselves to DIY installation.

"Equipped with the wiring diagrams and a moderate degree of DIY competency, there's no reason why a user couldn't install a straightforward three-zone Revox system in a couple of weekends," says MDC's Dave Wiley. "There's no soldering involved and the cables are only carrying data and line-level signals, so there's no heavy-duty speaker cable to worry about. If you feel confident, give it a go."

knows what they're doing with wiring," he says.

A similar product to Systemline is the Audio Access system which is distributed in the UK by See Hear. It uses a preamp-controller/power amp combination to distribute music from five sources to six zones; and by daisy-chaining several controllers, the system can be expanded to cover up to 36 zones. Audio Access also offers an RS232 interface to integrate with computer-based home automation systems.

PROFESSIONAL HELP

CEDIA

CEDIA, the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association, is an international trade association of companies which specialises in planning and installing electronic systems for the home. Its work typically involves single- and multi-room home entertainment systems, embracing music and/or home cinema, security, lighting, communication systems and home automation.

CEDIA established its UK arm in 1996 under the chairmanship of SMC's Steve Moore. It is currently chaired by David Graham of Graham's Hi-Fi and its 92 members include manufacturers and installers of multi-room systems. CEDIA members undertake a great deal of work with builders and developers in an effort to ensure that the best part of what they do remains unseen. Hi-fi enthusiasts may find it hard to rationalise, but for many people, incorporating technology in a way that doesn't detract from the overall design of a house can be almost as important as the performance of the hardware itself.

CEDIA places great emphasis on training its members. Its annual trade show, where dealers scurry from one seminar room to the next to get up on the nitty-gritty of installing audio, video, lighting, communications and security systems, is a far cry from the 'meet-and-greet' atmosphere of the typical hi-fi exhibition.

Bob Abraham, managing director of QED and founder member of CEDIA, is impressed by what the organisation has achieved in its short time in the UK. "One area in which dealers were never strong in the conventional market was quality training," he says. "What CEDIA did was to bring home how vital it is. The thought of [dealers] paying to be trained before CEDIA came along was anathema, but CEDIA proved that knowledge is power."

GET KNEKTED

Linn Hi-Fi created quite a stir in the hi-fi community in 1994 when it moved into multi-room with its KNEKT system. "I think that perhaps some of its traditional hi-fi customers didn't understand it," says Steve Moore, founder chairman of the international trade association for multi-room installers, CEDIA (see panel), and head of specialist multi-room installer SMC. "But the way Linn has worked it, is very neat. It doesn't have to be in the main signal chain, so you can still enjoy your main system while also accessing the multi-room sources from it. At the same time," he continues, "it can make some higher-end components work in a way that some of the other multi-room kit can't. This means that initially it's not as easy to use as some other systems, but people soon get used to it."

KNEKT distributes signals at balanced line level to room amplifiers in, or near to, each zone. Apart from the positive implications this holds for sound quality, it also enables the user to hook up local sources in each zone, in addition to the 'global' multi-room sources available to every zone. This way, Dad can enjoy Verdi's Requiem in the lounge while Kylie gets down to the Spice Girls in the bedroom. KNEKT can distribute audio from up to 16 sources to a maximum of 128 rooms.

Although less sophisticated than KNEKT, Revox multi-room systems nevertheless adopt a similar approach. There are three Revox multi-room systems available, each consisting of a controller replete with integrated amplifier, plus a CD player and tuner. The Revox systems can control the main room plus another nine zones, with room amplifiers to drive the speakers in each zone.

Dave Wiley of Revox distributor MDC estimates the cost of the two entry-level Revox Emotion and Evolution systems at around £5,000 for the main room con-



The spaghetti effect of cables and interconnects, can become a thing of the understairs cupboard with a multi-room system. Below-left: B&W's in-wall Casa speakers incorporate amplifiers.

trol amp, source and speakers, plus an additional £1,000 for each zone. The higher-end Exception system comes in at around £8,500 with £1,000 per zone. (Both estimates exclude installation.)

CASA MIA

The latest company to enter the multi-room arena in the UK is speaker manufacturer B&W with its Casa system, launched in spring 1998. The Casa system sees signals distributed at balanced line level, but it employs active speakers in each zone rather than room amplifiers.

The Casa controller can handle four sources and four zones, and up to eight controllers can be daisy-chained together. Local sources can be accommodated via wall-mounted modules and, if a customer prefers to use a pair of passive speakers, another wall module provides an output to a local power amp. The typical cost of a Casa installation is around £2,000 to £2,500 per zone.

According to B&W custom audio product manager Ken Weller, the Casa approach offers several key advantages. "The shorter the run of cable to the speaker, the better," he says. "And by using an active speaker, the run is about two inches. The difference in sound quality is amazing. Also, the installer doesn't have to find somewhere to house a room amplifier, which neatly avoids problems such as electricians installing mains sockets in cupboards, for example. It's illegal in this country, but it does happen."

The question of control is also important, according to Weller.

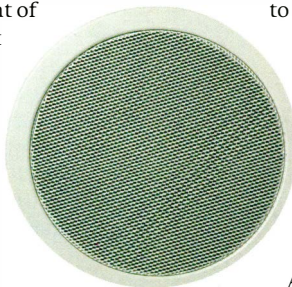
"Most multi-room systems have distributed intelligence,





compensate for signal loss over long distances, it may prove more difficult. Either way, it's far easier to hide cable runs if floorboards can be lifted, skirting boards removed and plaster chiselled out so that cables can be chased into walls.

Of course, Sod's Law dictates that you will only decide to get into multi-room the week after the decorators have packed their ladders, having successfully completed a top-to-bottom refurbishment of your abode. If that is the case, you don't have to abandon your plans, but it will mean your installers will have to work a little harder to accommodate the system in a visually appealing manner; you'll probably end up paying more for the installation work itself, too. But, everything's possible "In this business," says Dave Wiley, "the answer is always 'yes'. Then you work out how."

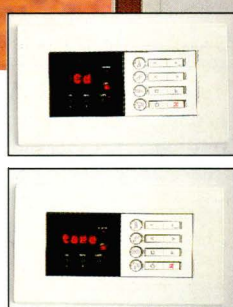


SPEAKER LEVEL SIGNALS

Ten years ago, QED's Systemline was one of the first multi-room systems to be launched in the

UK. The Systemline controller houses pre and power amps and the necessary circuitry to control four zones. By adding zone splitters to the controller, this figure can be doubled to eight, and by cascading several controllers, it can be increased further to 20. "More zones are possible in theory," says QED managing director Bob Abraham. "But it would need to be checked out. We've certainly never been asked for more than 20."

During system installation, the user or installer selects the brand of each source to be used with the system so that when



Speaker units hidden in the ceiling can produce that ambient mood across the house!
The panel display can provide information about the source and software.

commands reach the Systemline controller they can be converted via a built-in translator card to control the piece of equipment in question. Should the user have a source that isn't compatible with the controller, Systemline can act as an infra-red linking system for most brands, providing commands are issued from the remote control for that particular source in the room where it's located. Not an ideal solution, perhaps, but it does at least offer a way round the problem.

The beauty of a solution like Systemline is it integrates with an existing system to whatever level the owner requires. "The user can decide whether he or she wants to share some or all of the main system's source components, or add other

sources specifically for use in the multi-room set-up," says Abraham.

There is a disadvantage, however, and it concerns the distribution of signals at speaker level. While Abraham concedes that this isn't ideal in terms of absolute sound quality — or ease of installation either, for that matter — he argues that most listeners would be more concerned about absolute sound quality in the main listening area than in the kitchen or the bedroom. He's confident that the problems of accommodating and concealing heavy-gauge speaker cable can be overcome, too. "It's amazing what can be achieved by someone who

MULTI-ROOM BUYING TIPS

- Work out what you want your multi-room system to be able to do, which facilities would be nice (but not essential), and which capabilities you can definitely do without.
- Remember that virtually anything can be achieved in terms of hiding cables and equipment, and of interfacing with other systems (video, security, phone, heating, lighting and so on) — but be prepared to pay for it.
- Installing a multi-room system can be a complicated task, so naturally dealers and installers will tend to specialise in certain multi-room systems or brands. This may or may not be suitable for your needs, so do what you can to assure yourself that the proposed system isn't overly complex for what you need, but that it still has the potential for possible expansion in the future.
- Check that your dealer has experience of installing the system you have in mind. Someone has to be a dealer's first client for any particular system they may offer — and you don't want it to be you.
- Even if you're planning a relatively simple system, it will be easier to integrate it with your house if the work is timed to coincide with redecoration or refurbishment projects so that cables can be laid under floorboards or chased into walls.
- Choose a dealer who is prepared to listen to what you want from your multi-room system and who will respond to your questions. If you say you want music in the garden but don't know anything beyond that, they should come up with suggestions as to how it can be achieved and where you can go from there.

ROCKIN' All Over The House

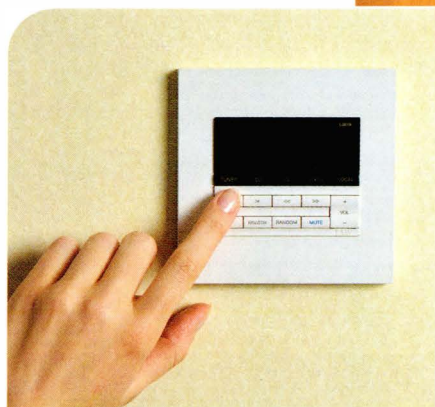
There's more than one way to enjoy music in every room, as **David Murphy** reveals.

Mention the phrase 'multi-room' to some hi-fi dealers and you run the risk of being frog-marched out of the demo room. The argument here is that it's not 'real hi-fi', that it can't possibly deliver the same sort of sound quality as a carefully built single-room system. And while they poo-poo the idea, others who are more open to the concept look at



Above: Bring music into your bedroom at the touch of a switch, with no ugly cables or hi-fi equipment to trip over!

Left: A simple panel will allow you to operate your system from another room.



the growth of multi-room in recent years and thank the day they got to grips with their first wiring diagram.

"The simple fact is, most people don't sit down and listen to music the way they did 10 or 15 years ago," says Dave Wiley of the Musical Design Company (MDC) which distributes Revox multi-room systems. "They do have music on in the house, but they listen to it in different rooms, and they like to be able to listen to it as they move around the house."

It goes without saying that *Hi-Fi Choice* readers include a greater than average concentration of music lovers who do sit and listen to music in the same

probably because the money that would have been put towards a new house has instead been lavished on the hi-fi (go on, admit it). But even if you worship your main system, there's no reason why it can't be integrated into a multi-room environment without compromising on performance. Horses for courses, as they say.

'Multi-room' sounds like an innocent enough moniker, and yet it covers a multitude of indulgence. At one end of the spectrum are simple systems that allow you to hear the same CD in several rooms around the house at the same time. At the other end are installations which transcend the line



between multi-room and 'smart home'. These not only embrace audio and video, but they also take in lighting, security, heating, computer networks — virtually the entire house infrastructure, in fact. Given the

huge choice available, it's important to understand what these systems all do and what you yourself want before you even think about calling the installers in.

Multi-room audio systems tend to fall into one of two camps, the first being systems such as Audio Access and QED's Systemline which use the American 'Home Run' configuration where all cables are routed back to a central control point housing all the amplification. The other camp are those which use local amplification in each 'zone' (usually a single room) to amplify signals distributed at line level. Examples of the latter include Linn's KNEKT, multi-room systems from Revox, and B&W's Casa, which adds a new twist by using active speakers as opposed to power amps in each zone.

Whatever type of system you decide to go for, the interface will usually be wall-mounted keypads which enable you to select

"Even if you worship your main system, there's no reason why it can't be integrated into a multi-room environment without compromising."

and control the source and volume from each zone in which the music is distributed. System remote controls are another control option, while more expensive systems also employ large LCD touch-screen panel remote controls.

HOLD THE WALLPAPER

Whatever type of system you have in mind, it will make life a whole lot easier if you time the project so that it coincides with a period of house refurbishment, or at least redecoration. By necessity, wiring a house for sound (and anything else you choose to include) will demand the running of cables from room to room in order to route the audio signals out to amps and speakers, and command controls back from each zone to the central controller.

In some instances, the cabling will be relatively easy to accommodate. In Home Run set-ups, where heavy-gauge speaker cable is used to



COMPETITION

805 Alive

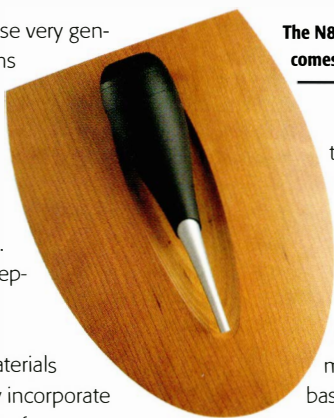
A pair of B&W Nautilus 805 loudspeakers, worth £1,400, must be won by one lucky *Hi-Fi Choice* reader!



In collaboration with those very generous people at Grahams Hi-Fi, London, which is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year, we are offering you the opportunity to win a pair of fabulous B&W Nautilus speakers.

The Nautilus 800 series represents a revolution in loudspeaker design. Made and designed in Britain using materials from around the world, they incorporate technology developed for the famous £35,000 Nautilus 'snail' speaker. The most notable example of this on the 805 being the tweeter housing with its tubular venting for rear firing energy from the drive unit.

Finished in black ash, cherry or red cherry the 805s have a distinctive curved 'horseshoe' section cabinet, and their compact 238x415x344mm (WxHxD) dimensions mean they would look great in any home.



The N805's distinctive tweeter housing comes from the £35,000 Nautilus 'snail'.

Priced at £1,400 the 805 is a two-way design with a free-mounted 25mm aluminium dome tweeter, complemented by a 177cm woven Kevlar bass/midrange unit. Although its sensitivity is not quite up to its bigger siblings, at 88dB, it maintains a very respectable bass extension down to 42Hz. The tweeter body is decoupled from the main enclosure using Isopath.

The first lucky reader to be pulled out of the hat will have a pair of these fantastic little speakers winging their way to them!

HOW TO ENTER

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

The Questions

- 1) What is the isolation material used for de-coupling in the 800 series called?
 - a) Nofriends
 - b) Deflex
 - c) Isopath
 - d) Sorbothane
- 2) What drive unit configuration does the 805 have?
 - a) Four way
 - b) Freeway
 - c) Two way
 - d) Three way
- 3) Which anniversary is Grahams Hi-Fi celebrating?
 - a) 70 years
 - b) 20 years
 - c) 25 years
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- 3) All winners will be notified by post.
- 4) The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entertained.
- 5) The B&W Competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, B&W, Grahams Hi-Fi nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
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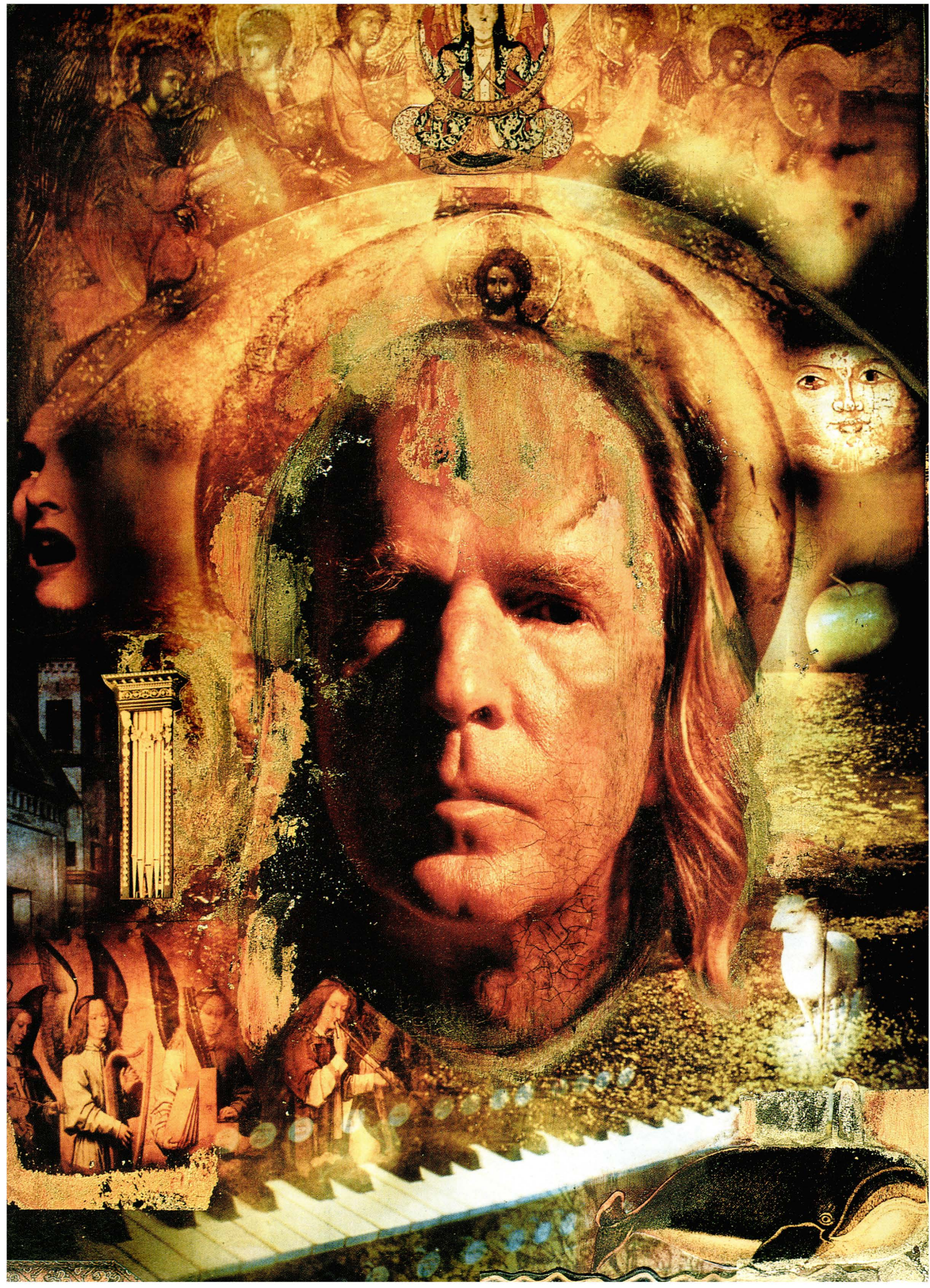
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ROKSAN ROLL

 I intend to build a system around Roksan's Caspian integrated amplifier, eventually adding a Caspian power amp. Would my Arcam Alpha 8SE CD player work with this amp? If it proves unviable, I'd be willing to upgrade this too. Room size is 15 x 9 feet, and for loudspeakers I'm thinking of Mission 752s or 753s — or is there something more suitable you'd recommend for up to about £800? I am happy to consider either standmounted speakers or floor-standers.

Terry Curran, Ireland

You seem to have a good system in the making. You're presumably happy with the Arcam Alpha 8SE CD player, which sounds refined, yet sharp and crisply defined. I'd be inclined to keep this, as these qualities should match well with the open articulate sound of Roksan's

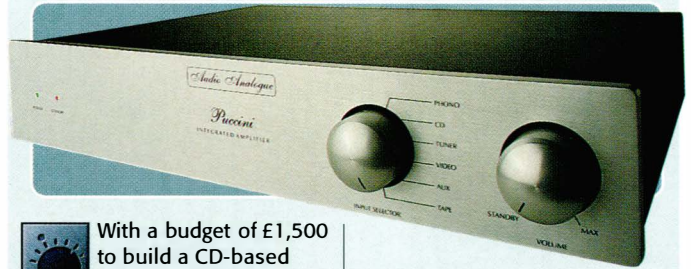



● Roksan Ojan 3.

Caspian amplifier. The Mission 752s or 753s are excellent. But speakers are a personal thing, so listen to as many pairs as possible before you decide. Others to include are B&W DM603s and Roksan's Ojan 3.

Don't overlook the importance of details like good speaker cable and interconnects. I have a feeling your proposed system may produce a brightish, rather forward tonal balance. If so, it might be a good idea to investigate Kimber speaker cables and interconnects. These cables have a special RF cancelling woven construction which should help control brightness/harshness without losing detail. Kimber's attenuated CD interconnect is very effective at controlling CD brightness/forwardness, though in some systems (and for some tastes) this particular Kimber variant cable can lack dynamics slightly. Kimber's distributor RATA also makes an excellent mains distribution board fitted with Kimber mains cable.

WHAT YOU REALLY REALLY WANT



 With a budget of £1,500 to build a CD-based system from scratch, I've had several dealer demonstrations from product combinations they stock. Most impressive was an Alchemist Nexus CD player, with an Audio Analogue Puccini SE amplifier, and Monitor Audio Monitor 3 speakers. Unfortunately, this system exceeds my budget; I'd still have to purchase the cables, and I also need a headphone socket. Would choosing the Marantz CD-63/II KI Signature solve my problems? And should I audition the Orelle SA-100RX amplifier before making my purchase?

Julian Hughes, Chesterfield, Derbyshire

If you went for the standard Puccini, rather than the SE version, you'd just scrape under your £1,500 ceiling. True, as you say, you've still got to add cables. But perhaps your dealer might be willing to include cables at a generously discounted price in order to


● Audio Analogue Puccini.

meet your budget. Can you definitely not exceed £1,500? It seems a shame to get so close, only to compromise for the sake of a hundred pounds or thereabouts. So why not go for what you really really want?

It's the same with the headphone socket; don't let such a minor facility dictate which CD player or amplifier you buy — you can always add a headphone adaptor box later. Indeed, if you intend listening to headphones seriously, consider buying Musical Fidelity's X-Cans dedicated Class A headphone amplifier, which gives audibly superior sound compared to the sockets found on most amplifiers and CD players. Again, this could be added at a later stage when finances have revived.

Orelle's SA-100RX would definitely be worth auditioning against the Puccini/Puccini SE. But at £649 it's perhaps outside your budget?

THE BEES KNEES?

 I was recently burgled, and several parts of my system were taken (including my neighbour's Linn Karik and Numerik CD player, which I now have to replace), leaving an Audiolab 8000Q and two Audiolab 8000P power amps, driving a pair of B&W P5 loudspeakers. Being about to retire, with the consequent reduction of financial resources, I wish to purchase a CD playing system to go with what's left of my original system, and am

thinking of a Teac P30 CD transport. This would leave me temporarily short of funds for a DAC. Could you suggest which DAC I might go for to match the P30? Would an obsolete (and therefore cheaper) DAC like Audiolab's 8000DAC be usable while I get some more pennies together?

George Pricehenfried, London

By all means go for Audiolab's 8000DAC, if you can still find one; consider buying second-hand too. Just because a product's been

superseded, it doesn't mean it's suddenly rubbish. If something really was good in its day, it'll still be good now — though, looking back, the Audiolab DAC had a rather muted welcome in HFC. If, however, you just want something really inexpensive to tide you over, consider the Cambridge Audio DAC Magic 2/II instead. At £149 (or less!) it's an amazing bargain. Okay — matching a £2,500 CD transport with a DAC that only costs £149 could be seen as madness. But if funds really are tight, and a relatively expensive DAC like Audiolab's 8000DAC is only a stop-gap, why not go for something really cheap that you can be equally unhappy with, and cheerfully chuck later?

Alternatively, it might be better to forget the Teac transport altogether and go for an outstanding one-box CD player like the Wadia 830 or Acoustic Precision Eikos. JK thinks the latter is the bees knees, so it must be more than pretty good!

HINTS & TIPS

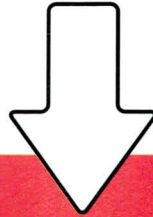


It's a natural and perfectly normal state to be dissatisfied with your hi-fi system. Most of us are, to a greater or lesser degree. Dissatisfaction makes the planet go round and keeps everyone in business! However, if you are dissatisfied with your system, and want to do something about it, it's obviously important to pick the right part to upgrade. Identifying the weak link can be tricky, but one way of narrowing it down is to ask yourself if the 'problem' or limitation is apparent on all sources.



Suppose the treble screeches and the bass booms. If it does this on CD, tuner, LP and tape, chances are it's either the amplifier or (more likely) the speakers. If, however, the quality of reproduction is good on all sources except one, it's pretty likely the problem is that particular source.





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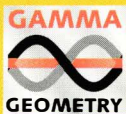


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SPEAKERS FOR CAMBRIDGE



Please can you help me choose the best speakers to go with my Cambridge Audio A3i amplifier and Cambridge Audio CD4SE CD player? I have considered Sonus Faber Concertinos, and various B&W models including the DM602, DM603, and the CDM1SE. Are these suitable, or do you have any other sugges-

tions? My room measures 4m x 5m, and has a high cathedral type ceiling.

Denis, via e-mail

On paper at least, your amplifier and CD player are mismatched in terms of price given the speakers on your shortlist. But Cambridge Audio products are good performers, and should hold their own

“The Sonus Faber Concertinos sound very good and look fabulous: they’re definitely worth investigating.”

even when partnered with speakers in the £500 to £600 price range. The Sonus Faber Concertinos sound very good indeed, and look fabulous; they’re definitely worth investigating. If you can stretch your budget to include the Concertinos or B&W DM603s, you’ll be rewarded with a clean refined sound that has presence and energy. Spending a bit more on a pair of CDM1SEs won’t bring major improvements in sound quality compared to DM603s. But the more expensive loudspeaker’s midband is very open and natural, and the styling is great. Also try and listen to Mission’s 752 Freedom and Monitor Audio’s Monitor 4.



Mission 752 Freedom

A NEW DIMENSION



I am thinking about upgrading my system with a pair of B&W Nautilus 802 loudspeakers. My current system consists of a Naim CD2 CD player with Naim HI-CAP, Linn Wakonda preamp and two Linn LK-100 power amps, plus KEF Reference 2 speakers, bi-amped. Do you think the B&Ws will make a worthwhile difference, or am I just wasting time and money? Or do you have any alternative recommendations?

Lawrence Noto, Singapore

The Nautilus 802s are formidable loudspeakers, and so they should be at the price. Although your KEF Reference 2s are pretty impressive too, they’re clearly a few steps down from the B&Ws. Whether a pair of Nautilus 802s represent a cost-effective upgrade, given a fairly well-matched set-up such as yours, is a moot point — probably not, if the rest of your system stays as it is.

The question is whether the up front nature of your CD players and amps will too starkly revealed by the B&Ws. This speaker needs a fair amount of quality power, which you probably have in the LK-100, although 200 Watts or more are necessary to get them really jumping through hoops.

If you can we advise you listen to the speaker with your amps and see how you feel, depending on

your room, cables etc we suspect that the pairing could be fortuitous. Bear in mind, however, that they could well lead you further down the upgrade path.

▼ **B&W’s formidable Nautilus 802s.**



HINTS & TIPS



With most modern speakers making provision for bi or tri-wiring, there’s potentially a problem for owners using a single set of wires and keeping the linking straps that connect the upper and lower sets of terminals together. It’s possible to get a bad connection here that causes intermittent loss of bass or treble and/or crackling and break-up. This is especially true if you’re using bare wires (rather than plugs) to the binding posts; it’s surprisingly easy to end up with the speaker wires tightly attached, but the linking strap loose underneath. Even if you’re using connecting plugs



on your speaker cables, check that the binding posts on the speakers themselves are firmly tightened down on the linking straps. Don’t just assume that you’ve made a tight clean connection, test it by wiggling the wires and linking straps, if something moves, it ain’t tight!

BIGGER DOESN’T ALWAYS MEAN BETTER



At the moment I have a Technics home cinema receiver connected to NAD 801 loudspeakers. I am thinking of replacing this with an Arcam Alpha 8R amplifier and B&W DM601s or 602s. Is there an appreciable difference between these speakers? I was interested in Monitor Audio Monitor 3s, but these are difficult to track down in Zurich.

On a different topic, what are the basic differences between bookshelf and floorstanding speakers? Is a floorstander always better because it’s bigger? *Vincent Fernan, Zurich, Switzerland*

The B&W speakers on your shortlist are Recommended by *HFC*, and both should improve on what you’ve already got. Of the two, the DM602s give a bigger sound with greater punch and midband dynamics. Sensitivity is slightly higher too. But, as always, try to

listen and compare before you choose. The Monitor Audio Monitor 3s got a mixed review from the *HFC* listening panel (*HFC* 170), but remain a good choice — if your ears tell you they’re preferable to the B&Ws, trust your ears! The Alpha 8 (in pre-R guise) also got a slightly mixed review (*HFC* 162), being criticised for a ‘safe’ but nonetheless enjoyably soft-centred presentation. Given the liveliness of the DM602s, the Alpha 8’s smoothness and refinement might not be a bad thing.


Your last question is difficult to answer succinctly! The obvious difference between floorstanding loudspeakers and so-called ‘bookshelf’ types is size; the former are bigger. However, whether the extra cabinet space improves sound quality by extending the bass is another matter; some do, and some don’t. Some floorstanders are really just ‘small’ loudspeakers in big boxes. They offer greater perceived value, and save you money by not needing

stands, but it’s possible that the same drive units in a smaller box on good stands would make a better sound. Some loudspeaker drive units actually benefit from the extra damping a small sealed box imparts. So try not to make superficial judgements based on size alone. Listen for bass quality rather than quantity, and notice whether the lower frequencies sound clear and articulate. Does the music float free of the speaker boxes and project out into the room, or does it sound squashed? Does the music involve and engage you emotionally? There’s no point in having a speaker that’s ‘perfect’ technically, yet sounds cold and sterile.



▼ **B&W DM602.**

AN AERIAL VIEW

 I'm on cable for my TV, and there is a connection for FM reception which I've just started using with an old tuner. As I don't have a loft or roof-mounted external aerial, it's my only means of receiving stereo radio stations I wouldn't otherwise be able to get. But how good is the quality of the signal from a communal aerial, and is it likely to be noticeably inferior to a good outdoor aerial? Is it the quality of my tuner that's holding me back, or the quality of the signal? I've been told I live in a bad reception area, so would it be worth getting a proper outdoor aerial and/or a new tuner?

Peter Lane, Worthing, West Sussex

Although you don't actually say it outright, in so many words your letter implies you're disappointed with the quality of sound from radio. Unfortunately, without more detail, it's hard to say specifically where the trouble lies. FM radio, even at its best, does not offer



sound quality comparable to the best CDs. It has a limited bandwidth and higher background noise and distortion. Tuners have certainly improved in the past 10 years or so, and if your existing model is (say) 15-20 years old it's likely a newer model will produce much better sound. Unfortunately, you don't say how old your tuner is.


A good communal aerial can be excellent, though having your own aerial should be better. But it all depends on the area you're in. If

"A good communal aerial can be excellent, though having your own aerial should be better."

reception is difficult in your locality — perhaps because you're in a valley or surrounded by tall buildings — then making use of an advantageously placed communal aerial would be the best bet. Why not take expert advice from an aerial contractor with detailed local knowledge? Also, talk to your local hi-fi dealer about tuners, and ask to compare your tuner to something more recent so you can hear the difference (if any) in sound quality.

○ Outside aerials are the best.

SMOOTH AND REFINED OF GOLDRING

 My system consists of a Michell Gyrodek with Rega RB-300 arm and Goldring 1012GX cartridge, a Creek 4240 amplifier, and Infinity Reference 10 loudspeakers. I'm very happy with the clarity and detail produced by my system, but would like a more weighty bass. If I changed the cartridge would this help?

Y Ganendran (address withheld)

The choice of replacement cartridges is more limited today than it once was, but check out Linn's K9 and Roksan's Corus Black. The latter is actually made for Roksan by Goldring, but it has a number of mechanical improvements which result in a smoother, more


refined sound. It's possible the lack of weighty bass you complain of is due in part to the Goldring 1012GX's bright, slightly harsh treble. So replacing your old cartridge with something smoother and more refined could give the impression of better bass, even if (in reality) bass quality remains the same.

Also, check out the QR Developments Ringmat Mk III. This won't make the bass heavier, but it will subjectively improve clarity and separation at low frequencies, so that bass lines stand out with greater independence. A completely different solution might be to add a Seismic Sink isolation platform under the turntable.



Goldring 1012GX.

COMPUTER CONUNDRUM

 I am considering the purchase of a CD recorder, but am confused on one or two points. Can a cheap re-writable computer disc be audio-formatted (via computer) and used in a CD recorder? Or do you have to try and trick the CD recorder by putting in an audio CD-R, then pulling the disc drawer out by hand and inserting a computer type CD-R? And do the recording level controls work for digital inputs as well as analogue? In other words, would I be able to make my own compilations of old and new CDs using direct digital connection, but still compensate for differing recorded levels?

M Allen, Dorset

Unfortunately you can't 'audio format' a CD-R and use it in a CD recorder — though it is possible to record audio signals with a

computer CD-R, albeit with less timing accuracy than a dedicated audio CD-R. Some CD recorders can, it seems, be tricked into accepting a computer CD-R disc in the way you describe, but then would it be worth running the risk of damaging your recorder when the price of buying audio CD-R blanks has come down to around the £3 mark?

On the point of record levels, I think you'll find CD recorders offer only fixed level recording in the digi-

tal domain. You'd have to plug your CD player's analogue outputs into the CD recorder's analogue line input to alter recording levels — and probably suffer a loss of sound quality as a consequence. Meridian's 518 digital processor allows volume levels to be altered in the digital domain, with a +12dB maximum increase over the standard 0dB fixed level. But the 518 is an expensive little toy and may cost more than the recorder itself!

Philips CDR 880.



HINTS & TIPS



Many CD players have a Display Off facility (often a button on the remote handset) that allows you to turn off the visual display that indicates things like track number, elapsed time, etc. This feature is useful for those who like to listen with the lights off and don't want a brightly-lit display glaring at them. But often there's a sonic benefit; many CD players sound slightly better with the display off. This seems to be because the lights have a slight drain on the power supply, and perhaps more significantly because the lights themselves produce noise. This noise contaminates the power supply, leading to a slightly coarser, less clean sound. The sonic difference, with and without the display, is perhaps more noticeable with older players. But regardless of age, if your player allows the display to be switched off, it's worth A/B comparing with and without.



A MATTER OF TASTE



I am looking to upgrade my present system which consists of a Pioneer PD-S703 CD player, a Rotel RC-971 preamp feeding four Rotel RB-971BX power amps which drive B&W CDM2SE loudspeakers. Interconnects are QED QNECT cables and Cable Talk 3 bi-wire speaker cables. Although pleased with the sound, I feel there's room for improvement – especially where the preamp is concerned. Would replacing my RC-971 with Rotel's RC-995 make a worthwhile difference?

Also, I'm thinking of replacing the CD player with something more open-sounding. My Pioneer produces good levels of detail, but I wonder if newer CD players have more to offer. Models like the Marantz CD-17 KI Sig, Kenwood DP-7090 and Pioneer's PDS-06

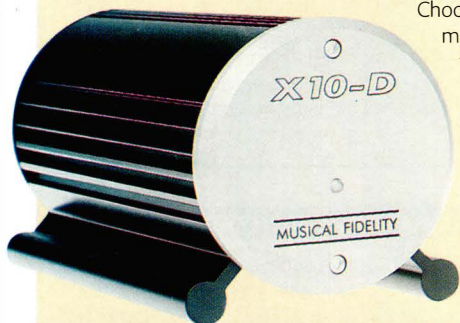
suggest themselves as replacements. But what do you think? *Adrian Williams, Peckham, London*

Since we haven't tested either Rotel preamp, it's difficult to say how much difference you're likely to get by upgrading to the RC-995. The safest thing would be to find a dealer who stocks this item, and take along your RC-971 for an A/B comparison. If, however, you simply wanted more richness and greater spatial depth without spending vast sums, why not consider adding Musical Fidelity's excellent X10-D valve line stage? This could either be used between CD player and preamp, or between preamp and power amps. Alternatively, you could really push the boat out and buy two, using them in both places.

The CD players you've short-listed are all excellent, and should improve on your old Pioneer.

Choosing one above the others must be a matter of personal taste, but if your system veers towards the lean/bright side (as I think it might), perhaps the warmth and sweetness of the Marantz CD-17 KI Signature might just edge it.

○ Musical Fidelity X10-D.



THE RIGHT COMBINATION?



I am the proud owner of a Jadis Defy 7 valve power amp, which drives a pair of Neat Petite MRL IIs with Neat Gravitas subwoofers. Although I am very happy with the sound, I have for some time been toying with the idea of bi-amping – using the Defy 7 to drive the Petite IIs, but adding a solid-state power amp of similar quality to the Jadis to power the Gravitas subs. My aim would be to try and combine the sonic virtues of valves and solid-state. Is it possible to do what I've just outlined? And if so, what pitfalls might there be?

Mr N Edwin, London

It's possible to use different power amps when bi-wiring. I've a friend who's done something similar to what you're proposing, and he's very pleased with the result. But he has a much less exotic amplifier than yours, and his sub is actively powered and therefore adjustable. Now, if you just happened to have a spare power amp doing nothing, and simply wanted to amuse yourself with a bit of harmless experimentation, what you're suggesting would be okay; if it worked, great – if it didn't, you haven't lost anything. But to risk spending large sums on some-



○ Neat Petite MRL 115.

thing that could easily make your system sound worse is folly.

There are two main pitfalls. The first is that the general tonal and dynamic characteristics of 'culturally opposed' power amps will clash. The result would be a disjointed balance between low frequencies and the mid and top. The second is that the sensitivity of the new amplifier will be different to your existing one. This would make the sub sound slightly louder or quieter than the main speakers. Bi-amping with a more powerful tube amp is one option, but again may lead to inconsistency. It would be more appropriate to either assist your Jadis with some Monolith 20/20 speaker cable or look for a replacement power amp with more grunt.

HINTS & TIPS



If your amplifier's a few years old, it's worth giving all the controls, switches and buttons a quick flick to keep them clean. Turning a switch backwards and forwards a few times helps clean the electrical contacts, removing tarnish and deposits that may build up over time. This is especially true if you use only one input and one set of speakers, and therefore never change the main selector switches. It's equally helpful to run the volume and balance controls from one end of their range to the other, just to allow the wiper to sweep a clean path. By doing this, you're unlikely to notice a vast improvement in sound quality (though it could happen!), but you will be helping to maintain performance so that the sound doesn't deteriorate. Unless the switching is electronic, you can carry out the maintenance described with the amplifier switched off at the mains. You can likewise 'clean' the sockets and plugs by unplugging and then re-inserting them. The same technique can be applied to the mains plug.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST



I have a system that consists of a Laser Disc player with Monarchy Audio DIP and an Audio Alchemy DAC-in-the-Box. The amp is a Pioneer A-400X driving AE Aegis 1 speakers. I want to upgrade the amplifier, and would prefer to stick with an integrated one. Right now I'm considering the Musical Fidelity A2 and X-A1, while my dealer has suggested a Plinius 2100i. Which one do you think would

suit my system best? I don't have a large room, nor do I play music loudly. Any other suggestions? *Jason via e-mail*

Pioneer's A-400X is a good amplifier; clean, refined, and well-balanced. Leaving aside the question of whether or not the A-400X is the weakest part of your system, the two Musical Fidelity amps should improve on your Pioneer in terms of resolution, detail and refinement, with the X-A1 giving a bigger sound

and the A2 sounding richer and warmer. But the best solution would be to take the A-400X along to a dealer in order to hear how it performs against the MF amps. If the difference doesn't seem too startling, but you still want to improve your sound, it might be worthwhile looking at a standard CD player to use in place of the LD player. Check out Arcam's Alpha 8SE CD machine, which offers excellent resolution and sharp detailed sound.



Pioneer A-400X.




HELP!

Having trouble reaching audio Nirvana? Worry no more, Jimmy Hughes has the answers!

QUERY OF THE MONTH

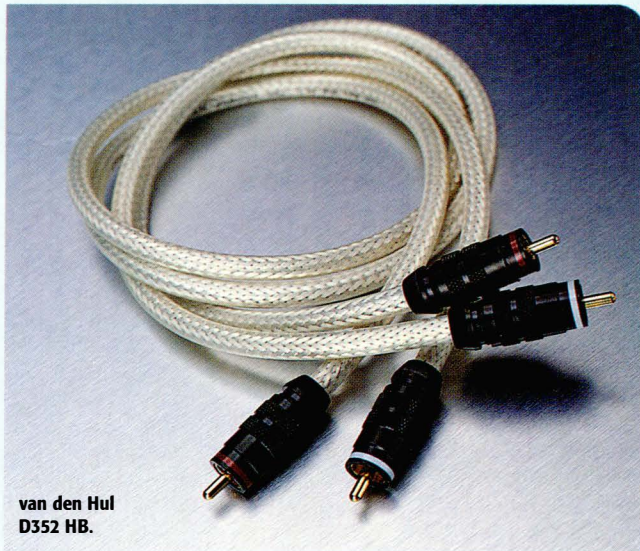
THE IMPORTANCE OF CABLES

 I currently have a Pioneer PD-S703 CD player, NAD 306 amplifier, and Mission 753 speakers, used in a room 3m x 5.5m. My interconnects and speaker cables are nothing special, and I wonder if I'd get a worthwhile improvement replacing them with something better. What would you suggest?

Peter P Lucero, Philippines

Speaker cables and interconnects can dramatically change the sound of your system, but there are a large number to choose from! A good simple interconnect to start with might be DNM's TCC75 — this solid-core cable gives an exceptionally clean lucid presentation that works well in most situations. Only if your system sounds excessively lean and lacking in richness will the DNM cable disappoint.

Also, you might want to investigate the Kimber range of interconnects, and the 4TC and 4VS speaker cables. These give a clean, focused sound, yet with good weight and richness. Cable Talk Advanced 2 and Studio 2 are also worth trying, while van den Hul's Source HB sounds very natural and unexaggerated. If you like DNM's interconnect, check out the company's speaker cable. This also produces a lean balance that's very lucid at middle and top frequencies. It's not exactly bass shy, but the bottom end won't be strongly profiled and powerful — a good thing if your system suffers from bass overhang. Nordost's 4-Flat is a good solid core and not too expensive, while van den Hul D352 HB is a stranded cable that offers the lucidity of a solid core with added richness and warmth.




van den Hul
D352 HB.

GET A JAMO LEATHER CD WALLET!

Every issue, the reader whose letter is our Query of the Month will receive one of these stylish, leather CD wallets, courtesy of those lovely people at Jamo Loudspeakers.



A STEP AT A TIME

 I recently decided to buy some new hi-fi, as the last time I did so was in 1982. I purchased an Audiolab 8000A integrated amplifier and a Marantz CD-63/II KI Signature CD player. Last week I was lucky enough to get my hands on an Audiolab 8000PX power amp brand-new, saving about £300 on the list price. I want to use the 8000A as a preamp, and the 8000PX as a power amp. I've kept my KEF Reference 103.2 speakers from 1982, but unfortunately they are not bi-wireable, and KEF tells me they cannot be converted. Would I do greater justice to my amplification by going for a new set of loudspeakers that could be bi-amped? I've considered floorstanders like Mission's 774, Monitor Audio's Monitor III/II, or the Castle Kendal. I

would need to place my speakers fairly close to a wall.

David Durnell, Cannock, Staffs

When upgrading, it's always best if possible to make one change at a time and live with the result for a while before making further alterations. If you make several changes, and find yourself unhappy with the overall sound, it can be difficult to retrace your steps.

Presumably you're very happy with your new Marantz CD-63/II KI Signature and Audiolab amps; hopefully they're making your old KEFs sound better than ever. The speakers you've shortlisted are all good, so why not visit a local dealer to listen and compare — perhaps taking the KEFs along for comparison? I think you'll find that bi-amping makes a difference, apart from the improvement you're likely to get with new speakers.

BASS: THE FINAL FRONTIER

 For some time now I've been trying to improve the bass response of my system. Although I now have reasonably deep bass, I still think the low end is a bit 'soft' and flabby. My system is predominantly Cyrus (CD player/DAC + PSX-R, with preamp feeding two monoblock power amps). Speakers are Monitor Audio Studio 20s, with 10kg of Soundbites in each. The equipment sits on Mana Acoustics tables, and is fed from a Power Wedge mains conditioner.

My listening room is a converted pigsty with a high vaulted ceiling and wooden beams, about 20ft long and 12ft wide, with the speakers projecting down the length of the room. Would a subwoofer overcome the problem, and if so, which model should I choose? Is positioning important for a sub? I won't be

able to have the sub in the centre. Any other suggestions?

Hugh Dunford, Clophill, Bedfordshire

Certainly investigate a good subwoofer — perhaps REL's Stadium/II. This will improve bass depth and tightness, giving you greater control and power. If, however, the bass from your main speakers is flabby and loose, adding a sub won't really change anything.

Paradoxically, soft bass can actually be caused by a lack of treble bite and attack. In my experience, improving clarity at high frequencies can subjectively tighten the bass, making it more focused and controlled. The opposite can happen too; sharp forward treble creates the impression of weak bass with little depth or power. Try Monolith 20/20 speaker cables, and consider adding some more Mana tables — have you tried any under the loudspeakers?

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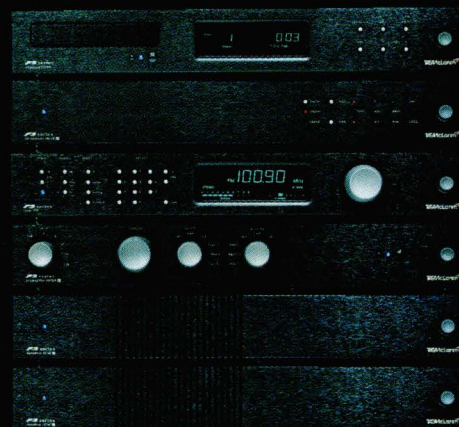
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BATTLESTAR Galactica?

Alan Sircom salutes Denon's high-end player as it draws first blood on the DVD battlefield.



So far, only the grunts of the DVD invasion fleet have struck. The true shock troops, the high-end players have yet to blood themselves. But now the first of them has appeared, and brought with it a mother lode of audio armoury.

Continuing the warfare analogy still further, Denon's new £1,600 DVD-5000 brings the heavy guns into the argument. Literally, as the thing weighs in at a meaty 19kg, almost three times as heavy as any of alternatives so far. It is also the most expensive of the Japanese players to date, and marks a distinct high-end pitch for Denon's DVD outlook.

It's a regular Region Two (European) DVD-Video player with a few twists that make it appeal to the audiophile as much as the video buff. The latter will appreciate the inclusion of the three component video outputs. Unlike composite video, that multiplexes the picture onto a single cable, this splits the signal into brightness, colour (with blue subtracted) and colour (with red subtracted). This system is seen in a handful of projectors and gives the best TV picture performance possible. Naturally, it also features composite and S-Video connections.

The rest of its video specification is near identical to the Pioneer DV-717 tested last month. Both feature digital outputs that support the Dolby Digital and Digital Theater Sound formats and

both allow the user to play 24/96 AAD discs, but the Denon downsamples its digital output to 48kHz, so 24/96 external converters are off the menu.

The video performance of the Denon is noticeably superior to the Pioneer (and almost everything else short of the Meridian models), while its Dolby Digital multi-channel performance is impossible to differentiate from the Pioneer's.

Denon's big plus point has

“Newer 24/96 AAD recordings reveal just how we've been duped all these years. Digital audio needn't sound bright and shiny. All it took was a better format!”

been in the development of a musical performance from CD that for once matches that of a decent CD player in its own right. The player uses HDCD filtration for 16-bit audio performance; whether used with or without an encoded disc, the Pacific Microsonics filter is largely considered to be one of the best sounding around. But the DVD-5000 uses a combined laser mechanism for both for-

mats, which flies in the face of current how-to-get-the-best-CD-from-DVD thinking.

Despite this, the Denon shines regardless of format. It's performance with the few 24/96 AAD discs (96kHz sampling, 24-bit word-length discs, also called DAD) is exemplary, and old analogue tape hiss on 24/96 sounds a lot more 'right' than it does with 16/44 CD. Newer 24/96 AAD recordings — *Mr Lucky* by John Lee Hooker for example — show just how badly we have been duped all these years. Digital audio need not sound bright and shiny, after all. All it took was a better format!

ONE BOX, TWO FORMATS

Pop in a regular CD and, unless you compare it back to back with a new(ish) player, or you place it into a system optimised for a specific CD player's sound, you will be hard-pushed to spot the difference between the DVD and many CD players. In fact, some will prefer the open, precise and controlled sound of the DVD-5000. Others, however, may find it a little sterile compared to the richness on offer with some of the more romantic-sounding DVD players about. Which is most of them.

The Denon sounded absolutely remarkable playing something thick with knob-twiddling like Madonna's *Ray of Light*, yet also remained essentially neutral with the complex layering found in the over-

● Highly competent regardless of the material and format. A DVD winner.

ture to Mahler's *Flying Dutchman* and even keeps the space around the notes with classic Coltrane from the late 50s. It does sound a little flat when the music gets head-down and dense; it lost its step with anything thrashy and became extremely anodyne when the dance music revved up. At its best, the Denon could throw a decent soundstage and had stacks of pin-sharp detail; at its worst, it just fell a little flat.

The same basic criticisms could be levelled at a number of CD players at £1,000 or more. That the DVD-5000 performs well as a CD player is only one of the plus points, add to that basic performance the power of the on-board 24/96 converter and that it is an extremely competent DVD player, and the DVD-5000 starts to make extremely good sense. From a CD playing perspective it's the best DVD player yet. The war isn't over yet, but the DVD-5000 has won the first battle.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £1,600

■ The first real DVD player that ain't bad as a CD player. Not as good as a £1,500 CD player, but a fine device nonetheless.

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FORMULA one for phono

Jason Kennedy makes the acquaintance of a phono stage to cement the vinyl revival.

There seems to be something of a vinyl renaissance going on out there in the real world. High street stores are starting to stock the stuff, and radio stations are beating a path to our door to ask us what it's all about. Some of you already know the score: great record players still leave great CD players stone dead. But people out there in mini system land haven't got great record players, and the thought of spending £1,549 on a phono stage is as alien to Joe Bloggs as a visit to Mars. Still, that hasn't stopped 1998's most aggressive new hi-fi company from marketing such a beast.

TAG McLaren's PPA20 sl is remarkably well equipped — I've never come across a phono stage with so many buttons, lights and sockets. Starting at the front, there are four buttons whose status is indicated by a series of red LEDs. First, there's an input select for one of two pairs of sockets, and either can be switched for MC or MM cartridges — so if you have a pair of decks or a pair of tonearms on one deck and they both have MCs onboard, plug pulling won't be required. Second is a filter selector which switches between regular RIAA and something called RIAA/IEC, which basically incorporates rumble filtering.

On the next tier is a cartridge selector offering two levels of MC amplification, described as 10x and 30x (the latter for those with an output of less than 0.1mV), and an MM gain setting. The last little silver switch alternates between modes of operation, the options being direct, filter and mono. The latter cannot be selected without the bandpass filter which rejects low and high frequencies in order to avoid the noise sometimes encountered with mono records — regardless of whether you want it or not.

There's plenty to talk about on the back panel, too. Most



The PPA20 sl is remarkably well-endowed and warrants its rather high price-tag.

“The piano felt so solid and present it seemed to be virtually in the room, an effect achieved by the level of detail extracted from the signal and sheer weight of bass.”

obvious are two pairs of balanced output sockets, but to use them you'll need optional onboard transformers — something for the Americans, methinks. Of more relevance are two pairs of phono outputs, an output level switch (bringing output down by -20dB) and four sockets per cartridge input. The second set is called upon for loading the input with whatever capacitance of resistance is required for best results with your particular cartridge — an approach that's usually exclusive to moving magnet cartridges.

Initially I used the PPA's 30x gain setting 30x as this produced a line level output that was comparable to that of my reference phono stage. However, on investigating the

10x gain setting I found that it was considerably better suited to the Wilson benesch Carbon cartridge being used. When I got the Carbon's output from Wb (0.32mV) the reasons for this became abundantly clear!

SOUND QUALITY

In an attempt to get to grips with this well-endowed box of tricks, I used an SME Model 20A turntable and arm with the aforementioned Wb Carbon MC cartridge and compared performance with a Lithos regulator upgraded Michell HR Iso phono stage (at £1,084 complete). Among the many fine discs used were a couple of Classic Records demo discs, which gave a single track cut at 33.3rpm on one side and 45rpm on the other. These represent the pinnacle of vinyl sound quality — and the music isn't bad either!

The result was pretty impressive. Low frequency resolution and depth were a step above the Iso, which is no slouch in that department itself, and it proved adept at creating space and highly tangible imaging. The piano on one track felt so solid and present it seemed to be virtually in the room, an effect achieved by the level of detail extracted from the signal and sheer weight of bass. Bass is an essential ingredient of good imaging — it's easy to make big and airy notes, but far harder to underpin them so that they

sit squarely in space.

Going back to the Iso, the main difference was the quality of timing — the little Michell is right on the money in revealing nuance and snap in instruments and voices. The PPA20 is hardly weak in this respect and may even be restrained by its deeper bass, but the Iso creates a degree of musical cohesion that it cannot approach. There's no significant difference in detail resolution, it's just the speed at which that detail comes through, a certain lightness of touch. It's a difficult difference to quantify, yet the effect is undeniably important.

CONCLUSION

To my mind, this is the better part of TAG McLaren's F3 headline amp range. It's a bit pricey, but it's one of the best equipped phono stages on the market and there's no denying its resolving ability. With a bit more snap it could be a killer.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,549

One of the best-equipped phono stages available. Resolution is excellent, but timing is marginally behind the best.

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Hi-Fi Choice

(December '96)

Cable Talk Studio 2

Sound *****

THE VERDICT

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

▼ Very little to criticise.

Price: £65 (1m pair)

Home Entertainment

(August '98)

Cable Talk Studio 2

Verdict *****

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

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



Cable Talk

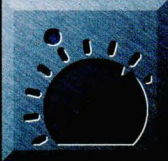
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SUPER TEST

PRE/POWER AMPS

Richard Black sets out the case for pre and power amplifiers in the £900-£1,100 range, do two boxes for the price of one make sense?

This group consists of pre- and power amplifier combinations in a particularly awkward price bracket. Awkward because, like that speed at which your car is not fully happy in either third or fourth gear, it sits uneasily between the integrated ground and that of separate units. For a grand it's possible to make a pretty funky integrated amp but

for all sorts of reasons (not least, I have to say, people's preconceptions) not many manufacturers do that. But divide that sum into two parts and build a preamp and a power amp, with all that implies about separate cases, separate front panels, separate mains transformers and connections, etc, and you're back to serious bean-counting to keep manufacturing costs reasonable — the more so because the market isn't vast enough to justify really big-scale tooling-up and production.

Nevertheless, these six manufacturers have decided to boldly go and generally offer tangible value for money in the process, in material terms at least. But what are the real advantages of separating pre and power amplifier functions? For a start, the power amp can, if required, be shoved off out of sight somewhere, particularly if (as with the Thule amps here, for instance) it can be switched off or into standby mode from the pre-amp. And then banishing the large mains transformer and high current wiring of a power amp can be beneficial for the more sensitive stages in a preamp, and indeed for sensitive equipment in the same equipment rack. And there's a potential visual advantage in that a preamp can be a smaller and prettier box than an integrated.



HINTS & TIPS

If you're shelling out a grand on a pair of amps, don't be too mean on the cables that link them. All cables are critical but when you consider that everything you want to hear goes through the pre/power interconnects, they're importance become clearer.

The power amp can go out of the way on the floor, but be aware that it must be placed on a hard surface — not carpet! This blocks can block ventilation and risk overheating. If possible use some form of isolation platform for best results

If you get hum when you install separate amps, ask your dealer to check the earthing of the units. Manufacturers are not consistent, some earthing the preamp, some the power amp, some neither, some both. There should ideally be one solid earth connection to the preamp and safety earths to other units.

THE CAST LIST

Alchemist Kraken APD7A MkII/ APD8A Mk II	£549/549
Arcam Alpha 9C/10P	£399.90/£599.90
Creek P43R/A52SE	£350/£599
Crimson CS610/ CS630 monoblocks	£1,075 total
NVA P50/A60	£350/£560
Thule PR100/PA100	£399.95/£599.95

Possibly most important, though, is the scope for further upgrading without such a hefty cost penalty. Need more power? Just replace the power amp. More inputs? Ditto preamp. Bi-amping? Add a power amp. And with multi-channel home cinema coming up fast, upgradeability is becoming more important than ever. What we can be assured of, luckily, is that all new equipment will be compatible with current amplifiers in terms of signal level and connections, so have no qualms on that score.

One disappointment in this group was the number of inputs provided — as low as four. Most of us have CD, cassette and tuner, but plenty of audiophiles out there have a turntable with separate phono stage, and in no time we'll be adding CD-R or MiniDisc, DVD (maybe?), and DAB tuner (for sure, sooner or later, quite possibly alongside FM/AM for a while though). Six-way switches

GLOSSARY

CLASS A: The way of using an amplification device with the minimum of distortion. However, an output circuit operating in Class A yields only about 20 per cent efficiency; it dissipates the other 80 per cent as heat. This is why Class A transistor amps run warm and offer relatively low power.

POWER SUPPLY (PSU): Alternating current (AC) from the mains swings between large positive and negative voltages. A hi-fi amplifier needs a few tens of volts at an unvarying level, ie direct current (DC). In crude terms, the hi-fi amplifier steps down the mains, 'rectifies' the positive and negative alternating current to give fixed voltages, and finally smooths everything to be as clean as possible. The cleaner the power input, the better the sound!

WATTS PER CHANNEL (WPC): In electrical terms one Watt is the result of multiplying one Amp of current with one volt. An amp's power rating in WPC thus describes how much electrical energy it can dissipate into a loudspeaker for each channel. Always look for an RMS (Root Mean Square) power rating in literature.

MONOBLOCKS: Stereo amplifiers have two channels of amplification within them, for left and right speakers. Monoblocks have only one amplification channel.

are standard and cheap: I'd like to see at least six pairs of inputs including two tape loops on all amplifiers. Sort it out, guys!



ALCHEMIST KRAKEN APD7A Mk II/APD8A Mk II

A good five years old now in basic design, the Kraken amplifiers are stalwarts of Alchemist's distinctive-looking range. Plenty of other companies have used heatsinks as a visual focus, but few quite so flagrantly. I find it can grow on you. It's not actually the most efficient way to use a heatsink, and the ADP8 — which, being a Class A amp runs hot — actually cools down a few degrees if it's stood on its face so that air can flow better over the heatsinks! But they're quite adequate as fitted (the ADP7, of course, doesn't actually need them for anything other than effect).

In order to get the requisite electronics inside a box this small, Alchemist has had to locate the mains transformer for each amp inside a separate plain black box. Fine, but I wish they'd label the boxes — externally they're identical, both sport the same flying lead and connector and you can

“The knobs on the pre... are connected to controls near the rear of the unit by metal rods which run in well-greased grommets in the front panel, giving a lovely feel.”

only tell them apart by weight. At least there's no risk of damage if they're accidentally swapped.

Construction is an odd mixture of good attention to detail and little oversights. The knobs on the preamp, for instance, are connected to controls near the rear of

◊ **Flagrant use of heatsinks lend the Alchemists a distinctive style.**

the unit by metal rods which run in well-greased grommets in the front panel, giving a lovely feel. But then the socket layout at the rear is illogical and badly labelled, the right channel residing at the top for most inputs, but at the bottom with one input; nor do the outputs follow the usual red-right code.

The outputs actually feature in- and out-of-phase sockets, which is principally useful for connecting a power amp in bridged mode.

The power amp sports chunky gold binding posts for speaker connection, rendered EC-approved by the fitting of plastic caps which can at least be prised off to admit 4mm plugs. As with the preamp, it is well-assembled inside, if inevitably a bit cramped. The preamp in fact uses two circuit boards, one 'upside down' and bearing the input sockets, switches and volume control, the other the right way up with all the active electronics. A phono stage can be fitted: in its absence the relevant sockets would function as a spare line input were it not for a



wiring error (common, apparently, to all units) which makes that one input hum badly.

SOUND QUALITY

This combination was probably the biggest disappointment of the test. At its best it can certainly be quite lively and upfront, but even then its sound tends to be edgy, dry and undynamic. With almost any kind of programme there's a sense of strain about the whole thing that certainly interferes with communication and can quickly become fatiguing to listen to. From time to time there's the impression of good detail retrieval, but it's an illusion caused by the unnatural forcing of one particular line at the expense of anything else that happens to be going on. Solo voices sound hoarse, percussion lacks resonance, guitars

◊ **Liveliness comes at the expense of subtlety and can prove fatiguing.**

sound bright but lack body; and even dance beats, although initially exciting, become wearing after a while.

Most measurements on the Kraken amps are fine, though the power amp is not fully stable and may not take kindly to high capacitance speaker cables of the Goertz/Electrofluidics type. However, when inspecting and testing the units I was struck by a particular design feature so bizarre I thought it must be an oversight — a detail in the preamp that results in high levels of crossover distortion (a particularly unpleasant effect usually confined to power amps). I related this to the designer, who concurred but nevertheless argued that that's the way the unit is and people like it.

CONCLUSION

I'm bound to say I don't, nor do I like the similarly high levels of distortion in the power amp (and there's little doubt that these parameters are largely responsible for the sound in this case). But this illustrates that there is a minority who actually like distortion. If you think you may belong to that group, check these out.



VERDICT

SOUND	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
BUILD	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
PRICE	£549/£549

Unusual looks and unusual sound — a rather rough and ready one that isn't the most natural but appears to have its adherents.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

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

ARCAM ALPHA 9C/10P

Arcam is clearly taking the possibilities of home cinema and multi-room installation seriously as the Alpha 9 preamp is well equipped for such duties. Labelling the second tape loop as 'Processor/Tape 2' is arguably trivial — you can insert an AV processor in the tape loop of any amp — but the provision of a rear-panel switch to defeat the volume control when a processor is used is handy, as are the extra pairs of output sockets marked 'Zone 1' and 'Zone 2' which are intended to drive remote amps. Zone 1 carries the same signal as the main preamp-out (but is not affected by the volume control), while Zone 2 has its own selector switch (this could of course also be used to drive a tape deck).

The remote control supplied with the 9C can be called upon to control the volume (a motorised pot) and the main input selector (a motorised switch). A phono stage (MM/MC) is available as an option. The tone and balance controls can be bypassed by the 'Direct' switch.

The power amp is a more simple affair but it still offers two switched speaker outputs and a headphone socket (the 9C has one too). It can be upgraded by adding a third channel for home cinema use (at a cost of £250), so that two Alpha 10P chassis will drive five speakers.

Both units are neatly designed and assembled. Those smart front panels are in fact plastic (pretty strong, though), but behind them

♦ **The Arcams deliver a sound replete with depth, detail and confidence.**

is a metal case. The Alpha 9C is built on a single printed circuit board which covers the whole length and width of the case, and is equipped with several integrated circuit op-amps (a mix, it seems, of high-quality ones for the main signal path and slightly less exalted ones for subsidiary functions) and decent passive components. The

“Both units are neatly designed and assembled. Those smart front panels are in fact plastic (pretty strong, though), but behind them is a metal case.”

10P uses entirely discrete transistors, the output devices being mounted on large internal heatsinks. Its mains transformer is a large toroid with what appears to be power-factor correction circuitry next to it — this is in response to EU legislation that requires large

appliances to draw a more friendly current off the mains and, when done properly, it should aid sound quality, too.

SOUND QUALITY

If I say that this combination was ever so slightly disappointing, that's probably in large part a reflection of the high expectations built up by other Arcam products. In fact, the sound was generally good, criticisms consisting mainly of a touch of harshness on complex high-frequency sounds like orchestral violin and female voice, and some compression of images, especially in dense textures. But neither criticism is serious and there's much to praise in terms of detail, solidity and confident dynamics.

Bass was a bit of an oddity. At times (and particularly on transient sounds such as percussion) it seemed a bit light, yet at other times, mostly with continuous energy as with organ or double bass, rather too heavy. Tonality in the midband was fine and there was never any feeling of a lack of power or drive. Quiet passages

♦ **Home cinema and multi-room ready, this duo offers top upgrade potential.**

were very relaxed and mostly remained detailed, though just once or twice it seemed that some very quiet piano playing was slightly lacking in communication. Engaging the tone controls, even when they're set to flat, made the sound seem distinctly more 'processed'. Overall a good result: separating the two units suggested that neither is solely to blame for the few small quibbles.

Measurements on both units are mostly good, although the 10P showed signs of mild crossover distortion down to low levels. It is certainly a powerful unit, putting out over 120 Watts per channel. The tone controls on the 9C are very mild in effect, with a maximum 8dB boost or cut at bass or treble extremes.

CONCLUSION

Modified rapture, perhaps, but it's still a good result overall. Along with this should be considered the excellent flexibility and upgradeability, and Arcam's good reputation for reliability and support, which all seems to add up to a well-deserved Recommendation.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £399.90/£599.90

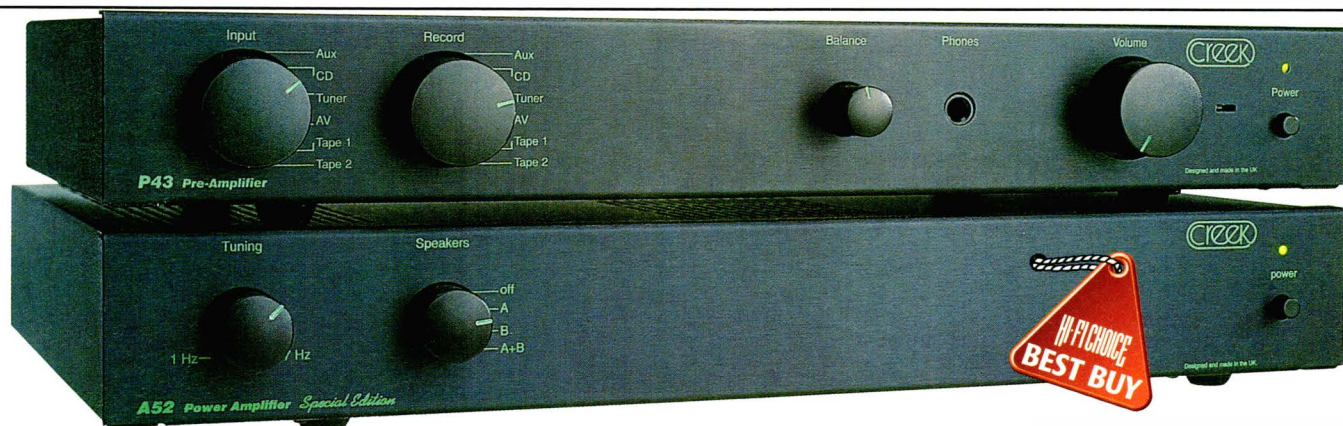
■ **A useful combination of good — if not great — sound and features makes this an appealing duo.**

■ **TWO YEAR GUARANTEE**

✉ A&R Cambridge, Pembroke Avenue, Denny Ind. Est., Waterbeach, Cambs CB5 9PB
☎ (01223) 203200



CREEK P43R/A52SE



Although the name has been around for a while, the Creek brand has undergone one or two changes over the years. Now, however, it is firmly back in the hands of founder Mike Creek who is continuing the general theme of carefully priced ('almost-budget') audio electronics.

This well thought-out pre/power combination offers plenty of scope for upgrading. The pre-amp in particular is very flexible: it starts out as a passive unit but can be supplied with an active stage (as tested here) which also drives headphones, a phono stage (not tested) and a bridging module to give a balanced output. Volume is adjustable via a remote control.

The power amplifier also sports a few features: two sets of speaker outputs (relay-switched) and no less than eight phono sockets grace the rear panel. Eight? Yup, four per channel — normal and inverted phase, two of each in parallel to facilitate 'looping through' to a second amplifier in a bi-amped system, or for the power-hungry (using the phase-inverted input) to the other channel for bridged

operation. Uniquely in my memory, there's also a control on the A52SE to set 'tuning', or in other words, bass cut-off frequency. This adjusts the lowest frequency to which the amp will operate between about 2.5Hz and 0.5Hz (-3dB), though in most systems the effect will be pretty negligible.

Back at the preamp there are six inputs, including two tape loops, with separate listen and record selector switches. Tone controls are entirely absent, but you do get a balance control. Construction is based on a large printed circuit board which links sockets,

switches and balance, while a smaller board carries the headphone socket and remote control decoder. Mounted on this is a still smaller board carrying the audio electronics (using entirely discrete transistors). There are three pairs of output sockets, one pair for balanced, the other marked 'balanced', but if the balanced module isn't fitted they both carry an inverted signal of the unbalanced output (which is in fact itself inverted).

Construction of both units is good. While the preamp relies on a small lump-in-a-lead power supply, the power amp has two large toroidal transformers fitted and dumps heat via substantial internal heatsinks. Circuitry in the

“Right from the start, its combination of authority, bass extension and clarity of texture was clearly a potent mixture, and at no point did its performance flag or disappoint.”

power amplifier is quite densely packed; it also follows a rather unusual topology.

SOUND QUALITY

This was the best-liked combination in the test. Right from the start, its combination of authority, bass extension and clarity of texture was clearly a potent mixture, and at no point did its performance flag or disappoint. The wonderful orchestral scoring of Percy Grainger was for once completely evident, from crisp and clear timpani to powerfully soaring violins. There was plenty of power for climaxes and I only managed to find the amp's limits by turning some rather brutal rock up to very unfriendly levels; but even right up to clip it remained unflustered.

With my usual imaging test recordings (sadly, not many have imaging good enough to test this really critically), the P43/A52SE came within an ace of my reference EAR amplifiers and just piped the other amplifiers tested

○ A substantial upgrade on typical integrated designs.

here in differentiating between near and far sounds. It contrived to both kick the proverbial with dance music and maintain the spell of delicate chamber or solo music, its near-faultless tonality only lacking — slightly — with one or two solo vocal recordings where at times it seemed just a shade coloured. Loud piano occasionally sounded a little processed, but apart from these two very minor criticisms the sound was generally excellent.

Lab tests showed no real problems. Above maximum output (90 Watts), the A52 slips very slightly asymmetrically, which can lead to a rather 'thumpy' quality on otherwise barely-audible overload, but all other parameters are fine. The preamp could perhaps use a bit more gain for compatibility with older tuners and tape decks, but with any modern source it will be OK. Distortion of both units is vanishingly small and the A52SE seems highly immune to loading.

CONCLUSION

This is clearly a highly capable duo which should provide a substantial upgrade on a typical integrated amp; it's also highly upgradeable. Definitely Best Buy material.

○ Creek's slimline combo offers high flexibility and great sound.



VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£350/£599

Little criticism can be levelled at this highly capable combination, which combines power, delicacy, immaculate manners and good upgradeability.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Creek Audio, 2 Bellevue Road, Friern Barnet, London N11 3ES
☎ (0181) 361 4133

CRIMSON CS610/CS630

Crimson first appeared in the '70s when it sold its amplifiers principally in kit form. It enjoyed a pretty good reputation but disappeared for some years before being revived by Virtual Reality Audio Systems, the distributor of DNM. They've been revived pretty much wholesale, including original circuits, circuit board layouts and the distinctive packaging, 'end-on' in a black anodised aluminium box section. Some might find it hideously ugly, but I never saw the attraction of large facias and find it quite elegant.

Features are basic. The preamp has five inputs (including phono, unique in this test and switchable internally between MM and MC), one tape output and a balance control which operates over a much smaller range than usual, giving a maximum 4dB channel difference. Internally, separate boards for line and phono amplification are linked by short wires, while wiring from front to back is run in a piece of ribbon cable with alternate cores grounded to maintain good channel and input separation. The audio path uses discrete transistors with a couple of integrated-circuit regulators and is quite complex; as with so many things, audio tends to be a bit fashion-led and in the '70s, when these amps were designed, circuits with lots of transistors were 'in'. As with modern 'slimline' circuits, some people did it well, some less well.

The power amplifiers are monoblocks — about as small as units of their capacity can practically be made. In fact, thermal overload used to be a bit of a problem but this has been solved in current production by making the case act as an auxiliary

heatsink. In cases of severe distress, a thermal cut-out keeps things under control. As with the preamp, the circuit is a fairly dense discrete-transistor affair with just two output devices. A large toroidal transformer makes up most of the unit's weight. Input and output sockets are duplicated to facilitate bi-amping or bi-wiring.

“Ability to keep track of individual lines in a large body of sound is one of the hallmarks of good hi-fi, and these Crimsons managed that feat with some distinction.”

In keeping with DNM-type thinking, the output sockets accept 2mm plugs instead of the usual 4mm (though sockets for these can be requested as an option), and some of the internal signal wiring uses DNM cable. In addition, the £1,075 price for a pre/power ensemble (already less than the two bought separately) includes DNM Solid Core mains and interconnect cables. (Bought

separately, prices are £450 and £800 for preamp and power monoblocks respectively.)

SOUND QUALITY

There's a notion that hi-fi in the '70s was at an all-time low. I'm delighted to report that these throwbacks to that era cheerfully refute the idea. In fact, among the amps in this test they arguably only lost out to the Creek combination. They certainly make for a very workmanlike duo, approaching the task of reproducing music with gusto and energy. Only in the slightest aspects of subtlety and detail preservation do they occasionally prove less than completely assured.

Listening began with some orchestral music and the amps' solid, controlled bass was put to immediate use in conveying the richness and body of cellos and double basses. When various other instruments joined in they were similarly well treated, building up to a sumptuous whole that never submerged any one of its constituent parts. The ability to keep track of individual lines in a large body of sound is, of course, one of the hallmarks of good hi-fi, and these Crimsons managed that feat with some distinction.

Ⓞ Elegant or ugly? Whatever, prepare to be blown away by the performance.

Imaging was good from side to side, with just a little compression front to back compared with the best I've heard. No one kind of music seemed particularly favoured, though perhaps the get-up-and-dance brigade would wish for a touch more drive and fire on occasion. There was also an odd reluctance on the part of the amps to play very quietly — one kept wanting to turn it up. But as I loathe background music I'd take that as a plus. The phono stage acquitted itself well with both MM and MC cartridges.

Measurements on the 610 pre-amp were absolutely textbook, its frequency response in particular being quite beyond reproach and extending well into the MW broadcast band. The power amp is similarly well behaved with plenty of power on hand (150 Watts continuous) and low distortion.

CONCLUSION

Whether you like the Crimson styling is another matter, but judged strictly on sound this combination certainly cuts it. It's admittedly basic and the upgrade factor is low, but taken as it is, it's definitely worth Recommending.



VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,075

Despite the odd looks and the aged circuit design, this is a very capable set-up with plenty of power and detail. Price includes DNM Solid Core cables.

■ THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

Virtual Reality Audio Systems, PO Box 383, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4GB
(01277) 227355

NVA P50/A60

NVA is one of the iconoclasts of the UK hi-fi business: don't look here for 'me too' products! Admittedly, at first glance the rather prosaic, black sharp rectangular boxes that house these two units don't suggest anything too far out of the ordinary.

However, look closer and you'll see the top and bottom panels of each are fairly conventional brushed anodised aluminium, the sides are of black ash-effect Medite and the front and back of acrylic. This isn't down to cosmetic reasons, says NVA, but rather "...to stop induced circulating currents and static charge problems associated with normal case designs". Not everyone agrees with this reasoning, but no doubt NVA has tested the construction empirically and has its justifications.

Unlike the other preamps in this group, the P50 is a passive unit; that is, it contains only a selector switch and a volume control, plus the absolute minimum of wiring to link everything. The selector switch is standard commercial grade, as are the sockets, and the volume control a rather specialist type (from Sfernice, though it isn't that expensive). To be honest, given the unusual casework, dealer margins and so on, I can't entirely see where all the money (£350) has gone. There are four inputs and three parallel-connected outputs plus a pair of sockets marked 'direct' which function as a tape output. The problem common to most passive preamps is that their high output

● **Plenty of volume on tap, but it's negated by an underlying lack of power.**



impedance (over at least some of the volume range) can limit high-frequency response, and the high-value pot used here will give potentially audible roll-off with as little as 1m of typical interconnect cable — a point to remember.

Externally, the A60 is as unostentatious as they come, with features limited to the bare essentials of input and output sockets, power indicator and power switch."

"Externally, the A60 is as unostentatious as they come, with features limited to the bare essentials of input and output sockets, power indicator and power switch."

ostentatious as they come, with features limited to the bare essentials of input and output sockets (the latter for 4mm plugs only, not bare wire), power indicator and power switch. Inside, the main circuit is on a fairly small circuit board, mounted on to the base panel via Medite spacers and glue — which sounds eccentric but seems secure enough. The power transistors are also glued to the base with thermally conductive glue and, rather alarmingly, the power supply rails and output

connections are all run in completely uninsulated wire. Given how thick it is, I don't see it bending and coming into contact with anything it shouldn't in a hurry, but it sure looks odd. There's no output 'Zobel network' and NVA makes special mention in the user notes about choice of speaker cable: high capacitance cables may induce oscillation and their use invalidates the guarantee. NVA is not unique in this respect, to wit Naim amps also rely on speaker cable inductance to maintain stability.

SOUND QUALITY

NVA's instructions for the A60 mention that it is optimised for use with a passive pre and should "under no circumstances" be used with an active one. And indeed, the combination of its high input capacitance with the high output impedance of the P50 gives enough treble loss to offset, at least to a degree, the intrinsic roughness that seems to pervade the sound. I think it must be partly a music thing. If your idea of a great radio show includes John Peel or Radio 3's 'Mixing It', this might be the amplifier for you. But if you want to hear the full power and subtlety of opera, a symphony orchestra, jazz band or even, the odd really well produced rock

● **NVA's classic lines disguise some unusual internals.**

record, I'm afraid on this showing the P50/A60 combo may not be the way to go. It managed to sound loud right enough, but without being powerful: solo jazz trumpet could blast but never beguile: and orchestral strings, one of the toughest tests of hi-fi naturalness, sounded distinctly processed, even synthesised.

I could go on rehearsing specific faults but, put simply, the sound was almost without exception coarse, one-dimensional and even aggressive. Only with real grunge and/or headbanging stuff did things sound a bit more right, and you can enjoy either of those through neutral amplifiers too.

Technically, apart from the points already mentioned, the A60's performance is dominated by rather high distortion, especially at high frequencies. Small wonder, arguably, that it sounds rough. Power output is 43 Watts, a little below the claimed 60 Watts.

CONCLUSION

When writing about products like this I tend to feel that I'm missing the point. I assume there is one — after all, the designer must have liked it! Unfortunately, right now I can find no grounds for recommending either of these units.



VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £350/£560

■ **A bizarre pair of units that don't seem to justify their unusual construction as their sound is coarse and uninviting.**

■ **TWO YEAR GUARANTEE**

✉ NVA, 6 Watermill Industrial Estate, Aspenden Road, Buntingford, Herts SG9 9JS
☎ (01763) 272707

THULE Spirit PR100/PA100

THULE SPIRIT PR100/PA100 Visit Our Website: www.hifichoice.co.uk

Thule hails from Denmark – quite a prolific country these days in hi-fi terms. The company's range consists mostly of amplifiers, plus a couple of CD players and a tuner, all with a quiet but smart family resemblance. Tested here are the cheapest separate pre and power amplifiers.

Thule clearly has no fear of high technology. This is evident from the outset, the PR100 lighting up with a digital display of volume setting. Electronic volume controls have not always been well received but Thule uses a recent part designed specifically for high-quality audio use, which I can vouch from personal experience is very unintrusive sonically and of course also allows board layout to be optimised independently of front panel considerations. Volume is adjusted in 1dB steps over the whole range of 0 to 79dB, which is fine for normal use. One soon gets used to having to turn the knob three revolutions from mute to full volume!

Input selection is also electronic, using CMOS switches mounted right next to the input sockets. There are five inputs including two tape (but only one tape output), but selecting the one that functions as tape monitor seems to require the use of the remote control, rather illogically too. I suspect the culprit is a software bug but it's not crippling and in the review period there wasn't time to investigate fully.

The PA100 power amp has no front-panel features beyond a status LED: the power switch is at the rear but Thule recommends that both units be left in standby mode when not in use, a dedicated link between them slaving the power amp to the pre for this function. There are both unbalanced and balanced (XLR) sockets, the latter connecting to similar outputs on



“Construction of both units is based almost entirely on surface-mount components, and I was amazed to discover that both amps share the same circuit board.”

the PR100. Construction of both units is based almost entirely on surface-mount components, and I was amazed to discover that both amps share the same circuit board, which is extremely cunningly laid out to allow this (it also serves, surprise surprise, in at least some of the company's integrated models). A slight drawback of electronic switching and volume control is limited headroom, but by running everything on absolute maximum rated supply voltage Thule has ensured that the PR100 can handle inputs up to 6V, adequate for any source I've ever seen.



SOUND QUALITY

Of the combinations in this test, this was really the only one where there appeared to be some imbalance of ability between pre and power units. Specifically, the power amp seemed by a decisive margin the better of the two, so it seems only sensible to separate the analysis – but bear in mind that in hi-fi, wrongs tend to add up while good points seldom do!

Good stuff first, then: the PA100 power amp is capable of clean power delivery over a wide range of music, dynamic levels and frequencies. Its bass is rock-solid (though possibly just ever so slightly shy of dramatic percussion) and its treble extended and for the most part clean, it was sometimes mildly affected by a sheen on sounds such as violin or hi-hat cymbal. Detail is almost always there for the listening to and the stereo image is fine, if perhaps a little behind the very best in terms of depth. There's no sign of strain as the volume is raised and high-energy music is never robbed of its vitality.

○ The power amp is more assured than the pre which verges on the bland.

The PR100 preamp is by no means a bad performer, but it lacks the assurance and completeness of its partner. Basically, it puts a light veil over many different kinds of sound, subtly shrouding detail and as a consequence detaching the listener from the musical experience. Comments from listening include: “a bit unexciting”, “violins a little strained”, “bass not quite as extended...” – it's just not very engaging and can be almost bland. One couldn't say it's offensive or obviously flawed in any one specific way, but it never sets the blood racing.

Measurements on the PR100 show a low but not vanishing level of distortion, due probably to the input switching circuits. All other parameters are fine, as are those of the PA100 which comfortably exceeded its 100 Watt rating and kept distortion fairly low and harmless in nature.

CONCLUSION

I would love to recommend the PA100, but as a pair the overall result falls just short of the high standards set in this test.



VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£399.95/£599.95

■ A potentially very capable power amplifier is let down somewhat by a rather veiled and unexciting preamp.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

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

PRE/POWER AMPLIFIERS CONCLUSIONS

THE BEST IN THE TEST

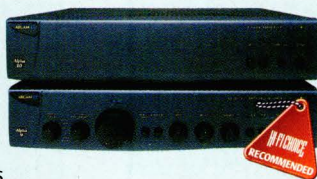


CREEK P43R/A52SE

Unless you want multi-channel capability, the preamp has it all: phono option, headphone output, remote control, bridging outputs. It also has very fine sound and is matched in this respect by the deceptively powerful A52SE.

ARCAM Alpha 9C/Alpha 10P

Far and away the most flexible combination in the group, but even after putting all those features in it seems Arcam had some money for sound quality which only just lags behind the Creek combo and possesses good tonality and dynamics.



CRIMSON CS610/CS630

You'll probably either love or hate the looks. The features are few, and the design is surprisingly old. The sound, however, is strong and vital, with particularly good bass – deep but never overblown.



will appreciate the phono stage in the Crimson preamp, too.

Thule, NVA and Alchemist fared less well. In the first case, the blame seemed tilted towards the preamp and Thule's power amp seemed like quite a fine unit, but it's a shame that on its own it doesn't seem so attractive. As for the others they seem to be designed 'to taste' rather than towards the goal of true neutrality, which in a way is fair enough but seems to me a dead end. OK, so you like your sound a bit rough and raw, but what happens if you decide one day you fancy something a bit refined? You're stuck. On the other hand, neutral hi-fi, of which the Creek is a good example, lets you hear what's on the record. If the performers and engineers wanted it rough, that's what you'll hear, otherwise it's a bad recording and bad hi-fi won't

help. But if a recording is made smooth, detailed and extended, you should be able to hear it.

Do give yourself a chance to prove all us reviewers wrong. Find a helpful dealer, and listen to a few products with familiar records. There's a lot of good gear out there. Don't pass it up for something you'll regret next month!

HINTS & TIPS

Interconnect cables are the umbilical cords of music.

And whatever brand of cable you are using, you can ensure they remain on top form by keeping their contacts free from dirt and oxide.

RCA phono plugs and sockets can be cleaned by plugging and unplugging a few times, using a proprietary cleaning solution to remove oxide.

To avoid damage, remember to turn the amp(s) off before doing this.

HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

Each combination was dropped into my usual system in place of my own EAR amps, the rest of the system comprising **ATC SCM20** speakers connected with either **Supra** or **Kimber** cable, **Rotel's** excellent new **RCD971** CD player, **Revox** FM tuner, various **DAT** and cassette sources and **Pink Triangle/SME/Highphonic** LP deck.

Listening took place over about a week and consisted of a fixed programme of relatively short (5-10 minute) bursts of familiar discs plus some casual listening to various material. Hot tip from this session: Percy Grainger edition on Chandos, *Volume 1 (orchestral works)*. Ideal review stuff – I could listen to it a hundred times and not lose interest. Almost all the lis-

tening was to one-make combinations, though just out of curiosity I did a little mix'n'matching, including other familiar units.

Each unit was also tested quite thoroughly in the lab, but only those measurements that showed something particularly unusual are mentioned.

SOFTWARE:

GRAINGER: *Orchestral Works Vol. 1*, BBC Philharmonic/Hickox, Chandos CHAN 9493

SCHMIDT: *Symphony 4*, Bruckner Orch. Linz/Sieghart, Chesky CD143

RAMSEY LEWIS TRIO: *In Person*, Chess GRP 18142

PALLAVICINO: *Madrigals, Consort of Musicke*, Musica Oscura 07097

This has been a particularly interesting group of amplifiers, covering as it does pretty much the gamut of approaches and indeed varying considerably in success on audition. It might be significant that the best sound came from the make that has steered what one might call a 'middle path' for many years, never being extremely tweaky or extremely high-tech or extremely anything, but just quietly getting on with the job. But in fact Creek has managed to offer quite a range of options on the preamp, and flexibility of the pair is good.

Granted, if you think you're likely to expand into full-on home cinema or round-the-house installation, Arcam's combination is clearly the one to go for, and in purely sonic terms it's not seriously outshone by any others here. On the other hand, if you feel that the only features you need are a couple of inputs and a volume control then Crimson's offerings are well worth a look and certainly dish up the power to hungry speakers (although the difference between the output of the Crimson and Creek amps is not that great). Those still playing vinyl

AMPLIFIER COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	ALCHEMIST	ARCAM	CREEK	CRIMSON	NVA	THULE
MODEL	KRAKEN APD7A MK II/APD8A MK II	ALPHA 9C/ALPHA 10P	P43R/A52SE	CS610/CS630	P50/A60	SPIRIT PR100/PA100
PRICE	£549/549	£399.90/£599.90	£800.00/£650.00	£1,075 inc. cables	£350/£560	£399.95/£599.95
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	2 yrs	2 yrs	2 yrs	3 yrs	2 yrs	2 yrs
SIZE (WxHxD) (PREAMP)	320x80x250mm	430x110x310mm	420x60x230mm	95x116x376mm	250x60x230mm	420x95x290mm
WEIGHT	4kg	4.5kg	2.7kg	2.3kg	1.5kg	6kg
RATED POWER (8 OHMS)	55W	100W	80W	100W	43W	100W
NUMBER OF INPUTS	6	6	6	3	4	5
PHONO INPUT?	Optional	Optional	Optional	Phono MM/MC	No	No

Five Stars

Paul Messenger explains why you should visit an independent

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

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

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

Power of the Press

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

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

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

The hi-fi reviewer attempts, with varying

degrees of success, to evaluate a particular component, and find something interesting (and hopefully positive) to say about it. That's about the end of it, and it's on to the next product.

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

The Role of the Dealer

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

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

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

For Value

specialist dealer if you are searching for real hi-fi satisfaction

of that particular flavour-of-the-month.)

If you go in and say you're looking for a CD player, and want his advice on what to choose, things are liable to become more interesting. The onus is now on the dealer to show what he can do. His first task is to ask the right questions to try and get some idea of what you might be after.

Asking the questions is the easy bit. The real skill comes in using the information to come up with a shortlist of likely contenders, and then conducting a demonstration so that you have a real chance to play a central role in the decision making process.

Putting together a successful hi-fi system might not be as difficult as it was twenty or thirty

"If music is an essential ingredient in your daily diet, you owe it to yourself to become a member of the discriminating minority."

years ago, but it's just as easy to make a mess of things. Put the 'wrong' combination of components together and it'll still sound a lot better than any cute little mini system package. It might even rate a five star review. But it won't match the potential of a carefully balanced and properly installed system, and it certainly won't cater for your own particular preferences and personality.

We British are notoriously indiscriminating consumers, at a mass market level at least. The majority of the population don't even bother to drive a car they're thinking of buying, never mind take the trouble to listen to hi-fi equipment.

The majority will therefore end up with hyperstore mediocrity, and hi-fi that's about as tasty as supermarket bread. But if music is an essential ingredient in your daily diet, you owe it to yourself to become a member of the discriminating minority.

You know full well that your music collection is as individual as your wardrobe, and just as

precious too, so it's worth taking the time and trouble to search out the dealer and equipment that will make that collection come alive, and give you a new buzz every time you play your favourite discs.

The independent specialist may not beat the chain store on price, but he continues to thrive in a hostile environment because real hi-fi is so much more than a matter of price. The people who work in these shops are themselves enthusiasts, often with many years of experience in meeting customer's needs, and the very necessary expertise to ensure that the whole thing is properly set up to deliver the best results.

The better the hi-fi, the more important it is to get the fine details right at the installation end of things, but even the least expensive equipment can be made to sound a whole lot better if good care is taken over the fine details - the support furniture, the cabling, the positioning of speakers and so on.

Without expert assistance even high class hi-fi can give mediocre results. With it you'll stand a very good chance of ending up with something rather more than a consumer durable - something which will be a source of considerable pleasure and genuine emotional satisfaction for decades to come.

I agreed to write this signed piece, irrespective of the specific sponsors, because I believe the independent specialist dealer plays a vital role in giving customers long term hi-fi satisfaction.

Paul Messenger

The specialist Dealers listed here are professional and enthusiastic.

Give your nearest a ring for a demonstration.

STAR QUALITIES

value for money	★★★★★
service	★★★★★
facilities	★★★★★
verdict	★★★★★

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0171 924 2040

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0181 400 5555

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Ashford, Kent

SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI

40 High Street
01233 624441

Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI

216 Moulsham Street
01245 265245

East Grinstead

AUDIO DESIGNS

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Kingston-upon-Thames

INFIDELITY

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0181 943 3530

Lakeside Retail Park

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01708 680551

Rayleigh, Essex

RAYLEIGH HI-FI

44a High Street
01268 779762

Southend-on-Sea

RAYLEIGH HI-FI

132/4 London Road
01702 435255

Uxbridge UXBRIDGE AUDIO

278 High Street,
01895 465444

MIDLANDS

Banbury OVERTURE

3 Church Lane
01295 272158

Birmingham SOUND ACADEMY

152a High Street, Bloxwich
01922 493499

Leicester CYMBIOSIS

6 Hotel Street
0116 262 3754

Northampton LISTEN INN

32 Gold Street, 01604 637871

Shrewsbury CREATIVE AUDIO

9 Dogpole 01743 241924

NORTH

Cheadle (Stockport)

AUDIO COUNSEL

14 Stockport Road
0161 428 7887

Oldham AUDIO COUNSEL

12/14 Shaw Road
0161 633 2602

Sheffield MOORGATE

ACOUSTICS

184 Fitzwilliam St
0114 275 6048

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh

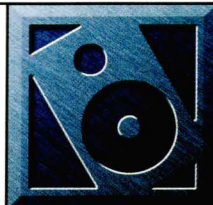
RUSS ANDREWS HI-FI

34 Northumberland Street
0131 557 1672

Glasgow STEREO STEREO

260 St. Vincent Street
0141 248 4079

ON TEST!



SPEAKERS

The infamous Pauls give a round dozen speakers spanning the £130-£300 price spectrum the once-over, and conclude that they're not in fact budget but rather, simply compact.

GLOSSARY

BALANCE: Most loudspeakers have a characteristic frequency balance which results from emphasising some parts of the audio range and/or de-emphasising others.

BASS: The lowest three octaves of the audio band – hence 'low bass' refers to the bottom octave (20-40Hz); 'mid-bass' the middle octave (40-80Hz); and 'upper bass' the 80-160Hz octave.

BI-AMP (SOMETIMES TRI-AMP): Loudspeakers equipped with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate (matching) power amplifiers for each driver.

BI-WIRE (SOMETIMES TRI-WIRE): Loudspeakers with separate access terminals to each driver can be driven by separate cable runs between the power amp and each driver.

CROSSOVER: A simple electrical network which divides the full bandwidth signal received from the power amplifier, apportioning appropriate parts of the spectrum to the various drive units.

DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER: A transducer which converts electrical energy into acoustic energy, eg main driver, tweeter.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE: The range of frequencies, from low to high, which a loudspeaker will reproduce.

IMPEDANCE: The complex electrical load that a loudspeaker presents to the amplifier which is driving it.

MAIN DRIVER: A drive unit which reproduces both bass and midrange frequencies.

MIDRANGE: The middle three or so octaves of the audio band, where the ear is most sensitive, covering the approximate frequency span from 160Hz up to 1.5kHz.

NETWORK: see Crossover.

PRESENCE: Critical section of the band between midrange and treble.

SENSITIVITY: The relative loudness generated for a specific voltage input.

TREBLE: The top end of the audio band, eg above 3kHz.

TWEETER: Treble driver.

WOOFER: Bass driver.

THE CAST LIST

AE Aegis One	£149.95	p73
Chario Hiper 1000	£299	p87
Eltax Liberty 3+	£150	p75
Heybrook Heylette B	£200	p81
KEF Q15	£199	p82
Linn Kan	£295	p88
Mission 771	£170	p77
Monitor Audio Silver 3	£300	p89
Mordaunt-Short MS812	£200	p83
Tannoy R1	£200	p84
TDL Nucleus 2	£130	p79
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2 Anniversary	£199.95	p85

With a price ceiling at £300 and a starting price of £130, this test group might more realistically be labelled Budget Speakers. However, since no fewer than six of the 12 feature real-wood veneered enclosures, Compact Speakers might be a more accurate description of the group gathered together here.

All are standmounts and as such require the additional purchase of a pair of stands (typically

£70 upwards). Factor this cost in with even the cheapest under-£100 budget baby, and the total outlay starts to overlap the lowest reaches of the compact floor-standing sector.

Indeed, the cheapest floorstanders are often no more than small standmount speakers that have had their enclosures extended down to the floor. The results can be aesthetically pleasing, assuming you don't find the large area of vinyl woodprint off-putting, and the negative influence of all that extra woodwork may be partly ameliorated by mass-loading the blanked-off sections that are often provided at the bottom of these enclosures. Generally, however, a smaller speaker on a dedicated stand is always likely to give superior results, if only because the ratio of driver diaphragm to box surface areas is larger.

The standmount versus floorstander argument will doubtless rumble on, fuelled as much by fashion as any other factor. And if the floorstander has been leading

the way over the past few years, this test group offers some evidence that the standmount is starting to fight back.

It all comes down to the falling cost of real-wood finish. Low-cost floorstanders are more or less by definition vinyl-finished, and now with a clutch of real-wood standmounts priced below £200 (four of them in our test group), the combination of real-wood-plus-ironmongery provides tough aesthetic competition for the vinyl floorstander.

Although this group doesn't delve that deeply into the bargain price basement, it does pretty much define the minimum size for a hi-fi speaker. The majority have enclosures of 6-10 litres, putting them firmly in the miniature class. All but three of the 12 have so-called 130mm main drivers, with actual diaphragm diameters somewhere between 90mm and 100mm. All have reflex ports too, to give a helping hand at the bottom end, and these are tuned somewhere between 40Hz and 70Hz. For the most part, the bottom octave (20-40Hz) is not on the agenda.



From Left to Right: Acoustic Energy Aegis One p73, Chario Hiper 1000 p87, Eltax Liberty 3+ p75, Heybrook Heylette B p81, KEF Q15 p82, Linn Kan p88
(Below) Monitor Audio Silver 3 p89, Mission 771 p77, Mordaunt-Short MS812 p83, Tannoy R1 p84, TDL Nucleus 2 p79, Wharfedale Diamond 7.2 Anniversary p85


GROUP A BELOW £170

GROUP B £170-£200

GROUP C £200-£300

HINTS & TIPS

The first step with any standmount speakers is to make sure you put them on proper stands as this at least ensures stable, predictable support; it also means the drive units are the same distance off the floor as your ears. If you feel like experimenting then the choice of stand can have a big influence on the sound, but from an acoustic point of view, finding the right place to put the loudspeakers with respect to the room walls is more important still. Our reviews offer suggestions, but every room is different so do take time and trouble over this. And don't forget to use decent speaker cable if you want your system to perform at its best.

SPEAKERS GROUP A
BELOW £170

Paradoxically, our least expensive group encompasses the biggest range of contrast, from the tiny real-wood Mission, via the chunky little TDL and hunky metal-cone Acoustic Energy up to the impressively large Eltax. With such a range of contrast available, almost irrespective of price, there's plenty of choice to suit different room sizes, furnishing aspirations and musical taste. Stylewise, the Mission 771 stands comfortably out front, but the change you'd get with the TDL would go a long way towards a pair of stands. For sheer value, however, the AE and Eltax must share the honours, right across the whole test group.

Acoustic Energy Aegis One	£149.95
Eltax Liberty 3+	£150
TDL Nucleus 2	£130
Mission 771	£170

SPEAKERS GROUP B
£170-£200

Our largest sub-group of five models has a total price spread of just £1. Sizewise there's rather more variation, though the Tannoy, Wharfedale and Heybrook are pretty much conform to the miniature stereotype, and all three feature real wood finish. They all need some space to work properly, as does the larger Mordaunt-Short. The KEF Q15, however, is arguably the only model across all three groups that seems to have been accurately aligned for close-to-wall siting. There may be superficial similarities here, but the sonic contrasts are quite dramatic.

KEF Q15	£199
Tannoy R1	£200
Mordaunt-Short MS812	£200
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2 Anniversary	£199.95
Heybrook Heylette B	£200

SPEAKERS GROUP C
£200-£300

Clustering up around the £300 price point we find that again the contrasts are greater than the similarities. The Chario Hiper 1000 will undoubtedly win friends for its lovely veneerwork, even if the curious porting and rubber feet might make standmounting rather tricky, especially as it needs plenty of space around it. The Monitor Audio Silver 3 with its shiny metal diaphragms is equally striking looking and can take being sited fairly close to a wall. The same applies to the Linn Kan, which comes rather soberly suited in black vinyl woodprint, although it feels very solidly built and features two rather classy drivers into the bargain.

Chario Hiper 1000	£299
Linn Kan	£295
Monitor Audio Silver 3	£300

HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

The unsighted listening tests took place in a room which is a little larger than average at 4.2x5.5x2.6m (WxLxH), but not excessively so. The speakers were installed one pair at a time behind an acoustically transparent curtain, and positioned according to the results obtained from a series of sine-waves sweeps taken in the room itself across the listening arc. Each presentation takes roughly half an hour, covering as broad a range of music as possible, split evenly between vinyl and CD sources.

Care is taken to try and match the relative volume of each loudspeaker,

although differences in frequency balance, bass extension and room drive do inevitably get in the way; grilles are removed where possible to take account of the mild influence of the black net curtaining.

The tests were spread over two days, allowing for a number of repeat presentations. Extensive hands-on listening was spread over about two weeks, allowing ample opportunity for further experimentation in positioning and alternative ancillary components.

The main reference system used for the blind and hands-on work consisted

of the usual mix of Mana-supported Naim and Linn components, viz: Linn LP12 turntable, Naim ARO tonearm, Linn Arkiv 2 cartridge, Naim CDS CD player, NAT01 tuner, NAC52 preamp and NAP135 power amps. Speaker cables were NACA5 and Nordost SPM; stands were primarily Kudos S100s.

THE LISTENING PANEL

Many thanks to the panellists:

DAVID INMAN (Castle) **ROBIN MARSHALL** (NXT) **RUSSELL KAUFFMAN** (Morel, Densen) **KEN WELLER** (B&W) **GARY MARDELL** (Gamepath) **ANDY WHITTLE**

WHAT MUSIC DID WE USE?
MASSIVE ATTACK:

Mezzanine on Virgin

JONI MITCHELL: *Mingus* on Asylum

LYLE LOVETT:

I Love Everybody on MCA MCD10808

CAMBRIDGE SINGERS:

Here is Sweet Music on Rutter/Collegium

VILLA-LOBOS/STOKOWSKI: *Uirapuru*

on Everest/DCC Compact Classics

FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS:

Come Find Yourself on Chrysalis

COMEZ: *Bring it On* on Virgin

A selection of other music and BBC Radios 3 and 4 were also used.

MISSION MISSION MISSION MISSION

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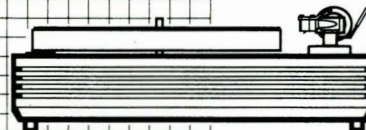
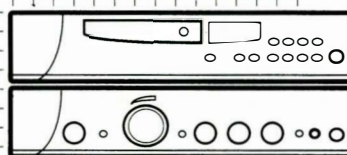
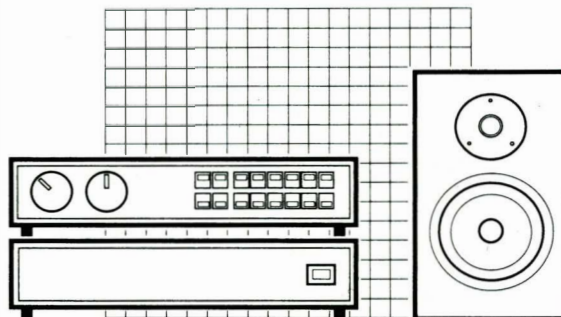
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ACOUSTIC ENERGY Aegis One

Acoustic Energy built its reputation on a tiny mini-monitor called the AE1, which broke new ground by using metal diaphragms for both the main driver and tweeter, which it built into an exceptionally tough mineral-loaded box.

Classic upmarket models like the AE1 are still available, but in recent years Acoustic Energy has turned its attention more towards the mass market. An exceptionally solid and good-looking floor-stander for its £350 asking price, the mass-loaded AE109 (HFC 164) was a notable success, and this new £150 Aegis One stand-mount looks like it could repeat the same trick. Despite being among the least expensive, it's

"It is in fact rather smoother than most of the competition, has decent dynamic range, fine voice articulation and unusual transparency."

also one of the larger and heavier designs in the test group.

It turns out that the main driver has a pukka-looking AE metal alloy cone, matt-silver finished, complete with the pointy little black metal dust dome that is now an AE trademark. This must be a first in £150 loudspeakers, so how has AE achieved it at this price point? I would guess offshore manufacture, since no country of origin is specifically nominated on either

speaker or carton, merely the disingenuous phrase: "designed and engineered in England".

If the rest of the package is rather more prosaic, there's no evidence of skimping. The wrap is finished in vinyl woodprint, black on our samples, with rosewood or cherry alternatives, while the textured front baffle has a heavily chamfered edge. Construction is pretty tough, with a braced 15mm MDF wrap plus a 25mm thick front baffle, the whole thing weighing in at more than 6kg. The main driver has a pressed steel frame and 98mm diameter alloy cone, while the tweeter uses a 25mm soft fabric dome. A flared port is mounted on the back panel together with a single terminal pair. The drivers are both flush-mounted, and the grille looks acoustically innocuous.

The in-room far-field averaged responses definitely point towards free space siting, from the point of view of both bass alignment and midband smoothness. The broad midband looks reasonably smooth and flat, with a gentle downturn above 1kHz and a very smooth crossover transition.

SOUND QUALITY

I'd enjoyed the Aegis One prior to the panel tests and was disappointed to find that it didn't raise much enthusiasm among either of the listening panels. While it didn't attract serious censure, criticism certainly outweighed praise. The rather restrained top end put some panellists off: "Too smooth; HF rolled off. No gross aberrations, just all a bit dull."



This is one occasion where I believe the panel got it wrong, judging the Aegis One dull because it avoids the forwardness that is typical of this group of speakers. In fact, the Aegis One is exceptionally evenhanded through the midband, with notably natural perspectives on acoustic and particularly classical material. It is actually rather smoother than most of the competition, has decent dynamic range, fine voice articulation and unusual transparency. There is a degree of boxiness, and the bass alignment wasn't ideal in our listening room, but it packs at least its fair share of drive and weight.

CONCLUSION

The Aegis One is a lot of interesting looking loudspeaker for the money, especially since metal cone technology has traditionally commanded a significant price

◉ The AE has remarkably low distortion for its price.

premium. While some might find its sound a little too retiring, there's an easy neutrality here that demands respect and recognition. The surprise is that it sounds so very different from the altogether more up-front AE200 tested (and Recommended) in HFC 177. **PM**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £149.95

■ Metal cone main driver at a new low price. Has a very natural and transparent midband, erring a little on the dull side.

THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Acoustic Energy Ltd, 16 Bridge Road, Cirencester, Gloucester GL7 1NJ
☎ (01285) 654432

THE LAB REPORT

I've berated sufficient loudspeaker manufacturers in past issues of *Choice* for quoting 'over-enthusiastic' sensitivity figures that most are now more cautious in their specification. I say most, because the 2-3dB dip through the Aegis' presence region brings its 500Hz-8kHz band sensitivity down to a more realistic 87.5dB. In essence, this means the Aegis One simply won't sound quite as 'loud' as its 90dB specification might suggest, though its 120W power rating still promises musical peaks around 103dBA in-room.

With a minimum load of 5.7 Ohms, the Aegis One will not be too tricky to drive. However, its

◉ A tricky load but easy drive.



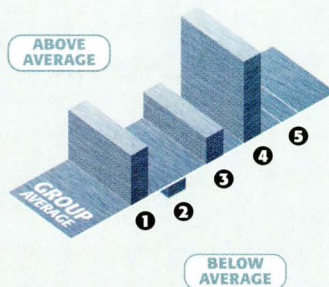
bass tuning is under-damped and shows big -45 to +60 degree swings in electrical phase and impedance, suggesting that its bass quality could vary from amplifier to amplifier. And yet this is still a technically well-engineered design with perfect alignment of both the 50Hz port tuning, impedance minimum and null in the bass driver's output. Bass extension looks good to 52Hz with no sign of boominess or 'waffle'.

Distortion is also very low for a relatively small enclosure, indicating that good quality drivers and crossover components are being employed. This is particularly true at low frequencies where THD typically hovers around 0.3-0.6 per cent (even at levels as high as 96dBA). **PM**

HOW IT COMPARES

Although Acoustic Energy rates its Aegis at a generous 90dB/1W/1m sensitivity, this figure is probably taken at 1kHz where the speaker's output is strongest. In reality, the Aegis One is less sensitive overall, but is easy to drive.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	35%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-5%
3 MAX MUM LOUDNESS	20%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	25%
5 BASS EXTENSION	0%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	90dB	87.5dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohms	12.2 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	50Hz	52Hz



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ELTAX Liberty 3+

Eltax is a relatively young Danish operation which looks set to emulate its elder countryfellow Jamo by moving onto the world stage of hi-fi loud-speaker manufacture and sales. Like Jamo, its speciality is cabinet manufacture, and the perceived value for money of its models is indisputably high.

Choice has reviewed Eltax speakers twice before: once way back in 1991, when the company first started looking at export markets; and more recently in HFC 177, after the company had set up its own UK subsidiary in Milton Keynes. This would seem to be working well, as the brand is finding its way into major retail chains, while the £149 Liberty 3+

“The Liberty 3+ falls into the lowest sub-group on price, yet it’s comfortably the largest and also one of the heaviest models in the whole test.”

which is the subject of this report, recently picked up a Best Buy rating in the influential Consumers Association magazine *Which?*

There’s no disputing you get a whole lot of speaker for your money. The Liberty 3+ falls into lowest sub-group on price, yet it’s comfortably the largest and also one of the heaviest models in the whole test. The finish is vinyl, and while the speaker undoubtedly looks very good from a metre

away, the pseudo-wood looks less convincing close up, and tactile impressions are even more negative. Beech, black and cherry are the three options available.

Surface finish apart, this is a good-looking speaker, soberly styled with a flush-mounted tweeter and neat front panel decoration. Much deeper than it is wide, a generous stand top-plate and footprint will be needed to provide stable support. Reflecting generous enclosure volume, the main driver has a 120mm plastic cone, while the tweeter has a 25mm soft fabric dome. Gilt twin terminals are fitted, sharing the rear panel with a flared port.

Keep it well clear of walls and the Liberty 3+ shows an impressive in-room far-field averaged response, a little strong through the midbass perhaps, but with fine ultimate bass extension. However, the upper midband presence is just slightly suppressed, while the mid and upper treble is a shade over-prominent.

SOUND QUALITY

The slightly laid-back midband, fulsome bass and bright top end gives the Liberty a very different presentation from the group norm, which made it very difficult to set comparable listening levels in the unsighted listening tests. Results were disappointing on both days, with only one panellist reacting positively to the Liberty 3+’s ‘differentness’, while the others put it well down their respective wish lists.

The deep bass extension has its own appeal, but quantity does not



imply quality, and several panellists criticised a rather soft and limp delivery, not only through the bass region but right up through the midband too. Apart from a slight top end ‘fizz’, the sound is attractively evenhanded and free from tonal aberrations, but there’s a fundamental lack of grip, drive and tension, which robs the sound of expressiveness and inhibits emotional communication.

CONCLUSION

Good value for money, and even though you won’t want to stroke it, this loudspeaker does look good. The Liberty 3+ paints a very distinct sonic picture from the norm, with oodles of rather soft bass, an obvious top-end ‘sparkle’, and some lack of midband energy and enthusiasm. If this one’s right, then the others must be wrong,

● **A performance that takes a clear departure from the norm.**

was the consensus opinion, though that’s not to say it isn’t a sound which will have its own constituency of fans. Bear in mind that you might have to spend as much (or more) on a suitable stand. **PMe**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £149

Bright, bassy, laid-back and attractively evenhanded, but dynamically challenged. A big box for your dosh.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Eltax, 4 Warren Yard, Wolverton Mill, Milton Keynes MK12 5NW
☎ (01908) 226464

THE LAB REPORT

This speaker’s averaged, third-octave response shows it to be generally well behaved from 300Hz-5kHz but flanked by an exaggerated bass and high treble, the latter at least partially ameliorated by angling the speakers inward by 20-30 degrees. The 80Hz-250Hz bass emphasis, however, remains to haunt the speaker and is further reflected in my nearfield analysis. Here we find the port’s significant and low-Q output stretching from 25Hz-95Hz (-3dB), well within the operating range of the bass driver with its -3dB point at 70Hz. Distortion may remain low at 0.4-0.6 per cent through this enthusiastic

● Full-on bass and treble.



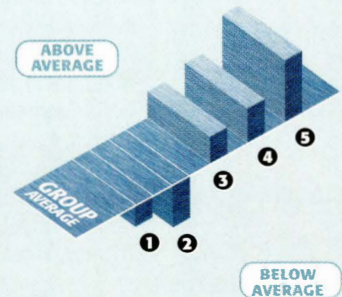
bass, although whatever else you do, try to keep the Liberty 3+ clear of corners! Either way, this clearly correlates with the “fat and imprecise” bass reported by Paul’s listeners.

Otherwise, the speaker’s sensitivity is modest at 87dB/2.83V/1m but distortion remains low, particularly through the bass (funnily enough) at 0.4 per cent. Distortion does increase to 1-2 per cent through the midband, however, where the largest electrical phase angles are also encountered (-51 degrees to +34 degrees between 750Hz and 3kHz). The overall speaker load is ‘safe’ enough with an 11 Ohm average, even though its brief minimum of 3.75 Ohms occurs at 160Hz. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

Bass extension appears to be the best of the group, but it’s achieved through excess rather than engineering subtlety. Treble is also high, but this can be at least partly ameliorated by angling the speakers inwards by 20-30 degrees.

- | | |
|----------------------|------|
| 1 EASE OF DRIVE | -15% |
| 2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS | -30% |
| 3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS | 20% |
| 4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION | 25% |
| 5 BASS EXTENSION | 45% |



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED ¹
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	87dB ¹	86.9dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	4 Ohms	11.4 Ohms:
■ Estimated Bass Extension	45Hz	41Hz

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MISSION 771

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If you equate bass quantity with quality – a widespread if totally erroneous perception – the 700s will be more your bag than the 77s. If you place subtlety and delicacy high on both your musical and aesthetic agendas, the 77s are much more likely to suit.

This £170 771 is the least expensive and smallest in the

rearward output of the driver isn't too heavily reflected or impeded. Mission describes it as: "far removed from the usual plank with holes".

The exceptionally neat grille is entirely optional as the speaker looks good with or without its clothes on. The main driver is a small affair with a 90mm aerogel cone and a zippy little 'chrome'-plated pole-piece in the middle. A particularly clever touch is the way the 25mm soft fabric dome tweeter has a form of leaf-spring decoupling built into its faceplate, ensuring that whole motor/diaphragm assembly is substantially unaffected by any vibration generated within the front baffle by the action of the main driver. The back panel has a small port to reflex-load the enclosure, and a single terminal pair.

The far-field in-room response appears to be beautifully judged, and unusually smooth too. A little wall reinforcement will help fill out the midbass (there is no low bass), but take care not to overdo it or you'll risk making the midband more uneven.

SOUND QUALITY

A strong result in the blind listening tests reflects the excellent balance and voicing of this speaker, and even the one listener who showed little enthusiasm acknowledged its unusually sweet treble. Ultimately, the lack of any real bass weight, drive or authority is the most obvious handicap and limitation, but at least one listener liked its precision and lightness of touch in this respect.

"The ultra-thick (38mm) front baffle is particularly clever, using a combination of real wood and a bonded leatherette finish."

series, and unusually competitively priced for a model featuring real wood veneer. It shares the same outstanding styling and design details as the top-of-the-line 774 (HFC 184). An object lesson in modern industrial design and manufacture, the ultra-thick (38mm) front baffle is particularly clever, using a combination of real wood and a bonded leatherette finish, with heavy chamfering to narrow the perceived frontal area, and scalloping inside so that the



○ Inviting character, real wood veneer and a good price. A true Best Buy.

But it's the midband that is the 771's biggest strength. Achieving just the right degree of openness while avoiding aggression is the most difficult trick in the speaker designer's book, and the 771 is one of the most successful around. As a result, the sound is always inviting, and a positive encouragement to switch on and enjoy the system.

CONCLUSION

It's difficult to avoid the conclusion that the 771 is, especially in terms of its midband balance and voicing, a rather better loudspeaker than the floorstanding and considerably more expensive 774 that we reviewed and Recommended in HFC 183. Although bass weight

and drive are clearly not its forté, in every other respect this is a superbly designed loudspeaker which undoubtedly merits a Best Buy rating on sonic grounds alone, notwithstanding the bonus of real wood veneer at a surprisingly affordable price. **PMe**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £169.90

Beautiful standmount miniature has a delightfully well-balanced and voiced sound, and a real wood finish too.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Mission Electronics, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED
☎ (01480) 451777

THE LAB REPORT

Despite the considerable difference in their bulk, there are similarities between this diminutive 771 and Mission's larger 774 (HFC 183). Both designs use the same Aerogel bass/mid driver and this is reflected in the 3-5kHz suckout that's apparent with each box along with the mis-termination 'glitch' at 270Hz. Only one such driver is used here and this, together with the decreased 6.5 litre cabinet volume, contributes to the lower 87.2dB sensitivity. Still, this remains over 2dB better than Mission's own, very conservative, specification.

The 774's treble emphasis seems slightly better dealt with in the 771, I'm bound to say,

○ A Mission to thrill.

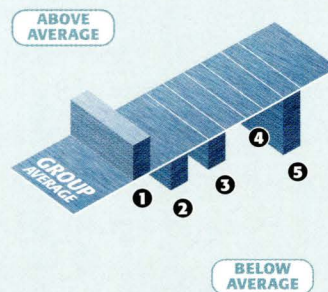


particularly if the boxes are toed inward by 10-15 degrees. The novel, fabric dome tweeter also holds distortion down to 0.3 per cent up to 96dBA. More importantly, the 771's reflex-loading avoids the 'leak' suffered in our sample of the 774 even if some spurious resonance at 580Hz still escapes the rear-mounted port. This port is slightly de-tuned at 70Hz (the driver null occurs at 63Hz) but it successfully reinforces the Aerogel cone, bringing the 771's in-room bass down to a healthy 60Hz. This is also where the largest -28 to +48 degree swings in phase angle occur along with the biggest swoops in impedance, so bass quality may well differ from amplifier to amplifier. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

The 771 is significantly more sensitive than Mission suggests, while the limited bass extension is still impressive considering its small enclosure. Treble emphasis is dealt with well, particularly if the speakers are toed inward by 10-15 degrees.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 1 | EASE OF DRIVE | 25% |
| 2 | RELATIVE LOUDNESS | -20% |
| 3 | MAXIMUM LOUDNESS | -20% |
| 4 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION | 0% |
| 5 | BASS EXTENSION | -40% |



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	85dB	87.2dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohms	10.4 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	65Hz	60Hz

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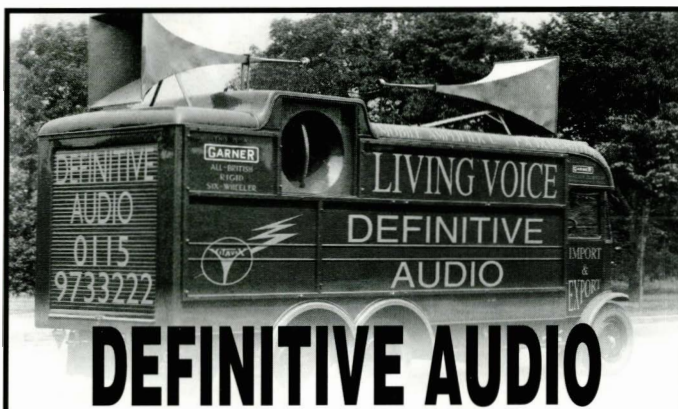


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TDL Nucleus 2

TDL built its reputation by building very large upmarket floorstanding loudspeakers with transmission line bass loading, but recent years have seen a pronounced shift towards the budget sector, first with the 'reflex transmission line' RTL series of vinyl-clad floorstanders, and now with the still more affordable Nucleus models.

This £130 Nucleus 2 is the middle model of three available as stereo pairs, representing quite a big price step up from the similar size £75 Nucleus 1, while the floorstanding Nucleus 3 comes in at £200. Since you won't need to buy stands to support a floorstander, the Nucleus 2 could well end up costing just as much as

“Good basic coherence and timing plus a measure of dynamic life give an end result that is both entertaining and informative.”

the N3, so it might not seem such obvious good value. However, you do get the same two drive units with both models, and box size has never been a reliable indicator of loudspeaker quality.

This little TDL is actually the least expensive model in the test group, and while the vinyl surface finish is pretty inevitable at this price point (there's a choice of black or rosewood or the supplied cherry), there don't seem to be

any other obvious compromises. In fact, the vinyl looks decent enough, and presumably it's also one of the reasons why the front baffle edge has an elegant post-formed contour.

It's a chunky-looking little box, and it feels pretty chunky too, turning the scales at a very respectable 4.3kg. The main driver uses a 98mm diameter doped paper cone in a moulded plastic frame, while the tweeter has a 19mm soft fabric dome. The rear panel has a flared port, plus a twin terminal block permitting bi-wire/-amp operation.

The Nucleus 2 shows a very well-judged in-room far-field response, with a notably smooth transition through the crossover region, although the broad mid-band looks a little 'lumpy'. The bass alignment would suggest that some wall reinforcement might be helpful, but I would be cautious about the full close-to-wall siting which the manufacturer suggests, as this appears rather too midbass heavy; it also renders the midband more uneven.

SOUND QUALITY

It makes life difficult for the reviewer when members of a listening panel decide to adopt violently contradictory stances. One participant took a strong dislike to the Nucleus 2, while two others were altogether more complimentary. In the end, it all falls on Yours Truly to arbitrate and throw the casting vote.

On balance, the N2 succeeds because it doesn't do too much wrong, although it falls somewhat



short of the marks set by the better models further up the price scale in this group. The balance and voicing complement each other very well indeed, so what colorations there are remain reasonably well under control.

Ultimately this is a small loudspeaker, and there's no getting away from the fact, or the consequent lack of weight and drive. It isn't particularly smooth and can get a little congested when the music becomes dense and complex, but good basic coherence and timing plus a measure of dynamic life give an end result that is entertaining and informative, in spite of its cosmetic flaws.

CONCLUSION

Sonically speaking, the Nucleus 2 doesn't quite measure up to its more expensive competitors here, but then it doesn't give a lot away either. There's the vinyl finish of course, and some lack of sonic

◉ **Cheap and extremely cheerful, the Nucleus 2s offer value in abundance.**

smoothness too, but the actual voicing and balancing is exceptionally well judged. It is worth spending more if the money's available, but if things are tight the Nucleus 2 offers solid value for money, and it deserves to be awarded a Recommended badge. **PM**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £129.95

📄 **A very competent miniature. Could be smoother, but with no serious flaws it offers good basic value for money.**

■ **LIFETIME GUARANTEE (Orig owner)**

✉ TDL Electronics, PO Box 98,
High Wycombe, Bucks HP10 9SH
☎ (01628) 850111

THE LAB REPORT

On-axis, TDL's Nucleus 2 loudspeaker has arguably the most even response trend of any in this survey and this, coupled with a healthy 89dB sensitivity, would seem to bode well for its success. But if we dig a little deeper some 'oddities' are unearthed. For example, its response is evidently less well integrated around the 3kHz crossover region as we move off the horizontal axis.

On the other hand, remaining directly on-axis does highlight a very unusual and abrupt +5dB peak at 17-18kHz. This sort of anomaly is typically caused by the doping of soft-dome

◉ **The TDL's even response hides certain anomalies.**



tweeters and may or may not have subjective repercussions of its own.

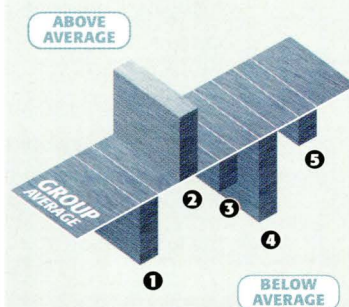
Distortion is also high through the 100-300Hz bass region at 2-3 per cent, even taking into account the limited cabinet volume and 130mm driver diameter. This is a pity because TDL's bass alignment is spot on with both the port resonance and driver null coinciding at 53Hz, bringing the pro-

jected in-room response down to 55Hz. Importantly, the port output is entirely free of spurious buzzes and rattles. The speaker load is also tougher than it looks: the *minimum* isn't bad at 4.2 Ohms, but the 20Hz-20kHz *average* is a current-hungry 8.7 Ohms. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

High sensitivity is achieved at the expense of a uniformly tough load which isn't devastating, but it is the trickiest of this group. Despite the limited cabinet volume and 130mm driver diameter, distortion is high through the bass region.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	-40%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	45%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-20%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-55%
5 BASS EXTENSION	-20%

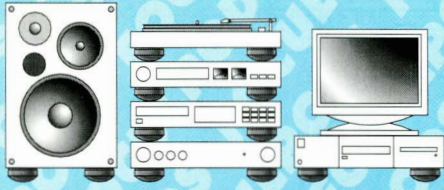


SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	89.0dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	4 Ohms	8.7 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	50Hz	55Hz

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HEYBROOK Heylette B

I must admit I didn't recognise this Heylette immediately, which we originally tested back in *HFC 170* (when it carried a £269 price-tag). One reason might be that this real-wood finish near-miniature looks rather less distinguished in the black livery supplied for review; the reddish-hued earlier samples sported a more obviously figured finish.

The more obvious explanation, however, is a massive 25 per cent price cut, which takes the now £200 Heylette into a quite different price class. This change could be due to the fact that, during the period since the original review, Heybrook has since been taken over by the much larger Audio Group International (AGI), better

“What was previously a rather dull-sounding speaker is now, in Goldilocks’ words, “just right”, with a balance that treads the fine line that divides ‘forward’ from ‘shut-in’.”

known for the high-volume manufacture of JPW loudspeakers, and for its keenly competitive prices. Heybrook's more upmarket profile sits well alongside JPW, and presumably benefits from some economies of scale.

That alone would not really justify a complete formal re-review appraisal but, according to the label on the back, this model is

actually a Heylette B, featuring a small but significant change in the crossover network that is expressly designed to counter one of the criticisms levelled at it in the original review. To find out whether this tweak has achieved its intentions, read on...

The speaker itself is a very neat little two-way standmount of around eight litres internal volume. It's soberly styled to blend in with traditional furnishing values, and it appears to be very well-built too. Twin terminals permit bi-wiring (or bi-amping), and a small rear panel port reflex-loads the enclosure. The main driver has a chunky cast metal frame — rare at this sort of price — and a small 100mm plastic cone, while the tweeter uses a 19mm soft fabric dome with a short horn flare.

The in-room far-field response shows that the Heylette cuts off quite sharply below 50Hz, but gives a pretty smooth and even response down to that point when mounted well clear of walls. There's a slight presence notch at around 3kHz, but that aside, the trend looks very well-judged and smoother than most.

SOUND QUALITY

It's amazing what a difference a small crossover change can make. What was previously a rather dull-sounding speaker is now, in Goldilocks' words, “just right”, with a balance that skillfully treads the fine line that divides ‘forward’ from ‘shut-in’.

Well-liked by the listening panel, with good consistency between two separate presentations,



○ Subtle revisions to the crossover result in a much improved loudspeaker.

there's no avoiding the fact that this is a small speaker with limited bass capabilities. However, the news further up the band is nearly all good. Voices are notably articulate and the overall sound has a lightness of touch — which is where small speakers often score over larger alternatives.

Box colorations are well under control, free-space siting allowing the Heylette to develop spacious and well-focused stereo images. Timing is on the button, and dynamic range is pretty good too — except when it comes to picking out bass detail. As one panellist put it: “A small box making a good attempt to be a grown-up.”

CONCLUSION

A classy little standmount in nearly every way, this tweaked variation on the Heylette theme not only

enjoys a significantly more open and engaging balance than its predecessor, it's also a lot more competitively priced. Accepting that deep bass grunt will never be on the agenda here, this model has a deftness and lightness of touch that is always inviting. Material value is high too, so a Best Buy rating seems appropriate. **PM**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£199

Attractive traditional-style near-miniature with classy main driver now has fine overall balance to match.

FIVE-YEAR GUARANTEE

Heybrook Hi-Fi, Audio Group International, Langage Science Park, Plymouth, Devon PL7 5HJ
(01752) 333800

THE LAB REPORT

First tested back in *HFC 170*, the basic characteristics of the Heylette remain largely unchanged, but subtle revisions can make all the difference. This particular sample offered a slight increase in sensitivity from 87.9dB to 88.7dB, while the response anomalies — in particular the broad depression in axial output from about 2-5kHz — were still present. However, changes to the crossover network have now ‘filled in’ this depression by about 1dB, so although the two-way design could still be better integrated around its 3.5kHz crossover region, it will certainly sound a little ‘livelier’ than before.

Distortion also increases to >1 per cent through this depressed

○ The Heylette just got better.

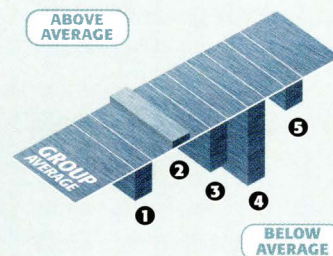


presence band and treble thanks to a higher-than-average second harmonic, but bass distortion is impressively low. The speaker's bass alignment remains identical, showing a clean port output at 60Hz, extending the system's bass response to 56Hz in the average room. Perhaps reflecting the slight increase in sensitivity and revisions to the crossover, however, the speaker load is just a little more current-hungry, with an average of 7 Ohms instead of the 8.2 Ohms recorded in *HFC 170*. With a dip to 3.7 Ohms at 275Hz, the Heylette warrants a 4 Ohm nominal rating but its limited 75W power handling indicates that a load-tolerant 30W amplifier will prove a better bet than a less tolerant 60-Watter.

HOW IT COMPARES

Midrange distortion is still a bit high, but the improved balance and sensitivity produce a more upbeat sound at a far lower cost. The speaker load is a bit more current-hungry than recorded in the previous *HFC* review.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	-20%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	5%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-30%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-55%
5 BASS EXTENSION	-15%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	88dB	88.7dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	6 Ohms	7.0 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	55Hz	56Hz

KEF Q15

KEF's Q-series with its radical co-axial drive units has been around for some time now. Indeed, according to my hard disk, *Choice* originally reviewed a Q60 way back in 1991 and, as is the way with new technologies, what was once an opportunity to charge a handsome premium for something new and different has gradually percolated down in price to the ranks of the eminently affordable.

This £200 Q15 sits a little further upmarket than KEF's budget Coda models, but only a little — in the context of this review group it seems competitively priced, with or without the Uni-Q drive unit. That said, build is perhaps a little

“The whole is much more than the sum of its parts here, and the overall evenhandedness and coherence is very persuasive.”

lightweight considering the quite generous box size; also, whereas some of the competition offers real wood at the same price point, the KEF's finish is mere vinyl.

In the early days of Uni-Q, some customers were apparently put off by the fact that there appeared to be only one drive unit. Salesmen would therefore have to patiently explain the purpose of the ultra-compact rare earth magnets used for the tweeter which allowed it to be mounted 'co-axially', or directly onto the polepiece in the middle

of the main driver cone. Such an axi-symmetric arrangement should make it that much easier to accomplish successful driver integration through the crossover region, although it's harder to predict what effect such an unfamiliar environment might have on the tweeter performance.

One factor which distinguishes the Q15 from most of the other speakers assembled for this group test is a relatively large 115mm diameter main driver cone, which is made from a translucent white plastic. The co-axial tweeter has a 19mm diaphragm; a large flared port provides some extra bass reinforcement, and twin bi-wire terminals are fitted.

Clear of walls, the Q15's in-room far-field responses looked decidedly bass-lean, even though ultimate bass extension is significantly better than the group average. Moving them closer to the wall helped to fill out the mid-bass, and while the midband and presence regions aren't the last word in smoothness, the overall balance is exceptionally good.

SOUND QUALITY

Despite one dissenter, the Q15 ended up on top of the heap after the first day's listening. As a check, I included it in the second day's listening too, only for it to go and repeat the same trick. That doesn't automatically mean that it's the best-sounding speaker in the group — unsighted listening tests cannot address all of the relevant issues — but it does strongly suggest that this speaker has a great deal going for it.



○ A popular contender with the panel, the KEF Q15 has a lot going for it.

One major reason is the overall balance and midband voicing, both of which are exceptionally well judged, coupled with the good sense of scale that comes from decent bass extension and good room alignment. The net result can be a little "soft around the edges", and a couple of panellists expressed reservations about the treble (or rather its lack of presence). But the whole is much more than the sum of its parts here, and the overall evenhandedness and coherence is very persuasive, even though the dynamic range and bass resolution are both a bit limited.

CONCLUSION

A fine all-round performer at a very realistic price, the Q15 combines good sensitivity with decent

bass extension and excellent mid-band voicing. The one reservation concerns an amplifier load which drops to a very low 2.5 Ohms at high frequencies. Some amplifiers won't even notice it but others might get into trouble, so some care must be taken to ensure the speaker's compatibility with the rest of the system.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £200

■ Beautifully balanced and voiced standmount, but a potentially tricky amplifier load at high frequencies.

■ FIVE-YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ KEF Audio, Tovil, Maidstone,

Kent ME15 6QP

☎ (01622) 672261

THE LAB REPORT

Whatever other advantages KEF's concentric or 'Uni-Q' driver might bring, the Q15 as a whole is very sensitive, making best use of a relatively currently-hungry 8.1 Ohm mean impedance to offer 90.7dB/1m. Taxing 'lows' of 3.5 Ohms @ 210Hz and



2.7 Ohms @ 8.7kHz with -34 to +53 degree phase swings through the bass and -40 to +62 degree swings from 780Hz-2.9kHz will not be appreciated by all amplifiers!

Otherwise, the Q15 has a head start over less sensitive speakers in achieving high sound levels without suffering undue distortion. Indeed, at 96dBA the Q15 keeps THD as low as 0.3 per cent through the bass, increasing to just 0.6 per cent through the crossover region — a fine result. The

○ Q15 keeps distortion at bay.

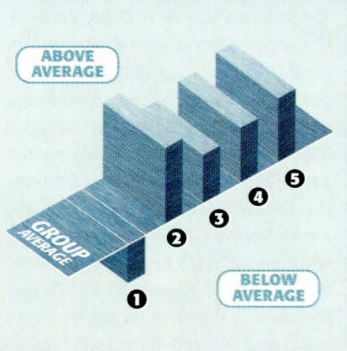
speaker's bass is slightly de-tuned with its broad, low-Q port providing maximum reinforcement at 60Hz even though the driver works down to a null of 40Hz. This may give the impression of a fuller mid-bass at the expense of any real low bass. With a box of this size, however, it's probably a sensible compromise.

The averaged third-octave measurements show a typically U-shaped axial response that 'fills out' as the speakers are toed inwards and the listening position extended to 2m or so. Listening on a level with the top of the Q15's cabinet also results in a very smooth-looking treble, but this will fall away as you move off-axis.

HOW IT COMPARES

High sensitivity is achieved while punishing the amplifier with a fairly taxing load. Also, do watch out for a loss in treble as you move off-axis. The slightly de-tuned bass may give an impression of fuller mid-bass at the expense of any real low bass.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	-25%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	55%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	35%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	40%
5 BASS EXTENSION	45%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	91dB	90.7dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	6 Ohms	8.1 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	50Hz	50Hz

MORDAUNT-SHORT MS812

We haven't had the opportunity to review a Mordaunt-Short loudspeaker for a couple of years now, and it may well be that we won't get the chance again in the future either. News has filtered through from parent plc TGI (which also includes Tannoy and Goodmans) that Mordaunt-Short is to be closed down in early 1999. And unless a buyer is found, this £200 812 might well prove the last in an often illustrious line that stretches back some 30 years.

Blame the fall-out from the world recession, and especially the slump in demand from Far Eastern markets. Mordaunt-Short has always been strong in exports, and ultimately was probably the

"It carries a measure of authority, and the speaker holds onto complex strands very well, delivering fine stereo with excellent depth and good detail retrieval."

'wrong size' operation to come through the current turmoils unscathed. Happily, the close-down is to be an orderly affair, and TGI fully intends to continue service and honour guarantees, so we decided to press ahead with the review on what looks like a very interesting, not to say idiosyncratic, new loudspeaker.

In a technical sense, Mordaunt-

Short has always trod its own path, and that's even more true of its new 800-series models, which are probably unique among mass-market hi-fi speakers in that they use elliptical rather than circular main drive units. This is strongly emphasised in equally unique and somewhat quirky styling, with an elliptical cherry-effect driver-mounting panel standing proud of the box front. A straw poll among our listeners suggests it won't win universal approval – on high stands with the grilles removed, the 812s do tend to resemble a pair of perching owls!

Besides the undoubted advantage of any USP (unique selling point), the case for an elliptical main driver is quite a strong one. In a classic two-way line-up, it accommodates the current fashion for ultra-slim loudspeakers without the need to accept a small cone area. Breakup modes are likely to be better distributed too, but I'm less convinced that the asymmetric sound distribution (in that the upper range radiation of the driver will spread out more laterally than vertically) is necessarily such a good thing.

Whatever, the main cone has minor and major diameters of 95mm and 150mm respectively, which makes it as large as any in this group. The tweeter uses a 25mm metal dome, and the 12 litre enclosure is a decent size, feels solidly built and is equipped with a rear port and bi-wire terminals.

Despite the manual's suggestion to the contrary, the in-room curves favour free-space siting. The broad midband looks very



Quirky styling and sound quality.

well ordered, but output falls quite sharply above 1kHz into a pronounced dip centred on 2.5kHz, followed by a strong treble recovery.

SOUND QUALITY

The panel gave the 812 a mixed reaction, presumably because the rather obvious balance anomalies upset some listeners more than others. There's no avoiding the depressed presence and exposed top, but behind that character this speaker has considerable coherence and transparency, and fine musical communication skills.

The bass could be cleaner and more precise, but it nevertheless carries a measure of authority. The 812 holds onto complex strands very well, delivering fine stereo with excellent depth and good detail retrieval. That said though, I did find the laid-back presence a bit tiresome during the longer hands-on sessions.

CONCLUSION

Both the styling and the sound quality have their quirks here, but if those elements are to taste, this speaker appears to offer good material value and has fine musical communication skills – and with a bit more weight and authority than its peers, too.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £200

Quirky styling and a very laid-back presence, but great musical integrity and solid value for money.

FIVE-YEAR GUARANTEE

Mordaunt-Short, Unit A1 Hazleton Industrial Park, Horndean, Hants PO8 9UJ
(01705) 498866

THE LAB REPORT

Mordaunt-Short's elliptical bass/mid unit offers an enhanced radiating area, but the averaged, third-octave trace shows a significant 4-5dB loss in output from 1.5kHz-3kHz. A narrowband analysis resolves this into a very uneven response with 'clumps' at 1kHz, 3.8kHz, 5.8kHz, 10kHz and 14kHz. Off axis, this suckout extends well into the presence region before recovering at around 10kHz or so to brighten the balance of this unusual speaker. Confirming these results, MS has suggested that this is linked to the 'lobing' caused by its simple first-order network and by the deliberate

Very low mid-bass distortion.



'voicing' of the speaker as whole.

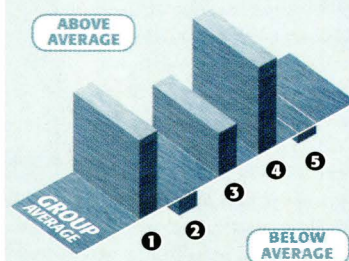
MS's elliptical cone may have its drawbacks, but distortion isn't one of them – this unit could achieve mid-bass THD as low as 0.1-0.2 per cent at 96dBA! Sensitivity is fairly high at 88.3dB but the speaker load is not particularly tricky with a minimum of 4.6 Ohms at 17kHz and a 20Hz-20kHz

mean of 12.2 Ohms. The bass alignment is spot-on with both port resonance and bass driver null occurring at 54Hz and extending the system response to 55Hz in-room. The port is clear of any spurious noises, but there is a sharp notch at 320Hz that corresponds to a blip in the cone's forward response. This is probably a cabinet resonance.

HOW IT COMPARES

Not as sensitive as MS would have us believe, but then the response is sufficiently 'rocky' that different figures can be plucked from across the spectrum! The elliptical cone may have some drawbacks, but distortion isn't one of them.

- | | |
|----------------------|------|
| 1 EASE OF DRIVE | 55% |
| 2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS | -10% |
| 3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS | 30% |
| 4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION | 60% |
| 5 BASS EXTENSION | -5% |



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	90dB	88.3dB
Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohms	12.2 Ohms
Estimated Bass Extension	55Hz	55Hz

TANNOY Revolution R1

Tannoy has enjoyed considerable commercial success in Britain and overseas with its Mercury series, three of which have established themselves right up near the top of the UK monthly sales charts. The company has now introduced a couple of niche models which utilise some existing Mercury components but add some extra performance tweaks to increase enthusiast appeal. It's a similar approach to that adopted by Marantz with its SE and KIS CD players and amplifiers, and it's surely no coincidence that Marantz is one of Tannoy's major distributors in the UK and around Europe.

One of these newbies, code-named the Mercury M2.5, is a

"In several respects the R1 is a class act. It looks good, is sharply priced and has an unusually smooth balance with fine tonal perspectives."

straight re-working of the existing M2. Arguably more interesting, though, is this £200 Revolution R1, which uses selected (tighter tolerated) Mercury drive units along with a special crossover in a miniature (6.5 litre) real wood enclosure.

Soberly styled with an extra thick and slightly chamfered front baffle, the enclosure is fashionably slim and finished in an attractive cherry wood veneer. The tweeter is flush-mounted, allowing the main driver's plastic frame to

overlap and bring the acoustic centres closer together. A total weight of 4.8kg is evidence of the solid build. The main driver's paper cone spans 100mm in diameter, while the tweeter has a 25mm soft plastic dome.

One particular tweak (which Tannoy goes to some lengths to explain) is the use of an auto-transformer in place of a resistor in order to match the tweeter sensitivity to the main driver. There isn't the space to go into such subtleties here, but an auto-choke is unquestionably the superior solution, and one that's widely used in professional monitoring loudspeakers. Its appearance on a budget 'mini monitor' then is much to Tannoy's credit.

The R1 shows surprisingly deep bass extension for such a tiny loudspeaker, but also a slight lack of ultimate treble extension. On our in-room far-field responses, the bass alignment looks sufficiently dry to suggest that some close-to-wall reinforcement will be beneficial. However, that has the less welcome side effect of adding some unevenness through the presence region. Listening tests found that a 1-2ft spacing from the wall gave best overall results.

SOUND QUALITY

The panel was rather underwhelmed by the R1's sonic performance. Despite appreciating the speaker's smooth evenhandedness: "Nice'n'clean; good space. Everything's there in its place [without exaggeration]"; the other side of the coin was: "Quite nice in a small and inoffensive way.



Times OK but bass lacks authority, control and slam."

The R1 proved very sensitive to set-up. Careful experiment with siting, and a change from spike to Blu-tack stand-coupling, all brought improvements to the sweetness, evenhandedness and freedom from coloration. But the R1 never managed to transcend an essential smallness, and seemed reluctant to bring a proper impression of dynamic drama and life to the party.

CONCLUSION

In several respects the R1 is undoubtedly a class act. It looks good, is sharply priced and has an unusually smooth balance with fine tonal perspectives, provided that plenty of care is taken over positioning and mounting. However, the Revolution regrettably lives up to its name in one respect. A traditional Tannoy virtue has long been the righteous repro-

duction of dynamics, and here the R1 all too politely declines. Delightfully clean and more transparent than most, some will appreciate these undoubted strengths, but it seems that somewhere along the way, someone forgot to teach it how to rock'n'roll.

duation of dynamics, and here the R1 all too politely declines. Delightfully clean and more transparent than most, some will appreciate these undoubted strengths, but it seems that somewhere along the way, someone forgot to teach it how to rock'n'roll.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £200

Pretty little mini-monitor is smooth, well mannered, and polite to a fault, with some lack of dynamic expression and life.

FIVE-YEAR GUARANTEE

Tannoy Ltd, Rosehall Industrial Estate, Coatbridge, Strathclyde ML5 4TF
(01236) 420199

THE LAB REPORT

A narrowband analysis reveals a series of sharp discontinuities from 3-7kHz but, with third-octave averaging, from 1kHz-16kHz this speaker's response seems remarkably flat and even. The overall trend, however, is gently down-turned with the upper bass and midrange showing greater emphasis. Clearly, this ties in with a panellist's suggestion that the Tannoy R1 sounds "classy but dull". Moreover, this smooth-looking treble falls away quite rapidly beyond 3kHz as the listener moves off the speaker's horizontal axis, so I would suggest that you never toe-inward the R1 unless your system is unbearably bright!

The speaker isn't hugely sensitive at



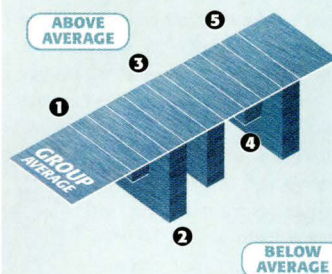
86.6dB/2.83V/1m, but it's still capable of maintaining a healthy 96dBA output while keeping distortion below 1 per cent. Indeed, this is close enough to Tannoy's own 87dB specification, but sensible 102dBA maximum SPLs will still place it at the bottom of this five-strong group

in the loudness stakes. Furthermore, although the R1 is ostensibly reflex-loaded by a rear-firing port, the foam plug is sufficiently restrictive to ensure the speaker behaves more like a 'leaky' sealed box. Nevertheless, even the plug cannot disguise a strong, spurious resonance at 870Hz. The projected, in-room bass extension of 60Hz is on a par with the smaller cabinets in this 11-way survey.

HOW IT COMPARES

With a 4dB disadvantage in sensitivity over the KEF and a treble-shy balance, Tannoy's speaker is the most sober-sounding of the group. "Classy but dull", said one panellist; the Tannoy wouldn't benefit from toeing in except with bright systems.

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-5%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-50%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-40%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-10%
5	BASS EXTENSION	-50%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	87dB	86.6dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohms	8.5 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	55Hz	60Hz

WHARFEDALE Diamond 7.2 Anniversary

Wharfedale's Diamond first appeared way back in the early '80s, and since then a number of new Diamond variations have appeared on a fairly regular basis.

The most recent offering to come under *Choice* scrutiny was a £140 version dubbed the 7.2, which was reviewed some 18 months ago in *HFC* 169. Now it's back again, this time dressed in real wood finery to celebrate its 16th anniversary, and carrying a £200 price-tag. The wood is indeed real and feels authentic enough, although I wouldn't describe it as the prettiest example of its type; a visible glue joint along the top edge of one of the pair was an unfortunate oversight.

“This 7.2 is quite a bit larger than the original Diamond and has a chunky, purposeful feel thanks to 4.5kg of weight, while its convex-moulded front and back lend it a fashionably ‘soft’ appearance.”

The other sample emitted a slight rattle when turned upside down – evidence of something left loose inside the box – and another reason why the Anniversary loses brownie points for build quality.

Whether the move from vinyl to real wood offers any sonic advantages here is debatable. Normally

one would expect to see a slight improvement from such a change, but one of the key sales features of the 7.2 was that the mineral-loaded plastic mouldings used for the front and back panels were bolted to each other, and deliberately slightly decoupled from the box wrap. Ergo, the change in enclosure materials should presumably have little impact. Whether decoupling the box wrap from the front baffle is a good idea per se is rather more questionable. It would seem to negate at least one of the reasons for using a proper stand, although perhaps it might be advantageous with more casual bookshelf placement.

This 7.2 is quite a bit larger than the original Diamond and has a chunky, purposeful feel thanks to 4.5kg of weight, while a convex-moulded front and back lend it a fashionably ‘soft’ appearance. The grille treatment is very neat and minimalist, though its asymmetry does look a little strange. The rear panel has a 40mm diameter port with flared ends and gilt twin terminals for bi-wire/-amp connection. The main driver sports a 90mm mineral-loaded plastic cone with a protuberant dust dome, while the tweeter has a 25mm soft fabric dome.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the Diamond tradition, the in-room far-field responses definitely indicate that this 7.2 variation is likely to give its best overall balance if kept clear of walls. Close to a wall, the midbass is a little too strong, and the rather forward upper midband tends to be even more exposed.



SOUND QUALITY

I'd already carried out much of the work on this Diamond 7.2 Anniversary when it suddenly dawned on me that it's actually a new variation on an already reviewed theme. It was therefore quite gratifying to discover how closely the new findings mirrored those of the original.

One panellist waxed enthusiastic about the Anniversary's bass dynamics and control, and the musical coherence of the whole experience, albeit acknowledging that the treble sounded a little cold and hard. Others were less impressed, however. While the general consensus remained reasonably positive about its essentially lively and listenable nature with good basic timing, there was also criticism that it sounded a bit “untidy around the edges”, and that the midband could have been cleaner.

○ A lively speaker that brims with character, if at the expense of panache.

CONCLUSION

A set of new clothes and a higher price-tag do little to change the verdict. The 7.2 is lively and entertaining but also a little crude sonically, its good communication skills somewhat marred by a lack of smoothness in presentation.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £199.95

Li ely and exuberant, but a bit untidy with it; can sound a bit cold and hard.

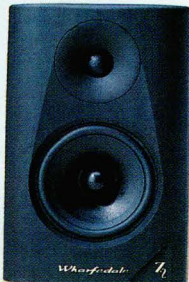
■ FIVE-YEAR GUARANTEE

☒ Wharfedale, IAG House, Sovereign Court, Ermine Bus Pk, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6WA
☎ (01480) 431737

THE LAB REPORT

Depending on how you care to view the data, the Diamond's slightly undulating axial response either shows an emphasis from 400Hz-1kHz or a mild depression from 1-4kHz, the former becoming more obvious as you move off the horizontal listening axis. A narrowband analysis also shows a 15-16kHz peak, but followed by a sharp 14dB cancellation notch that looks far worse than it'll ever sound.

The speaker just about meets its 89dB rated sensitivity (well, 88.7dB to be precise) while just holding distortion to around 1 per cent under dynamic conditions up to 96dB. Interestingly, the Diamond's midband distortion contains a very extended



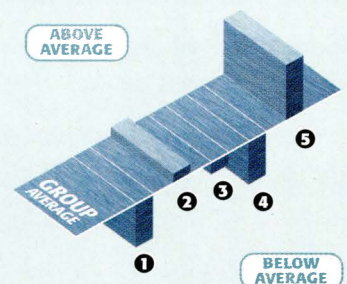
spread of harmonics which will undoubtedly contribute to its inherent 'colour'. Perhaps this is why it was described as “congested” by Paul's panel. The load is tough, dipping to 3.6 Ohms at 250Hz and averaging out at just 6.6 Ohms across the spectrum. Weedy amplifiers should stay in their boxes.

At lower frequencies, Wharfedale's bass alignment is well judged: the bass roll-off doesn't exhibit any 'peakiness', while the port resonance, impedance minimum and driver null all coincide at 53Hz. You can expect an in-room bass extension close to 50Hz, which is impressive considering the size of its enclosure.

HOW IT COMPARES

The toughest load of all five speakers there with an unusual spread of distortion through the midband. Bass alignment is well judged, with no evidence of any 'peakiness' in bass roll-off that would otherwise compromise its transient performance.

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-30%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	5%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-5%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-30%
5	BASS EXTENSION	40%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	88.7dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohms	6.6 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	50Hz	50Hz

Billy Vee

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CHARIO Hiper 1000

Chario is a well established Italian speaker company which has been in the business since 1975, and active on the international stage for more than a decade, though it has only recently made its debut in Britain, courtesy of distributor The Musical Design Company (MDC). *Choice* has reviewed a couple of Charios over the past two years, including a £250 Syntar 100 which shows quite close similarities to the neat little £300 Hiper 1000.

Italy is known for style, and Chario delivers it in abundance. When the Hiper 1000 arrived, I took a careful look and decided the surface was probably vinyl, if only because the figuring looked a bit too good to be true at £300. I rang to check, and was informed that it was a real Italian walnut veneer, which puts me in my place, and the Hiper 1000 up on a pedestal for a classy finish at an affordable price. It's not just the box that looks good. The drivers are nicely flush-mounted into the front baffle, and the twin bi-wire/amp terminals are mounted on an elegant brass panel inset into the rear.

Among several features shared with the Syntar 100, the Hiper 1000's most idiosyncratic must be the decision to mount the reflex loading port in the base of the enclosure, and fit little rubber feet so that the base is kept a pre-scribed 18mm above the mounting platform (in order to damp the port output somewhat, I understand). The tricky bit is that this is a relatively deep loudspeaker, in

which direction the feet are 230mm apart, which is rather more than most stand top plates can easily accommodate. However, the rubber feet have 6mm metal threads, and these could be substituted for upward facing stand spikes. Which still leaves the issue of whether rubber feet are the right way to support a loudspeaker. British practice favours spikes or Blu-tack, to provide more rigid coupling to stand and floor, but I daresay a measure of rubber decoupling might be beneficial if the speaker is placed on an ordinary shelf.

The main driver has a cast frame, large magnet and a small 90mm cone, made from a delib-

“The drivers are nicely flush-mounted into the front baffle, and the twin bi-wire/amp terminals are mounted on an elegant brass panel inset into the rear.”

erately coarse paper pulp with extra damping compound applied, while the tweeter has a 25mm soft fabric dome. The whole thing feels reassuringly solid, turning the scales to a hefty 7.5kg. The thick-frame grille looks better avoided.

The far-field in-room responses indicate that this Chario ought really to be kept well clear of walls for fear of generating excessive midbass output. In free space it's notably well balanced and rela-



tively smooth too. And although output does fall slightly as frequency rises, the downtilt is much gentler than average.

SOUND QUALITY

The listening panel reacted quite positively to the Hiper 1000, enjoying its sweet, easy-going, open and well balanced performance. The sound is basically neutral, albeit with some boxy and chesty colorations, and while the upper part of the spectrum sounds refreshingly open, there's also a slight tendency towards spitchiness on speech.

The bass is perhaps the least convincing part. It doesn't go particularly deep, and doesn't have much in the way of grip or authority either, one panellist complaining of a 'grumbly' character, while another described it as 'soft and amorphous'.

Yes, that wood is real Italian walnut.

CONCLUSION

An attractive looking speaker with an open and mellifluous sound, the Hiper 1000 has the most beautiful cabinetwork I've seen for £300, and that would seem to justify Recommendation. **PM**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £299.99

Classy-looking standmount has a sweet, easy-going sound with fine midband voicing.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

Musical Design Company, PO Box 13, London E18 1EG
(01992) 573030

THE LAB REPORT

What Chariodescribes as 'vented NRS' bass loading amounts to a downward-firing port, raised some 18mm by the speaker's integral rubber feet. This is a high-Q affair which, at 56Hz, is tuned fractionally above the 53Hz null of the bass driver but corresponds to the estimated in-room bass extension for this small enclosure. There are some high-order pipe resonances escaping this port which coincide with a notch on the speaker's forward response at 680Hz – the tail-end of what could be a lumpy-looking bass if the Hiper 1000 were packed into a bookshelf location.

The speaker's axial response shows a broadly reinforced midrange (700Hz-2.3kHz) which falls away through the presence



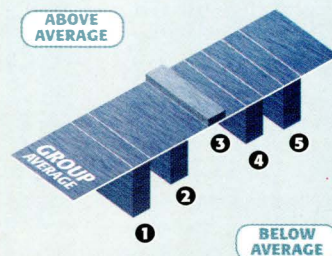
band (where distortion also increases >1 per cent) before climbing beyond 8kHz to deliver a 'fizzy' treble. The latter peaks some +6dB above the mean midband level at 14-18kHz but is tamed if the box is toed-in by 30 degrees or so. Chario rates the speaker as a nominal 4 Ohm load and, indeed, there are some tough dips below 8 Ohms from 40Hz-1.8kHz which must be tackled along with an unusual set of phase angles (from +59 degrees to -49 degrees). A broad minimum of 3.7 Ohms occurs around 250Hz. Nevertheless, despite being fairly current-hungry, the final 86.4dB sensitivity is not desperately high for all the amplifier's effort! **PM**

Not exactly amp-friendly.

HOW IT COMPARES

With only moderate sensitivity and a current-hungry load, the Hiper 1000 will not give all budget amplifiers an easy ride. High treble peaks at some +6dB above the mean midband level at 14-18kHz but can be tamed by toeing-in the speakers by 30 degrees.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	-35%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-25%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	5%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-25%
5 BASS EXTENSION	-30%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	87dB	86.4dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	4 Ohms	7.4 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	59Hz	56Hz

LINN Kan

Linn's first Kan appeared way back in 1980, and was actually based on the same veneered birch-ply enclosure used by the highly respected BBC LS3/5A design. Linn had its own ideas about crossover networks, and subsequently drive units, so the lookalike was anything but a soundalike. The sonic contrast couldn't have been greater, which is maybe why the Kan too developed a loyal cult following.

The true successor to the original Kan is Linn's £550 real-wood-veneered Tukan (LS3/5As now cost around £700), but the initial Kan intention was always to provide an entry-level speaker, which the Tukan is not. Hence this £295 revival of the original Kan name and concept, which is brought up to date with a vinyl finish, carbon fibre cone, ceramic tweeter and offshore (Taiwan) manufacture.

Like its predecessor, the new Kan feels immensely solidly built, and if it's by no means the heaviest in our test group, it is just about the smallest. In fact the enclosure itself is exactly the same size as the original Kan (and 3/5A), only instead of a front baffle which is inset by a grille's thickness, the new Kan's baffle stands proud by a full 20mm, so the actual enclosed volume is larger.

Perhaps the biggest surprise was discovering a small port set into the bottom corner of the rear panel. The original Kan's sealed-box alignment made a good wall-mount room-match, but its extra subsonic stability was more relevant to the vinyl era than to today's CD dominated scene.

Adding a port does aid overall efficiency, and allows the new Kan to be used a little further out from the wall than its predecessor, improving midband coloration in consequence. The bass driver uses carbon fibre composite for both 92mm cone and dust dome, while the 19mm tweeter has a ceramic dome.

You can simply bung the Kan up on a shelf and forget about it, but the in-room responses do suggest that some experiment with proper stands and placement will pay worthwhile dividends. Moving them about a foot from the wall helped to smooth out the midrange while still providing

"You can simply bung the Kan up on a shelf and forget about it, but the in-room responses do suggest that some experiment with proper stands and placement will pay dividends."

ample bass output down to 50Hz. It's still not the smoothest mid-band around, retaining a measure of classic Kan forwardness, but the treble looks very well judged.

SOUND QUALITY

The Kans produced a strong showing in the formal listening tests, albeit with one dissenter, and attracted praise for the good impression of scale and weight. The sound is a little pinched, nasal



◉ The revival of the Kan includes vinyl finish and carbon-fibre cone.

and shut in, but it's also expressive, with good dynamic range and a degree of genuine bass drive which is rare in something so small and relatively inexpensive.

Its strongest feature is probably the way the bass and box manage to avoid cluttering everything else up. Timing is predictably good too, making it that much easier to pick up on all the musical activity right across the band. The midband might not be the sweetest or most gracious sounding cosmetically, but treble is clean and clear, if a little over-cautiously balanced.

I have a friend who has been using the original Kan since 1981, so I couldn't resist introducing him to this new version. Although we both preferred the more open midband of the originals, the new Kan does retain much of the spirit and charm of its ancestor.

CONCLUSION

The fact that the Kan costs £300 and has only a vinyl finish might mitigate against it on perceived value for money grounds, but the resources seem instead to have gone into solid engineering. Its bass drive and dynamic range is quite exceptional, and the overall communication skills are high enough to merit Recommendation. **PMe**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £650

Great bass discrimination from something so small, ensuring a very informative, if slightly shut in experience.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

☒ Linn Products, Floors Rd, Waterfoot, Eaglesham, Glasgow G76 0EP

☎ (0141) 307 7777

THE LAB REPORT

Linn provides detailed information concerning the ideal positioning of its V (Video) Kans, particularly in respect of near-wall mounting for optimum bass loading. Nevertheless, it's the gently downtilted balance of the speaker that most users will have to wrestle with, suggesting that the boxes be toed-in as little



as possible. Despite this general 'dimness', a narrowband analysis of the speaker shows the ceramic treble dome and woven bass/mid unit are well integrated even though distortion is much lower (typically 0.1 per cent) once the former takes over.

The midrange, by contrast, incurs around one per cent or more of third har-

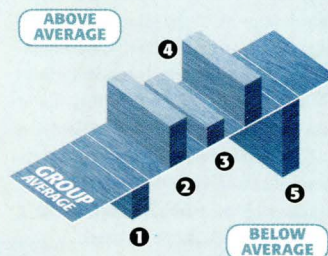
monic distortion at the reference 96dB level – this is the sort of 'character' forming distortion seen with other popular speakers (Epos springs to mind), for example. The average 8.2 Ohm load is reasonably tough but you do get a

decent enough 87.7dB sensitivity bearing in mind the compactness of the enclosure. Neither is the bass loading excessive: the port is tuned sharply to 55Hz while the bass driver alignment is not as 'peaky' as with other small box designs. All things considered, the Kan looks to be a very solidly, and sensibly, engineered speaker. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

The smallest box and yet the loudest speaker in this group with better bass extension than Linn would suggest. Many users will have to contend with the gently downtilted balance of the speaker as a whole, suggesting that they be toed-in as little as possible.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	-20%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	30%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	15%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	30%
5 BASS EXTENSION	-50%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	88dB	87.7dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	4 Ohms	8.2 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	70Hz	58Hz

MONITOR AUDIO Silver 3

Monitor Audio has gone through some major changes over the past year or so, bringing in a new management team, and merging with Keswick Audio so that Dean Hartley now heads up the design side. The company has also signed up to have its UK distribution handled by LKO Distribution, a subsidiary of the Sevenoaks Hi-Fi retail chain, and while that doesn't mean that Monitor Audio will only be available through Sevenoaks outlets, the new Silver Series is specifically intended for sale through Sevenoaks.

This £300 Silver Three is a very attractive looking loudspeaker,

“Images are well formed, with fine focus, while boxiness is notable for its absence, and the sound is undoubtedly clean and clear, and can pack a surprising punch.”

confirming Monitor Audio's reputation for producing some of the best looking cabinets in the business. Reflecting its relatively modest prices, the Silver Series doesn't have the last word in luxury finish, such as multi-layer high gloss lacquer, but does use a nicely figured real cherry wood finish (on our samples) with an attractively bevelled front panel edge. The drivers and trim are neatly rebated, forming a scalloped shape cunningly

disguises the grille mounting holes. The latter's rather thick frame suggest it is better left unused.

The Silver bit clearly comes from the finish of the main driver's metal cone, and the permanent perforated protector over the gilt tweeter dome. There's a dash of gilt too on the main driver's protuberant dust dome (which is actually made of plastic), and there's no denying all these shiny bits confer a measure of interest and class to the cosmetics.

The main driver has a plastic frame, a generous shielded magnet, and a small (90mm) metal cone, while the tweeter has a 25mm metal dome. The front has twin ports to reflex-load the enclosure, while the rear carries twin terminals for bi-wiring/-amping.

The far-field in-room responses show a significant lack of bass output when positioned clear of walls, but although close-to-wall siting provides worthwhile 50-100Hz reinforcement, it also tends to exaggerate a tendency to upper-mid forwardness, and leave the lower midband looking decidedly lean. The presence band is a little lacking too.

SOUND QUALITY

The panel had little good to say about the Silver 3, and even the most positive reaction was cluttered with caveats, in obvious reaction to the balance anomalies. One the plus side, the midband is very well projected and quite expressive, but the bass has a tendency to thump, and the treble is

rather soft and slightly shut in.

The lack of warmth and richness is the biggest drawback, which not only makes for a character on the cold and clinical side of neutral, but also tends to highlight a degree of cuppy and nasal coloration on voices. Balance problems aside, there's actually some potential here. Images are well formed, with fine focus, while boxiness is notable for its absence, and the sound is undoubtedly clean and clear, and can pack a surprising punch on the right material.

CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding its indisputably pretty appearance, with or without the grille in place, the Silver Three is not a particularly successful design. Irrespective of the chosen siting it suffers from a rather over-



◉ The Silver 3 uses real cherry wood.

projected upper midband, with attendant 'hard' and 'cuppy' colorations, and although wall reinforcement can give the bottom end a helping hand, the upper bass and lower mid are decidedly lean, so the sound balance as a whole is always lacking in warmth and richness, while tending to over-emphasise detail. **PMe**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £299.95

Classy looking metal-cone standmount is sharply priced but the sound is rather cold and clinical, if detailed.

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THE LAB REPORT

In previous issues we've looked at MA speakers that were bright and other that were treble-shy. This Silver 3 falls in the former category with both narrowband and averaged, third-octave responses showing a broad treble hump – some 3-4dB above the mean midband level – at 10kHz. By contrast, the lower octaves look pretty well-integrated and distortion favourable at 0.5-0.7 per cent through the midrange, though a degree of unevenness creeps in once the speakers are toed off-axis.

Neither, at 86.8dB/2.83V/1m, will the Silver 3's readily raise the roof but at least the impedance trend with its moderate 10.5

◉ Bright in name and nature.

Ohm average is not too current hungry. In common with past MA speakers, there is an additional impedance and phase swing through 2.5-5.7kHz but maximum angles no greater than +38/-26 degrees are manageable. This 'oddy' is apparently caused by the metal-coned bass/mid driver 'ringing' through the 3.5kHz crossover region and may be linked to some of the panel's less complimentary remarks.

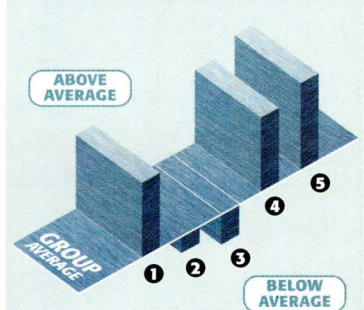
The Silver 3's bass roll-off is closer to second/third order than a 'peaky' fourth-order alignment and provides a fairly smooth-looking bass register. The dual reflex ports offer maximum reinforcement at 60Hz, dragging the system response down to 45Hz in-room. **PMI**



HOW IT COMPARES

An easy load, offering moderate sensitivity and low harmonic distortion but the metal-coned bass/mid driver is a departure from the norm. The Silver 3's readily raise the roof but at least the impedance trend is not too current hungry.

- | | |
|----------------------|------|
| 1 EASE OF DRIVE | 50% |
| 2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS | -10% |
| 3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS | -20% |
| 4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION | 40% |
| 5 BASS EXTENSION | 60% |



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	87dB	86.8dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohms	10.5 Ohms
■ Estimated Bass Extension	50Hz	45Hz

SPEAKERS

CONCLUSIONS

THE BEST IN THE TEST



1 HEYBROOK Heylette B

Considerably cheaper now, and tweaked to sound less shut-in too, the revised Heylette has a deftness and lightness of touch that is always inviting.



2 MISSION 771

Although bass weight and drive are not its forte, in every other respect this is a superbly judged design, with the bonus of real-wood veneer at a surprisingly affordable price.



3 ACOUSTIC ENERGY Aegis One

With a metal cone main driver and a good size box, you certainly get a lot of interesting loudspeaker for the money. The Aegis One also has an easy neutrality that demands respect and recognition.



4 CHARIO Hiper 1000

It might not set any new sonic standards for the price, but it has quite the most beautiful cabinetwork I've seen for £300, alongside an open and mellifluous sound.



5 KEF Q15

The KEFs put in a stonking performance in the listening tests, with decent bass extension, excellent voicing and good sensitivity. However, the load might upset some cheaper amplifiers.



6 LINN Kan

Pricey for a vinyl box, but tough build quality and classy drivers deliver exceptional bass drive and dynamic range. Could sound sweeter, but has high overall communication skills.



7 TDL Nucleus 2

This budget baby doesn't give a lot away to its more expensive competitors. The actual voicing and balancing is exceptionally well judged, and the saving could be put towards the cost of stands.



The trouble with a group test of under-£300 loudspeakers is that, by and large, the value for money ratings are almost bound to be high. The speakers are inherently simple and quite similar, so it's quite hard to get the recipe seriously wrong. It's easy enough to hear the differences between the models, but much harder to state unequivocally that one is right and another wrong.

Because the speaker sits right at the end of the hi-fi chain, it's very much slave to the rest of the system, and a different system could well change the preference pecking order. The listening room and the tastes of the individuals therein are just as difficult to pin down, and are just as influential in the end result.

I could have happily recommended 10 of our 12 test candidates, so whittling it down to the final seven involved plenty of angst. We try to pick out the most likely contenders, but the lack of a Recommended flag shouldn't disqualify a particular model from serious consideration. It may be merely that the model concerned is rather further from the norm than the majority.

If you want masses of bass on a budget, then check out the Eltax Liberty 3+ as it could be just what you're looking for. If you've had enough of the in-ya-face, way too up-front and compressed mix-downs of today's chart material, the Mordaunt-Short MS812's laid-back presence might be just the

S P E A K E R C O M P A R I S O N T A B L E

MAKE	ACOUSTIC ENERGY	CHARIO	ELTAX	HEYBROOK	KEF	LINN
MODEL	AEGIS ONE	HIPER 1000	LIBERTY 3+	HEYLETTE B	Q15	KAN
PRICE	£149.95	£299.99	£149.00	£199.00	£199.99	£295.00
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	3 yrs	5 yrs	1 yr	5 yrs	5 yrs	2/5 yrs
SIZE (WxDxD)	19x36.5x24cm	18x35x28cm	20.5x38x34cm	19.5x30x22cm	20.5x31x27cm	19x31x19cm
WEIGHT	6.1kg	7.5kg	7.3kg	4.4kg	5kg	4.7kg
RECOMMENDED PLACEMENT	well clear of walls	well clear of walls	well clear of walls	clear of walls	close to wall	about 1ft from wall
ACTUAL SENSITIVITY @ 1M/2.83V	87.5dB	86.4dB	86.9dB	88.7dB	90.7dB	87.7dB
ACTUAL IMPEDANCE (MEAN)	12.2 Ohms	74 Ohms	11.4 Ohms	7.0 Ohms	8.1 Ohms	8.2 Ohms
ACTUAL BASS EXTENSION (-6DB)	52Hz	56Hz	41Hz	56Hz	50Hz	58Hz

ticket. For the smaller room and more refined sensibilities, Tannoy's Revolution R1 could stand as the perfect solution.

Loudspeakers are usually the most visible part of a hi-fi system, and appearance is a key factor for success. Indeed, in the real world I suspect it has rather more influence over purchase decisions than sound quality. Evaluating the styling and presentation poses just as big a headache as the sound. Just how much is a real-wood finish worth over the same size enclosure finished in vinyl?

Take the contrast between the TDL Nucleus 2 and the Heybrook Heylette B – same size box to within a gnat's, and very similar tweeter and port tuning, too. The Heybrook costs half as much again as the TDL, but it does sound significantly better, presumably because of its cast frame main driver and real-wood cabinetwork. And of course the woodwork looks better too. Is all this worth the £70 premium? I've given them both flags, but only you can make that decision.

All these speakers will score high on appearance, if only because they're all relatively small, and smallness wins prizes in the eyes of British householders. The often ignored question is whether, in truth, they might be a bit too small.

These miniatures have successfully dominated British hi-fi speaker sales for the past decade or two, but are they still up to the job? We tend to forget that the quality of our hi-fi systems steadily improves over time (regardless of what the anachrophiles might say), and the loudspeaker is the window onto the rest of the hi-fi system. A smallish window might have sufficed in the '80s, but perhaps now it's time to move up to something larger.

BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDATIONS



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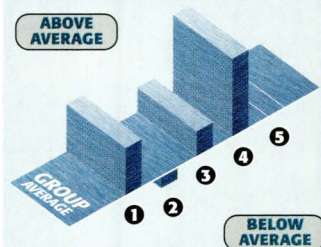
Our Recommended and Best Buy swing-tags are a great way to begin your hi-fi shopping list. However, at *Hi-Fi Choice* we believe firmly that only individual listening can decide which hi-fi gear to buy. There is only one golden rule of buying hi-fi: hear it for yourself. And for this you need the services of a good local hi-fi dealer. (See page 132 for the *HFC* dealer guide to find your nearest hi-fi specialist.) If you are upgrading an existing system, you must hear any

proposed new component with gear you use already. Either take your kit to the dealer, or arrange a home trial which most decent retailers will organise. Listen for as long as possible (a weekend is ideal) because initial impressions can be misleading. Hi-fi you find exciting and zingy 'on the shelf' may well sound unbearably bright in time. If you find dealers you can trust, rely on their recommendations, even if they're not totally in line with ours. Hi-fi is part science, part art!

UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPH MEASUREMENTS

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

THE BAR-GRAPHS



1 EASE OF DRIVE: This is derived from the reactive and resistive components of the speaker load, indicating how tricky it is for the amp to drive.

2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS: Speaker sensitivity is measured at 1m with a 2.83V input across third-octave bands 17-29, then weighted according to the human loudness contour to indicate how 'loud' one speaker will sound relative to another.

3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS: This takes into account the speaker's sensitivity, distortion, the maximum useable amplifier power and the effects of placement in an 'average room' to gauge the maximum practical Sound Pressure Level.

4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION: This test momentarily raises the output to 96dBa with dynamic signals through bass, midrange and treble. This allows us to more realistically assess distortion.

5 BASS EXTENSION: This gives an indication of the likely bass extension in an 'average' room, according to the maker's suggestions for positioning.

RIVAL BUYS

REGA KYTE £198
Longstanding and highly respected wall-mount miniature. Lacks bass drive but possesses magical up-front mid-band detail.

B&W DM602 £300
Classic large standmount with classy ingredients at a realistic price. Admittedly not the smoothest balance around, but invigorating dynamics more than compensate.

JPW ML510 £130
Fine all-round material value and a beautifully engineered balance, with an open and invigorating sound that might be too up-front for some tastes.



KEF Coda 7 (above) £129
Topping the best-seller charts for ages is the best recommendation of all for this cleverly conceived and constructed 'miniature plus'.

TANNOY Mercury M2 £140
Put Tannoy back at the top of the sales charts by cunningly offering a slightly bigger and more capable speaker to compete head-on with the miniatures.

ROYD Minstrel £275
This super-compact floorstander makes an interesting alternative to the standmounts, with a crisp, clean and communicative sound.

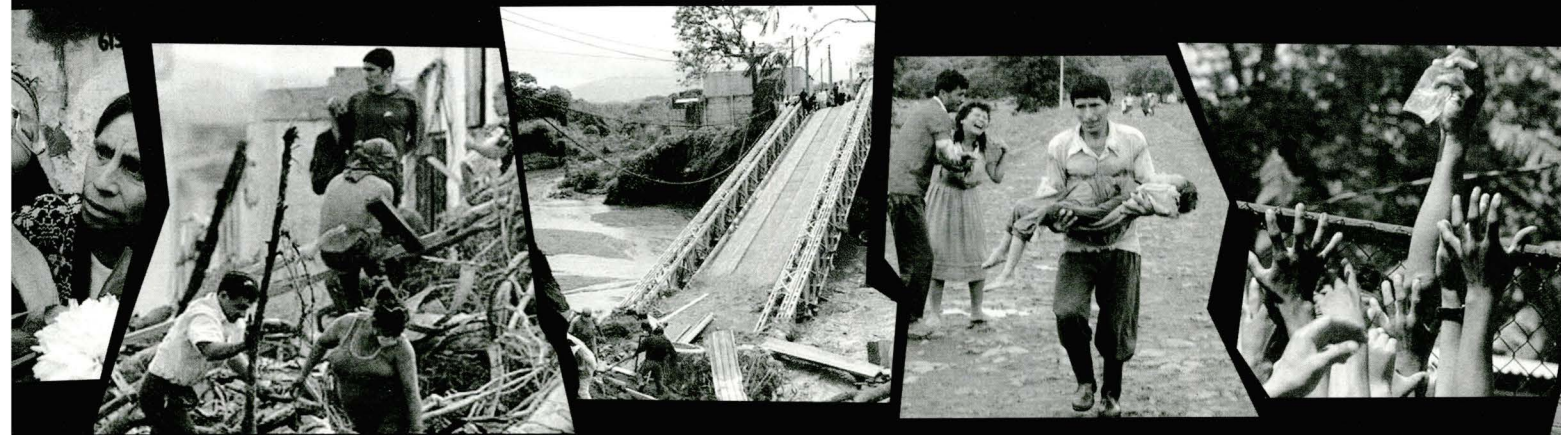
ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE200 £250
A striking contrast to the Aegis One, the 200 has a punchy, in-er-face delivery and is winning friends as a studio nearfield monitor.

SPEAKER COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE MODEL	MISSION 771	MONITOR AUDIO SILVER 3	MORDAUNT-SHORT MS812	TANNOY R1	TDL NUCLEUS 2	WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 7.2
PRICE	£169.90	£299.95	£200.00	£200.00	£129.95	£199.95
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	1 yr	3 yrs	5 yrs	5 yrs	Lifetime	5 yrs
SIZE (WxHxD)	17x31x22cm	20x35x 21	20.5x42x25cm	17x30x22cm	20x29x22cm	19x29.5x24cm
WEIGHT	3.8kg	5.9kg	6.8kg	4.8kg	4.3kg	4.5kg
RECOMMENDED PLACEMENT	quite close to wall	about 1ft from wall	clear of walls	1-2ft from wall	1-2ft from wall	1-2ft from wall
ACTUAL SENSITIVITY @ 1M/2.83V	87.2dB	86.8dB	88.3dB	86.6dB	89.0dB	88.7dB
ACTUAL IMPEDANCE (MEAN)	10.4 Ohms	10.5 Ohms	12.2 Ohms	8.5 Ohms	8.7 Ohms	6.6 Ohms
ACTUAL BASS EXTENSION (-6DB)	60Hz	45Hz	55Hz	60Hz	55Hz	50Hz



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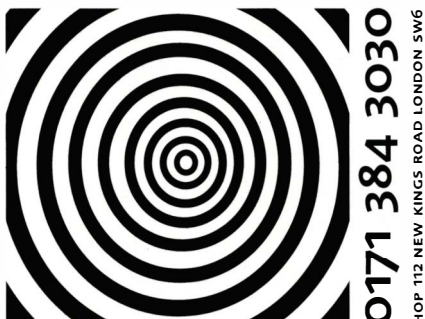
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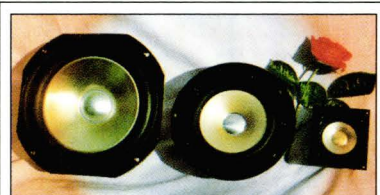
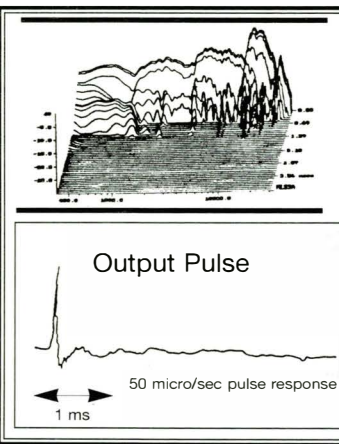
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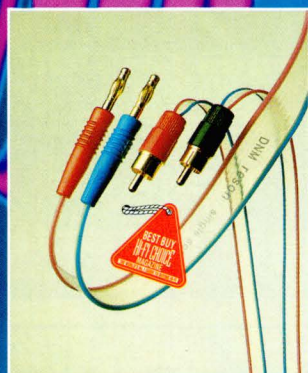
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		ORACLE Premier M811 Table with psu	£1495

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OVERSEAS



Class 'A' symmetrical amplifiers
HPA2: Headphone Amplifier for high Impedance Headphones.
Best Buy HI-FI CHOICE, England, December 1997
Especially recommended stereoplay, Germany, etc.

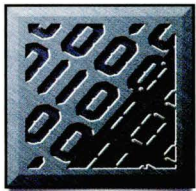
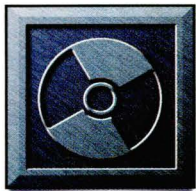
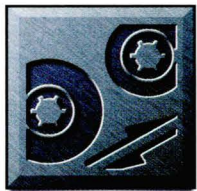
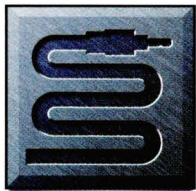
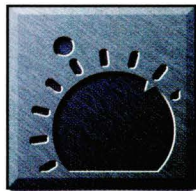
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Classified

READER CLASSIFIED



- Antiference Five Element FM roof aerial with motorised rotator – move forces sale. £75. (0121) 422 2308.
- Arcam Alpha 8 CD player £300. Arcam Alpha 8/8P combo £375. Mint cond, can be boxed. Warranties. Cumbria (01900) 606650.
- Audioquest speaker cable, type 4. Biwire, 2 x 6m lengths. £25. Essex (01268) 419013.
- B&W DM4 speakers £60. JVC JRS 301 tuner amp, 65WPC. Power metres graphic equaliser £50. (01708) 457691.
- Castle Severn speakers, antique oak finish, boxed. Perfect condition. £350. (0191) 257 9659.
- CD-R audio blanks for sale, suitable for all domestic home recorders (Philips, Marantz, Pioneer etc). 500 bought in error! £19 for 10 discs. Ken (0181) 933 1141.
- Chord Co Chameleon interconnect. 1m, 4 yrs old. (£68 new) £30 ono. Worthing (01903) 533069.
- Electrocompaniet AW 100DMB (power) £1,200 and EC4.5 pre £850 (£1,950 both). Teac T1 transport £295. Seismic Sink £120. Pioneer PDR04 CD recorder £325. Yamaha E390. PL processor £80. Chris, (0114) 237 7168/(0114) 236 6566.
- Holfi Xaurus CD, pre 8, power 8. Stunning sound, gorgeous looks. Reviewed HFC 179, 50 hrs use. Perfect. £2,500 (£3,900). (01244) 831348 after 6pm.
- Krell KAV 3001 amp £1,750. Michell ISO HR £450. Rega Ela Mk I £140. Bristol (01454) 857251.
- Leak Delta t/table, Leak Delta 75 receiver, Leak Sandwich 600 speakers £100 the lot. Frank, Wirral (0151) 645 3253.
- Lexicon DC1 (AC3/THX/DTS) £2,995. Krell KAV500 5 channel power amp, £3,250 Celestion A2 speakers, cherry finish £850. Sony JA30es MD recorder £250. All mint, (0113) 240 3043 eves.
- Linn Keilidh loudspeakers, Linn Granite stands, bi-wired, cherry finish, perfect cond. £475. W London

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- Magnum IA 170 with phono stage £125. Sony XA2ES CD player £150. Both mint, boxed, with instructions. Essex (01255) 675115.
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- Meridian A500 floorstanding speakers, 20 months old, black, mint, boxed £750 new, bargain at £350. Norwich (01953) 456408.
- Mission 752 Freedom loudspeakers in primavera wood veneer £350. Meridian 555 power amp £350. QED Vector active/passive remote preamp £90. All boxed and mint. (01493) 651287.
- NAD 1000/2100 £275. Sansui 707 amp £650 (£1,500). Exchange WHY wanted, Sennheiser headphones. (0121) 246 0486.
- Naim NAC52 preamp (£3,450) £2,700 ono. NAPI35 mono power amps (£3,140) £2,540 ono. Both 1 yr old, mint and boxed. Naim NACDS CD player (£3,940) £2,200 ono.

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- Nakamichi 700ZXL deck, with auto calibration, RAMM indexing, pitch control, 3 inputs, tape memory etc. Complete with Dolby C unit and IR receiver, ex cond, serviced. Worth £2,000+, sell for £900 ono. Berks (0118) 941 0771 or (0973) 459984.
- Neat Petite (MkII) speakers. As new £499. Grado 325 headphones with Audio Alchemy H/phone amp £299. (01952) 406759.
- Precious Metals Silver loudspeaker cable SL104 4x4m terminated, 1 yr old, perfect cond, boxed with receipt (£220 new) £160 ono. Worthing (01903) 533069.
- Rotel RCD 970BX CD player, £120. Wharfedale Shelton XP2 speakers, £35. Southampton (01703) 267207.
- Ruark Epilogues cherry wood £190 ono. Rega Planar 3 + Elys (£290 + £85) £150 ono. Rotel phono stage RQ970 £90 ono. All boxed, mint. Rob, Bucks (01494) 436156.
- Sennheiser HD580 headphones, X-CANS amp, X-PSU power supply.

All less than 6 months old, boxed, mint. Cost £460, sell £200. (01322) 286187/(07801) 079255.

- Sony 715E CD player £139. SME 309 tonearm £450. (01582) 724414.
- Tannoy DC2000 compact floorstanding speakers, black ash, c/w spikes. Immaculate (£300) £125. E Herts (01920) 429428.
- Teac P700/D700 transport/DAC (£1,495) £675. REL Storm s'woofer (£700) £375. All 2 yrs old, mint, boxed. (01904) 708382.
- Teac VRDS-7 CD player, mint, little use £395. Leicester (0116) 276 8351.
- Teac VRDS 7 CD player, mint cond, boxed, manuals etc, superb, excellent transport. Cost £649.99, reasonable offers considered. Alex (01664) 566362.
- Technics SP10, Thorens 160, STD, Audionote transformer, Audionote M2 preamp, Meridian M/block, Trio K917, Troughline, TIM DP decoder ONX15, Tascam 34B Studer B62, Nagra, Tannoy, Golds, KEF, lots more. (0181) 443 0557/(01992) 620905.

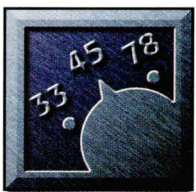
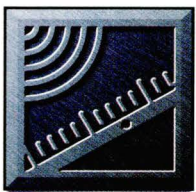
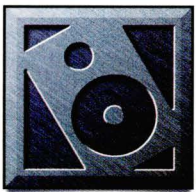
WANTED

- Tannoy 625 ALF. (01908) 602194.

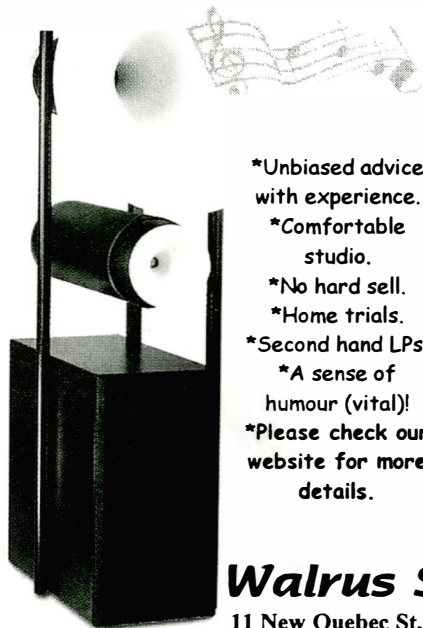


BUYING TIPS

Buying secondhand can be a great way to pick up a bargain. A formerly-expensive second-hand component might well prove a better long-term bet than a brand-new product engineered down to a price. Do some research on which brands and products have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a secondhand hi-fi dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty. So it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy. Products such as speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amplifiers, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be troublesome – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!



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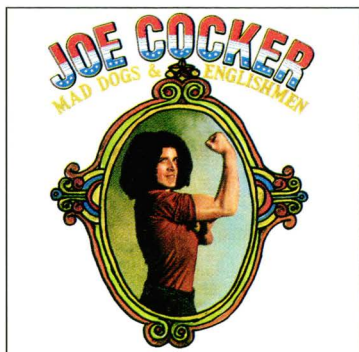
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Best Buys, Recommendations & Editor's Choices

BEST BUYS: Awarded to group-tested products which display an unbeatable blend of performance and value for money.

RECOMMENDED: Top performers in group tests: perhaps not the cheapest but possibly more sophisticated than Best Buys.

EDITOR'S CHOICE: More expensive components which exhibit outstanding engineering, industrial design and sound quality.

Our Three Step Guide to Buying Hi-Fi

The *Hi-Fi Choice Price Guide and Directory* are extremely simple to use, but contain all the information you need to select and buy the perfect hi-fi system. Here's how it works.

STEP 1 DISCOVER which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide, which starts on this page. The product listing is updated using manufacturers' data every other month, and aims to include every hi-fi component currently available in the UK. (But please fax us on 0171-917 5512 with any omissions!) It is an alphabetical listing divided into different types of hi-fi component, and also into price bands.

STEP 2 PRODUCTS whose names are printed in **RED** are those we have reviewed, which you can read about in the Directory (starts after the Price Guide). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy, Recommended or Editor's Choice awards, denoting products of exceptional quality and value. The Directory is sorted by product type and listed alphabetically, and the beginning of each section provides essential information about each kind of hi-fi component.

STEP 3 FIND your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (at the end of the Directory) to book a demonstration of the hi-fi equipment you want to hear. Remember to take your own LPs or CDs!

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AMPLIFIERS INTEGRATED

KEY

Ⓜ - Number of line-level inputs.
 '20W' - Rated RMS output power per channel into nominal load of 8 Ohms.

UP TO £250

Akai AM1100	Ⓜ	50W	230
AMC 3020	Ⓜ	20W	100
AMC 3025A	Ⓜ	30W	140
AMC 3050A	Ⓜ	45W	170
Ariston AX910	Ⓜ	30W	80
Cambridge A1 Mk III	Ⓜ	30W	100
Cambridge A1 Mk3 SE	Ⓜ	30W	120
Cambridge A5i	Ⓜ	60W	200
Cambridge A500RC	Ⓜ	50W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	Ⓜ	30W	140
Denon PMA-350SE	Ⓜ	50W	180
Denon PMA-535R	Ⓜ	50W	230
Denon PMA-100M	Ⓜ	80W	240
Goodmans Delta 900A	Ⓜ	100W	130
H/K HK610	Ⓜ	30W	180
H/K HK620	Ⓜ	40W	250
JVC AX-V4BK	Ⓜ	30W	200
JVC AX-A372BK	Ⓜ	40W	200
JVC AX-R5BK	Ⓜ	45W	200
Kenwood KA-1080	Ⓜ	60W	140
Kenwood KA-3080R	Ⓜ	70W	170
Kenwood KA-3020SE	Ⓜ	50W	200
Marantz PM-47	Ⓜ	40W	150
Marantz PM-57	Ⓜ	50W	200
Marantz PM-47	Ⓜ	40W	200
Marantz PM-66SE	Ⓜ	50W	230
Musical Fidelity E1	Ⓜ	30W	199
NAD 310	Ⓜ	20W	100
NAD 312	Ⓜ	25W	200
Pioneer A-105	Ⓜ	30W	130
Pioneer A-204R	Ⓜ	25W	160
Pioneer A-300R	Ⓜ	50W	200
Pioneer A-305R	Ⓜ	50W	200
Pioneer A-405R	Ⓜ	45W	250
Rega Brio	Ⓜ	30W	229
Rotel RA921	Ⓜ	20W	100
Rotel RA931	Ⓜ	35W	150
Rotel RA971	Ⓜ	70W	200
Sansui AUX-410R	Ⓜ	50W	150
Sansui AUX-510R	Ⓜ	70W	230
Sherwood AX 4050R	Ⓜ	50W	150
Sherwood AX-7030R	Ⓜ	95W	230
Sony TA-FE210	Ⓜ	40W	130
Sony TA-FE320R	Ⓜ	60W	150
Sony TA-F248E	Ⓜ	50W	200
TEAC AR-600	Ⓜ	90W	200
Technics SU-V300	Ⓜ	25W	150
Technics SU-V500	Ⓜ	30W	180
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	Ⓜ	37W	200
Technics SU-V620	Ⓜ	70W	230
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	Ⓜ	45W	250
Yamaha AX-392	Ⓜ	60W	170
Yamaha AX-9	Ⓜ	50W	200
Yamaha AX-492	Ⓜ	85W	220

£251 TO £500

Alchemist Maxim	Ⓜ	30W	350
AMC CVT 3050A	Ⓜ	30W	400
Arcam Alpha 7	Ⓜ	40W	260
Arcam Alpha 8	Ⓜ	50W	360
Arcam Alpha 9	Ⓜ	70W	500
Audio Analogue Puccini	Ⓜ	40W	450
Audiogram MB1	Ⓜ	40W	493
Audiolab 8000LX	Ⓜ	60W	470
Audiolab 8000A	Ⓜ	60W	500
Aura VA-100 II	Ⓜ	70W	350
CR Dev CR324	Ⓜ	100W	499
Creek 4350	Ⓜ	35W	279
Creek 4340	Ⓜ	35W	279
Creek 4350R	Ⓜ	35W	355
Creek 5250	Ⓜ	50W	450
Cymbal CA1	Ⓜ	40W	499
Denon PMA-735R	Ⓜ	65W	300
Denon PMA-1500R	Ⓜ	70W	500
EMF Audio Sequel	Ⓜ	50W	450
H/K HK640	Ⓜ	55W	400
Kenwood KA-5090R	Ⓜ	65W	300
Kenwood KA-7090R	Ⓜ	85W	400
Magnum IA120	Ⓜ	65W	265

Magnum IA170	Ⓜ	96W	330
Magnum IA170SE	Ⓜ	90W	430
Marantz PM-68	Ⓜ	90W	300
Marantz PM-66 KI Sig.	Ⓜ	50W	400
Micromega Minium Series 2	Ⓜ	40W	400
Mission Cyrus SL	Ⓜ	50W	398
Monrio Asty	Ⓜ	55W	400
Musical Fidelity E11	Ⓜ	60W	300
Musical Fidelity X-A1	Ⓜ	50W	480
Musical Fidelity A2	Ⓜ	25W	500
Myryad T-40	Ⓜ	50W	400
NAD 314	Ⓜ	35W	260
NAD 317	Ⓜ	80W	470
Onkyo A9210	Ⓜ	40W	260
Onkyo A921	Ⓜ	50W	350
Onkyo A922	Ⓜ	70W	400
Orelle SA-100	Ⓜ	50W	499
Pioneer A-400X	Ⓜ	50W	300
Pioneer A-605R	Ⓜ	80W	400
Pioneer A-300R Precision	Ⓜ	35W	400
Rega Luna	Ⓜ	40W	375
Rega Mira	Ⓜ	60W	450
Shearpe 2.5	Ⓜ	35W	499
Sony TA-FB920R	Ⓜ	50W	300
Sony TA-FA30ES	Ⓜ	80W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	Ⓜ	40W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	Ⓜ	50W	500
TEAC AH-500	Ⓜ	50W	280
Technics SU-A800D Mk2	Ⓜ	55W	300
Technics SU-A900D Mk2	Ⓜ	70W	400
Thule Audio Spirit IA60	Ⓜ	60W	449
Yamaha AX-592	Ⓜ	100W	280

£501 TO £700

Alchemist Kraken APD6A	Ⓜ	55W	600
Alchemist Nemesis	Ⓜ	80W	700
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	Ⓜ	40W	595
Audio Note Kanji Line SE	Ⓜ	9W	699
Audio Note First integrated	Ⓜ	40W	699
Audiogram MB2	Ⓜ	60W	599
Audiolab 8000S	Ⓜ	60W	700
CR Dev Orpheus	Ⓜ	150W	569
CR Dev Kalypso	Ⓜ	15W	599
CR Dev CR325	Ⓜ	175W	699
Creek 5250R	Ⓜ	50W	575
Creek 5250SER	Ⓜ	60W	665
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	Ⓜ	60W	650
Exposure XX Super	Ⓜ	55W	700
Gamma Gemini	Ⓜ	12W	699
H/K HK660	Ⓜ	65W	700
Hi Q Sound MCI	Ⓜ	30W	565
JoLida 202	Ⓜ	40W	695
LFD Integrated 0	Ⓜ	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	Ⓜ	33W	650
Lynwood Opal	Ⓜ	80W	685
Magnum IA200	Ⓜ	100W	599
Magnum Class A	Ⓜ	85W	690
Micromega Tempo 1	Ⓜ	50W	700
Mission Cyrus IIIi	Ⓜ	50W	598
Musical Fidelity A220	Ⓜ	50W	700
Myryad MI 120	Ⓜ	60W	600
Naim Nait 3	Ⓜ	30W	590
Orelle SA-100RX	Ⓜ	75W	649
Quad 77 integrated	Ⓜ	85W	700
Roksan Caspian	Ⓜ	70W	695
Rose Scion	Ⓜ	65W	615
Shearpe Phase 2	Ⓜ	50W	689
Stemfoort SF60	Ⓜ	60W	549
Talk Electronics Storm 2	Ⓜ	50W	650
TEAC AB-X7R	Ⓜ	50W	700
Thule Audio Spirit IA100	Ⓜ	100W	599

£701 TO £1000

Alchemist Forseti Integrated	Ⓜ	100W	1,000
Arcam Alpha 10	Ⓜ	100W	800
Audio Note Oto Line PP	Ⓜ	12W	950
AVI S2000M1	Ⓜ	100W	999
Copland CSAB	Ⓜ	60W	945
Credo IMP702	Ⓜ	70W	850
Credo IMP703	Ⓜ	70W	1,000
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	Ⓜ	50W	995
Exposure XV Super	Ⓜ	55W	800
Golden Tube Audio SI-50	Ⓜ	50W	1,000
H/K HK680	Ⓜ	85W	1,000
Holli Audis Signature	Ⓜ	65W	750
LFD 0 LE Integrated	Ⓜ	60W	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	Ⓜ	33W	800
Magnum Class A SE	Ⓜ	80W	795
Marantz PM-17	Ⓜ	60W	900
Meridian 551	Ⓜ	55W	795
Micromega Tempo 2	Ⓜ	70W	900
Naim Nait 3 R	Ⓜ	30W	780
Opera Aida	Ⓜ	60W	795
Pioneer A-07	Ⓜ	80W	999
Primare A20 Mk II	Ⓜ	70W	799
Rega Elicit	Ⓜ	70W	730
Shearpe Phase 2 Reference	Ⓜ	50W	799
Sonnenteer Alabaster	Ⓜ	50W	900
Stemfoort SF100	Ⓜ	100W	849
Thule Audio IA150B	Ⓜ	150W	999

£1001 TO £2000

Art Audio Integra	Ⓜ	30W	1,499
ATC SIA2-150	Ⓜ	150W	1,984

HI-FI PRICE GUIDE

Audio Note Soro Line PP		20W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Line SE	Ⓢ	12W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Phono SE	Ⓢ	12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE	Ⓢ	18W	1,699
BB Audio BB 30-60	Ⓢ	30W	1,495
Beam-Echo SA-50	Ⓢ	50W	1,950
Bow Technologies Wazoo	Ⓢ	50W	1,795
Bryston B-60	Ⓢ	60W	1,249
Copland CSA14	Ⓢ	70W	1,199
Copland CSA28	Ⓢ		1,299
Copland CTA401	Ⓢ	25W	1,699
CR Dev Romulus V3	Ⓢ	35W	1,198
CR Dev Remus V3	Ⓢ	60W	1,989
Credo LIM 702		1,981	
Credo LIM 703		1,249	
EAR 859	Ⓢ	13W	1,999
EAR 834	Ⓢ	40W	1,999
Graaf Quintique	Ⓢ	20W	1,695
LFD Integrated 1	Ⓢ	65W	1,099
Meracur Intrare	Ⓢ	60W	1,095
Primare A301	Ⓢ	80W	1,699
Rogers E-20a	Ⓢ	20W	1,229
Rogers E-40a	Ⓢ	40W	1,900
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	Ⓢ	25W	1,299
T+A R1200R	Ⓢ	90W	1,750
Thule Audio IA250B	Ⓢ	250W	1,799
Unison Simply Two	Ⓢ	12W	1,199
Unison Simply Four P	Ⓢ	24W	1,600
Unison Pentode 35	Ⓢ	35W	1,650
Unison Simply Four T	Ⓢ	11W	1,650
Woodside ISA230 Line	Ⓢ	30W	1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	Ⓢ	30W	1,249
YBA Integre DT	Ⓢ		1,650

OVER £2000

Aidyton Opera	Ⓢ	50W	2,595
Audio Note Meishu Line		9W	2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	Ⓢ	25W	56,000
Audio Research CA50	Ⓢ		3,990
Cary CAD-300SE1	Ⓢ	11W	3,995
Conrad-Johnson CAV-50	Ⓢ	50W	2,495
EAR V20	Ⓢ	24W	2,495
Electrocompaniet ECI-1	Ⓢ	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm	Ⓢ	18W	2,499
Gamma Rhythm Ref	Ⓢ	20W	3,499
Gamma Moment	Ⓢ	40W	19,999
Jadis DA30	Ⓢ	30W	3,490
Jadis DA60	Ⓢ	60W	5,750
Krell KAV300i	Ⓢ	150W	2,550
McIntosh MA6400E	Ⓢ	100W	3,999
McIntosh MA6800E	Ⓢ	150W	5,999
Meracur Onesta	Ⓢ	75W	2,595
Musical Fidelity A1001	Ⓢ	200W	2,500
Pioneer A-09	Ⓢ	45W	4,000
Rowland Concentra	Ⓢ	100W	5,500
T+A R1500R	Ⓢ	135W	2,015
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Int.	Ⓢ	30W	2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	Ⓢ	150W	6,900
Unison Simply 845	Ⓢ	24W	3,195
Unison Performance One	Ⓢ	25W	4,500
Unison 845 Absolute	Ⓢ	40W	11,995

PREAMPS

KEY
 Ⓢ (etc) - Number of line-level inputs.
 Ph - Phono input fitted as standard
 (may be an option on some other models).

UP TO £500

Art Audio Minuet			499
Audio Analogue Bellini	Ⓢ	Ph	475
Audio Note The M			350
Beam-Echo PP-21		Ph	499
Bryston BP1	Ⓢ	Ph	438
Carver CT-24	Ⓢ	Ph	499
CR Dev Themis			349
Creek P43	Ⓢ		399
Creek P52	Ⓢ		499
Crimson CS610C	Ⓢ	Ph	450
DPA Ent'ment phono		Ph	275
EAR 834P		Ph	349
EAR 834L	Ⓢ		449
EAR 834P/MC		Ph	499
Electrocompaniet ECP-1		Ph	495
Henley HMC50			200
Henley HMC100			450
Hi Q Sound LCP2			149
LFD Mistral Linestage	Ⓢ		449
LFD LSO Linestage	Ⓢ		499
Lumley PP70	Ⓢ		345
Lumley PP1	Ⓢ		345
Magnum MP120	Ⓢ		330
Magnum MP660	Ⓢ		500
Magnum MP330	Ⓢ		500
Monrio ADN-N		Ph	295
Monrio Asty L	Ⓢ		500
Moth 30 Passive	Ⓢ		149
Moth 30 RIAA	Ⓢ	Ph	249
Moth 30 Active	Ⓢ		349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	Ⓢ		120
Musical Fidelity X-LP	Ⓢ	Ph	130
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	Ⓢ		200
Musical Fidelity E20	Ⓢ	Ph	400
NAD 114	Ⓢ	Ph	270

NAD 116	Ⓢ	Ph	430
Naim Prefix			360
Naim NAC92			485
Parasound P/HP-100	Ⓢ	Ph	130
Parasound P/HP-850	Ⓢ	Ph	400
Rega EOS	Ⓢ	Ph	398
Rega Cursa	Ⓢ	Ph	450
Roksan Artaxerxes 10	Ⓢ	Ph	395
Rose RV-23	Ⓢ	Ph	450
Rotel RC970BX	Ⓢ	Ph	130
Rotel RC971	Ⓢ	Ph	150
Rotel RC972	Ⓢ	Ph	225
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	Ⓢ	Ph	500
Technics SU-C1000 Mk2	Ⓢ	Ph	300
Thule Audio Spirit PR100	Ⓢ		399
Trilogy 905	Ⓢ		375
Trilogy 904	Ⓢ	Ph	375
Trilogy 900	Ⓢ	Ph	499
Unison Simply Phono	Ⓢ	Ph	500

£501 TO £2000

Aidyton Chorus			1,995
Alchemist Kraken Pre	Ⓢ		550
Alchemist Forseti Pre	Ⓢ		950
Art Audio Headline	Ⓢ		700
Art Audio VPL	Ⓢ		741
Art Audio Conductor Phono			750
Art Audio VP1			952
Art Audio Conductor	Ⓢ		1,250
Art Audio Conductor Export			2,000
Audio Note M1 Line			550
Audio Note M1 RIAA		Ph	550
Audio Note M2 Line			999
Audio Note Discovery			999
Audio Note M2RIAA		Ph	1,099
Audio Prism Mantissa	Ⓢ		1,995
Audio Research LS7	Ⓢ		1,750
Audio Research LS3	Ⓢ		1,997
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	Ⓢ		595
Audio Synthesis Passion	Ⓢ		695
Audio Synthesis Passion 85	Ⓢ		1,295
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	Ⓢ		1,695
Audiolab 8000C	Ⓢ	Ph	580
Audiolab 8000PPA	Ⓢ	Ph	1,000
Audiolab 8000Q	Ⓢ	Ph	1,250
Aura CA-200	Ⓢ	Ph	700
AVI S2000MP	Ⓢ		949
AVI S2000MP+P	Ⓢ	Ph	1,199
Beam-Echo SP-21	Ⓢ	Ph	1,116
Bryston 4	Ⓢ	Ph	642
Bryston BP5	Ⓢ	Ph	889
Bryston BP20	Ⓢ	Ph	1,126
Bryston BP-25	Ⓢ	Ph	1,326
Canary Audio CA-606	Ⓢ	Ph	1,295
Canary Audio CA-601	Ⓢ	Ph	1,595
Cary SLP-50	Ⓢ	Ph	995
Cary SLP-74	Ⓢ	Ph	1,795
Cary PH-301	Ⓢ	Ph	1,795
Chord Phono	Ⓢ	Ph	1,898
Chord CPA 1800	Ⓢ	Ph	1,905
Concordant Exhilarant			900
Concordant Exquisite			1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL	Ⓢ		995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	Ⓢ	Ph	1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL	Ⓢ		1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	Ⓢ	Ph	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	Ⓢ	Ph	1,990
Copland CSA303	Ⓢ	Ph	1,199
Copland CTA301 MkII	Ⓢ	Ph	1,399
CR Dev Carmenta			659
CR Dev Argento			699
Credo CMP004			1,246
Credo CMP005			1,876
Densen DM-20	Ⓢ		1,200
DNM 3 Start	Ⓢ	Ph	1,000
DNM 3A Start	Ⓢ	Ph	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre			795
Dynavector L200	Ⓢ		1,195
Dynavector P100	Ⓢ	Ph	1,495
Dynavector L100	Ⓢ		1,995
Earmax Pre	Ⓢ		1,895
ECA Vista S	Ⓢ		760
ECA Vista HD	Ⓢ		880
ECA Prisma	Ⓢ	Ph	880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5			1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6			1,750
Exposure XIX			800
Exposure XVII	Ⓢ	Ph	850
Golden Tube Audio SEP-1	Ⓢ	Ph	990
Graaf WFB Two	Ⓢ	Ph	1,195
Graaf WFB One	Ⓢ	Ph	1,725
Henley HMC200			750
Heybrook Signature II Pre			555
Hi Q Sound MCB2	Ⓢ	Ph	545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	Ⓢ	Ph	645
Jadis DPL2	Ⓢ		1,790
LFD MC1 PhonoStage	Ⓢ	Ph	949
LFD LS1 Linestage	Ⓢ	Ph	999
LFD MC2 PhonoStage	Ⓢ	Ph	1,499
LFD LS2 Linestage	Ⓢ	Ph	1,599
LFD LSB Linestage	Ⓢ	Ph	1,999
Linn Wakonda	Ⓢ		750
Linn Linto	Ⓢ		850
Linn Kairn	Ⓢ		1,400
Lumley LV1.5	Ⓢ		895
Lumley LV1	Ⓢ		1,150

Lumley PV1.5	Ⓢ	Ph	1,700
Lumley PV1	Ⓢ	Ph	1,700
Matisse Atom	Ⓢ		1,000
McIntosh C712	Ⓢ	Ph	1,999
Meracur Ingredi	Ⓢ		925
Meridian 501	Ⓢ		695
Meridian 562	Ⓢ		765
Meridian 562V	Ⓢ		995
Meridian 502	Ⓢ		1,295
Michell Orca	Ⓢ	Ph	1,650
Michi RHC-10	Ⓢ		795
Michi RHCQ-10	Ⓢ	Ph	1,150
Michi RHA-10	Ⓢ		1,150
Micromega Tempo P	Ⓢ		1,150
Mission Cyrus Pre	Ⓢ	Ph	648
Monrio Pluri-L II	Ⓢ		900
Muse Model 3	Ⓢ		1,990
Musical Fidelity F25	Ⓢ	Ph	1,500
Myryad MP100	Ⓢ		600
NAD 118	Ⓢ		1,000
Naim NAC92R	Ⓢ		650
Naim NAC72	Ⓢ		745
Naim NAC102	Ⓢ		1,080
Quad 77 Pre	Ⓢ	Ph	850
Rega Hal	Ⓢ	Ph	998
Roksan ROK-L2.5	Ⓢ		1,250
Rose RV-235	Ⓢ	Ph	525
Rotel RC995	Ⓢ		525
Shearman Phase 6 Pre	Ⓢ		999
Shearman Phase 1 Pre Ref	Ⓢ		1,499
Sieml MC20	Ⓢ	Ph	650
Sieml MM20	Ⓢ	Ph	650
Sieml TU10	Ⓢ		1,599
Sieml TR20	Ⓢ		1,599
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre 1P	Ⓢ	Ph	899
Sonic Frontiers Phono 1	Ⓢ	Ph	1,999
Sonographe SC26	Ⓢ		995
Sumo Athena II Line	Ⓢ		767
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS	Ⓢ		987
Sumo Athena III	Ⓢ		987
Sumo Artemis up	Ⓢ		1,595
T+A P1200R	Ⓢ		965
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2	Ⓢ		650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	Ⓢ		900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4	Ⓢ		1,550
Talk Electronics Hurricane 5	Ⓢ		1,900
Technics SU-C2000	Ⓢ	Ph	700
Thorens TTP-2000F	Ⓢ	Ph	699
Thule Audio Spirit PR150B	Ⓢ		699
Trilogy 901	Ⓢ		750
Trilogy 906	Ⓢ	Ph	995
Trilogy 902	Ⓢ		1,595
Tron Retro	Ⓢ		1,000
Tron Nucleus Phono	Ⓢ	Ph	2,000
Tron Nucleus	Ⓢ		2,000
Tube Tech Seer Line	Ⓢ		935
Tube Tech Mac Phono	Ⓢ	Ph	1,150
Tube Tech Prophet	Ⓢ		1,970
Unison Feather One	Ⓢ		795
Unison Mystery Two	Ⓢ		1,750
Unison Mystery One	Ⓢ		1,750
Unison VPP One	Ⓢ	Ph	1,995
Van Den Hul Pre-amp	Ⓢ		1,700
Wilson Benesh Stage One	Ⓢ	Ph	995
Woodside SC27 Line	Ⓢ		949
Woodside SC26 Line	Ⓢ		1,557
XTC PRE-1	Ⓢ		1,250
Yamaha CX-2	Ⓢ	Ph	650
YBA 3	Ⓢ		1,199
YBA Integre	Ⓢ		1,199
YBA 2	Ⓢ		1,999

OVER £2000

Aidyton Temper			2,495
Aidyton Modus	Ⓢ		2,695
Alchemist The Alchemist pre			4,995
ATC SCA2			2,599
Audio Note M3Line	Ⓢ		2,650
Audio Prism Avanti	Ⓢ		7,995
Audio Research LS15	Ⓢ		3,399
Audio Research LS22	Ⓢ		4,391
Audio Research LS5 MkIII	Ⓢ		6,435
Audio Research REF 1	Ⓢ		9,900
Boulder L3AE	Ⓢ		2,100
Boulder L5AE	Ⓢ		3,400
Boulder L5M	Ⓢ		3,800
Boulder 2010	Ⓢ		22,000
Canary Audio CA-801	Ⓢ		3,750
Cary SLP-98L	Ⓢ		2,595
Chord CPA 2200	Ⓢ		2,530
Chord CPA 3200	Ⓢ		3,785
Chord CPA 4000	Ⓢ		6,675
Conrad-Johnson PF-R	Ⓢ		2,490
Conrad-Johnson PV-12A	Ⓢ	Ph	2,590
Conrad-Johnson Premier 15	Ⓢ	Ph	3,995
Conrad-Johnson Premier 14	Ⓢ		4,495
Conrad-Johnson Art	Ⓢ		14,995
CAT SL1 Sig. Mk3	Ⓢ	Ph	6,500
CR Dev Kastor	Ⓢ		2,995
Credo LPR 001	Ⓢ		2,815
DNM 3C Primus	Ⓢ	Ph	2,550
DNM 3C Twin	Ⓢ	Ph	3,800
DNM 3C Six	Ⓢ	Ph	5,050
EAR 802MC	Ⓢ	Ph	2,599
EAR G88	Ⓢ	Ph	9,999
EAR P52	Ⓢ	Ph	15,999

Gamma Era Ref	Ⓢ	Ph	7,999
Graaf GM13.5B	Ⓢ		3,750
Jadis DP60L	Ⓢ		2,800
Jadis DPL	Ⓢ		3,190
Jadis DPMC	Ⓢ	Ph	3,190
Jadis JPL	Ⓢ		4,720
Jadis JPP200	Ⓢ		4,998
Jadis JPS0MC	Ⓢ	Ph	

POWER AMPS (CONTINUED)

Bryston THX3B	150W	1,262
Bryston 7B-ST PRO	500W	1,545
Bryston 4B-ST PRO	300W	1,756
Bryston 7B-ST	500W	1,815
Bryston THX4B	300W	1,850
Bryston THX7B	500W	1,886
Canary Audio CA-706	40W	1,695
Canary Audio CA-708	50W	1,950
Caner A-500X	250W	949
Caner A-760X	380W	1,299
Chord SPM 400	100W	1,425
Chord SPM 600	130W	1,850
Conrad-Johnson MV-55	50W	1,995
Copland CTA501	30W	1,750
CR Dev Amphion	12W	1,949
Credo PMP 804		1,876
Creek AS2SE	80W	599
Crimson CSC630C	100W	800
Densen B-300	100W	1,200
Densen DM-30	45W	1,000
DNM PA Start	45W	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pwr	100W	995
Earmax Power	25W	1,895
ECA Lectern S	50W	880
ECA Lectern HD	50W	1,480
Electrocompaniet AW60FT	60W	1,095
Exposure XVIII Super	70W	850
Golden Tube Audio SE-40	40W	1,100
Golden Tube Audio SE-300B MkII	8W	1,490
Golden Tube Audio SE-100	100W	1,995
Graaf Ventiniqua P	25W	1,395
Heybrook Signature II Pwr	120W	1,045
Hi Q Sound MCM	70W	715
Jadis DAS	40W	1,997
Lexicon 212	120W	1,850
LFD PA1 Powerstage	60W	999
LFD PA2 Powerstage	75W	1,599
LFD PA2M Powerstage	90W	1,999
Linn LK100	50W	650
Linn LK240	120W	750
Linn AV5105	100W	1,200
Lynwood Ruby	120W	985
Magnum MF330	150W	685
Magnum MF660	125W	825
Magnum A500SE	200W	1,485
Magnum A50SE	200W	1,595
McIntosh MC7100	100W	1,999
Meracur Ciere	60W	1,095
Mendian 555	60W	750
Mendian 556	100W	895
Mendian 557	200W	1,400
Mendian 505	160W	1,590
Mitchell Alecto Stereo	50W	1,150
Mitchell Alecto Mono	100W	1,989
Michi RHB-05	100W	1,100
Michi RHB-10	200W	2,000
Micromega Amp	100W	1,150
Monrio Asty P	100W	950
Monrio Cento	135W	1,950
Monrio HP-1	135W	1,750
Moth 60 Stereo	60W	599
Moth 30 Mono/100	100W	879
Muse Model 100	100W	1,490
Musical Fidelity X-A200	200W	1,000
NAD 218THX	200W	770
Naim NAP140	45W	850
Naim NAP180	60W	1,090
Naim NAP135	75W	1,705
Naim NAP250	70W	1,705
Papworth TVA50	50W	1,425
Parasound HCA-1000A	125W	600
Parasound HCA-1500A	205W	1,000
Quad 77 Power	85W	600
Quad 707	140W	800
Rega EXS	70W	598
Rega Exon	125W	1,196
Roksan Caspian Power	70W	595
Roksan ROK-S1.5	100W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	75W	550
Shearne Phase 3	50W	639
Shearne Phase 3 Reference	50W	749
Shearne Phase 5 Mono	100W	1,598
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Amp 1	40W	1,299
Sonographe SA250	125W	1,195
Sonographe SA400	220W	1,695
Sumo Polaris III	164W	950
Sumo Model Five	60W	1,975
Sumo Andromeda III	240W	1,975
T+A A1210	90W	875
T+A PA1200R	90W	1,445
T+A A1500	140W	1,535
T+A PA1500R	135W	1,665
Talk Electronics Tornado 2	65W	600
Talk Electronics Tornado 3	100W	750
Talk Electronics Tornado 4	110W	1,100
Technics SE-A2000	100W	1,100
Thorens TTA-2000	30W	599
Thule Audio Spirit PA100	100W	599
Thule Audio Spirit PA150B	150W	699
Trilogy 948	50W	1,895
Trilogy 948T	22W	1,895
Tube Tech Syrinx	45W	1,150
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Pwr	30W	1,900
Unison Power 35	35W	1,500

Woodside SA240	40W	1,199
Woodside MA100	100W	1,733
Woodside STA50	50W	1,880
XTC POW-2	150W	1,450
Yamaha MX-2	150W	750
YBA 3 stereo		1,299

OVER £2000

Adyton Cordis 1.6	120W	3,495
Adyton Cordis 3B	280W	12,995
Alchemist The Alchemist pwr	220W	3,995
Alchemist The Alchemist mono	55W	8,995
Art Audio Tempo	30W	2,499
Art Audio Quintet SE	-W	2,500
Art Audio Maestro	10W	3,524
ATC SPA2-200PRO	200W	2,056
ATC SPA2-150	200W	2,699
Audio Note P3	9W	2,150
Audio Note Quest	9W	2,750
Audio Note Yubi	18W	3,850
Audio Note Conquest	18W	4,450
Audio Note Tomei	30W	8,500
Audio Note Negro	7W	11,360
Audio Note Ankoru	60W	14,500
Audio Prism Debut Mk II	35W	2,495
Audio Prism Mana	100W	12,995
Audio Research D130	130W	2,299
Audio Research VT60	35W	2,395
Audio Research D300	467H	4,678
Audio Research VT100	400W	4,995
Audio Research D400 MkII	100W	6,850
Audio Research VT130 SE	130W	8,500
Audio Research VT150 SE	150W	17,000
Audio Synthesis Desire Decade	200W	2,495
Beam-Echo DL7-35	3Q	3,525
Border Patrol 300B SE	10W	3,495
Boulder 102AE	100W	2,800
Boulder 102M	100W	3,100
Boulder 500AE	150W	4,995
Boulder 500M	150W	5,500
Boulder 2060	600W	25,000
Boulder 2050	999W	43,500
Bryston THX8B	150W	2,385
Canary Audio CA-304	40W	2,695
Canary Audio CA-301	22W	2,995
Canary Audio CA-303	24W	5,495
Cary CAD-572SE	20W	2,495
Cary CAD-300SE	12W	3,995
Cary 300SE Sig	12W	4,795
Cary CAD-805	50W	8,995
Chord SPM 1000B	200W	2,920
Chord SPM 1200B	250W	3,790
Chord SPM 1200C	350W	4,210
Chord SPM 1400B mono	350W	8,420
Chord SPM 5000	415W	14,570
Conrad-Johnson MF-2300A	250W	2,990
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	70W	3,500
Conrad-Johnson Premier 12	140W	6,900
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8XS	150W	17,000
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8A	275W	17,000
CAT JL1	180W	18,000
Copland CTA505	67W	2,099
CR Dev Artemis		4,995
Credo LPO 804		2,456
Credo PMP 155		2,676
Credo LPO 455		4,975
Credo LPO 155		6,983
DNM PA3	50W	2,500
DNM PA3S	23W	3,750
Dynavektor HX75	25W	2,195
Dynavektor HX1.2	130W	3,995
EAR 861	32W	3,599
EAR 509 Mk II	100W	3,999
EAR 519	100W	4,699
EAR 549	200W	6,499
Electrocompaniet AW120DMB	120W	2,695
Electrocompaniet AW250R	250W	3,995
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	180W	4,595
Exposure IV	80W	2,199
Exposure XVI	125W	4,000
Gamma Aeon	20W	4,999
Gamma Space Ref	18W	7,999
Gamma Aeon Ref	70W	49,999
Graaf 5050	50W	2,100
Graaf GM20	60W	2,750
Graaf GM100	100W	4,250
Graaf GM200	200W	7,500
Jadis DA8	80W	3,333
Jadis DA7	100W	5,290
Jadis JA30	30W	5,980
Jadis JA300B	10W	9,000
Jadis JA80	60W	9,912
Jadis JA200	160W	15,518
Jadis JA500	400W	21,500
Krell KAV500/2	100W	3,485
Krell FPB200	200W	6,490
Krell FPB300	300W	9,500
Krell FPB600	600W	12,900
Krell KAS2	20,000	20,000
Lexicon 225	250W	2,500
Lexicon 501	500W	5,000
Linn Klout	80W	2,400
Lumley M125	120W	3,750
Lumley M250	250W	7,500
Magnum Class A mono	180W	2,450
Magnum A200SE	275W	3,750

Mark Levinson 331	100W	4,495
Mark Levinson 332	200W	6,495
Mark Levinson 333	300W	8,495
Mark Levinson 33H	150W	19,395
Matisse Ref Monoblocks	180W	8,000
McIntosh MC150	150W	3,499
McIntosh MC300	300W	3,999
McIntosh MC500	500W	8,999
McIntosh MC1000	999W	14,999
Meracur Tentare	75W	2,245
Meracur Cantare	-W	8,995
Muse Model 160 Ser. II	160W	2,290
Muse Model 150	125W	2,690
Muse Model 175 Ser. II	175W	3,490
Muse Model 300 Ser. II	300W	3,990
Musical Fidelity F16	200W	2,500
Musical Fidelity F19	300W	4,000
Papworth M100	100W	2,645
Papworth M200	200W	3,825
Roksan ROK-M1.5	160W	2,250
Rowland Model 2	75W	4,999
Rowland Model 6	150W	10,999
Rowland Model 8T	250W	12,499
Rowland Model 9T	350W	27,999
Shearne Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,399
Sieml TA20	50W	2,350
Sonic Frontiers Power 1	55W	2,499
Sonic Frontiers Power 2	110W	4,999
Sonic Frontiers Power 3	220W	8,599
Sumo Model Ten/M	240W	4,200
Sunfire Sunfire	300W	2,170
T+A A3000	190W	2,850
Talk Electronics Tornado 5	200W	2,100
Trilogy 958T	45W	3,395
Trilogy 958	100W	3,395
Tube Tech Genesis Sig.	100W	4,700
Tube Tech Synergy DMA	150W	6,400
Unison Smart 845	24W	3,500
Unison Smart 300B	24W	4,250
Unison Palladio	32W	11,995
Van Den Hul Power amp	65W	2,500
XTC POW-1	200W	2,250
YBA 2 stereo		2,200
YBA 1 HC stereo		4,999

Cardas Audio Cardas Cross	360.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five C	530.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink Golden-5 C	600.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross	700.00
ChordCo Chrysalis	40.00
ChordCo Cobra 2	55.00
ChordCo Siren	69.00
ChordCo Chameleon	90.00
ChordCo Solid	120.00
ChordCo Chorus	199.00
Connections UK Ultra	28.00
Connections UK Midas	39.00
Connections UK HD	46.00
DBF Acoustics Black Velvet	30.00
DBF Acoustics Black Velvet SE	40.00
DBF Acoustics Azure SE	75.00
DNM-Reson TC75	35.00
DPA Slink	41.00
DPA White Slink	75.00
DPA Black Slink	220.00
Ecosse Ref CA1	65.00
Ecosse Ref CS1	75.00
Ecosse Ref MA2	155.00
Ecosse Ref MS2	165.00
Ecosse Ref US1	550.00
Expressive Tech IC-1	700.00
Gamma Wow Balance	799.00
Goertz M1 Interconnect	145.00
GT Audio Intercon	130.00
Henley HSP10	20.00
Henley HSP50	35.00
Henley HSP100	65.00
Henley HSP200	95.00
Heybrook Black Flash	39.00
Insert Audio Focus 1.2	21.50
Insert Audio IC100 Mk II	46.95
Insert Audio Image 5.1	84.95
Insert Audio Status 3.4	160.00
Ixos 104	20.00
Ixos 1003	30.00
Ixos Gamma 1002	39.95
Ixos 103	45.00
Ixos 102	60.00
Ixos 101	100.00
Ixos 100.X03	150.00
Kimber PBJ	68.00
Kimber KC1	96.00
Kimber Hero	110.00
Kimber Silver Streak	180.00
Kimber KCAQ	390.00
Kimber KCTG	720.00
Kronos Konnekt 3	49.00
Kronos Konnekt 2	99.00
Kronos Konnekt 1	199.00
LAT International IC-50	37.00
LAT International IC-80 MkII	58.00
LAT International IC-200 Mk II	151.00
Lieder Chanson	340.00
Lieder Lek	420.00
Lieder Het Lied	420.00
Lieder Song	580.00
Lieder Maas	620.00
Lieder Rijn	1,000.00
Lieder Waal	1,400.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	115.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	175.00
Moth Leyline Black	100.00
Moth Leyline Grey	200.00
Nordost Magic	35.00
Nordost Black Knight	60.00
Nordost Blue Angel	98.00
Nordost Blue Heaven I/C	144.95
Nordost Red Dawn	285.00
Nordost SPM	825.00
Ortofon 7N interconnect	250.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 35	40.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 50	50.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 52	70.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 53	90.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 100	100.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 102	130.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 103	160.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 104	190.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 200	220.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 202	290.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 203	360.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 204	430.00
Prowler Silver	60.00
PAD Elementa	145.00
QED Onect 2	30.00
QED Onect 4	60.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	75.00
Shiny Red Devil	80.00
Shiny Red Star 2	120.00
Shiny Black Star 2	240.00
Shiny Pulsar 2	495.00
Shiny Quasar 2	850.00
Siltech MC2-12	308.00
Siltech MC4-24S	400.00
Siltech FTM-3S	730.00
Silver Sounds S52	99.00
Silver Sounds S51	199.00
Silver Tone Ex-Static	35.00
Silver Tone Sci-Fi	95.00
SME S2LB-4	4618
SME S3LB-4	52.06
SME 4900A	76.83


CABLES
Analogue Interconnects

KEY
 ☉ - Stranded construction.
 ● - Solid-core construction.

Prices of interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B	260.00
Apertura Model A	469.00
Art Yam Church 5000	515.00
Audio Note AN-A	18.00
Audio Note AN-C	35.00
Audio Note AN-S	99.00
Audio Note AN-V	179.00
Audio Note AN-Vx	450.00
Audioquest Jade	30.00
Audioquest Turquoise 2	40.00
Audioquest Topaz 2	59.95
Audioquest Ruby 2	80.00
Audioquest Quartz	125.00
Audioquest Opal	200.00
Audioquest Emerald	260.0

SME 5900A	102.57
Sonic Link Red	25.00
Sonic Link Silver pink	35.00
Sonic Link Black	49.00
Sonic Link White	65.00
Sonic Link Brown	70.00
Sonic Link Violet	85.00
Sonic Link Maroon	125.00
Sonic Link Blue Nickel	150.00
Sonic Link Vermillion	195.00
Sonic Link Red earth	300.00
Sonic Link Black earth	450.00
Sonic Link Blue earth	695.00
Sonic Link Black Rhodium	995.00
Straightwire Chorus	40.00
Supra DAC-X	60.00
Supra EFF-1SL	80.00
Supra EFF-XLR	90.00
Tara Prism 3	17.95
Tara Prism 5	21.95
Tara Prism 8	25.95
Tara Prism 11	37.50
Tara Prism 22	63.50
Tara Prism CD	76.25
Tara Prism 33-i	88.25
Tara Prism 55	115.00
Tara RSC-CD	138.00
Tara RSC-Prime	170.00
Tara RSC-Ref Gen. 2	229.00
Tara RSC-Master Gen. 2	464.00
Tara RSC-Decade	935.00
Tara The 2	1,170.00
Tara The One	2,230
Transparent Cable Musichord Int	48.00
Transparent Cable The Link	92.00
Transparent Cable Music Link	119.00
Trichord Pulsewire 75	169.00
Vampire Wire CC	24.00
Vampire Wire CCC/II	58.00
Vampire Wire SC/II	98.00
Vampire Wire SC/IV	144.00
Vampire Wire A/2	259.00
Vampire Wire SL	412.00
Van Den Hul Storm	25.00
Van Den Hul Source HB	60.99
Van Den Hul D102 III	59.00
Van Den Hul Thunderline HB	130.00
Van Den Hul First	210.00
Van Den Hul Second	240.00
Van Den Hul MC Gold	400.00
Van Den Hul MC Silver IT	1,240.00
Van Den Hul MC Silver IT Bal	1,560.00
Wireworld Orbit	30.00
Wireworld Solstice II	40.00
XLO Type 150	50.00
XLO Type 0.1	180.00



CABLES

Digital Interconnects

KEY
 ⊕ – Stranded construction.
 ⊙ – Solid-core construction.

Prices of interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B	139.00
Apertura Model A	255.00
Art Yam Church 5000	275.00
Audioquest Digital/Video 1	30.00
Audioquest Digital/Video 2	60.00
Audioquest Optlink X	90.00
Audioquest Digital PRO	100.00
Audioquest Optlink Pro	149.00
Audioquest Optlink Z	179.00
Cable Talk Digital 2	78.00
Cardas Audio Lightning	190.00
ChordCo Codac	38.00
ChordCo Optichord	40.00
ChordCo Prodac	50.00
DNM-Reson DIG100	26.00
DPA Opt-link	20.00
DPA Digi-link	2750
Ecosse Ref MD2	71.50
Insert Audio Dataline 500	24.95
Insert Audio Optic 2.1	29.95
Insert Audio Dataline 700	39.95
Insert Audio Image 5.1	44.95
Ixos 105	25.00

Ixos 106	30.00
Kimber Opti-link	50.00
Kimber Illuminati DV-30	70.00
Kimber Illuminati D-60	325.00
Kimber Illuminati DX-50	350.00
Kimber Illuminati Orchid	750.00
LAT International DI-20-D	79.00
Moth Leyline Datalink	140.00
Nordost Moonglo	155.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 35	20.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 100	50.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 200	110.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 202	145.00
QED Digiflex	20.00
QED Optiflex	25.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	45.00
Shinpy Digital	265.00
Siltech HF-6	145.00
Sonic Link Green	60.00
Supra EFF-ID	45.00
Supra DAC-XLR	45.00
Transparent Cable PDL	199.00
Trichord Pulsewire 75D	75.00
Vampire Wire DI/1	150.00
Van Den Hul Source HB	30.00
Van Den Hul Videolink	60.00
Van Den Hul AES-EBU 110	65.00
Van Den Hul First	125.00
Van Den Hul Second	130.00



Speaker Cables

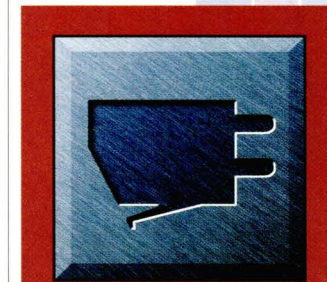
KEY
 ⊕ – Stranded construction.
 ⊙ – Solid-core construction.

Price per mono metre, unterminated.

Acoustic Energy AESC-C3	11.95
ALR/Jordan QMM	5.00
Apertura Silver	82.50
Art Yam Church M2000	470.00
Art Yam Church 5000	795.00
Audio Note AN-D	4.50
Audio Note AN-B	16.50
Audio Note AN-L	29.50
Audio Note AN-SP	150.00
Audio Note AN-SPx	450.00
Audioquest Type 2	3.50
Audioquest F-18	3.60
Audioquest Type 6+	9.00
Audioquest Indigo +	15.00
Audioquest Crystal +	25.00
Audioquest Forest	75.00
Audioquest Argent +	125.00
Audioquest Clear 3	200.00
Cable Talk Theatre 2	1.50
Cable Talk The Flat One	2.00
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25
Cable Talk Talk 4.1	4.25
Cable Talk Talk 3.1 Biwire	4.50
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	7.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1 Biwire	8.50
Cable Talk Symphony 3	12.50
Cable Talk Concert 2.1 Biwire	14.00
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin SC	35.00
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five SC	59.00
Cardas Audio Cross SC	99.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five SC	109.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink GoldenS SC	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	789.00
ChordCo Myth	6.00
ChordCo Legend	15.00
ChordCo Odyssey	17.00
DNM-Reson LSC	6.95
DNM-Reson LSCB	13.95
Ecosse Ref FS2.16	1.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.2	2.50
Ecosse Ref CS2.3	3.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.15	5.75
Ecosse Ref MS2.2	15.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.3	20.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.15	30.00
Ecosse Ref US2	450.00
Gale XL105	1.00
Gale XL189	1.00
Gale XL315	2.00
Gale XL160-2	2.50
Gale XL315-2	3.99
Gamma Wonder Line	99.00
Goertz M1	16.00
Goertz M2	32.00

Goertz Big Boy	64.00
GT Audio Speaker	50.00
Ixos 607	2.00
Ixos 6004	3.00
Ixos 6003	3.00
Ixos 605	3.00
Kimber 4PR	3.90
Kimber 4VS	9.00
Kimber 4TC	19.60
Kimber 8TC	32.70
Kimber 4AC	394.00
Kimber 8AG	656.00
LAT International SS 800	16.00
LAT International BWIRE	23.00
LAT International SS 1000	36.00
Lieder Pad	133.00
Lieder Bel Canto	188.00
Lieder Spoor	253.00
Lieder Straat	463.00
Lieder Weg	663.00
Linn K20	4.00
Linn K400	10.00
Linn K600	15.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	35.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	40.00
Mission Duett	1.90
Mission Quartet bi-wire	3.90
Naim NAC AS	5.70
Nordost Octava	3.00
Nordost 4-Flat	12.00
Nordost Blue Heaven Spkr	55.00
Nordost Red Dawn	110.00
Nordost SPM	325.00
Ortofon SPK100	3.00
Ortofon SPK200	5.00
Ortofon SPK300	8.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 32	750
Precious Metals Silver L'r 102	10.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 34	15.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 104	20.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 106	30.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 108	40.00
Puresonic OFC 7892	1.20
Puresonic OFC 7844	1.65
Puresonic OFC 7845	1.95
Puresonic OFC 7891	2.85
Puresonic OFC 7816	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7832	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7812	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7825	3.75
Puresonic PSOC 7801	6.95
Puresonic PSOC 7802	9.50
Puresonic PSOC 7803	18.00
QED Qudos Micro	27.00
QED Qudos micro 4 core	1.25
QED Qudos 4 core	2.00
QED Qudos Bi-Wire	4.00
QED Qudos Silver	4.50
QED Profile 4x4	4.95
QED Profile Silver 12	9.00
Rega REGA	15.00
Roksan ROK-Speaker	2.00
Shinpy Red Devil	6.00
Shinpy Red Star 2	30.00
Shinpy Black Star 2	39.00
Shinpy Pulsar 2	62.00
Shinpy Quasar 2	104.00
Siltech LS2-45	208.00
Siltech FT-12 Mkl	109.00
Siltech LS4-120	240.00
Silver Sounds 12 Gauge	549.00
Silver Sounds 10 Gauge	15.00
Silver Sounds 8 Gauge	35.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic HC	75.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic HC	10.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice	15.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice Ultra	55.00
Sonic Link AST50	85.00
Sonic Link AST75	1.95
Sonic Link AST200	2.50
Sonic Link AST200x2	2.95
Sonic Link S300	5.95
Sonic Link S130x2	10.00
Sonic Link S300x2	18.00
Sonic Link S900	20.00
Sonic Link S600x2	40.00
Sonic Link Black Rhodium 4	60.00
Straightwire Quartet	80.00
Supra Classic 2.5	1,000.00
Supra Linc 2.5 Flex	8.00
Supra Phy 2.0	2.49
Supra Linc 4.0 Flex	3.49
Supra Phy 3.4	3.95
Supra Quattro 4x4	4.95
Supra Classic 10	4.95
Tara Prism Extra	6.95
Tara Klara	8.95
Tara Prism Omni	9.95
Tara Prism 2+2	1.95
Tech + Link SPC 79	2.95
Transparent Cable Musichord Spkr	3.95
Transparent Cable The Wave	8.20
Transparent Cable Music Wave Spkr	1.20
Vampire Wire SC-384	11.00
Vampire Wire SC-554	23.00
Vampire Wire ST-I	25.00
Vampire Wire SC-1108	11.00
Vampire Wire ST-II	15.00
Vampire Wire ST-III	30.00
Van Den Hul Skyline HB	48.00
Van Den Hul Snowline	73.00
Van Den Hul Skytrack HB	3.50
Van Den Hul Gold Water	5.00
Van Den Hul Cleanwater	5.50
Van Den Hul Snowtrack	7.00
Van Den Hul CS122 HB	10.00
Van Den Hul Cleartrack	12.00
Van Den Hul D352 HB	13.00
Van Den Hul Teatrac HB	20.00
Van Den Hul SCS12	22.00
Van Den Hul Magnum HB	34.00
Van Den Hul The Wind HB	38.00
Van Den Hul Revolution HB	40.00
Van Den Hul Revelation HB	76.00
Van Den Hul The Third	120.00
XLO Pro 625	900.00
XLO Pro 600	4.00
XLO Pro 600	16.60

Vampire Wire ST-I	30.00
Vampire Wire SC-1108	30.00
Vampire Wire ST-II	48.00
Vampire Wire ST-III	73.00
Van Den Hul Skyline HB	3.50
Van Den Hul Snowline	5.00
Van Den Hul Skytrack HB	5.50
Van Den Hul Gold Water	7.00
Van Den Hul Cleanwater	7.00
Van Den Hul Snowtrack	10.00
Van Den Hul CS122 HB	12.00
Van Den Hul Cleartrack	13.00
Van Den Hul D352 HB	20.00
Van Den Hul Teatrac HB	22.00
Van Den Hul SCS12	34.00
Van Den Hul Magnum HB	38.00
Van Den Hul The Wind HB	40.00
Van Den Hul Revolution HB	76.00
Van Den Hul Revelation HB	120.00
Van Den Hul The Third	900.00
XLO Pro 625	4.00
XLO Pro 600	16.60



CARTRIDGES

KEY
 MM – Moving-magnet type.
 MC – Moving-coil type.

UP TO £100

Audio Note IO1	MM	99
Audio Technica AT-91	MM	15
Audio Technica AT-95E	MM	20
Audio Technica AT-110E	MM	28
Audio Technica AT450E	MM	70
Audio Technica AT440ML	MM	90
Benz-Micro MC20EII	MC	70
Denon DL110	MC	70
Denon DL160	MC	90
Denon DL103	MC	100
Goldring Elan	MM	19
Goldring Elektra	MM	29
Goldring 1006	MM	59
Goldring 1012GX	MM	79
Goldring 1022GX	MM	99
Grado ZTE+1	MM	27
Grado ZCE+1	MM	37
Grado ZFE+1	MM	48
Grado Prestige Black	MM	49
Grado Prestige Green	MM	59
Grado Prestige Blue	MM	69
Grado ZF1+	MM	83
Grado Prestige Red	MM	99
N'hain Tracer I	MM	98
Ortofon VMS2	MM	15
Ortofon OM 5E	MM	20
Ortofon OM 10	MM	30
Ortofon 510	MM	40
Ortofon OM DJ	MM	50
Ortofon OM 20	MM	70
Ortofon 520	MM	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	MM	75
Ortofon Concorde DJ	MM	80
Ortofon OM 30	MM	90
Ortofon 530	MM	100
Pickering TE-15	MM	20
Pickering VE-15	MM	25
Pickering T-E	MM	25
Pickering V15-DJ	MM	28
Pickering TL-E	MM	35
Pickering TL-2E	MM	45
Pickering XV15-625E	MM	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	MM	50
Pickering TL-2-S	MM	55
Pickering XV15-7575	MM	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	MM	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	MM	70
Pickering TL3S	MM	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	MM	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	MM	100
Pickering TL-4-S	MM	100
Rega Bias	MM	39
Rega RB78	MM	39
Rega Super Bias	MM	59
Rega Elys	MM	85
Shure M70BX	MM	21
Shure M92E	MM	22
Shure SC35C	MM	29
Shure M447X	MM	35

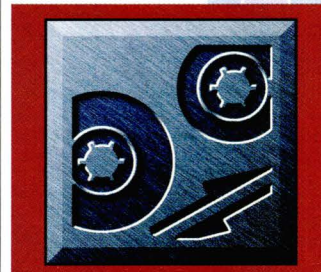
CARTRIDGES (CONTINUED)

Shure M44GX	MM	35
Stanton 500AL II	MM	35
Stanton 500EL	MM	44
Stanton 680AL/X	MM	59
Stanton 680EL/X	MM	74
Sumiko Oyster	MM	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	MM	50
Sumiko Pearl	MM	70
Sumiko Blue Point	MC	100

OVER £100

Audio Note IO2	MM	139
Audio Note Soara	MC	795
Audio Note IO1V	MC	1,095
Audio Note IO1LD	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9	MC	330
Benz-Micro The Glider	MC	650
Benz-Micro M090	MC	700
Benz-Micro L040	MC	700
Benz-Micro H200	MC	700
Benz-Micro Reference	MC	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	MC	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	MC	1,600
Clearaudio Aurum-Alpha	MM	135
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta	MM	195
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta/S	MM	265
Clearaudio Gamma-S	MC	745
Clearaudio Signature	MC	1,495
Clearaudio Accurate	MC	2,500
Clearaudio Insider	MC	4,900
Denon DL304	MC	200
Dynavector 10X4II	MC	189
Dynavector 23RS	MC	375
Dynavector 17D2	MC	450
Dynavector XX-1L	MC	998
Dynavector XX-1	MC	998
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	MC	1,698
Goldring Eroica LX	MM	110
Goldring Eroica	MM	120
Goldring 1042	MM	120
Goldring Elite	MC	220
Goldring Excel VX	MC	525
Grado Prestige Silver	MM	119
Grado Prestige Gold	MM	149
Grado Signature Junior	MM	150
Grado Signature BMZ	MM	250
Grado Signature MCZ	MM	375
Grado Signature TLZ	MM	650
Grado Signature XTZ	MM	975
Grado Reference	MM	995
Koetsu Red T	MC	1,550
Koetsu Red K Sig	MC	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	MC	2,297
Koetsu Signature	MC	3,218
Koetsu Gold PR	MC	5,498
Linn K9	MM	125
Linn Klyde	MC	500
Linn Arkiv	MC	1,000
London Decca Maroon	MM	299
London Decca Gold	MM	319
London Decca Maroon Dp	MM	379
London Decca Gold Dp	MM	399
London Decca S Gold	MM	439
London Decca S Gold Dp	MM	519
London Decca Jubilee	MM	999
Lyra Lydian	MC	649
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	MC	995
Lyra Pannassus DCT	MC	1,895
N'ham Tracer II	MM	310
N'ham Tracer III	MM	410
N'ham Tracer IV	MM	660
Ortofon MC15 Super II	MC	140
Ortofon 540	MM	140
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	MC	150
Ortofon MC25E	MC	200
Ortofon MC25FL	MC	250
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	MC	300
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	MC	450
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	MC	550
Ortofon MC2000II	MC	800
Ortofon MC Rohmann	MC	1,000
Ortofon MC3000 II	MC	1,200
Ortofon MC7500	MC	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	MM	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	MM	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Reson Mica	MM	185
Reson Rea	MM	250
Reson Aciore	MC	299
Reson Etile	MC	455
Reson Lexe	MC	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	MM	130
Roksan Shiraz	MC	970
Shure V15XMR	MM	295
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	120
Sumiko BPS	MC	250
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	1,000
Transfiguration Temper	MC	1,950
Van Den Hul MM-1	MM	250
Van Den Hul MM-2	MM	300
Van Den Hul DDT-II	MC	600
Van Den Hul MC-10	MC	750

Van Den Hul MC-One	MC	900
Van Den Hul MC-ONE Super	MC	1,050
Van Den Hul MC-Two	MC	1,200
Van Den Hul The Frog Low o/p	MC	1,500
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIISLA	MC	2,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIIGLA	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIIGLA	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIICMN	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIIHN	MC	2,900
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	MC	3,000
Wilson Benesch Matrix	MC	786
Wilson Benesch Carbon	MC	1,348
Wilson Benesch Analog	MC	1,572



CASSETTE DECKS

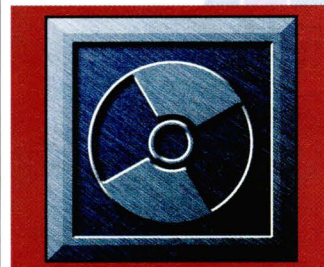
KEY
 ⇐ - Autoreverse - no need to remove and turn around the tape.
 3-H - 3 heads, i.e. separate record and replay heads.
UP TO £200

Akai DXW1100	⇐	200
Akai DX1200	⇐	200
Ariston WX-510	⇐	60
Denon DRM-550	⇐	160
Denon DRW-585	⇐	200
Goodmans Delta 801	⇐	130
JVC TD-X372BK	⇐	170
JVC TD-R472BK	⇐	200
Kenwood KX-W4080	⇐	160
Kenwood KX-3080	⇐	160
Kenwood KX-W6080	⇐	200
Kenwood KX-5080S	⇐	200
Marantz SD-455	⇐	169
Marantz SD-57	⇐	199
Onkyo K 185	⇐	200
Pioneer CT-S250	⇐	150
Pioneer CT-W205R	⇐	160
Pioneer CT-W505R	⇐	180
Pioneer CT-S450S	⇐	200
Pioneer CT-W606DR	⇐	200
Sony TC-KE200	⇐	120
Sony TC-WE525	⇐	160
Sony TC-KB820S	⇐	180
Sony TC-WE725	⇐	180
TEAC W-416	⇐	100
TEAC V-615	⇐	130
TEAC RH-300	⇐	160
TEAC W-790R	⇐	170
TEAC V-1050	⇐	180
TEAC RH-500	⇐	200
Technics RS-BX501	⇐	170
Technics RS-TR373	⇐	180
Technics RS-TR474	⇐	200
Technics RS-A26	⇐	200
Yamaha KX-393	⇐	130
Yamaha KX-W321	⇐	170
Yamaha KX-493	⇐	180

OVER £200

Carver TDR-1550	⇐	629
Denon DRM-650S	⇐	230
Denon DRM-740	⇐	270
Denon DRS-810	⇐	310
H/K TD420	⇐	250
H/K TD450	⇐	350
JVC TD-V662BK	⇐	270
JVC TD-W718BK	⇐	300
NAD 613	⇐	230
NAD 614	⇐	270
NAD 616	⇐	300
Onkyo TA 6210	⇐	230
Onkyo TARW 211	⇐	270
Onkyo TARW 311	⇐	320
Onkyo TA 6310	⇐	330
Onkyo KR 609	⇐	350
Onkyo KW 606	⇐	370
Onkyo TARW 411	⇐	370
Onkyo K 611	⇐	460
Pioneer CT-S550S	⇐	250
Pioneer CT-W806DR	⇐	300
Pioneer CT-S550S Precision	⇐	340
Pioneer CT-S830S	⇐	500
Pioneer CT-95	⇐	1,000
Rotel RC960XB	⇐	250
Sony TC-WE825S	⇐	230
Sony TC-KA6ES	⇐	550
T+A CC1200R	⇐	1,180

TEAC W-860R	⇐	230
TEAC W-6000R	⇐	450
TEAC V-6030S	⇐	550
TEAC V-8030S	⇐	650
Technics RS-AZ7	⇐	270
Technics RS-TR575	⇐	280
Yamaha KX-580SE	⇐	250
Yamaha KX-W592	⇐	280



CD PLAYERS

KEY
 ⇐ - Multiplayer: can be loaded with more than one disc.
 ⇐10 - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
 ⇐1010 - Musical Fidelity A2 CD Myryad T-10
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.
UP TO £250

Akai CD1100	⇐10	200
Akai CDM1200	⇐	230
AMC CD9	⇐	130
AMC CD8A	⇐	150
AMC CD9/DACB	⇐10	200
Ariston CDX700	⇐	70
Ariston CDC610	⇐	90
Ariston CDX710	⇐	100
Cambridge CD4	⇐10	150
Cambridge CD4SE	⇐10	200
Cambridge CD6	⇐10	250
Denon DCD-435	⇐	130
Denon DCD-635	⇐	180
Denon DCD-735	⇐	230
H/K HD710	⇐10	200
JVC XL-V120BK	⇐	110
JVC XL-V130BK	⇐	120
JVC XL-V230BK	⇐	140
JVC XL-F116BK	⇐	180
JVC XL-F216BK	⇐	200
JVC XL-Z574BK	⇐	250
Kenwood DP-1080	⇐	200
Kenwood DP-2080	⇐	200
Kenwood DP-R3090	⇐	140
Kenwood DP-R4090	⇐	160
Kenwood DP-3080	⇐	170
Kenwood DP-R6090	⇐	200
Kenwood DP-4090	⇐10	250
Marantz CD-38	⇐	130
Marantz CC-38	⇐	200
Marantz CD-48	⇐10	200
Marantz CD-57	⇐10	230
Marantz CD-67II	⇐10	250
NAD 522	⇐	170
NAD 510	⇐	200
NAD 523	⇐	250
NAD 512	⇐10	250
Philips CD711	⇐	120
Philips CD721	⇐	130
Philips CD751	⇐10	150
Philips CDC751	⇐	180
Pioneer PD-106	⇐	130
Pioneer PD-206	⇐	150
Pioneer PD-F606	⇐	200
Pioneer PD-M603	⇐	200
Pioneer PD-S505	⇐	200
Pioneer PD-F706	⇐	250
Rotel RCD-930AX	⇐	180
Sansui CD220	⇐10	200
Sherwood CD-4030R	⇐	180
Sherwood CDC680	⇐10	180
Sherwood CDC650R	⇐10	180
Sony CDP-M205	⇐	110
Sony CDP-XE210	⇐	120
Sony CDP-M305	⇐	130
Sony CDP-XE310	⇐	140
Sony CDP-CE105	⇐	150
Sony CDP-XE510	⇐	180
Sony CDP-CE315	⇐	200
Sony CDP-C325M	⇐	200
Synergy CDJ1210	⇐	120
TEAC CDP-1120	⇐	100
TEAC CD-P1820	⇐	130
TEAC CD-P3450SE	⇐	200
TEAC PD-D2400	⇐	200
TEAC PD-H500	⇐10	240
Technics SL-PG390A	⇐	90
Technics SL-PG490A	⇐	100
Technics SL-PG590A	⇐	120
Technics SL-PD688	⇐	140

Technics SL-PD888	⇐	160
Technics SL-P5670D	⇐	200
Technics SL-MC410	⇐	250
Technics SL-P5770D	⇐10	250
Yamaha CDX-393	⇐	130
Yamaha CDC-565	⇐	170
Yamaha CDX-493	⇐	180
Yamaha CDX-9	⇐	200
Yamaha CDC-665	⇐10	220
Yamaha CDX-593	⇐10	230

£251 TO £500

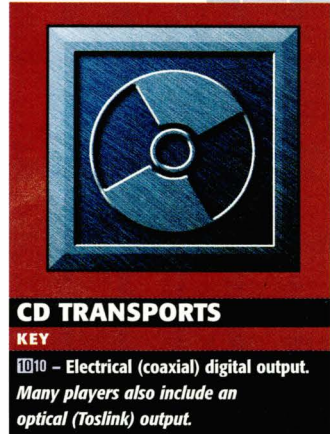
Arcam Alpha 7	⇐10	330
Arcam Alpha MCD	⇐	450
Aura CD100	⇐10	400
Carver MV-5	⇐	469
Denon DCD-835	⇐	280
Denon DCM-260	⇐	300
Denon DCD-1550AR	⇐10	350
H/K HD730	⇐10	300
H/K FL8500	⇐	300
JVC XL-Z674BK	⇐	300
Kenwood DP-R7080	⇐	300
Kenwood DP-9090	⇐	300
Kenwood DP-5090	⇐	300
Kenwood DP-7090	⇐	400
Marantz CD-67SE	⇐10	350
Marantz CC-870	⇐	400
Marantz CD-63IKI	⇐10	400
Musical Fidelity E60	⇐10	300
Musical Fidelity A2 CD	⇐10	500
Myryad T-10	⇐	400
NAD 513	⇐	290
NAD 515	⇐	350
NAD 514	⇐	370
NAD 517	⇐	400
Onkyo DX 7210	⇐10	260
Onkyo C721	⇐10	290
Onkyo DXC 320	⇐	380
Onkyo DX 7510	⇐10	400
Onkyo CM 716	⇐	450
Parasound C/DP-1000	⇐10	500
Pioneer PD-F805	⇐	300
Pioneer PD-S705	⇐	300
Pioneer PD-F906	⇐	350
Pioneer PD-S904	⇐	400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	⇐10	460
Rotel RCD951	⇐	300
Rotel RCD971	⇐	350
Rotel CDP-CX55	⇐	280
Sony CDP-XE900E	⇐	300
Sony CDP-CX200	⇐	380
Sony CDP-XA20ES	⇐	450
Sony CDP-X3000ES	⇐10	500
Synergy CDJ2010	⇐	300
Yamaha CDX-993	⇐10	400

£501 TO £1000

Acurus ACD11	⇐10	899
Alchemist Nexus	⇐10	600
Arcam Alpha 8	⇐10	520
Arcam Alpha 8SE	⇐10	600
Arcam Alpha 9	⇐10	800
Audio Analogue Paganini	⇐	695
Audiolab 8000CD	⇐10	1,000
Audiomeca Obsession	⇐	999
AVI S2000MC2	⇐	899
AVI S2000MC 24 Ref	⇐	999
Creek CD42	⇐	599
DPA Renaissance int CD	⇐	950
Helios Model 3	⇐	650
Helios Model 2	⇐10	950
Heybrook Signature II	⇐	989
Linn Mimik	⇐10	875
Magnum CD2020	⇐	595
Marantz CD-17	⇐	800
Micromega Premium 10	⇐	650
Micromega Premium 20	⇐	850
Mission dAD3	⇐	598
Mission dAD3Q	⇐	898
Monrio Asty PL	⇐10	675
Monrio Privilege	⇐10	995
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	⇐	799
Myryad T-20	⇐	600
Myryad MC100	⇐	700
Orelle CD100EA	⇐	649
Orelle CD-100eSA	⇐	999
Pioneer PDS-06	⇐	550
Primare D20	⇐	799
Quad 77 Bus	⇐	700
Quad 77 Mains	⇐	900
Roksan Caspian	⇐10	895
Rotel RCD991	⇐10	750
Sony CDP-XA50ES	⇐	1,000
Talk Electronics Thunder 3	⇐	1,000
TEAC VRDS-8	⇐	600
TEAC VRDS-9		

OVER £1000

Acoustic Precision Eikos	£1,850
Alchemist Forseti	£1,995
Audio Research CD1	£3,290
Audio Research CD2	£4,100
Audiomeca Keops	£1,500
Audiomeca Talisman	£2,150
Audiomeca Talisman SE	£2,300
Cary CD-301	£2,495
Classe CDP-3	£1,395
Conrad-Johnson DF-2	£1,695
Conrad-Johnson DV-2b	£2,495
Copland CDA-266	£1,199
Copland CD277	£1,800
Copland CDA288	£2,199
Cymbal CDP12	£1,299
Helios Model 1	£1,250
Helios Stargate	£2,250
Krell KPS30i	£5,490
Krell KPS-20i	£9,990
Marantz CD-17KIS	£1,100
Mark Levinson 39	£4,995
McIntosh MCD7009	£3,699
Meracus Tanto	£1,395
Meracus Imago Player	£4,495
Meridian 506	£1,100
Meridian 508	£1,995
Micromega Solo	£2,500
Myriad MCD500	£1,300
Naim CD3-5	£1,050
Naim CDX	£2,200
Oracle CD Player	£9,525
Pink Triangle Numeral	£1,049
Pink Triangle Litaural	£2,200
Primare D302	£1,799
Proceed CDP	£3,395
Resolution CDS0	£2,995
Roksan Attezza-DP3P	£1,495
Sheame Phase 7	£1,499
Sherwood CD1	£1,100
Sonic Frontiers Anthem CD1	£1,699
Sonic Frontiers SFCD-1	£3,799
T+A CD1210R	£1,185
T+A CD1220R	£1,540
Theta Digital Miles	£2,495
XTC CDP-1	£1,250
YBA Integre	£1,250
YBA CD3	£2,250
YBA CD2	£3,350
YBA CD1	£4,500



CD TRANSPORTS

KEY
 £10 - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Alchemist Forseti Drive	£1,100
Altis CDT III	£4,995
Arcam Delta 250	£800
Audio Research CDT1	£3,290
Audio Synthesis Transcend Decade	£3,295
Audiolab 8000CDM	£1,400
Audiomeca Damnation	£999
Audiomeca Damnation SE	£1,100
Audiomeca Talisman	£1,850
Audiomeca Talisman SE	£1,999
Audiomeca Talisman DOB	£2,250
Audiomeca Mephisto	£2,350
Audiomeca Mephisto SE	£2,500
Audiomeca Mephisto	£2,750
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	£1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	£775
Jadis JD3	£4,850
Jadis JD2	£4,990
Jadis JD1	£12,500
Krell KPS-20t	£8,490
Linn Kark	£1,850
Mark Levinson 37	£3,995
Mark Levinson 31.5	£9,295
Meracus Imago	£3,995
Meridian 500	£1,245
Micromega Drive 3	£1,000
Micromega Data	£2,000
Monrio Bimatch	£950
Muse Model 5	£1,800
Oracle CD Drive	£7,415
Pink Triangle Cardinal II	£909

PS Audio Lambda TR	£2,250
PS Audio Lambda AT&T	£2,778
Rogers SC-8t	£2,699
Roksan Attezza-DP3	£1,295
Sonic Frontiers Transport 3	£5,999
T+A CM1200R	£875
TEAC VRDS-T1	£550
TEAC P-30	£2,500
Theta Digital Data Basic II	£2,397
Theta Digital Data III NTSC/PAL	£5,455
Thorens TCD-2000	£999
Trichord Digital Turntable	£719
Tube Tech Fulcrum	£1,000
Wadia 8	£3,195
Wadia 20	£4,370

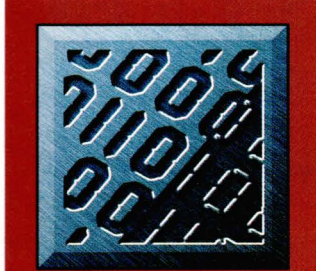


DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)

KEY
 4 - Number of digital inputs

Alchemist Forseti DAC	£1,100
Altis Reference	£4,995
AMC DAC8	£130
Arcam Black Box 50	£350
Arcam Black Box 500	£500
Audio Note DAC1	£675
Audio Note DAC2	£1,099
Audio Note DAC3	£1,750
Audio Research DAC5	£2,148
Audio Research DAC3	£2,335
Audio Research DAC3	£4,195
Audio Research DAC3	£4,555
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade	£2,795
Audiolab 8000DAX	£1,000
Audiomeca Elixir	£799
Audiomeca Ambrosia	£1,850
Boulder 2020	£21,000
Chord DSC900	£1,850
Chord DSC1100	£2,575
Chord DSC1500	£3,850
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	£1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	£1,990
dCS Elgar	£8,500
DPA Little Bit 3	£325
DPA Renaissance DAC	£595
DPA Enlightenment DAC	£850
DPA SX128	£2,000
DPA SX256	£4,000
DPA SX512	£8,000
Jadis JS3	£2,129
Jadis JS1	£8,068
LFD DAC2	£1,950
LFD DAC3	£3,000
Linn Numerik	£1,500
Mark Levinson 36	£3,995
Mark Levinson 30.5	£15,950
Meracus Auriga	£1,295
Meracus Flagrare	£2,495
Meridian 566	£1,095
Micromega DAC 2	£750
Micromega Dialog	£1,750
Monrio 18B2	£795
Muse Model 2	£2,190
Muse Model 2 Plus	£2,500
Musical Fidelity X-ACT	£200
Musical Fidelity X-DAC	£300
Onkyo DX 7310	£330
PS Audio DL3	£777
PS Audio SL3	£1,449
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HCD	£2,590
PS Audio Ref Link	£4,550
Rogers SC-8m	£1,899
Roksan Attezza-D2	£595
Sonic Frontiers Processor 3	£5,999
Sumo Theorem II	£945
Sumo Theorem IIB	£1,155
TEAC D-T1	£500
Theta Digital Chroma Std	£849
Theta Digital Pro Geny	£1,145
Theta Digital Pro Prime II	£1,800
Theta Digital Pro Basic III	£2,990
Theta Digital Gen V SE	£4,300
Theta Digital Casablanca LS	£5,910
Thorens TDA-2000	£700
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	£1,395
Tube Tech Fulcrum	£1,400
Wadia 12	£1,530
Wadia 15	£3,790
Wadia 64.4	£4,750

Wadia 16	£7,395
Wadia 7	£9,995
Wadia 9	£12,790
Woodside DVAC-18	£1,499



DIGITAL RECORDERS

KEY
 MD - MiniDisc
 DAT - Digital Audio Tape
 £ - portable

Denon DMD-1000	MD	£300
Kenwood DM-7000	MD	£500
Kenwood DM-9090	MD	£550
Marantz DR700		£600
Onkyo MD-121	MD	£450
Onkyo MD 122	MD	£700
Philips CDR870		£499
Pioneer PDR-555RW		£500
Pioneer PDR-04		£700
Pioneer D-05	DAT	£900
Pioneer PDR-05	DAT	£1,000
Pioneer D-C88	DAT	£2,000
Sharp MD-R2	MD	£300
Sharp MD-R1E	MD	£300
Sharp MD-MS200H	MD	£350
Sharp MDXV300H	MD	£1,000
Sony MZ-E20	MD	£180
Sony MDS-JE510	MD	£250
Sony MZ-E30	MD	£280
Sony MDS-538	MD	£300
Sony MZ-R30	MD	£300
Sony MDS-JA30ES	MD	£699
Sony MDS-JA50ES	MD	£1,300
TEAC MDH300	MD	£300
TEAC MD-H500i	MD	£350
TEAC MD-5	MD	£600
TEAC MD-10	MD	£900
Yamaha MDX-9	MD	£300



HEADPHONES

KEY
 'D' - Dynamic type, compatible with virtually all normal headphone outputs.
 'E' - Electrostatic type; generally includes a separate power supply.
 £ - Open-back construction.
 £ - Closed-back construction.
 UP TO £40

AKG Rox	D	£30
Aural Envelope DX200	D	£20
Aural Envelope DX220	D	£30
Beyer DT111	D	£15
Beyer DT211	D	£31
Beyer DT211TV	D	£35
JVC HA-CD88	D	£18
JVC HA-D525	D	£20
JVC HA-F65	D	£20
JVC HA-D626	D	£25
Kenwood KPM-310	D	£18
Kenwood KPM-410	D	£25
KLH KHP201TW	D	£21
KLH KHP-300V	D	£25
KLH KHP-420V	D	£33
Maxell HP-2000	D	£20
Pioneer SE-A40	D	£20
Pioneer SE-A20V	D	£23
Pioneer SE-M250	D	£25
Pioneer SE-M350	D	£30

Sennheiser HD56	D	£18
Sennheiser HD433	D	£20
Sennheiser HD400	D	£25
Sennheiser HD470	D	£35
Sennheiser HD60TV	D	£40
Sony MDR-W20G	D	£18
Sony MDR-E837	D	£18
Sony MDR-P70	D	£18
Sony MDR-ED238	D	£20
Sony MDR-009TV	D	£20
Sony MDR-A34L	D	£20
Sony MDR-E848	D	£20
Sony MDR-P1TV	D	£25
Sony MDR-CD270	D	£30
Sony MDR-E868	D	£35
Sony MDR-V400	D	£40
Sony MDR-D11	D	£40
Stanton ST Pro	D	£25
Technics RP-F200	D	£30
Technics RP-HT300	D	£40
Vivanco SR150	D	£20
Vivanco SR200	D	£25
Vivanco SR250	D	£25
Vivanco SR300	D	£30
Vivanco IR5700	D	£40

OVER £41

AKG K301	D	£80
AKG K222iR	D	£100
AKG K401	D	£120
AKG K501	D	£150
AKG K333iR	D	£150
AKG K444iR	D	£180
AKG K290S	D	£250
AKG K1000	D	£700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	D	£80
Audio Technica ATHD40FS	D	£120
Audio Technica ATHM40FS	D	£120
Audio Technica ATH911	D	£120
Beyer DT311	D	£50
Beyer DT411	D	£63
Beyer DT511	D	£106
Beyer DT801	D	£125
Beyer DT811	D	£145
Beyer DT100	D	£160
Beyer DT901	D	£160
Beyer DT911	D	£170
Denon AH-D210	D	£45
Denon AH-D350	D	£65
Denon AH-D550	D	£80
Denon AH-D650	D	£95
Denon AH-D750	D	£130
Denon AH-D950	D	£150
Grado SR40	D	£45
Grado SR60	D	£79
Grado SR80	D	£100
Grado SR125	D	£150
Grado SR225	D	£200
Grado SR325	D	£300
Grado RS2	D	£495
Grado RS1	D	£695
Jecklin Float Model 1	D	£79
Jecklin Float Model 2	D	£99
Jecklin Float ELS	E	£399
JVC HA-D727	D	£43
JVC HA-W60	D	£49
JVC HA-D910	D	£65
JVC HA-D1000	D	£250
JVC HA-F25	D	£699
Philips SBC 3396	D	£70
Philips SBC HP9000	D	£90
Pioneer SE-M550	D	£50
Pioneer SE-M750	D	£60
Pradice Ergo Model 1	D	£120
Pradice Ergo Model 2	D	£140
Sennheiser HD490	D	£50
Sennheiser IS 380	D	£55
Sennheiser HD495	D	£60
Sennheiser HD500	D	£70
Sennheiser RS400	D	£80
Sennheiser HD570	D	£80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	D	£90
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	D	£100
Sennheiser IS450	D	£110
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	D	£250
Sennheiser HDC 451-1	D	£130
Sennheiser HD250II	D	£150
Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	D	£150
Sennheiser HD265-13	D	£160
Sennheiser Lucas	D	£160
Sennheiser HD25	D	£160
Sennheiser HD 580 Precision	D	£200
Sennheiser HD600	D	£250
Sennheiser Lucas/HD580	D	£260
Sennheiser IS850	D	£859
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	E	£998
Sennheiser Orpheus	E	£9,652
Sony MDR-IF120K	D	£50
Sony MDR-E888	D	£55
Sony MDR-IF125RK	D	£60
Sony MDR-V600	D	£70
Sony MDR-F1	D	£100
Sony MDR-NC5	D	£100
Sony MDR-IF420RK	D	£100
Sony MDR-CD770	D	£100
Sony MDR-D77	D	£130
Sony MDR-IF520RK	D	£150

HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Sony MDR-CD1700	D	200
Stanton DJ Pro 101/HB	D	65
Stanton DJ Pro 1000	D	95
Stanton DJ Pro 1001	D	150
Stax SR-0001	E	280
Stax SR-Lambda Nova C	E	370
Stax SR-Lambda Nova Basic	E	449
Stax SR-Lambda Nova S	E	450
Technics RP-F800	D	50
Technics RP-HT600	D	60
Technics RP-DJ1200	D	130
Vivanco IR5800	D	50
Vivanco SR850	D	50
Vivanco SR650	D	50
Vivanco FMH 3000	D	60
Vivanco SR750	D	60
Vivanco IR6000	D	70
Vivanco SR909	D	70
Vivanco IR7600	D	100
Vivanco SR1000IFL	D	100
Vivanco SR2000IFL	D	120



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS
Hi-Fi Tables

KEY
4 – Number of shelves

Alphason SM17	1	49
Alphason VSM17	1	85
Alphason GSM17	1	85

Alphason GMV1P	1	110
Alphason R17/17	3	120
Alphason GMH1P	1	150
Alphason VR17/17	3	190
Alphason GR17/17-AS	4	275
Audiophile Base 01	1	79
Audiophile S4T120	4	280
Audiophile S4T120P	4	560
BCD Model 1006/8	1	795
BCD Model 1000	3	1,250
Custom Design Aspect 650	4	240
Custom Design e-lite E4	4	250
Custom Design Aspect 500AV	3	270
Custom Design Aspect 850	5	270
Custom Design e-lite AV	6	350
Deadrock 701	1	60
Deadrock 802	2	90
Deadrock 703	3	130
Deadrock 705	5	230
Deadrock 704	4	250
Elemental Isotube x1	1	169
Elemental Isotube BS	1	199
Elemental Isotube TS	1	209
Elemental Isotube IS	1	209
Elemental Reference B1	1	329
Elemental Reference BS	1	499
Elemental Reference x1	1	499
Elemental Reference TS	1	549
Elemental Reference IS	1	549
Elemental Isotube x4	4	599
Elemental Isotube x4/Ref	4	1,199
Elemental Reference x4	4	1,599
Fi-Rax R4	6	399
Frameworks H175	1	139
Frameworks FS1	1	150
Frameworks H500	3	265
Frameworks FT2	2	285
Frameworks FT3	3	350
Frameworks H700	3	355
Frameworks H900	3	389
Heybrook Stand-Signature	4	249
Impulse Iso-plate		190
JPW 3 Tier	3	80
JPW 5 Tier	5	100
Kudos Audio Corinthian	5	600
Linn K3000		85
Mana Sound Frame		125
Mana Mini Table		150
Mana Power supply table		150
Mana Reference flat top		150
Mana Sound Shelf		175
Mana Sound Base		175

Mana Sound Stage		200
Mana Sound Table		235
Mana Ref Shelf		325
Mana Reference Table		350
Mana 2 Tier Amp stand		375
Mana 3 Tier Amp Stand		450
Mana 4 Tier Amp Stand		500
Mana 5 Tier Amp Stand		600
Mana 6 Tier Amp Stand		700
Mission Hark		298
Optimum G2	2	69
Optimum G2/Pedestal	2	99
Optimum C4/Pedestal	5	130
Optimum OPT 3406	3	149
Optimum G5/Pedestal	6	150
Optimum OPT 4906	4	199
Optimum OPT 6606	5	249
Optimum OPT 340	3	249
Optimum OPT 490	4	299
Optimum OPT 440	4	299
Optimum OPT 10206	6	299
Optimum AV 300	3	329
Optimum OPT 700	5	349
Optimum OPT 610	5	349
Optimum OPT 660	4	349
Optimum OPT 1020	6	399
Optimum OPT 1190	7	450
Projekt A3	3	145
Projekt A4	4	190
Projekt A5	5	235
Projekt B3	6	255
Projekt A6	6	280
Projekt B3i	6	300
Projekt B4	8	340
Projekt B Multi	8	345
Projekt B3ii	7	345
Projekt C3	9	375
Projekt D3	12	420
Projekt C3i	8	420
Projekt B5	10	425
Projekt C3iii	11	465
Projekt C3ii	10	465
Projekt D3i	12	500
Projekt C4	12	500
Projekt C3iv	10	510
Projekt D3ii	14	545
Projekt C Multi	9	555
Projekt D4	16	560
Quadraspire Q45 mini shelf	1	65
Quadraspire Q45 shelf	1	65
Quadraspire QKS Cabinet shelf	1	80
Quadraspire QAV shelf	1	130
Quadraspire Q4M mini table	4	250
Quadraspire Q4 table	4	250
Quadraspire Q4SP Table	4	320
Quadraspire QAV table	3	350
Quadraspire QAVSP Table	3	400
Quadraspire QK Cabinet	4	450
Reson DOMOPS	1	195
Reson DOMOWS	1	195
Sound Org Z022	1	65
Sound Org Z021	2	78
Sound Org Z030	3	100
Sound Org Z060	4	120
Sound Org Z038	5	135
Sound Org Z540	4	140
Sound Org Z545	4	150
Sound Org Z560	5	160
Sound Org Z530	3	170
Soundstyle X300	3	180
Soundstyle X305	3	210
Soundstyle X053	4	210
Soundstyle X050	4	210
Soundstyle X6300	3	215
Soundstyle X100	4	230
Soundstyle X6110	4	230
Soundstyle X058	5	240
Soundstyle X310	3	250
Soundstyle X105	5	250
Soundstyle X6053	4	255
Soundstyle X6100	4	265
Soundstyle X6310	3	275
Soundstyle X6058	5	290
Soundstyle X6105	5	300
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	5	320
Stands Unique Isolation Platform	1	52
Stands Unique Sound Support	4	249
Stands Unique Sound Tower	5	289
Stands Unique Compact Sound Supp	4	315
Stands Unique Sound Support 10	4	315
Stands Unique Sound Twr Cabinet	5	369
Stands Unique Ref Wall Support	1	550
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	10	689
Stands Unique Ref Floor Support	6	799
Target B5	5	175
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-CD	110	
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-3D	400	
Townshend S/Sink Stand 1-4	999	
Townshend Seismic Sink Stand	4	1,245
Vibraplane Passive	1	1,895
Vibraplane Active	1	3,600
Wilson Benesch Standard Shelf	1	130
Wilson Benesch Mono Block	1	265
Wilson Benesch Kevlar Shelf	1	270
Wilson Benesch Asside Basic	4	590
Wilson Benesch Asside	4	720
Wilson Benesch Triptych	1	990

HI-FI CHOICE WEBSITE

Why not use our exclusive interactive hi-fi buying guide? Find us on the Web at: <http://www.hifichoice.co.uk>. See You There!



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Speaker Stands

KEY
60 – Height of stand in cm

Alphason NCI	60	47
Alphason Akros 1	60	49
Alphason RS1	120	49
Alphason NCI	60	84
Alphason HDS-40/M	60	85
Alphason Titan S	60	125
Apollo AZ6	66	80
Arcici Q-1	30	299
Arcici Q-2	30	299
Atacama BD21	56	55
Atacama BD17		55
Atacama BD25		60
Atacama SE16		65
Atacama SE12		65
Atacama SX500		67
Atacama F2		70
Atacama F1		70
Atacama SX600		70
Atacama SL200		70
Atacama SE24	61	70
Atacama SE20		70
Atacama SX700		73
Atacama SL300		73
Atacama TP600		75
Atacama TP500		75
Atacama SE615		75
Atacama SE515		75
Atacama SE415		75
Atacama SL400		76
Atacama SE1000S		80
AVF Tower P6144BP	60	35
BCD Model 1010	60	595
Credo STD 001		284
Custom Design Tri 100	50	50
Custom Design R/S300	60	70
Custom Design M3	55	75
Custom Design M2	55	75
Custom Design M1	55	75
Custom Design Tri 300	55	85
Custom Design SCS 24	60	85
Custom Design X24	60	109
Deadrock 903	61	60
Deadrock 902	47	60
Deadrock 901	39	60
Dynaudio Trophy	60	120
Dynaudio Master	60	200
Dynaudio Ultima	60	290
Elemental Isotube SZ	49	499
Elemental Isotube SCZ	49	699
Elemental Reference SZ	42	999
Elemental Reference SCZ	52	1,499
Harbeth HL-Stands	21	249
Heybrook Stand-ULT	3	55
Heybrook Stand-56	63	69
Heybrook Stand-54	48	69
Heybrook Stand-S1	47	119
JPW MS2	45	45
JPW MS3	61	55
JPW MS1	46	80
JPW HS1	58	120
JPW HS2	45	120
Kudos Audio Arrow	60	50
Kudos Audio S-50	60	100

Don't discount the value of a good quality support, like this Optimum International OPT 490G, if you want to get the best from your sources and amps.

Kudos Audio S-100	63	270
Mission Micrometer	58	70
Mission Entasis	58	98
Opera S1	60	345
Pioneer CP-7		50
Pioneer CP-8		80
Projekt Signature	55	80
Revolver RS1	50	70
Royd Royd	55	99
SD Acoustics SD Alexandra	50	369
Silverado Silverado 1 Stand	60	350
Sonus Faber Ironwood		475
Sonus Faber Stonewood		497
Sound Org Z037		55
Sound Org Z027		55
Sound Org Z026		55
Sound Org Z518	45	65
Soundstyle X6118		100
Stands Unique Speaker support	42	159
Stands Unique Tuned Spkr Support	59	220
Stands Unique Tuned Carbon Fibre	59	299
Stands Unique Vvas CF Spkr Supp	60	349
Target TR60	60	68
Target R1	53	280

Mordaunt-Short VS-100	100	100
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100	100
NAD 801	100	100
Paradigm Micro v2	100	100
Paradigm Atom v2	100	100
Pioneer CS-3030	120	120
Polk AB410	100	100
Realistic Minimus 26	56	100
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100	100
Revolver Beretta	100	100
R Allen Minette 2	129	129
Solid HCM2	130	130
Sony SS-86E	100	100
Tangent Monitor 3	60	100
Tangent Monitor 5	80	100
Tannoy Mercury M1	120	100
TDL Nucleus 1	75	100
TDL Nucleus 2	130	100
TEAC LS-X8 Mk II	80	100
Technics SB-CS55	80	100
Technics SB-CS65	100	100
Technics SB-CS75	100	100
Wdale Valdus 100	80	100
Wdale Diamond 7.1	100	100
Wdale Valdus 200	110	110
Wdale Modus Micro	110	110

£131 TO £200

Acoustic Energy AE100	200	200
Allison Model 4A	170	170
B&W DM302	150	150
B&W CWM5	170	170
B&W DM601	199	199
Bose 201 IV	200	200
Boston CR6	149	149
Boston 325	149	149
Boston Micro 80 Sat	169	169
Boston Runabout	169	169
Boston 335	179	179
Boston 351	189	189
Boston CR7	199	199
Boston Runabout II	200	200
Celestion 15i	199	199
Cerwin-Vega CT-165	200	200
Genexa GX650	140	140
Genexa Pro	160	160
G.L.L. Imagio IC218	140	140
G.L.L. Imagio IC318	200	200
Heybrook Heylette	199	199
Heybrook HB1	199	199
Infinity SM65	150	150
Infinity Reference 1i	150	150
Infinity Reference 11i	200	200
Interaudio XL2000	200	200
Jamo Cornet 165	150	150
Jamo 38	150	150
Jamo 525	150	150
Jamo 560	150	150
Jamo 660	170	170
Jamo Cornet 65	170	170
Jamo Studio 180	180	180
Jamo D165	200	200
Jamo 68	200	200
JBL TLX121	150	150
JBL LX20	200	200
JPW ML610	170	170
JPW S5551	200	200
KEF Coda 8	189	189
KEF Q15	199	199
KEF Model 60S	199	199
Kenwood LS-200G	200	200
KLH Model 21	155	155
KLH Model 11	155	155
KLH Model 31	185	185
Magnat Vector 22	179	179
Mission 731i Pro	140	140
Mission 732i	200	200
M-A Monitor 1	200	200
Mordaunt-Short MS10i Pearl	150	150
Mordaunt-Short VS-200	150	150
Mordaunt-Short MS812	200	200
Mordaunt-Short MS20i Pearl	200	200
Mordaunt-Short VS-300	200	200
Paradigm Mini Monitor	200	200
Pioneer CS-5030	170	170
Polk M2	180	180
Polk RT3	200	200
Polk AB610	200	200
Rega Kyte	198	198
Revolver Colt	139	139
Revolver The 230	169	169
Revolver Purdey MkII	199	199
R Allen Minette 3	159	159
R Allen Dim'n 5/1 Compact	179	179
R Allen RA6	199	199
Rogers GS1	155	155
Royd A7X	199	199
Sequence 200	199	199
Solid Monitor	200	200
Sony SS-126EB	150	150
Sony SS-176E	200	200
Tangent Monitor 9	150	150
Tangent Monitor 11	180	180
Tannoy Mercury M2	140	140
TDL Nucleus 3	200	200
Technics SB-CS95	150	150

Technics SB-M20	200	200
Wdale Diamond 7.2	140	140
Wdale Valdus 300	150	150
Wdale Modus Music Two	200	200
Wdale Valdus 400	200	200
Wdale Diamond 7.3	200	200

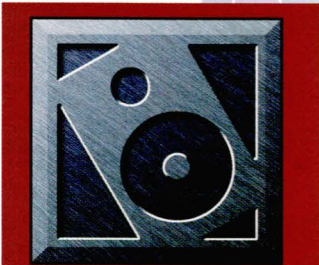
£201 TO £300

Acoustic Energy AE200	250	250
Arcaydis Baby 1	299	299
Audio Gem Opal	230	230
B&W CWM6i	280	280
B&W DM602	300	300
Bose 151	220	220
Bose 301 IV	300	300
Boston 361	219	219
Boston CR8	239	239
Boston 381	259	259
Boston CR9	279	279
Boston Voyager	299	299
Castle Isis	250	250
Celestion C1	299	299
Celestion 23i	299	299
Cerwin-Vega VS-8	250	250
Cerwin-Vega CT-330	300	300
Chario Syntar 100	249	249
Chario Ref 100	299	299
Chario Hiper 1000	299	299
Dali 102B	260	260
Dali 150	300	300
Etax Linear Response	249	249
G.L.L. Imagio IC238TL	250	250
Heybrook Optima	259	259
Heybrook Heylios	269	269
Infinity SM85	250	250
Interaudio XL3000	230	230
Interaudio XL4000	260	260
Jamo 892	220	220
Jamo Cornet 175	230	230
Jamo Classic 4	250	250
Jamo Art	270	270
Jamo D265	300	300
Jamo 307A	300	300
JBL LX2	250	250
JBL TLX151	300	300
JM Lab Tantal 507	295	295
JPW ML710	230	230
JPW ML810	260	260
JVC SX-SW10	300	300
KEF Coda 9	299	299
KEF Model 70S	299	299
KLH 83A	205	205
KLH 183A	265	265
KLH Soundbites System	276	276
KLH Model 81	280	280
KLH Model 41	290	290
Linn Kan	295	295
Mission 750LE	250	250
M-A Monitor 2	250	250
M-A Silver 3	300	300
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	275
Mordaunt-Short MS10i Classic	280	280
Mordaunt-Short MS814	300	300
Mus Tec Kestrel SE	300	300

NAD 802	280	280
NHT SuperZero	218	218
Paradigm Monitor 5	250	250
Paradigm Monitor 7	300	300
Pioneer CS-7030	230	230
Pioneer CS-9030	280	280
Pioneer S-LC1	300	300
Polk AB505	220	220
Polk M3 II	220	220
Polk RT5	250	250
Polk RT7	300	300
Polk M5	300	300
Promenade SP1	299	299
Rega EL8	298	298
Revolver The 250	250	250
R Allen Dimension Five 1	239	239
R Allen RA8	249	249
R Allen RA8M	249	249
R Allen Dimension Five 2	269	269
Rogers db101	250	250
Rogers GS3	279	279
Royd The Envoy	249	249
Royd Minstrel	275	275
Ruark Epilogue	239	239
Sequence 300	249	249
Solid HCM1	250	250
Sony SS-176EB	250	250
Tannoy Mercury M3	230	230
Tannoy Precision P10	300	300
Wdale Modus Music Four	230	230
Wdale MFM1	250	250
Wdale Valdus 500	300	300
Yamaha NS10M	300	300
ZYP A1	219	219
ZYP A2S	295	295

£301 TO £500

Acoustic Energy AE109	350	350
Acoustic Energy AE209	450	450
Acoustic Energy AE120	500	500
Allison Model 2A	420	420
Arcaydis Baby 2	399	399
Audiovector C1	399	399
AVI Neutron	499	499
B&O Beovox CX50	325	325
B&O Beovox CX100	425	425
B&W CWM8i	350	350
B&W DM305	350	350
B&W CDM2SE	400	400
B&W DM603	500	500
B&W Signature 7	500	500
Bandor Pictures	352	352
Blue Room Mini Pod	400	400
Boston Micro 90 Sat	369	369
Boston Micro 80 Sys	369	369
Boston VR20	380	380
Castle Tay	350	350
Castle Kendal	400	400
Castle Eden	470	470
Celestion 25i	399	399
Celestion 30i	449	449
Celestion 35i	499	499
Cerwin-Vega VS-10	350	350
Chario Syntar 100T	399	399



LOUDSPEAKERS

KEY

- ⌋ - Floorstander; larger models requiring no separate stand.
- ⌋ - Stand mount; smaller models designed to be raised above the floor.
- ⌋ - Wall mount; designed to be sited on or near the wall.
- ⌋ - Box type, including infinite baffle, reflex and transmission line types.
- ⌋ - Horn type; mostly large and very efficient.
- ⌋ - Panel type, including electrostatic and planar magnetic types.

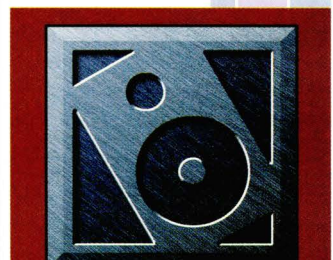
UP TO £130

Allison Micro Monitors	95	95
Allison Mini References	120	120
Ariston MSX 03	30	30
Ariston MSX 05	50	50
Celestion 12i	119	119
Denon SC-M2	80	80
Denon SC-E313SE	130	130
Gale Mini Monitors	70	70
Gale Gold Monitors	90	90
Gale 2i	130	130
Genexa GX300	80	80
Genexa GX330	80	80
G.L.L. Arena	90	90
G.L.L. Imagio IC208	100	100
Goodmans Active 75	65	65
Heybrook Prima 2	129	129
Interaudio XL1000	130	130
Jamo Studio-80	70	70
Jamo SAT-90	90	90
Jamo Cornet 25	100	100
Jamo D-110	100	100
Jamo SAT-170	110	110
Jamo Studio-110	110	110
Jamo Cornet 145	110	110
Jamo Cornet 35	120	120
Jamo Artina	120	120
Jamo D-115	120	120
Jamo 28	125	125
JBL TLX111	120	120
JPW Mini Monitor	60	60
JPW ML110	70	70
JPW Gold Monitor	80	80
JPW ML210	80	80
JPW ML310	90	90
JPW ML410	100	100
JPW ML510	130	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60	60
JVC SP-V50	80	80
JVC SP-X220TBK	100	100
JVC SP-SX50BK	130	130
KEF Coda 7	129	129
Kenwood LS-90UK	130	130
Mission 700	130	130
Mission 73 i	130	130

JBL 4312 Mk II: listen to your old rock albums as they sounded in the recording studio.



Bose A1mass AM5	900	TDL Cheviot CF300	850	Shahinian Arc	1,875	Meridian DSP5500	5,950
Bose 701	1,000	Technics SB-M1000	1,500	Shahinian Obelisk	2,695	Meridian DSP6000	9,400
Boston VR40	1,000	Titan Tower T/4	1,175	Shinpy Eurtmica	1,995	M-A Studio 50	3,300
Cabasse Farella 400	950	Totem Model One	1,195	Shinpy Altair	2,895	M-A Studio 60	5,000
Castle Harlech	880	Triangle Antal	1,099	Silverado Silverado 1	1,995	Naim DBL Active	8,050
Castle Howard S2	1,200	Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Sonus Faber Minima Amator	1,566	Neolith NEO 2	3,499
Celestion A1	899			Sound-Lab Quantum	2,150	Neolith NEO 3	4,999
Celestion C3	999			S Coast Excalibur	2,750	NHT Model 3.3	3,500
Celestion A2	1,499			Spendor SP7/1	1,990	Paragon Regent	3,490
Cerwin-Vega AL-1000	1,100	£1501 TO £3000		Spendor SP100	2,099	ProAc Response 3.8	3,990
Cerwin-Vega 1515	1,300	Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,695	T+A TB 140	1,760	ProAc Response 5	9,000
Chario Ref 1000T	999	Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,695	Tannoy Definition D500	1,999	ProAc Response 4	12,000
Chario Academy 1	1,299	Alon I Mk II	1,795	Tannoy Stirling TW	2,200	Prof Monitor Co MB1P	4,370
Clements Reference 1	995	Alon II Mk II	2,495	Tannoy Definition D700	2,500	Prof Monitor Co BBS A	16,688
Cura CA-21	999	Apertura Agora Signature	2,295	TDL Studio Monitor-m	2,750	Quad ESL63	3,450
Dali 850	1,100	Apertura Tanagra	2,395	Totem Mann-2	2,795	Rehdeko RK125	3,200
Def Tech BP8B	1,000	Apertura Tanagra Sig.	2,795	Triangle Zays	1,750	Rehdeko RK145	4,800
Def Tech BP10B	1,500	ATC SCM20SL	1,750	Triangle Altimis	2,250	Rehdeko RK175	8,800
Diapason Prelude II	875	ATC SCM20 Tower SL	2,400	Triangle Extan	2,950	Revel Gem	5,295
Diapason Karis	1,250	Audio Note AN-E/D	1,520	Wilson Benesch Orator	2,900	Rockport Syzygy	15,000
Dynaudio Contour 1.1	879	Audio Note AN-E/SPx	2,250			Rockport Procyon	32,500
Dynaudio Contour 1.3	1,198	Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749			SD Acoustics SD1E	3,495
Electrocompaniet EC-M1	995	Audio Physic Tempo	1,999			Shahinian Hawk	4,995
Electrocompaniet EC-Qube	1,195	Audio Wk'p Cyclone 34	2,000			Shahinian Diapason	8,895
Electrocompaniet EC-Qube SE	1,495	Audiovector M3	1,899	OVER £3000		Shinpy Enigma	3,995
Epos ES15	890	Audiovector M3 Sig	2,499	Acoustic Energy AE5	7,995	Shinpy Euphonia	5,995
Epos ES22	1,185	Avalon Monitor	2,995	Alon Lotus SE	3,500	Shinpy Magnifica Suprema	14,500
Harbeth HL-K6	1,049	B&O Beolab 6000	1,550	Alon V Mk III	5,495	Shun Mook Bella Voice	6,800
Harbeth HL-Compact 7	1,499	B&O Beolab 8000	2,100	Alon Adriana	8,500	Sonus Faber Electa Amator	3,293
Harbeth BBC L55/12A	1,499	B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,650	Alon Circe	12,000	Sonus Faber Extrema	6,500
Heybrook Quintet	1,199	B&W Matrix 804	1,695	Alon Phalanx	19,000	Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790
Impulse Kora	1,250	B&W Matrix 803s2	2,495	Apertura Athena	6,995	Sound-Lab Aura	6,490
Infinity Kappa 80	995	B&W Matrix 802s3	2,995	Apertura Atlante	8,995	Sound-Lab Pristine III+	7,990
Infinity Kappa 90	1,295	BKS Audio Hybrid 128	2,549	ATC SCM20A PRO	3,049	Sound-Lab A-3	11,990
Jamo Concert 8	1,300	Bose 901 VI	1,650	ATC SCM50PSL	4,250	Sound-Lab Ultimate II	13,950
JBL L40	1,000	Boston Lynfield 300L	2,000	ATC SCM100PSL	4,950	Sound-Lab A-1	13,990
JBL P515	1,000	Bravura Virtuoso Bronze	2,995	ATC SCM50ASL	5,775	Sound-Lab Ultimate III	18,950
JBL SVA 2100	1,250	Carver AL-111P	1,999	ATC SCM200ASL	15,595	Sound-Lab Ultimate I	23,950
JBL L80	1,250	Cary SP-301	2,295	ATC SCM300ASL	17,731	Spendor SP9/1	3,450
JBL L90	1,500	Celestion A3	2,399	Audio Note AN-JSE Silver	7,900	T+A A4D	3,850
JM Lab Cobalt 815	900	Celestion Kingston	2,500	Audio Note AN-ESE Silver	9,600	T+A A3D	4,550
JM Lab Electra 905	1,095	Chano Academy 2	1,649	Audio Physic Virgo 2	3,399	T+A A2D	8,400
JM Lab Cobalt 820	1,175	Clements Reference 7	1,995	Audio Physic Avanti 2	6,699	Tannoy Edinburgh TW	3,250
Jordan Watts JH1+1	1,150	Credo SPB 003	1,820	Audio Physic Caldera	10,599	Tannoy Definition D900	3,999
JPW Ruby 4	1,000	Credo SPB 009	2,453	Audio Physic Medea	24,999	Tannoy GRF Memory TW	4,000
KEF Q75	999	Cura CA-30	1,699	Audiovector 5X	3,999	Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600
KEF Ref. Model One	1,199	Dali Grand Coupe	2,500	Audiovector 6X	5,699	Tannoy Canterbury 15 TW	7,720
Kelly KT3	1,200	Def Tech BP2002	2,400	Avalon Avatar	4,495	Tannoy Westminster Royal	14,920
Keswick Torino	999	Diapason Adamantes II	1,895	Avalon Arcus	6,000	TDL Ref Standard-m	6,000
Keswick Figaro Evolution	1,099	Diapason Adamantes III	1,995	Avalon Eclipse	6,495	Triangle Nemo Altair	4,250
Keswick Milano	1,199	Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,842	Avalon Radian	10,995	Wilson Audio Cub	5,495
Keswick Legato	1,199	Dynaudio Craftt	2,598	Avalon Osiris	72,000	Wilson Audio WATT 5	8,750
Keswick Amber	1,499	Dynaudio Contour 3.0	2,930	AVI Gravatron	3,995	Wilson Audio WITT	8,888
Linn Tukan Aktiv	1,050	ECA Servo A.2	2,450	B&W Matrix 801s3	3,995	Wilson Benesch Actor	3,900
Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,250	ELS Res'ch Vision	2,800	B&W Silver Signature	5,500	Wilson Benesch ACT1 spkr	6,900
L Voice Auditorium	1,500	Epos ES30	2,385	B&W Nautilus	35,000	Wilson Benesch Act 2	8,900
Lowther Accolade 2	1,199	Gamma Epoch Ref Five	2,999	Bandor Bandoline	3,290	Wilson Benesch The Bishop	20,000
Lumley L/M3.5	1,050	Harbeth HL-S8	1,999	Bandor Bandora/Mora	3,290		
Magnat Vintage 720	1,199	Helius Syrius II	2,395	BKS Audio Hybrid 175	3,995		
Magneplanar SMG-C SE	990	Helius Syrius I	2,850	Boston Lynfield 500L	4,449		
Magneplanar MG-0.6 SE	1,370	Heybrook Octet	1,799	Bravura Virtuoso Gold	3,395		
Meridian Argent 1	995	Hi Q Sound SM108	2,000	Bravura Virtuoso Reference	6,995		
M&K S-125	1,150	Horning Aristophane	2,600	Bravura Accelerando	3,600		
Mission 754f	1,298	Impulse Lali	1,850	Chario Academy 3j	5,999		
M-A Studio 6	900	Infinity Kappa 100	1,895	Credo SPB 012	3,147		
M-A Silver 9	1,000	Jamo Concert 11	2,000	Credo SDL 001	5,677		
M-A 705PMC	1,150	JBL L100	1,750	Dali Grand	4,000		
Mordaunt-Short MS817	900	JM Lab Electra 915	1,795	Def Tech BP2000	3,600		
Mordaunt-Short Perf 820	1,495	JM Lab Electra 920	2,350	Diapason Adamantes Ltd	3,995		
Mus Tec Condor	1,000	Jordan Watts JH2K	2,400	Dynaudio Contour 2.8	3,198		
Mus Tec Hawk	1,250	Jordan Watts JH5K	3,000	Dynaudio Contour 3.3	4,815		
Mus Tec Eagle	1,500	KEF Ref. Model Two	1,599	Dynaudio Confidence 3	4,846		
Naim Credo	1,090	KEF Ref. Model Three	1,999	Dynaudio Confidence 5	5,924		
NHT VT-1.2	999	Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Dynaudio Consequence	14,566		
NHT Model 2.5	1,299	Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,640	Electrofluidics Sonolith 2.2xi	5,999		
Opera Terza	999	Lowther Fidelio	1,999	ELS Res'ch Vista	3,900		
Opera Callas Gold	1,050	Lowther Academy	2,399	ELS Res'ch Illusion MkII	9,000		
Opera Divina II	1,500	Lowther Bel Canto	2,699	Horning Agathon	3,555		
Origen Live Sovereign	1,130	Lumley L/M2 Mk3	2,995	Impulse Ta'us	3,100		
Paradigm Studio/100	950	Magnat Vintage 760	1,999	Infinity Sigma	5,995		
Polk LS70	1,200	Magneplanar MG-10 SE	1,650	Infinity Epsilon	9,995		
Polk RT20p	1,500	Magneplanar MG-1.5 SE	1,780	Inner Sound Eros	3,995		
ProAc Tablette 50 SIG	899	Magneplanar MG-2.7 SE	2,650	Jamo Onel	7,000		
ProAc Response 1 SC	1,199	Manticore Matisse	1,890	JBL S2600	3,500		
Prof Monitor Co LB1	935	Martin-Logan Aeries i	2,299	JBL S3100	4,000		
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,496	Meridian M60	2,150	JM Lab Mini Utopia	4,500		
Rega XEL	1,040	M-A Studio 20SE	2,500	JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	7,250		
RMS Revelation S 1	1,299	Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,895	JM Lab Utopia	18,300		
Rogers Cg/28	1,399	Mordaunt-Short Perf 880	2,795	JM Lab Grande Utopia	35,000		
Roksan Ojan 3X	995	Naim SBL Active	1,885	Jordan Watts JH10K	7,570		
Royd The Albion	985	Naim SBL Passive	2,030	KEF Ref. Model Four	3,299		
Ruark Broadsword II	899	Neolith NEO 1	2,999	Keswick Zero 2	7,000		
Ruark Paladin	1,099	NHT VT-2	1,600	Linn Keltik Aktiv	6,000		
Shahinian Super Elf	875	NHT Model 2.9	2,199	L Voice Air Scout	19,500		
Shahinian Compass	1,395	Opera Caruso II	2,350	L Voice Air Scout S	37,200		
Shinpy Microphonica	1,099	Origin Live Conqueror	1,750	Lowther Delphic	3,099		
Silverado Ryder	1,395	Paragon Jubilee	1,995	Lowther Opus One	4,999		
Sonus Faber Minuetto	898	Pentachord P'column	1,649	Lumley L/M 2 Sig. Mk3	4,500		
Sonus Faber Concerto	1,098	Polk LS90	1,700	Magnat Vintage 770	3,500		
S Coast Merlin Monitor	849	Posselt Albatross	2,500	Magneplanar MG-3.5SE	3,800		
S Coast Classic	1,195	ProAc Response 2S	2,000	Magneplanar MG-20 SE P	10,300		
Spendor 2040	899	ProAc Response 2.5	2,700	Magneplanar MG-20 SE A	11,000		
Spendor SP2/3E	1,050	Prof Monitor Co IB1S	2,099	Martin-Logan SL3	3,499		
Spendor SP1/2E	1,390	Rehdeko RK115	1,700	Martin-Logan CLS Ilz	4,555		
T+A TAS 1200E	1,050	Rogers LSS/9	1,549	Martin-Logan Re-Quest	5,875		
T+A TB 120	1,060	Ruark Crusader II	1,599	Martin-Logan Monolith S	7,440		
Tannoy Definition D300	999	Ruark Equinox	1,849	Martin-Logan Monolith IHP	8,550		
		Ruark Accolade	2,699	Martin-Logan Monolith IHPB	11,900		
		SD Acoustics SD5	1,549	Meridian DSP5000	3,295		



SUBWOOFERS
KEY
 (A) - Active; includes a dedicated power amplifier.
THX - THX-approved by LucasFilm for use in Home THX installations.

Acoustic Energy AE108S	300
Allison Mini Ref Sub	210
Alon Poseidon	12,000
ATC SCM 0.1/15	3,810
Audio Physic Terra	3,499
B&W ASW1000	500
B&W AS6	500
B&W ASW2000	800
B&W ASW3000	1,000
B&W Matrix 800ASW	1,500
B&W Matrix 800ASW	1,500
Boston CR400	300
Boston VR500	450
Boston VR2000	800
Celestion CS135	139
Celestion CSW MkII	329
Celestion S1i	349
Celestion A6s	800
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D	200
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D	250
Chario Syntar Bass	299
Chario Hiper Bass	499
Credo SDC 001	3,054
GLL Le Bass	350

Factsback

For access to past reviews see page 145.

SUBWOOFERS (CONTINUED)

H/K Citation 7.4	(A)	875
Infinity SSW-10	(A)	500
Jamo SW303E	(A)	220
Jamo SW400E	(A)	330
Jamo SW505E	(A)	400
Jamo Sub One	(A)	400
Jamo SW600e	(A)	530
JBL Contol Sub 6	(A)	200
JBL PSW800	(A)	275
JBL Sub 10	(A)	300
JBL PSW1000	(A)	325
JBL PSW1200	(A)	375
JM Lab Tantal SW20	(A)	349
JM Lab Cobalt SW27A	(A)	595
JM Lab Electra SW33A	(A)	895
JM Lab Sub Utopia	(A)	2,200
JPW Subwoofer	(A)	130
JPW SW40	(A)	199
JPW SW60	(A)	350
JPW SW-120	(A)	500
KEF Model 20B	(A)	349
KEF Model 30B	(A)	499
KEF Model AV1	(A)	2,499
Kenwood SW500	(A)	250
Kenwood SW501	(A)	349
Keswick Alto	(A)	1,299
KLH ASW10-100	(A)	350
KLH ASW12-120	(A)	380
Linn AV5150	(A)	2,850
L Voice RW24	(A)	11,500
Magnat Vector Sub 30P	(A)	149
Magnat Vector Sub 30A	(A)	299
Meridian M2500	(A)	1,595
M&K VX-7MkII	(A)	450
M&K V-75 MkII	(A)	650
M&K V-125	(A)	800
M&K V-125 (THX)	(A)	800
M&K MX-70	(A)	900
M&K MX-150 (THX)	(A)	1,500
M&K MX-700	(A)	1,595
M&K MX-200	(A)	1,800
M&K MX-350THX	(A)	1,995
M&K MX-5000 (THX)	(A)	2,900
Mission 73AS	(A)	450
Mission 75AS	(A)	548
M-A ASW110	(A)	500
M-A ASW210	(A)	700
Mordaunt-Short MS8265	(A)	500
Mordaunt-Short T2000	(A)	500
Mus Tec Sub	(A)	650
Muse Model 22	(A)	1,890
Muse Model 18	(A)	3,790
Neat Gravitas	(A)	1,095
NHT SW2Pi	(A)	699
Paradigm PDR10	(A)	250
Paradigm Servo 15A	(A)	800
Polk PSW50	(A)	350
Polk PSW150	(A)	500
Polk PSW300	(A)	750
REL Q50	(A)	375
REL Q-100E	(A)	495
REL Strata II	(A)	575
REL Storm	(A)	695
REL Stadium II	(A)	995
REL Stentor II	(A)	1,800
REL Studio II	(A)	4,000
Revel Sub-15	(A)	2,195
Revolver The Recoil	(A)	100
R Allen Gold Sub	(A)	149
R Allen Dim'n Active	(A)	499
R Allen Magnum Active	(A)	699
Rogers AB1	(A)	549
Rogers Sub-bass	(A)	679
Roksan Ojan 3S	(A)	795
Sequence FW120	(A)	249
Solid PB100	(A)	350
Sony SA-W305	(A)	130
Sunfire True Sub	(A)	1,450
TDL Nucleus SBR	(A)	200
Triangle Sat III	(A)	650
Tsunami TS200	(A)	300
Tsunami TS210	(A)	399
Velodyne VA-68XII	(A)	399
Velodyne VA-810XII	(A)	599
Velodyne VA-1012XII	(A)	699
Velodyne VA-1215XII	(A)	999
Velodyne FSR-12	(A)	1,099
Velodyne FSR-15	(A)	1,299
Velodyne F-1800II	(A)	1,999
Wdale Modus Sub Bass	(A)	180
Wdale Modus Powered Sub	(A)	350
Wilson Audio Puppy 5.1	(A)	8,450
Wilson Audio Whow III	(A)	12,500
Yamaha YST-SW40	(A)	140

Yamaha YST-SW80	(A)	180
Yamaha YST-SW150	(A)	280
Yamaha YST-SW300	(A)	350

TOEARMS

KEY
 (A) - Pivoted.
 (#) - Parallel tracking.

Air Tangent IC	(#)	4,600
Air Tangent 10B	(#)	8,600
Air Tangent Reference	(#)	14,000
Audio Note AN-ARM 1	(A)	169
Audio Note AN-0s	(A)	795
Audio Note AN-1s	(A)	995
Audiomeca SL5	(#)	2,500
Clearaudio TQ-1 Improved	(#)	1,950
Dynavector 507	(A)	1,995
Graham 1.5 Basic	(A)	1,695
Graham Mk 2.0	(A)	2,650
Helius Orion 4 Copper	(A)	549
Helius Cyalene 2	(A)	1,495
Kuzma Stogi	(A)	750
Kuzma Stogi Ref	(A)	1,250
Linn Akito	(A)	500
Linn Ekos	(A)	1,500
Manticore Musician II	(A)	595
Manticore Magician II	(A)	895
Manticore Magician 12	(A)	995
Moth Mk II	(A)	109
Moth MkIII Stainless	(A)	146
Moth Mk III Tungsten	(A)	174
Moth Moth 900	(A)	598
Naim ARO	(A)	1,070
N'ham Space	(A)	450
N'ham Paragon 3	(#)	550
N'ham Paragon 2	(#)	800
N'ham Mentor	(A)	800
N'ham Foot	(A)	1,100
N'ham Paragon 1	(#)	1,600
Rega RB250	(A)	109
Rega RB300	(A)	174
Rega RB900	(A)	598
Rockport Series 7000	(#)	6,000
Roksan Tabriz	(A)	320
Roksan Tabriz Zi	(A)	420
Roksan Artemiz	(A)	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	(A)	309
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	(A)	338
SME Series II 3009-R	(A)	514
SME Series II 3010-R	(A)	526
SME Series II 3012-R	(A)	565
SME 309	(A)	689
SME 310	(A)	705
SME 312	(A)	802
SME Series IV	(A)	983
SME Series V	(A)	1,461
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 4i	(A)	3,000
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar Si	(A)	3,250
Wilson Benesch Act 0.5	(A)	795
Wilson Benesch ACT2	(A)	1,350
Zeta AS	(A)	469
Zeta VDH	(A)	549

TUNERS

KEY
 (P20) (etc.) - Number of presets.
 RDS - Radio Data System; receives text information on station, programme type etc.

Akai AT1200	(P30)	170
AMC T7	(P30)	130
Arcam Alpha 7	(P24)	230

Arcam Alpha 8	(P24)	280
Arcam Delta 280	(P20)	300
Ariston TX-510	(P20)	60
Audiolab 8000T	(P39)	800
Aura TU80	(P30)	350
AVI S2000MT2	(P99)	899
Carver TX-8R	(P20)	469
Creek T43	(P68)	399
Day Sequerra FM Ref		5,937
Day Sequerra S B'dcast Mon		14,640
Denon TU-260L	(P20)	120
Denon TU-215RD	(P40)	150
Denon TU-425RD	(P40)	200
Fanfare FT1	(P08)	1,395
H/K TU930	(P30)	150
H/K TU950	(P30)	200
Kenwood KT-2080	(P20)	130
Kenwood KT-3080	(P30)	180
Linn Kudos	(P50)	775
Linn Kremlin	(P80)	2,600
Magnum Dynalab FT11		550
Magnum Dynalab FT-101A		825
Magnum Dynalab Etude		1,250
Magnum Dynalab 108		4,500
Marantz ST-48	(P30)	119
Marantz ST-17	(P60)	600
McIntosh MR7084	(P50)	2,499
McIntosh MX118	(P50)	4,999
McIntosh MX130	(P50)	6,999
Meridian 504	(P30)	695
Michi RHT-10	(P16)	895
Micromega Minium FM Mk2	(P39)	330
Micromega Tuner	(P39)	700
Mission Cyrus FM7	(P29)	400
Musical Fidelity E50	(P20)	300
Myryad T-30	(P39)	400
Myryad MT100	(P39)	530
NAD 412	(P24)	190
NAD 414RDS	(P24)	250
NAD 710	(P24)	270
NAD 712	(P24)	330
Naim NAT03		615
Naim NAT02		1,130
Naim NAT01		1,780
Onkyo T 421 ORDS	(P30)	180
Onkyo T 409	(P30)	230
Onkyo T 411RDS	(P30)	260
Pioneer F-204RDS	(P30)	140
Pioneer F-504RDS	(P40)	250
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	(P40)	300
Quad 77FM	(P25)	700
Rega Radio	(P24)	298
Roksan Caspian	(P50)	595
Rotel RT-935AX	(P20)	160
Rotel RT940AX	(P20)	200
Sony ST-SE200	(P30)	100
Sony ST-SE300	(P30)	120
Sony ST-SE500	(P30)	140
Sony ST-SB920	(P30)	180
Sony ST-SA3ES	(P30)	250
T+A T1200R	(P60)	790
TEAC T-R400	(P40)	100
TEAC TR-460	(P40)	120
TEAC T-H500	(P40)	170
Technics ST-GT350L	(P30)	130
Technics ST-GT550L	(P39)	180
Technics ST-GT650L	(P39)	230
Thorens TRT-2000	(P59)	499
Thule Audio Spirit TU100	(P40)	499
Yamaha TX-480L	(P40)	100
Yamaha TX-10 II	(P40)	130
Yamaha TX-492RDS	(P40)	180
Yamaha TX-59 2RDS	(P40)	130
Yamaha RX-396RDS	(P40)	250

TURNTABLES

KEY
 (A) - Arm included.
 (A) - Cartridge included.
 UP TO £500

Audio Note AN-TT 1	(A)	349
Dual CS435-1	(A)	150
Dual CS455	(A)	190
Dual 505-4 UK	(A)	250
Eclipse TT430	(A)	70
Genexa Lab-710	(A)	60
Genexa Lab-810	(A)	70
Kenwood KD-492F	(A)	100

Michell Mycro	(A)	455
Moth Alamo	(A)	199
Moth Kanoot MK1 Arm	(A)	279
Moth Kanoot Mk3 Arm	(A)	329
NAD 533	(A)	220
N'ham Interspace	(A)	500
Pioneer PL-12500-C	(A)	80
Pioneer PL-990	(A)	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	(A)	170
Pro-Ject 1/510	(A)	210
Pro-Ject 2/520	(A)	325
Pro-Ject 6/MC15	(A)	500
Rega Planar 78	(A)	214
Rega Planar 2	(A)	214
Rega Planar 3	(A)	274
Roksan Radius	(A)	470
Sherwood PM8550	(A)	160
Sony PS-LX150H	(A)	90
Sony PS-LX300H	(A)	150
Technics SL-J110D	(A)	120
Technics SL-BD20	(A)	160
Technics SL-BD22	(A)	180
Technics SL-1210MkII	(A)	400
Technics SL-1200MkII	(A)	400
Thorens TD-180 AT91	(A)	190
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	(A)	210
Thorens TD-166 V/UK/RB	(A)	400
Thorens TD-318 III TP50	(A)	500

OVER £500

Audio Note AN-TT 2	(A)	995
Audio Note AN-TT 3	(A)	1,995
Audiomeca Romance	(A)	1,895
Audiomeca J1	(A)	3,500
Basis 2000	(A)	1,995
Basis 2001	(A)	2,995
Basis Ovation II	(A)	5,400
Basis 2500	(A)	5,495
Basis 2800	(A)	7,495
Basis Debut Gold Std III	(A)	8,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	(A)	10,300
Chantry QT Level 2	(A)	705
Clearaudio Evolution	(A)	1,790
Clearaudio Reference	(A)	3,990
DNM-Reson Rota 1	(A)	3,900
DNM-Reson Rota 2	(A)	5,600
Eclipse Moskitto	(A)	695
Kuzma Stabi	(A)	1,950
Kuzma Stabi Reference	(A)	3,750
Linn LP12 Basic	(A)	1,100
Linn LP12 Lingo	(A)	1,750
Manticore Mantra 97	(A)	595
Manticore Mantra	(A)	895
Manticore Magister	(A)	4,400
Michell Gyrodek	(A)	875
Michell Orbe	(A)	1,995
N'ham Spacedeck	(A)	750
N'ham Graphic	(A)	1,200
N'ham HyperSpacedeck	(A)	1,500
N'ham Mentor	(A)	2,600
N'ham Anna Log	(A)	5,500
Oracle Paris	(A)	1,100
Oracle Delphi	(A)	3,370
Oracle Delphi 15th Anniv	(A)	3,800
Pink Triangle Tarantella	(A)	680
Rega Planar 9	(A)	1,598
Reson RS1M	(A)	695
Reson Rota 1	(A)	3,900
Rockport Capella II	(A)	7,000
Rockport Sirius III	(A)	50,000
Roksan Xerxes 10	(A)	1,295
Roksan TMS	(A)	2,750
SME Model 20/2	(A)	3,403
SME Model 20/2A	(A)	4,863
SME Model 30/2	(A)	10,675
SME Model 30/2A	(A)	12,135
Stratosphere ST1	(A)	6,500
Technics SL-1200LTD	(A)	700
Thorens TD-146 VI TP50	(A)	550
Thorens TD-2001 TP90	(A)	700
Thorens TD-520 SME	(A)	1,050
Well Tempered Record Player	(A)	1,850
Well Tempered Classic	(A)	2,980
Well Tempered Super	(A)	3,900
Well Tempered Reference	(A)	5,300
Wilson Benesch Circle	(A)	795
Wilson Benesch WB Turntable	(A)	1,775
Wilson Benesch Full Circle	(A)	1,995

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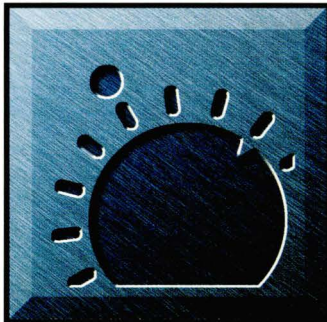
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Amplifiers

The amplifier is at the heart of any hi-fi system, accepting the outputs from various music sources, increasing the amplitude of their signal and then driving the loudspeakers to produce sound. One-box 'integrated' amps rule the roost at low-to-middle price points, but if you pay more, the low-level and high-level signal processes are separated into preamp and power amp boxes, and even separate 'outboard' power supplies come into play. Another luxury is a separate amp for each stereo channel: such devices are known as monoblocks. Finally, output power and sound quality are not necessarily related. Some of the finest amplifiers outputs only 12 Watts, but will yield loudness aplenty when partnered with high-efficiency loudspeakers.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

LINE INPUTS: Number of input sockets for line-level (non-vinyl) sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.
MM PHONO INPUT: An input specially designed for moving magnet (high output) phono pickup cartridges.
MC PHONO INPUT: An input for moving coil (low output) phono pickup cartridges.
REMOTE CONTROL: An infra-red handset to adjust volume etc.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: An integral output for headphones.
POWER OUTPUT (Watts): Our measurement of an amp's RMS power output into 8 Ohms.
RECEIVER: An amplifier with built-in radio receiver (tuner).
FACTSBACK REFERENCE: The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.
High End Review

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Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS
 MC PHONO INPUTS
 REMOTE CONTROL
 HEADPHONE SOCKET
 POWER OUTPUT (W)
 RECEIVER
 FACTSBACK NO.
 ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Maxim	319	Vivid and colourful-sounding amp, but just too bold and brassy	5	●				30		1737	154
Alchemist Kraken APD6A	579	Compact, with Darth Vader styling, yet sound quality is meek and mild, despite strong midband dynamics	5	●				55		2150	175
Alchemist Nemesis	700	Good if ultimately undistinguished amplifier whose strengths include warmth, authority and distinctive aesthetics	6					80		2006	168
AMC 3025a	140	Surprisingly potent and easy on the ear, if not especially analytical – classic bargain-basement material, in fact	4	●	●	●	●	30		2045	171
AMC 3050a	170	Tremendous value for money, and a full, big, if rather uninformative sound	4	●	●	●	●	45		1970	167
AMC 3100a	200	A head banger's delight, but sound quality can be muggy and brash on occasions	6				●	100			186
AMC CVT3030a	400	Beer-budget valve amp, with valve-like virtues (euphony with dynamics) and vices (system dependency, noise)	6	●				30		2001	168
Arcam Alpha One	230	Rather like an Alpha 7 but without the remote control and an what appears to be better sound quality still	6					35			186
Arcam Alpha 7	260	Decent, if slightly system-fussy amplifier that generally pulls all the right strings	5	●				40		1971	167
Arcam Alpha 8	360	Enjoyably soft-centred amp, won't frighten the animals. Upgradeable via preamp output, and optional remote	5	●				50		1853	162
Arcam Alpha 9	500	Not quite a match for the Alpha 9/9P combo, the solo integrated is nevertheless colourful and explicitly detailed	7				●	70		2007	168
Arcam Alpha 10	800	Although not the best sounding in its class, the Alpha 10's modular nature demands it be taken seriously	5				●	100			181
Audio Analogue Puccini	450	Superbly finished, the entry-level Audio Analogue performs way out of its class	5	●	●	●		40		2147	175
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	595	Upgraded, more powerful Puccini is disappointingly sluggish and curiously lacking in musical vitality	5	●	●			40			181
Audiogram MB1	493	The only flaws are the amateurish build, a number of technical problems and inconsistent sound quality	4	●			●	40		2235	178
Audio Note Oto SE	1,200	Transparent, dynamic, clear and subtle, but offers limited power output	4					24			126
Audiolab 8000LX	470	Well built, entry-level model lacks bottle and pizzazz. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	6				●	60		2148	175
Audiolab 8000S	700	Informative in every sense, only a slight lack of bite detracts. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	6				●	60		1740	154
AVI S2000MI	999	Fine, detailed amplifier with excellent timing and strong control of a wide range of loudspeaker loads	5				●	100		2155	175
Bryston B60R	1,249	Great build, but the lazy bass and opaque treble bracket an articulate midband. Comes with 20 year guarantee	5				●	60		2156	175
Cambridge Audio A500RC	200	Load tolerance may be a problem for some, but this is an otherwise impressive, if tonally muted amp	6				●	50			186
Copland CSA8	945	Sophisticated yet transparent, this is one of those amplifiers that sounds good even when the gloss has worn off	5					60		2010	168
Copland CSA14	1,199	Great sound and looks, but avoid high capacitance speaker cables	4	●				60		1416	148
CR Developments CR324	569	Solid and capable on paper, this is a bit of a blunt instrument when let loose on the music	5					150			181
Credo IMP702	850	Old-fashioned looking, but bags of clarity and precision, though it can sound brash in the wrong system	5					70		2157	175
Cymbal CA1	499	Lacklustre amplifier tends to underperform with complex material. Best with straightforward compact loudspeakers	6					40		2236	178
Creek 4330	279	Compact, even pretty, but sounds dark and uninviting, with coarse treble and 'woomy' bass	5					40		2052	171
Denon PMA-250SE	160	This amp can sound rough when extended, but within its limits it is open, detailed and likeable	5				●	30		2046	171
Denon PMA-350SE	200	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, this SE model is a control freak, but can sound wonderful	5				●	50		1856	162
Denon PMA-425R	230	Well-equipped and generally enjoyable but slightly ragged performer	3	●			●	45		1973	167
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation, but musically unexciting	5	●	●	●	●	97		1802	157
Denon PMA-1500R	500	Recommended for its outrageous power, especially with problem speakers.	5	●	●	●	●	70			181
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	650	High 'air guitar' factor, and can punch above its weight, but check it will complement your system	5					60		1855	175
DPA Renaissance	595	DPA's first integrated amp is typically innovative, but a little too 'crisp'n'dry' for our tastes	5	●			●	40		1582	140
EMF Audio Sequel	450	Relaxed and restrained design from Mike Creek	5	●			●	50			109
Exposure XX Super	700	Rather transistorised, unexciting sound. Good coherence and rhythm. Best played loud	6					55		1743	154
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	995	A 50 watt amplifier which sounds more powerful, and makes 'real sounding' music.	4					50		2158	175
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but with low power, mundane sound and poor build	3					12		1416	148
Goodmans Delta 900A	130	Coloured and raw sound tarnish high power yield and remarkable pricing, and noisy fan cooling is a real joy-killer	5	●			●	100		2228	178
Harman/Kardon HK610	180	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●			●	30		1465	149
Harman/Kardon HK620	250	Capable and musical amplifier which is one of the nicest at this price. Optional add-in MM/MC board available	6				●	40		1858	162
Holfi Audis Signature	750	A 'no-feedback' circuit giving outstanding resolution, but significant load dependency	4	●				65			181
JoLida 202	695	Well-built and technically accomplished, affordable valve integrated with subtle refined, if not quite gripping sound	4					40		2011	168
JVC AX-V4	200	Respectable performance for a Pro-Logic AV amplifier. Lacks resolution and sparkle, though	5	●			●	63		1805	157
JVC AX-R5	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●			●	45		1466	149
Kenwood KA-5090R	300	Large, well equipped and high tech integrated, but TRAITR output still gives a harsh, unsubtle performance	5	●	●		●	65		2053	171
Kenwood KAF-3010R	180	Plenty of twiddly bits yet weak on inputs, and basically good, but somewhat uneven sound quality	4	●			●	70			186
Lavardin Model IT	3,200	Banishment of 'memory distortion' delivers an amp with the best of valve and transistor sound characteristics	4					40			184
LFD Integrated Zero	549	Lively and brisk, but at the same time cold and unsympathetic	6					50		1584	140
Linn Majik (phono)	800	The cornerstone of Linn's modular hi-fi system is innovative, but sounds vague and confused	5	●	●		●	33		1013	129
Magnum IA120	265	Mirror finish amplifier with bold, colourful delivery, but needs careful system matching to avoid loss of clarity	6				●	65		2054	171
Magnum IA170	330	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic; preserves colour and dynamics	6				●	96		1260	142
Magnum IA200	599	Sweet, valve-flavoured solid state amplifier which flatters where it doesn't cast light	7					160		1860	162
Magnum Class A	690	Lashings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A circuits trade lushness for accuracy	4	●			●	60			116
Magnum Class A SE	795	A MOSFET amplifier drawing inspiration from the world of valves, this is an erratically refined, detailed amplifier	5	●				80		2159	175
Marantz PM-48	150	Fine entry level amplifier has excellent midband resolution and top, with a slightly coarse textured bass	5	●			●	50			186
Marantz PM-57	200	Well equipped but ultimately anodyne amplifier which lacks for nothing but star quality	5	●			●	50		2049	171

CONTINUED

Amplifiers

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▶ Marantz PM-66SE	230	A bit lush, and power output is limited, but it gives airy, large-scale music. An excellent budget buy	5	●	●	●	50		1969	167
▶ Marantz PM66 KI-Signature	400	<i>It knows how to rock and roll with holographic detail and stereo, but prefers small/medium scale acoustic material</i>	5	●	●	●	50		2003	168
▶ Marantz PM-17	900	Probably worth it for the WBT terminals and other build features alone, but this model doesn't sing as it should	6	●	●	●	60			181
▶ Micromega Tempo 2	900	Idiosyncratic but flexible amplifier with an attractively forward and expressive sound quality	7		●	●	70			181
▶ Mission Cyrus III	598	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance was not liked. Upgradeable using PSX PSU unit		●	●	●	50		1854	162
▶ Mission Cyrus SL	398	Articulate amplifier with build quality to die for, superb, outgoing midband and lean, though well-extended bass	6				50			168
▶ Monrio ASTY	400	Engaging, but ill-disciplined, even OTT amplifier with unpredictable system compatibility	5				55		2237	178
▶ Musical Fidelity E1	199	Richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special	6				30		2050	171
▶ Musical Fidelity E11	299	Well built minimalist amp with a 5 year guarantee, but can sound congested when extended	6				60		2232	178
▶ Musical Fidelity X-A1	479	<i>Idiosyncratic visuals just another plus for an amp that is powerful, well built, and serves the music superbly</i>	6				50			181
▶ Musical Fidelity A2	500	Lucid, transparent midband and a full upper bass are provided by this highly proficient A1 replacement	5	●			25		1862	162
▶ Musical Fidelity A220	700	Powerful, authoritative and well turned-out amplifier that is easy to match with comparably priced speakers	5	●			50		2012	168
▶ Myriad M1120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, though it can sound rather brittle	6			●	60		2153	175
▶ NAD 310	100	<i>Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness</i>	5				20		1468	149
▶ NAD C320	200	<i>Excellent budget amp from the makers of the seminal 3020 offers better clarity and neutrality and good build</i>	6			●	40			186
▶ NAD 314	260	Lively if coloured presentation that is musically engaging and easy on the ear	6	●			53		1807	157
▶ Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5				30		1748	154
▶ Orelle SA-100	499	<i>A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble</i>	5				50		1749	154
▶ Orelle SA-100RX	649	<i>In its latest guise, this is a fluid, articulate and transparent design – and excellent value</i>	7			Opt	75			181
▶ Pioneer A-204R	160	The A-204R makes no special claims beyond being well equipped and cheap, but displayed unexpected quality	5	●		●	25		2047	171
▶ Pioneer A-300R	200	Its bright and breezy sound is a natural tonic to those of us worn down by the ongoing stress of life	5	●		●	50		1469	149
▶ Pioneer A-405R	250	Fully featured, open and dynamic sounding; makes up in enthusiasm what it occasionally lacks in refinement	5	●		●	45		2230	178
▶ Pioneer A-407R	230	Clean, consistent, finely detailed sound, good finish and (mainly) good build	5	●		●	45			186
▶ Pioneer A-400X	300	On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling than on its first outing	6	●	●		50		1545	138
▶ Pioneer A-300R Precision	400	<i>Sophisticated variant of the A-300R. Not an obvious winner, but will slowly ply you with its subtle charms</i>	5	●		●	35		1863	162
▶ Pioneer A-605R	400	Intriguing technology, but execution is certainly impeded by excessive gadget count	5	●		●	80		2005	168
▶ Pioneer A-07	999	Curious blend of high-end attributes and inconsistent, though undeniably detailed sound	5	●		●	80		2160	175
▶ Primare A-20 Mk II	799	<i>Everything except packaging has changed in mkII version: but ballsier model has lost none of its refinement</i>	5			●	70			181
▶ Pro-ject Model 7	300	A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC phono	5	●			40		1264	142
▶ Quad 77 Integrated	700	Compact and sophisticated amp. Has limited inputs when used with 'foreign' components. (Optional system remote)	3				84		2013	168
▶ Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier, derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, though at least it is well behaved	4	●			50		1865	162
▶ Roksan Caspian	695	<i>Well-built, open and articulate amplifier, which is also consistent from system to system, and well built</i>	6			●	70		2014	168
▶ Rose Scion	615	Unique two-box integrated gives real subtlety and low level resolution, but the sound lacks scale and weight	5	●	●		65		2009	168
▶ Rotel RA-931	150	Rather dry and unforgiving sound from this internally well specified and attractively priced amplifier	4	●			35		2048	171
▶ Rotel RA-971	200	<i>Budget buy par excellence, especially for large rooms and insensitive speakers</i>	6				70			186
▶ Sony TA-F448BE	250	Minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit with satisfactory effect – but keep the volume in check	5	●		●	55		2055	171
▶ Sony TA-F3000ES	500	<i>Champagne 'shoebbox amp' may lack power reserves, but is quick and articulate. In every sense a knockout</i>	5	●	●	●	35		2239	178
▶ TAG McLaren 60iRv	999	Looks, feels and sounds better than the Audiolab it supersedes. Smooth, open, refined-but lacks body and drive	6			●	60			184
▶ Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model	6				50		1868	162
▶ Talk Electronics Storm 2	650	Crisp, clean, well defined sound, arguably lacking warmth, but a good midrange purchase overall	6			●	50		2154	175
▶ TEAC A-BX7R	700	Characterful balance mars a meticulously designed amplifier. Includes a balanced input, optional MM/MC stage	5			●	50		1869	162
▶ Technics SU-A660MK3	200	Plenty of welle for the price, but the sound can be a tad coarse and lacking in fine detail	5	●		●	37			186
▶ Technics SU-A700 Mk 3	250	Fully equipped, high-tech amplifier ultimately fails the authenticity test, and can sound messy and inarticulate	5	●		●	45		1870	162
▶ Technics SU-A800D Mk 2	300	Two-box amplifier looks great, has plenty of gadgets, and makes good, if slightly over-exuberant music	5	●		●	55		2234	178
▶ Technics SU-A900D Mk 2	400	Looks like a pre/power amplifier, but in effect it's an integrated, with a rather soft-centred sound to match	5	●		●	70		2149	175
▶ Token Audio K50	350	Stainless steel finish, others available. Sound is warm and attractive, though a little undynamic	5				50			186
▶ Woodside ISA230 Disc	1,249	Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for ultimate success	3	●			30			116
▶ Yamaha AX-492	2200	Powerful, well equipped amplifier at an attractive price, offers powerful and engaging music-making	5	●		●	85		2231	178
▶ Yamaha AX-592	280	Fine, middle ranking amplifier, with a detailed midband but performance declines at frequency extremes	5	●	●	●	100		2056	171
PREAMPLIFIERS										
▶ Audiolab 8000C	580	Distinctive, stark neutrality will not appeal to all. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	5	●	●	●				97
▶ Audiolab 8000Q	1,250	Tested with 8000M monoblock power amps. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	6			●			1301	145
▶ Copland CTA-301MKII	1,399	Sweet sounding, but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●					1630	151
▶ Crimson 610C	875	Not entirely satisfactory preamp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	4	●						181
▶ EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with 509 Mk 2 power amp. (See Power Amplifier section.)	4	●	●					63
▶ ECA Vista	760	<i>Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system. (Tested with Lectern power amp)</i>	5						1302	145
▶ Exposure XVII	850	Superbly rhythmic; maybe a bit overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super	5	●	●					142
▶ Jadis JP-30MC	5,978	French tubes, beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (Tested with JA 30 power amp)	5	●						60
▶ LFD Mistral Linestage	449	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6						1930	165
▶ Meridian 501	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. (Tested with 555 power amp)	5	●		●			1303	145
▶ Meridian 562V	995	Transparent and capable preamp, also features six digital inputs	9	●		●				140
▶ Meridian 502	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation	7			●				162
▶ Moth 30 Passive	149	<i>Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy</i>	4							109
▶ Moth 30 Active Line Stage	349	Excellent-sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp	4						1931	165
▶ Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp	5			●				166
▶ Musical Fidelity X-PRE	200	<i>Cleverly configured preamp with many upgrade options, and open, lively and engaging sound</i>	4						2152	175
▶ Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista	1295	Fully remote, nuvistor tube equipped, with fine coherence and musicality	5	●		●				182
▶ NAD 114	270	<i>Beer-budget preamp, sounds focused, detailed and consistent</i>	6	●	●		●		1932	165
▶ Naim NAC92R	630	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry. (Tested with NAP90 power amp)	5			●			1936	165
▶ Quad 77 Pre	850	<i>Sophisticated design with 2-way remote control console; open colourful sound and very flexible</i>	4	●	●	●			1941	165

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Rega Hal	998	Passive line stages dedicated to Exon power amps	6	●	●	●			1942	165
Rose RV-23	450	You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price	3	●						77
Rotel RC-971	150	Low price is offset by rather coarse sound quality with certain types of music. (Tested with RB-971 power amp)	5				●			178
Sumo Athena IIB	767	Big, natural and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	6						1305	145
TAG McLaren PA20R	1500	Refinement of Audiolab original with clean, detailed sound but limited thrill power. (t/w 125M monoblocks.)	6				●	●		184
Talk Hurricane 2L	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6						1937	165
Thorens TTP2000F	699	Glamorous, shoebox-format, minimalist pre with fine detail and some granularity	3	●	●	●			1938	165
Woodside SC26 Phono	2,233	Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency. (Tested with STA35)	5	●	●					100
POWER AMPLIFIERS										
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	529	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless	1					60		124
Arcam Alpha 9P	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1					60	1929	165
Arcam Alpha 10P	600	Good all-rounder with huge headroom and a taut, controlled sound. Not the last word in transparency	1					100		183
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around	1					15		109
Audiolab 8000M	1,600	Strong, controlled sound; confident bass, but colourless. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	1					125	1301	145
Border Patrol 300B SE	3,995	Single ended valve power amp with passion, grace and fire, and plenty of grunt to boot	1					8.5		186
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1					67	1630	151
Crimson 620C	875	Not entirely satisfactory power amp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	1					50		181
Cyrus Power	498	Detail and midband clarity and stand-out qualities. Smooth and refined with most types of music but bass-soft	1					50		183
Densen B-300	800	Expensive but highly musical. Colourful and warm sound with strong timing and listener involvement	1					100		183
EAR 509 Mk II	3,699	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention. (Tested with 802 Preamp)	1					100		63
ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1					50	1302	145
LFD Mistral Power	449	Infectious upper band vitality, but LF dynamics lacking – likewise 'grip' and transparency	1					60	1930	165
Meridian 555	750	By providing an open window on the music, this amp is wide open to RF and low level IM distortions	1					60	1303	145
Michell Alecto stereo	1,150	Open, well-focused imagery with natural, refined textures	1					50	1940	165
Moth 60 Watt Stereo	599	Miniature power amp lacks control and finesse – not comfortable with difficult speaker loads	1					60	1931	165
Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. Demonstrated solid balance and proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1					100		159
Musical Fidelity FX2	800	Quality build and imposing presentation is married to strong power yield, tonal colour and finesse	1					100	1934	165
Musical Fidelity X-A50	500	Cleverly configured and attractively packaged, open, lively and engaging sound. Reviewed with X-PRE	1					50		175
Mynad MA120	450	Based in MI120 integrated – see latter for comments, but sounds significantly better when bi-amped with MI120	1					60	1935	165
NAD 214	370	A little lightweight, but detailed, consistent sound quality, and excellent value for money	1					80	1932	165
Naim NAP90	450	Power amp from a Nait integrated with some improvements	1					30	1936	165
Quad 77 Power	600	Open, bold and colourful, with mild compression	1					85	1941	165
Rega Exon	1,196	Monoblock, priced each, dedicated for Hal preamp. Bold, outgoing, in-command kind of sound	1					125	1942	165
Roksan Caspian Power	595	Excels musically and in conventional hi-fi terms. A power amp for people with long-term satisfaction in mind	1					70W		183
Rotel RB-971	200	Somewhat better than the accompanying preamp – clean, mean and bridgeable. (Tested with RC-971)	1					70		178
Rotel RB-980BX	450	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid-back and occasionally smeared sound	1					120		155
Sirius D200	2995	Single MOSFET pair per side gives tremendous resolution and timing (balanced only)	1					200		183
Sumo Polaris III	950	Tested with Athena IIB. Big and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	1					164	1305	145
TAG McLaren 125M	2400	Refined Audiolab replacement monoblocks with clean sound but limited thrill power. (t/w PA20R preamp)	1					145		184
Talk Tornado 2	600	Good, but slightly retiring sound which lacks the authority to stand out in a crowd	1					65	1937	165
Thorens TTA2000	599	Low power shoe-box format, but gutsy and surprisingly subtle and articulate	1					30	1938	165



Cables

Cables are an integral part of a hi-fi system, required to connect source components to amplifiers, and the latter to speakers.

- Analogue Interconnects connect source components and amplifiers, and run between pre and power amps. They are priced for one-metre terminated pairs.
- Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs or digital recorders. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.
- Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SYMMETRICAL:** A twisted pair of conductors.
- **COAXIAL:** A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.
- **STRANDED:** Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.
- **SOLID CORE:** Single or multiple, individually insulated strands.
- **COPPER:** Material used for conductor.
- **SILVER:** Material used for conductor.
- **DIG CABLE TYPE:** O - optical digital; E - electrical digital for CD Players, DACS and digital recorders.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
- ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.
- H** High End Review

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

Cables

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL
COAXIAL
STRANDED
SOLID CORE
COPPER
SILVER
DIG CABLE TYPE
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS											
Audio Note AN-A	18	Not especially impressive: warm but well-rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is quite clear			●		●	●			108
Audio Note AN-C	35	Neutral but lacking in subtle texture and unable to distinguish fine detail					●	●		1687	131
Audio Note AN-S	99	Up-beat and enthusiastic sound with satisfyingly deep and grumbly bass	●				●	●	●	1687	131
Audio Note AN-V	179	15 individually insulated silver strands make up this very clean and dynamically unchallenged cable	●				●	●	●	1687	131
Audioquest Turquoise	40	A 'fit and forget' cable that sounds distinctly lazy	●				●	●			160
Audioquest Topaz 2	60	Sounds flattened out, with poor imaging and grainy treble					●	●		2166	176
CableTalk Advanced 2	35	Slight roughness in loud music barely detracts from a well-balanced performance with good imaging					●	●	●	2166	176
Cable Talk Studio 2	65	A first-class performer from tonal, dynamic and rhythmic standpoints	●				●	●	●		160

CONTINUED

Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Cambridge Pacific	30	Lacks subtlety and bass impact but is otherwise quite serviceable for the price				●	●	●		2167	176	
▲ Cambridge Audio Studio Ref	40	Dynamic cable with strong soundstaging and only a slight lack of detail				●	●	●			160	
Chord Company Cobra 2	50	Good, strong sound with full-bodied music, less happy with smaller forces					●	●		2167	176	
▲ Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare			●		●	●			160	
▲ DNM TCC75	34	Price for 0.75m. High resolution cable, but best in short runs due to higher than average series impedance					●	●		1690	131	
DPA Slink	41	Slightly bright and zingy with flat soundstaging and hollow bass, though vocals and strings sound convincing	●	●						1690	131	
DPA White Slink	75	Bass recedes as the music gets complex; midrange and treble better with quite good detail and imaging					●	●		2168	176	
▲ DPA Black Slink	245	Initially dark and meaty but after running in, it's lucid and transparent. Quad geometry, Gore-Tex dielectric	●				●	●		1691	131	
Goertz M1 Interconnect	145	Soft sound lacking in bite, with excessive and plummy bass (NB sample used in review was only 0.5m)	●				●	●		2168	176	
Insert Audio IC100 MkII	47	Mostly good sound is let down by pervasive dryness					●	●		2169	176	
▲ Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble				●	●	●		1692	131	
Ixos Gamma 1002	39	Lumpy bass, grainy treble, and poor integration. Nice colour, though	●				●	●		2169	176	
▲ Ixos 103	45	Even-handed and generous sound, bass has a well-rounded, bouncy quality			●	●	●	●		1692	131	
Ixos 102	60	A bit bright and undynamic, this cable is nevertheless a good all-rounder, whose faults are largely subtractive	●				●	●			160	
Ixos 101	100	A cable with personality; its veiled and shut in quality bring an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike	●				●	●		1693	131	
▲ Kimber Hero	110	Slight roughness detracts from some music; seems well suited to rock and jazz. Lively and detailed	●		●	●	●	●		2170	176	
▲ Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy	●				●	●	●		108	
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed, but there's a sense of distance between music and listener: vocals are coarse rather than liquid	●				●	●	●		108	
Nordost Black Knight	60	Flat black cable that is distinctive but slightly coloured – but not in a wholly negative manner	●				●	●			160	
▲ Nordost Blue Heaven	145	Very good bass and only slightly grainy treble add up to a well integrated, natural-sounding cable	●				●	●			176	
▲ Prowire Silver	60	A good cable in every way, with just the occasional hint of coloration and coarseness				●	●	●		2171	176	
PAD Elementa	145	A fat, heavy and frankly rather lazy-sounding cable; best with music for small forces	●				●	●		2171	176	
▲ QED Qnet 2	30	Very well balanced, refined and detailed, this is everything a good cable should be, and excellent value					●	●		2172	176	
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight				●	●	●			160	
▲ SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. We're unsure about the flesh-coloured finish though...	●				●	●	●		160	
▲ Sonic Link Black	49	Nickel-plated copper with a slight dryness in the bass and a hint of treble roll-off don't compromise integration	●				●	●		2172	176	
▲ Straight Wire Chorus	40	A very confident cable with good bass, though perhaps a shade of treble loss			●	●	●	●		2173	176	
van den Hul The Storm	25	Price for 0.8m. Rich and warm but bass is rolled off; however there's plenty of drive and top end is clean			●		●	●		1701	131	
▲ van den Hul Source HB	50	Price for 0.8m. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness			●	●	●	●			160	
▲ van den Hul D102 MkII	70	A cable with everything; good bass, treble, imaging and naturalness					●	●		2173	176	
▲ van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of information			●	●	●	●		1702	131	
▲ van den Hul The Second	240	Wonderfully open and relaxing but also intimately detailed, slightly softens percussive dynamics	●		●	●	●	●		1702	131	
XLO Type 150	50	A restrained but useful cable for taming lively CD players, dynamics lack freedom, treble lacks clarity			●	●	●	●		1703	131	
▲ XLO Type 0.1	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals					●	●		1703	131	
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS												
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear-cut transparency				●	●			E	108	
Chord Codac	36	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration				●	●		●	E	108	
▲ Chord Prodac	50	Price for 0.6m length. Lively detailed treble, drives music along confidently with no hint of fizz			●		●	●		E	1706	131
DPA Opti-link	20	Sound is lacklustre								O	108	
▲ DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound			●	●	●	●		E	108	
▲ Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft-edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colorations; plenty of weight, smooth			●		●	●		E	1707	131
▲ Kimber Kable Opti-link	50	Appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet sounds a little brighter and livelier than most					●	●		O	108	
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive			●	●	●	●		E	108	
▲ QED DigiFlex	20	A top performance, low-loss 75 Ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality			●	●	●	●		E	108	
Siltech HF-6	145	Sounds detailed, very clean and extended, but bass is less well resolved – a treat for high-end systems	●				●	●		E	1709	131
▲ SonicLink Green	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a bit over-crisp at times – very compelling, however			●		●	●	●	E	1709	131
▲ van den Hul The First	125	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly cautious compared to some. Plenty of subtle information and integration			●	●	●	●		E	1710	131
LOUDSPEAKER CABLES												
ALR Jordan QMM	5	Generally neutral, if sometimes bass-shy, but not very communicative			●		●	●			183	
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that are twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward						●	●		109	
▲ Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical					●	●		1711	133	
▲ Audio Note AN-L	29.50	Fruity bass and expressive vocal rendition was appreciated by the panel, which was happy to accept its foibles	●				●	●	●	1712	133	
▲ Audio Note AN-SP	150	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●				●	●			109	
▲ Audioquest F-14	2.2	Ideal for laying under carpets. F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound					●	●			109	



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... in YOUR home

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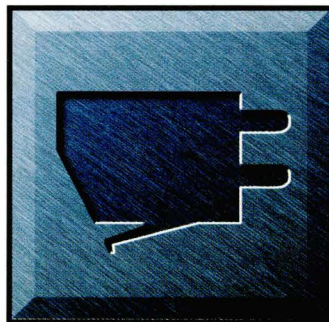
Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Audioquest Type 4	5	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains 'bite'	●				●	●			109
Audioquest Type 6	9	A very inflexible cable in which the sonic ends don't quite justify the means	●				●	●			183
Audioquest Crystal	25	Neutral balance is spoiled by some graininess and smearing	●				●	●			168
Bandridge LC7409	4	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings					●	●		1800	157
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25	Quite well-balanced but tends to lose bass lines in complex music					●	●			168
Cable Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained					●	●		1800	157
DNM LSC350	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension	●				●	●			168
DNM LSCB500	12	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire					●	●		1716	133
DPA Black Sixteen	100	Unflappable resolution of musical details. No dampening of dynamics, simply oodles of taut information	●				●	●	●	1717	133
Gale XL189	1	Slightly bright and not too subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system					●	●			168
Gale XL315	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value					●	●		1800	157
Gale XL160-2	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy-sounding bi-wire cable. Can be slightly manipulative					●	●		1800	157
Goertz M2	32	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility	●				●	●			168
Heybrook Heywire	3.5	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven					●	●			109
Hitachi LC-OFC	7	Very crisp, very clear and very confident. In the right system would be very expensive to better	●				●	●			109
Kimber 4TC	19.6	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas	●				●	●			168
Kimber 4VS	9	A good mix of virtues including particularly fine bass	●				●	●			183
Linn K20	4	Seems to work best with lively, unsubtle music - can be dry and edgy	●				●	●			183
Naim NACA 5	5.5	A 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems, where it works a treat					●	●			109
Nordost Octava	3	Fair bass but confused treble and some coloration	●				●	●			168
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey-sounding - strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance. A bit bass-shy, too					●	●			133
Ortofon SPK200	4.99	Good strong bass and fair detail, only slightly marred by a little dryness	●				●	●			183
Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric, with robust, full-blooded bass - if slightly bright at times	●				●	●			133
Precious Metals SL102	10	Unusual construction gives rather strained sound, only really cheering up with simple musical textures	●				●	●			183
Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound - but too messy and bloated for its own good	●				●	●			183
Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design; shame about the sound quality	●				●	●		1800	157
QED Qudos	2.25	Despite high-tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, its music-making failed to gel					●	●		1800	157
QED Profile 4x4	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding					●	●			168
QED Qudos Silver	5	Basic figure-8 cable adds value with silver plating, to generally smooth and detailed effect	●				●	●			183
Silver Sounds 12 gauge	15	Basic 'homemade' construction gives fairly neutral sound. Price not outstandingly competitive	●				●	●			168
Sonic Link S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●				●	●			168
SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced					●	●		1800	157
SonicLink AST150	3.95	Slightly plummy bass and a useful way of holding musical strands together					●	●		1800	157
Straight Wire Quartet	8	A good all-rounder with full tone, clear detail and natural ambience	●				●	●			183
Supra Ply 3.4	6.95	Clean sound which stays together well at high levels, with full bass - perhaps a touch of treble restriction	●				●	●			183
Tara Labs Klara	2.95	A good budget cable with an even spread of virtues - and very minor vices - across the board	●				●	●			183
van den Gold Water	7	Bass becomes shy when there's a lot happening, and detail could be clearer	●				●	●			183
van den Hul The Clearwater	7	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky-sounding cable					●	●	●		109
van den Hul The Magnum	38	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twin-lead cable, Magnum sounds soft and old fashioned					●	●	●		109
van den Hul The Wind	40	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!					●	●	●		109
van den Hul Revolution	76	Silver-plated OFC combined with carbon fibre prompts a sombre character with an easy and relaxed treble					●	●	●	1726	133
XLO Pro Type 625	4	Lively but natural and relaxed-sounding - a hint of congestion at frequency extremes					●	●	●	1726	133
XLO Pro 600	16.60	Basically neutral tonality but can become aggressive and two-dimensional	●				●	●			168



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs; and generally more expensive low- and very-low-output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono-input-equipped valve amps need a transformer to cope with MC cartridges. ■ Even basic high-output MM cartridge designs will benefit from a customised amplifier input load. Consult your dealer for further details on this topic.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MM:** Moving-magnet cartridge with a normal output, suitable for all amplifier phono inputs.
- **MC:** Moving-coil cartridge with a low output, only suitable for high-sensitivity MC amplifier phono inputs.
- **REPLACEABLE STYLUS:** Most MM cartridges have a stylus (needle) that can be removed and replaced when worn out.
- **OUTPUT (mV):** Cartridge output in millivolts.
- **MASS (g):** The mass of your chosen cartridge

affects the choice of partnering tonearm. Consult dealers or manufacturers to establish which arms and pickups work well together.

● **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.

● **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

High End Review



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EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS

MM MC REPLACEABLE STYLUS OUTPUT (mV) MASS (g) FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Audio Technica AT-95E	20	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced			●		2.8		48
Clearaudio Signature	1,495	A great all-round performer with fine dynamic vitality and a seductive midband intimacy			●	0.55	11.5	2142	175
Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well		●		1.0	6		48
Denon DL160	90	Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'		●		0.1	6		43
Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life'. Is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail		●		0.1	6		103
Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether, and a bargain at the price		●					103
Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	450	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent		●		0.15	5.3		158

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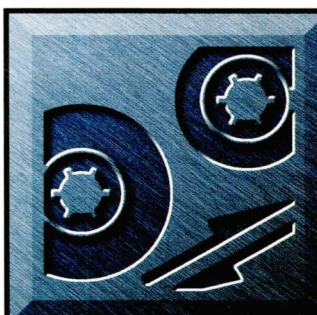
Cartridges

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

REPLACEABLE STYLUS
OUTPUT (mV)
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER
MM
MC

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	1,698	A real smoothie, but pricey. Worth checking out for its delicate laid-back transparency and low needle-talk	●	0.25	8.5	2142	175
Dynavector XX-1L	998	Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm	●	0.25	12		84
Dynavector XX-1	998	Good, but not immensely competitive at the price, and not helped by comparison with the low output version	●	2.0	12		84
Goldring Elan	19	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●	5.0	7		67
Goldring 1012GX	79	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency coloration apparent	●	6.5	7		85
Goldring 1022GX	99	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●	6.5	7		85
Goldring Eroica LX	110	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative	●	0.5	8		84
Goldring 1042	120	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively, though	●	6.5	6		91
Goldring Elite	220	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound is not the cleanest	●	0.5	8		103
Goldring Excel VX	525	Good bass drive but dull and imprecise higher up. An old-fashioned sound that falls short of the true high end	●	0.45	8	2143	175
Grado Prestige Gold	149	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●	4	6		158
Grado Reference	995	Loads of tracking headroom but treble is limited. A prospect for mid-oriented valve amp users	●	1.7	6.5	2143	175
Linn K9	125	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Bask's bodywork and adding a super stylus	●	4.5	5		Col
London Decca Maroon	259	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever	●	5.0	6		67
London Decca S Gold	399	Immediate and detailed, but coloured and nonlinear, with a questionable effect on records	●	5.0	6		84
Lyra Lydian	649	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed	●	0.3	7		158
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	995	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard	●	0.1	7		143
Lyra Parnassus D.C.t	1,895	A real little jewel of a cartridge, with many good qualities, but handicapped by a rather too obvious treble peak	●	0.22	10.5	2144	175
Ortofon 510/P	38	For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality	●	3.0	5		85
Ortofon 520/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, but the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound	●	3.0	5		67
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle – take it as it comes!	●	3.3	4		103
Ortofon MC15 Super II	130	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and close up	●	0.35	7		103
Ortofon MC25E	180	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable	●	0.5	11		139
Ortofon MC25FL	250	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP	●	0.5	11		139
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	525	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings	●	0.5	10.7		158
Ortofon Rohmann	1,000	A class act in nearly every respect, with fine groove security and a very smooth and even-handed sound	●	0.25	8.5	2144	175
Ortofon MC3000II	1,100	A real ear-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere – one of the very best	●	0.12	10		84
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo	●	0.12	10		91
Rega Bias	39	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow body, but the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound	●	5	4		67
Rega Elys	85	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is more detailed, accurate and convincing	●	5.0	5		67
Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but smoother and more civilised	●	6.5	5		91
van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●	5.5	6		103
van den Hul DDT-II	600	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing, but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy	●	0.35	7.6		158
van den Hul MC-10	750	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●	0.4	6		60
van den Hul MC-One	900	This extends all the positive qualities of the 10, but adds greater authority and scale – worth all the extra money	●	0.4	6		60
van den Hul MC-Two	1,200	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal	●	0.4	6		72
van den Hul Frog	1,500	Seems to control/suppress surface noise better than its rivals. This delicate and subtle performer has great charm	●	0.65	7	2145	175
van den Hul G' hopper IIIGLA	2,800	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available. It has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse	●	0.4	6		122
Wilson benesch Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive	●	0.58	6		158
Wilson benesch Carbon	1,573	Carbon fibre body contributes to a delightfully clean and open midrange, and a quick, lively and coherent sound	●	0.45	7	2145	175



Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Cassette decks hook up to the 'tape loop' inputs and outputs offered by most modern amplifiers. It's worth taking care to choose the best tapes for a specific machine. For example, expensive metal tapes will be a wasted investment for a cheap deck. Many better-specified decks have manual or automatic bias adjustment to get the best from specific samples of tape. Twin decks offer the possibility of copying from tape to tape, playing two cassettes sequentially or recording onto two tapes at once. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but uni-directional mechanisms promise better sound. Dolby S is the ultimate noise reduction system, and three-head decks permit record monitoring off-tape.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **DOLBY B/C:** The first and second Dolby hiss-killers.
- **DOLBY S:** A desirable derivative of Dolby SR professional noise-reduction.
- **DOLBY HX-PRO:** Extends headroom for cassette recording.
- **3-HEAD:** Permits monitoring off-tape while you're recording.
- **TWIN DECK:** Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play.
- **AUTOREVERSE:** Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.
- **AUTO CALIBRATION:** The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.
- **ADJUSTABLE BIAS:** Permits manual optimisation of tape.

● **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.

● **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *HI-FI Choice* in which an original review appeared.

● **High End Review**

B BEST BUY **R RECOMMENDED** **E EDITOR'S CHOICE**

STATUS

Cassette Decks

SPECIFICATIONS

DOLBY C
DOLBY S
DOLBY HX PRO
3-HEAD
TWIN DECK
AUTO REVERSE
AUTO CALIBRATION
ADJUSTABLE BIAS
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed deck. Astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●			●					1513	136
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin for those who want bells, whistles – and music	●			●					1377	146
Denon DRM-550	160	There are some technical limitations, but this remains a fine-sounding deck, and excellent value	●			●						158
Denon DRW-580	200	Twin deck; OK for casual use, but will quickly pall with more quality critical applications	●			●						171
Denon DRS-640	200	Draw-loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well-adjusted sound	●			●					1591	140
Denon DRM-650S	230	An improvement on predecessors, it offers a wide-ranging, sound. Dolby S is not the best feature	●	●							1920	164
Denon DRM-740	270	Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment, offers good, if somewhat detached sonics	●			●					1514	136
Denon DRS-810	310	Draw-loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition	●			●						127
Harman/Kardon TD420	250	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well-conceived, minimum features design	●			●					1592	140
Harman/Kardon TD450	350	Draw loader with poor tape navigation features; good midband but shallow bass	●			●					1920	164

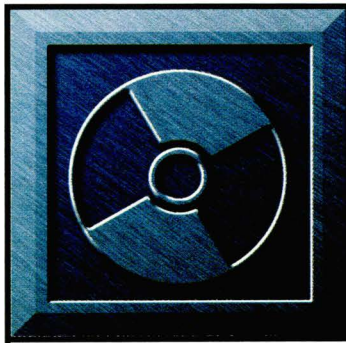
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Cassette Decks

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
ADJUSTABLE BIAS
AUTO CALIBRATION
AUTO REVERSE
TWIN DECK
3-HEAD
DOLBY HX PRO
DOLBY S
DOLBY C

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	
JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile-sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1380	146
JVC TD-W718	300	Twin deck. Good for creative live recording, but no timer standby. Respectable performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2039	171
Kenwood KX-W6080	200	Modestly decent-sounding twin deck, with some transport instability and ragged bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2040	171
Marantz SD455	170	Works well as a single deck, especially on replay, but dubbing at high/low speed compromises sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		184
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
NAD 616	300	Twin deck with basic features. No Dolby setting memory, transport is too unstable for audiophile use	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2041	171
Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer-loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146
Pioneer CT-S550S	250	Great features, good with cheap low bias tapes, but slightly synthetic sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
Pioneer CT-W806DR	300	Had it not been for the iffy transport quality, this sophisticated twin would have been Recommended	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2042	171
Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High-class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1385	146
Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
Teac V01050	180	One of the cheapest 3-head machines around, but it shows in very 'thick' sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		184
Technics RS-AZ6	200	For those who can't afford the RS-AZ7; clarity over the widest bandwidth thanks to AZ thin-film head	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
Technics RS-AZ7	270	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in state-of-the-art	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
Yamaha KX-490	200	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent deck, with a lightweight tonality, but stability and strong detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2043	171



CD/DVD Players

All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see below). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical type. The former is preferable for the ultimate sound. A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which converts the disc's digital bitstream into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue converter, or DAC. Although most players are contained within a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs. The first new DVD players have not excelled with CD software.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.
- **AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT:** Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- **OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For optical connection to an outboard DAC.
- **ST OPT DIG OUTPUT:** High-speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- **BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:** Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.
- **HEADPHONE SOCKET:** For 'car' users.
- **VARIABLE OUTPUT:** Remotely adjustable output level (usually non-audiophile).
- **MULTI-DISC:** Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
- **DAC TYPE:** BS - Philips Bitstream; MB - multibit; Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies; 1bit - single bit types eg MASH, bitstream, PWM, etc; CC - constant calibration.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full information, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the magazine.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared. Factsback information page.

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H High End Review

CD/DVD Players

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
DAC TYPE
MULTI-DISC
VARIABLE OUTPUT
HEADPHONE SOCKET
BAL ANALOGUE OUT
ST OPT DIG OUT
OPTICAL DIG OUT
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Acurus ACD11	899	First-rate if costly player, which combines a delightful transparency with an uncontrived naturalness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1962	166	
Acoustic Precision Eikos	1,850	Seriously customised Pioneer with extraordinary resolution and world beating imaging and bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit		165	
Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb		169	
AMC CD8A	150	Has balanced output, but is otherwise rather grey and unremarkable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	2071	172	
AMC CD9/DAC8	200	Beer-budget two-box system (player + DAC) is smooth, attractive and easy on the ear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	CC	2261	179	
Anthem CD1	1,595	Unusual combination of high-end player, complete with HDCD, and changer. Good, but noisy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2219	178
Arcam Alpha 7	330	Mildly rehashed favourite comes up smelling of roses	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1872	179	
Arcam Alpha MCD	450	Excellent bass and natural midband, but just a touch of treble dryness, from this very listenable changer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2220	178	
Arcam Alpha 8	520	Refined, intricately detailed but a little cautious. Should be broadly compatible with a variety of amps	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1873	163	
Arcam 8SE	600	Excellent (and very reasonably priced) HDCD-compatible player is a strong all-rounder	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1-bit		176	
Arcam Alpha 9	800	Looks like other Arcam CD players, but sounds compressed and lacking in detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Ring DAC		184	
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1875	163	
AVI S2000MC2	899	A chip off the old block. This model's in-yr-face balance obstructs an otherwise finely detailed sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2179	176	
AVI S2000MC Reference	1,399	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us. A fine performer in a sympathetic system	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB		169	
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and at 'em sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1268	147	
Cambridge Audio CD4SE	200	Among the best encountered at the price, considerably more refined and convincing than the CD4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1877	163	
Cambridge Audio CD6	250	A sharp, articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS		159	
Copland CDA-266	1,199	Simple yet elegant design is unexpectedly sophisticated under the skin, and effective in execution	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2183	176	
Copland CDA-288	2,199	A gentle giant of a player that errs in favour of pastel shades rather than bold daubs of colour	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1880	163	
Symbol CDP12	1,299	Clean, detailed and airy HDCD-equipped player with minimalist trappings	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	2184	176	
Denon DCD-635	180	Modest presentation gives little due to the thoroughbred electronics ticking away inside	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2075	172	
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1269	147	
Denon DCD-835	280	Refined version of Denon's multibit technology is a bit of a star	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB		184	
Denon DCD-1550AR	350	Disappointing bland and ploddy sound from an immaculately constructed, high tech player	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2266	179	
Denon DCD-1015	350	Excellent, mid-range player - fast, fluid and lean	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1599	141	
Denon DCD-3000	1,000	Sings with the temperament of a huge orchestra under the baton of a timid conductor	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1881	163	
harman/kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is amplifier fussy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit		159	
harman/kardon HD730	300	Competitive at the price, with a coloured but dynamic and outgoing sound, good features	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1957	166	
harman/kardon FL8300	300	Generally capable changer with relaxed sound and firm bass. Just a hint of roughness on occasion	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2220	178	

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CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
DAC TYPE
MULTI-DISC
VARIABLE OUTPUT
HEADPHONE SOCKET
BAL ANALOGUE OUT
ST OPT DIG OUT
OPTICAL DIG OUT
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS																	
Helios Model 2	950	This player may not be to everyone's taste, but it is an individual, with some interesting things to say	●														1bit	2180	176
JVC XL-V184BK	120	Excellent budget player, well presented, a little opaque, but its heart is in the right place															1bit	2072	172
JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined sound	●														1bit	1270	147
JVC XL-Z574	250	Strong resolving power, good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin															1bit	159	
JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even-handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●														1bit	1637	151
Kenwood DP-3080	170	Bold, dynamic and outgoing sound, though somewhat aggressive. Poor build quality and finish	●														1bit	159	
Kenwood DP-4090	250	Focuses a clear, wide aperture lens on the music – and has CD Text too!	●														1bit	2076	172
Kenwood DP-5090	300	Disappointing senior brother to the excellent DP-4090, but surface interface is good	●														1-bit	2267	179
Kenwood DP-7090	400	A lively and compelling performer with an even-handed and coherent disposition	●														MB	1885	163
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multi-room features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●														Hyb	1762	155
Marantz CD-48	200	Somewhat inconsistent, middle ranking player which hints at better things	●														1bit	2077	172
Marantz CD-67 Mk II	250	The digital equivalent of a safe pair of hands. Smooth	●														BS	2268	179
Marantz CD-675EmkII	300	Lacks dynamic consistency to justify the stunning performance with simple material	●														BS	184	
Marantz CD-675E	350	Refined, enjoyable player, though ultimately a little soft-centred	●														BS	1958	166
Marantz CD-63MkII KI Sig	500	It's the quintessential sound of Marantz – warm, open, and smooth almost to a fault	●														Hyb	169	
Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●														BS	1763	155
Marantz CD-17KIS	1,100	Minor QC problems aside, this is a superbly turned-out machine, but ultimately a little bland	●														BS	2181	176
Meracus Tanto	1,395	Believable tonal colours and textures, refinement takes preference over dynamics – but it's not cheap	●														DS	169	
Meridian 506	1,100	Revised 506 includes MSR remote and a new D/A chip, which makes it livelier and more detailed	●														1 bit	2182	176
Meridian 508 (20-bit)	1,995	Combines a delicate mid and treble with rich, opulent bass and has impressive low-level resolution	●														BS	1886	163
Mission Cyrus dAD3	598	A relaxed style of delivery that convinces with guile and subtlety rather than orchestral ordnance	●														BS	1887	163
Mission Cyrus dAD3Q	898	Lucid, transparent and uncontrived sound quality, superb build, and readily upgradeable	●														MB	1887	169
Monrio Privilege	995	Costly and well-engineered, but ultimately rather heavy-handed and dull, if refined player	●														MB	1963	166
Musical Fidelity E60	300	This entry-level player lacks proper stereo localisation and clarity	●														BS	1959	166
Musical Fidelity A2	500	Warm (too warm), attractive and open player, a great improvement on (related) E60	●														BS	169	
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	799	Brilliantly packaged and clean but slightly antiseptic sounding player	●														MB	184	
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,500	A forward disposition makes this perfect for Fenders but less appropriate to Guarneris	●														BS	1888	163
Myryad T-10	400	Rather ordinary player fails to shine with good music recordings	●														DS	184	
Myryad MC100	700	A little extra get-up-and-go wouldn't go amiss, but its sheer maturity and composure ensure listenability	●														BS	1889	163
Myryad MCD500	1,300	Well-built, attractive player, showing much promise, but can be a little heavy-going, on audition	●														1bit	2185	176
NAD 522	170	Crude, mechanical sounding player fails to tickle the music buds															1 bit	2262	179
NAD 510	200	Pale version of NAD's senior CD players with a stripped-down feature count															1bit	2078	172
NAD 512	250	Simple, well-focused presentation, and articulate with it. Hard-nosed quality is not everyone's cup of tea	●														1bit	159	
NAD 523	250	Nothing seriously amiss with this classic NAD 'no-frills' changer, but it lacks that vital spark															Hyb	2222	178
NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●														BS	1639	151
Naim Audio CD3	1,000	The idiosyncratically packaged CD3 is solid and highly articulate. Always has its feet on the ground															MB	1765	155
Naim Audio CD2	2,000	Provides bags of detail with a solid stereo focus but not all the romanticism we know to be possible															MB	1890	163
Onkyo DX-7210	260	Well-bred CD player features an unusual digital filter, is smooth and cultured without appearing boring	●														BS	1273	147
Onkyo DX-7510	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●														BS	1640	151
Orelle CD-100EA	649	Excellent imagery, timing and transparency, and readily upgraded or reconfigured	●														MB	1964	166
Parasound C/DP-1000	499	Comes on like a high end player, but ultimately sounds a tad weak and soft-centred	●														Hybrid	184	
Philips CD-721	130	Surprisingly well-sorted, articulate if slightly glossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead															1bit	159	
Philips CD751	150	Inconsistent and occasionally opaque and scrawny sounding cheapie	●														1bit	172	
Pioneer PD-S705	300	This machine was loved by some for its articulacy and disliked by others for sounding too impressive!	●														BS	1891	163
Pioneer PD-S707	300	Idiosyncratic Legato Link dominated sound, but always subtle and interesting	●														MB	184	
Pioneer PD-F906	350	Interesting appearance and concept, but this changer's sound is lacklustre and ergonomics frustrating															1bit	2223	178
Pioneer PD-S904	400	Too much legato – literally – in sound, but a very smooth performer	●														1bit	1641	151
Pioneer PDS-06	550	Technologically sophisticated. Pioneer's first multi-bit player for years is polished and capable	●														MB	2176	176
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	460	Assured, fluid-sounding player, with great spatial coherence	●														1bit	1965	166
Quad 77	900	A true thoroughbred combining a penetrating insight into detail with poise rarely found at the price															Hyb	1893	163
Revox Exception E426	2250	Very stylish with a light, agile sound that extends superbly and has fine timing	●														BS	182	
Roksan DP3P	1,495	Dramatic and compelling. Classical listeners should be ready to 'air conduct' when auditioning	●														BS	1896	163
Roksan Caspian	895	Solid, articulate, and fundamentally well-engineered player, but with some subtle low-level limitations	●														Hyb	169	
Rotel RCD-971	350	Odd disc handling logic, but bold, detailed and refined sound make this a must	●														MB	184	
Rotel RCD-970BX	375	A combination of solid build, useful facilities and an attention-grabbing sound make this a winner	●														BS	1897	163
Sherwood CD-4030R	180	Easy on the ear, smooth-sounding player, with limits set by the slightly soft, compressed quality															BS	159	
Sherwood CD1	1,100	A very neutral, even handed sounding player with a rather flat, lifeless sound. Beautiful construction	●														BS	1899	163
Sony CDP-XE310	140	Excellent value and bright as a button, but can sound OTT in some systems															1-bit	179	
Sony CDP-XE510	180	Souped up CDP-XE500 which tells a rather bland and unengaging story															1bit	172	
Sony CDP-XB720E	200	Good basic performance and a number of filter settings make this an interesting player for tweaks	●														Low bit	184	
Sony CDP-XE900E	300	Refined and analytical disc scavenging tool, some distinctive colorations make auditioning vital	●														BS	159	
Sony CDP-XA20ES	450	High tech, with a long list of gadgets, oddly configured player that ultimately sounds less than compelling	●														1-bit	2177	176
Sony CDP-X3000ES	500	Shoebot format player, looks to die for, switchable digital filters to tweak the already excellent sound	●														BS	1969	169
TAC McLaren CD20R	1,249	Fabulous build but transparent, highly-detailed sound lacks meat and is bettered at the price	●														1bit	184	
Teac CDP-3450SE	200	For once a budget player where gadgets take second place to respectable, budget amp-friendly sonics	●														1bit	1960	166
Teac CD-5	350	Bright, breezy and up-beat – but short in the trouser department	●														BS	1643	151
Teac VRDS-7	599	Although bold and outgoing, this player can sound both intrusive yet lacking in fine detail	●														BS	1769	155
Teac VRDS-8	600	Superb build quality is matched to good, but not exceptional sound quality	●														MB	184	
Teac VRDS-9	700	Well-presented. This Teac is crisp, yet shallow, and inconsistent in sound quality and partnering skills	●														1-bit	2178	176
Teac VRDS-10SE	850	Superbly built and presented, but rather leaden bass, with an over-prominent mid/top	●														BS	169	
Teac VRDS-25	1,300	A solid player in all respects, combining powerful sound with state-of-the-art technology	●														MB	1903	163

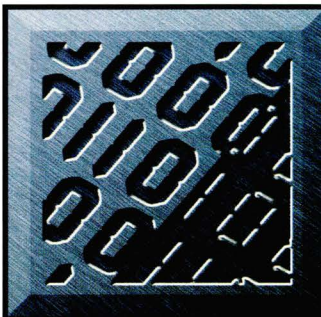
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CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	BAL OPT DIG OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC OUTPUT	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Technics SL-PG480A	130	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a subtle, slightly harsh top end							●	1-bit	159	
Technics SL-PS670D	200	Fine, middle ranking player which sounds solid, sometimes even a little stolid			●			●	●	1 bit 2264	179	
Technics SL-PS770D	250	High tech and well built technology battleship which smooths the rough edges off the music			●			●	●	BS 2080	172	
Technics SL-MC410	250	If you fancy a CD player that holds 111 discs, this one's cheap, pretty capable, and easy to use							●	Hyb 2224	178	
Trichord Genesis	549	Breathed-on Pioneer is warm and mellifluous, but ultimately lacks drive and authority	●					●	●	Hyb	169	
Trichord Revelation	799	Well-ordered and clean sound that may be a little too refined for some, images well	●					●	●	1-bit 1966	166	
XTC CDP-1	1,250	Bright and sometimes abrasive, but detailed player	●					●	●	MB 2186	176	
Wadia W830	3000	Envelope busting dynamics, power and imaging in a rather unexciting box (digital volume control)					●	●	●	MB	183	
Yamaha CDC-665	220	This player offers many features and highly listenable sound, with tidy and tuneful bass and good imaging	●	●			●	●	●	1bit 2225	178	
Yamaha CD-X993	400	A bit of a lush, though the sound is singularly free of grain, and equipment levels are strong	●					●	●	BS	184	
TRANSPORTS												
Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrassing	●			●				-	1323	144
PS Audio Lambda	2,250	With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail	●	●						-	1106	133
Roksan Attessa ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of sounding exciting with the right material	●			●				1-bit 1867	162	
Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound (tested with D-T1)	●			●				-	1325	144
Theta Data Basic II	2,397	Uses a Philips CDM9 Pro mechanism and works a treat with more lively DACs	●							-	1494	130
Thorens TCD2000	999	Lively presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble. (Tested with TDA 2000 DAC)	●			●				-	1867	162
Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer	●	●						-	1867	162
Wadia 8	3,195	Budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; too expensive for the performance on offer	●	●	●	●				-	1495	130
DACS												
Audio Note DAC1	675	Oddball DAC with manual de-emphasis switch. Needs a high preamp input impedance or bass will suffer								MB	127	
Linn Numerik	1,500	A new 20-bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a bit dry and humourless								MB 1323	144	
Musical Fidelity X-24K	300	24/96 ready with a warm, natural sound and good soundstaging (tested with Pioneer DV-717)								MB	186	
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590	The sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail. (Tested with Lambda transport)								MB 1106	133	
PS Audio Reference Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics					●			MB 1069	132	
Roksan Attessa ATT-DA2/DSS	1,145	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material								1-bit 1867	162	
Teac D-T1	500	Teamed with VRDS-T1 for test, this superb quality unit is tidy and composed								BS 1325	144	
Teac D-700	600	With P-700, the D-700 may lack the resolution, but is bubbly and entertaining								MB	120	
Thorens TDA2000	700	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble								BS 1867	162	
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer. Switchable phase, dither etc								Hyb 1867	162	
DVD PLAYERS												
Denon DVD-3000	700	Enjoyable rather than analytical, includes 24/96 and AC-3/MPEG-2 Audio	●			●			●	BS	180	
Micromega Premium DVD	1,500	Unique lack of regional coding constrictions but both DVD and CD replay are compromised	●			●				BS	183	
Panasonic DVD-A350	700	24/96 converter and AC-3 & MPEG-2 Audio included, well balanced, if slightly blurred and shut in	●	●				●		BS	180	
Pioneer DV-505	450	Plenty of analysis, with a slightly ragged edge. Rescued by the price & S/PDIF capabilities	●			●				BS	180	
Pioneer DV-717	600	DVD-V transport with 96/24 dig o/put, concedes only image depth to like priced CD players	●			●				1-bit 186	186	
Pioneer DVL-909	900	DVD and LD player: self-recommending to AV nuts; musically detailed but occasionally seems disjointed	●			●				BS	180	
Sony DVP-S715	600	24/96 converter for DAD compatibility, sharp, forward, but slightly unsuitable sound	●	●				●		BS	180	
Toshiba SD3107B	550	Dynamic sound and good stereo which lacks lowest stratum of detail	●			●				BS	180	



Digital Recorders

Domestic digital recording has been possible since the launch of digital audio tape (DAT) in the '80s. Since then DAT has remained expensive and largely esoteric, favoured only by well-heeled or professional users. Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc (MD) were launched in the early '90s but only MD has stayed the course. A little later came domestic CD-Recorders using CD-R discs, while the latest twist is the arrival of re-recordable CDs known as CD-RW discs. The recording quality hierarchy is as follows: DAT, CD-R/CD-RW, MD. MD is probably the most convenient to use, and offers sophisticated editing facilities, while CD-R is ideal for making digital 'clones' of prerecorded CDs. DAT is the medium of choice for high-quality location recording.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **FORMAT:** Type of recorder – see left for descriptions.
- **DAC TYPE:** Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream; MB - multibit; Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream; 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc
- **ADC TYPE:** The analogue to digital converter (ADC) converts sound into digits during live recording. Types of ADC are as per DACs (qv).
- **PORTABLE:** Battery operable, but not necessarily personal-stereo-sized.
- **OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for optical cable.
- **ELEC IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for electrical cable.
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STATUS

Digital Recorders

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER		
Denon DMD-1000	300	A good machine, but it still doesn't manage to shake off the MiniDisc plague of losing the listener's interest				MB	BS	N	●	●	184	
Denon DMD-1300	500	Sound sometimes lacks integration but tonal balance is good and it handles loud music with panache				MD	BS	BS	●	●	2193	177
Kenwood DM-9090	550	Slight sibilance and image vagueness do not detract from excellent balance and solid bass				MD	BS	BS	●	●	2194	177
Onkyo MD-121	450	Mid-sized deck that sounds slightly coloured at times, though immediate and lively				MD	BS	BS	●	●	2195	177
Sharp MDR3H	300	Nifty machine combining a 3-disc CD changer with a MD recorder. Sound on both is rather below par, though				BS	BS	N	●	●	184	
Sharp MD-R2	300	Budget recorder that loses little or nothing in comparisons with much more expensive models – highly capable				MD	BS	BS	●	●	2196	177
Sony MDS-JB920	300	One of the better MD decks, its sound is neutral and dynamic. European Audio Recorder of the Year '98-'99				BS	BS	N	●	●	184	
CD RECORDERS												
Philips CDR-880	499	Capable of making perfect copies of CD digital, and very acceptable copies of anything analogue too				BS	BS	N	●	●	184	
Pioneer PDR-555RW	480	Competitor to Philips' CDR880; it can't make perfect copies but has the edge in replay and analogue record sound				BS	BS	N	●	●	184	
Pioneer PDR-04	700	Scaled down version of the PDR-05 with auto level setting but all the socketry and features you need to make CDs				CD-R	BS	BS	●	●	171	
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000	The first domestic CD-R deck – excellent sound quality				CD-R	BS	BS	●	●	1652	152



Headphones

There are several different ways of making a headphone. The most expensive models employ electrostatically-driven diaphragms within an open-backed earcup. Most mid-price designs feature dynamic, moving-coil-driven diaphragms in open, semi-open or closed-back designs. An open-backed headphone can sound remarkably transparent, but also permits the ingress of external noise. Closed-back designs keep out unwanted sound, but may be less comfortable to wear and more coloured. The latest development is the cordless headphone using either infrared light or, more recently, radio waves. Quality is improving, but has yet to match the best corded designs.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **TYPE:** Operating principle: D - dynamic; E - electrostatic
- **SUPRA-AURAL:** Where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.
- **CIRCUM-AURAL:** Where the earcup encloses the ear.
- **OPEN BACK:** Offers an open sound but lets in noise.
- **CLOSED BACK:** Keeps out external noise.
- **MASS (g):** Mass in grams
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Load offered to the headphone amplifier. Many headphones offer a significantly higher value than loudspeakers, for example, but this does not mean they will be incompatible with the majority of amplifiers.
- **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR:** Compatible with mini-jacked components, eg personal stereos.
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Headphones

SPECIFICATIONS

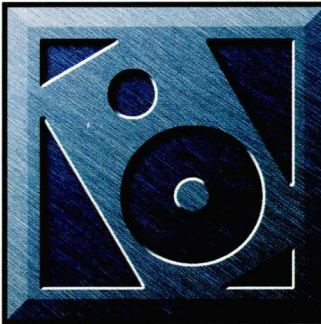
STATUS

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	TYPE	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUM-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	MASS (g)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
AKG K 1000	700	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs	D			●	●	270	120			99
AKG K 240 DF	100	Inoffensive 'phones that are very laid back, if lacking in grunt	D			●	●	240	600	●		186
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	80	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found	D	●				280	40	●		55
Audio Technica ATH-M40	120	Incredible detail and honesty from these classically designed studio 'phone	D			●		250	60	●		186
Beyer DT311	50	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone	D			●	●	124	40	●	1098	133
Beyer DT411	63	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price	D			●	●	120	250			111
Beyer DT431	81	Nice looking 'phones that may not be the best players on the field, but will always give 100 per cent	D			●	●	210	40	●		186
Beyer DT100	160	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	D			●	●	350	600			157
Beyer DT511	106	Superb midband clarity and speed slightly at odds with soft bass. High tingle factor, even so	D			●	●	200	250		2063	172
Beyer DT531	135	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D			●	●	245	250			144
Beyer DT831	140	These provide silky, smooth textures in abundance and we're not just talking about the velvet ear pads	D			●	1/2	295	250	●		186
Beyer DT911	170	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps: these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans	D			●	●	275	250			111
Denon AH-D550	80	A competent 'phone with integrity, but little panache or charisma. Hard headband causes brain strain	D			●	●	200	35	●	1801	157
Denon AH-D750	130	Loud and gutsy, meaty bass, good with rock and dance. Can sound thick and dumsky	D			●	●	250	30	●	2063	172
Grado SR-40	45	Cheap and nasty appearance largely redeemed by cheerful, up-beat sound. Very comfortable	D	●			●	120	32	●	2064	172
Grado SR-80	100	Open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes	D	●			●	60	8	●	1801	157
Grado SR125	150	What these 'phones lack in style they make up for ten-fold in musical quality	D	●			●	200	32			186
Grado SR-225	200	Warm, darkly-coloured tonally and ultimately lacking in clarity, but true to the spirit of the music	D	●			●	200	32		1883	163
Jecklin Float Model 1	79	While very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness	D			●	●	400	200			55
Jecklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in the long term, despite lack of adjustment	D			●	●	400	200			63
JVC HA-W60	49	Remarkable lack of interference and hiss ameliorates adequate sound of this cordless design	D	●			●	165	I/R	●		172
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colorations	D	●			●	220	32	●		121
JVC HA-W200RF	75	Distinct lack of hiss from these FM cordless 'phones ensures that detail and depth are easily heard	D			●	●	280	20,000	●		186
Koss R/100	100	Rather cheap looking 'phones that supply good detail but are severely lacking in midrange excitement	D			●	●	215	60	●		186
Precide Ergo Model 2	140	Still has much of the spaciousness of the Float from which it is derived, but coarse mid/top	D			●	●	380	100		1892	163
Philips SBC 3396	70	Remarkably airy for closed-back designs. Fine tonal balance, punchy delivery. Amazing for money	D			●	●	255	32	●	2064	172
Philips SBC HP900	90	Sharper, snappier midrange than 3396: initially impressive but blows it on balance and listenability	D			●	●	200	32	●	2065	172
Sennheiser IS 380	55	As close as you'll get to real hi-fi with infra-red phones at this price. Inevitable hiss spoils the illusion	D	●			●	192	I/R	●		172
Sennheiser HD 455	55	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound; modular, but can become dislodged from head	D	●			●	185	60	●	1801	157
Sennheiser HD 500	70	A disappointing pair that offer good stereo-imaging, but little else	D			●	●	210	32	●		186
Sennheiser HD 475	80	Elegant, uncluttered sound and very comfortable but lean bass saps satisfaction	D	●			●	120	60	●	2065	172
Sennheiser RS 400	80	FM cordless 'phones that are very wearable, but slightly woolly sounding with interference problems	D	●			●	160	N/A	●		186
Sennheiser HD 545	125	Fine all-rounder that takes all styles of music in its stride. Ear-clamping headband	D			●	●	255	150	●	2066	172
Sennheiser HD 565 Ovation	150	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable	D			●	●	255	150	●	1801	157
Sennheiser HE 60/HEV70/UK	998	Very nearly a superb electrostatic, with a pure midband, but top end is sibilant and edgy	E			●	●	260	N/A		1898	163
Sony MDR-605LP	50	Funky looking headphones that have a very bold, but tiring sound, with coloured bass	D			●	●	145	40	●		186
Sony MDR-CD770	100	Neutrality and comfort make the Sony easy to live with. Correct-sounding too, yet musically unrewarding	D			●	●	-	-	●	1801	157
Sony MDR-CD1700	200	Astonishingly detailed, uncoloured and free of the usual artefacts from a sealed back headphone	D			●	●	325	32	●	1901	163
Sony MDR-F1	100	Natural, easy-going sound teamed with great looks and comfort. Shame about the lightweight bass	D			●	●	300	12	●	2066	172



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Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

As the last link in the hi-fi chain, loudspeakers are at the mercy of incoming signals. Nevertheless, distortions introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be the most obvious. The average loudspeaker comprises an enclosure containing two drive units. Inside the box, a simple electrical circuit (the crossover or dividing network) splits the incoming, full-frequency-range signal into the right portions for specific drive units to handle: highs to the 'tweeter', lows to the 'woofer'. For any given box size, designers must balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against bass extension (how low it goes). Subwoofers augment bass and are either passive (unamplified) or, preferably, active (self-amplified).

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SIZE WxHxD (cm):** Width by height by depth in centimetres.
- **FLOORSTANDER:** Requires no stand support.
- **SENSITIVITY (dB/W):** How much sound results for a given electrical input – the higher the figure, the louder the speaker.
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Impedance, measured in Ohms, indicates how much resistance the speaker presents to an amplifier. As impedance decreases, demands on an amplifier increase.
- **BASS FROM (Hz):** The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce effectively.
- **FREE SPACE:** Speakers which should not sit close to walls.
- **CLOSE TO WALL:** Speakers which should sit between 3 and 12cm from the rear wall.
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Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

- SIZE WxHxD (CM)
- FLOORSTANDER
- SENSITIVITY (dB/W)
- IMPEDANCE (Ω)
- BASS FROM (Hz)
- FREE SPACE
- CLOSE TO WALL
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Acoustic Energy AE200	250	Metal-cone miniature has a tendency to shout but is still lots of fun, and well built too	18,5,30,25		87	6	40			2199	177
Acoustic Energy AE109	350	Lots of mass-loaded twin-driver speaker for the money, especially for loud, driving bass	18,90,25		88	4	25			1904	164
Acoustic Energy AE120	500	Attractive presentation and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance	18,98,28		89	4	25			1904	170
ATC SCM20	1,599	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable	24,44,31		83	8	28				86
Audio Gem Emerald	540	Pretty compact floorstander with lively if lightweight sound	18,94,21		87	6	40			1905	164
Audio Note AN-J/B	799	Light damping and local unevenness add some coloration, but don't spoil the speaker	38,58,25		93	8	25				110
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	Coherent, dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity – but ugly!	36,84,28		94	8	20				106
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually-styled floorstander has performing stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47		88	8	28			1344	143
Audiovector M2	1,399	High-class, smooth and slightly laid-back performer has driving bass. It's upgradeable, too!	20,102,30		89	4	22				180
AVI Positron	899	This 'mini-floorstander' is capable of great precision and delicacy, but in a rather small scale way	17,5,74,24.5		85	6	40			2130	174
B&W CDM2SE	400	Beautifully styled and finished, respectable midband. Lacks definition towards frequency extremes	22,32,25		87	6	40				183
B&W DM302	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45			1778	156
B&W DM601	199	Great main driver for the price, entertaining dynamics	20,5,35,5,23		88	6	30			1779	156
B&W DM602	300	Prefers tall stands and space, but offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension	24,49,31		90	8	30			1654	152
B&W DM305	350	Ridged paper cone gives lively sound, clever box, but a little uneven	22,87,31		89	4	40			1908	164
B&W DM603	500	Squat floorstander with decent dynamics and well-judged, restrained balance; bass could go deeper	23,5,88,29		89	7	45			2030	170
B&W CDM1SE	600	A great looking stand-mount with one of the best midbands around, and a subtle blend of other qualities	22,37,29		88	5	40			2209	177
B&W CDM7	1,000	A combination of serious welly and physical elegance; but a basic lack of midband smoothness	22,97,29		90	4	22			2131	174
B&W Matrix 805 V	1,095	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low coloration	33,33,21		87	8	30				98
B&W Matrix 804	1,695	A great all-rounder which combines exceptional bass extension with fine sensitivity	26,96,26		88	4	20			1985	167
B&W Nautilus 802	6,000	Outstanding example of the high tech speaker builder's art, needs real power but gives real sound	39,111,55		91	8	34				183
B&W Nautilus 801	8,500	The 801 is a magnificent loudspeaker in nearly every respect, but it is one that likes to play loud	52,111,69		91	8	34				186
Cabasse Farella 400	950	Exciting but very upfront-and-in-er-face sound. High sensitivity, fine build and good dynamic drive	26,92,32		92	5	28				180
Castle Isis	250	A great miniature at a competitive price. Sound is lightweight but very coherent, with a fine overall balance	17, 35,5,21		87	8	45			2019	170
Castle Kendal	500	A beautifully finished compact floorstander with a decidedly forward but communicative sound.	17,76,20		86	6	45			2204	177
Castle Severn 2	539	Carbon fibre cone gives lovely, subtle midband but treble is a bit dull and bass a bit thumpy	21,84,25		87	8	30			2120	174
Castle Avon	730	Lovely box and lovely voices from carbon-fibre composite cone	22,91,28		85	8	22			1909	164
Castle Harlech	880	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33		88	8	28			1820	160
Castle Howard S2	1,200	Able to fill the gap between Chester and Winchester, has a rich, laid-back balance	26,104,41		90	8	40			1078	132
Celestion 12i	119	Not without virtue, but the relentless enthusiasm and mid-band colorations can become wearing	19,31,21		88	6	45			2254	179
Celestion 23i	300	Cosmetically flawed, but the bottom end has fine get-up-and-go, and works well with dance tracks	24,86,27		89	6	30			2200	177
Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35		88	6	25			1910	164
Celestion A2	1500	Full scale, big sound from ultra-elegant floorstander. Smooth and slightly laid back presentation	24,93,39		89	6	22				180
Cerwin-Vega VS10	350	Not very refined but extremely ballsy; these rock boxes have no shortage of gung-ho	33,70,29		95	6	37			1758	155
Chario Syntar 100	249	Pretty with a pleasantly easygoing balance, but not the most communicative or exciting sound around	18,32,27		87	6	45			2020	170
Chario Academie	1650	Pricy Italian stand-mount, has high class sound and appearance. Solid walnut enclosures	25,40,31		84	8	40				180
Dali 606	400	A big bruiser at a tempting price. Sounds refined and polite, but also packs some punch	22,97,32		91	4	25			2121	174
Dynaudio Audience 5	400	Follows the Dynaudio tradition for fine midband transparency, but the overall timbre is a bit thin	20,31,26		85	4	40			2205	177
Dynaudio Audience 50	577	This stand-mount doesn't look big, but sound quality can match many models at twice the price	20,33,25		86	4	30			2122	174
Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,842	Wonderful voice-band delicacy and loads of deep bass from a very elegant and compact box	21,95,29		85	4	20			1986	167
Eltax Linear Response	249	A curiously dumpy shape, but smooth, laid-back performer is easy on the ears, with fine tonal accuracy	25,35,32		85	4	40			2201	177
Epos ES12	499	High quality luxury stand-mount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25		85	8	45			1823	160
Epos ES14	675	Substantial stand-mount delivers delightful midrange focus and delicacy with good bass control	23,49,29		87	8	25				98
Epos ES25	1,655	Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance	24,90,35		88	6	22			1346	143
Faraday Siren	445	High mass concrete cabinet is let down by imbalance of ageing driver combination	25,27,46		90	4	48				94
Gale 2i	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27		88	7	40			2021	170
Genexa Pro	160	Terrific treble and upper-mid but coloured and cuppy lower-mid and bass. A mixture of genius and grot.	14,27,14		86	8	90			2255	179
GLL Imagio IC130	500	Lots of speaker for the money, but sound is decidedly dull and shut in	22,112,29		88	4	20			1824	160
Heybrook Prima 2	159	Great openness, speed and timing. Sounds fresh and vital, though sometimes lacks scale and weight	20,29,18		87	6	50			2256	179
Heybrook Heylette	269	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature has fine bass-to-mid integrity, but dull and shut-in top end	19,5,30,20		89	6	45			2026	170
Heybrook Heylios	389	Great all-round performance in a pretty package at a sharp price	24,36,27		87	6	25			1912	164
Heybrook Heylo	439	Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought	23,73,19		88	8	30			1658	152
Heybrook Ultima	649	Has the bass wallop to justify its dual hi-fi/home cinema roles, but doesn't excite	22,97,29		89	6	45			2126	174
Heybrook Octet	1800	Good-looking but pricy floorstander with novel drivers and a fine ceramic-enclosure midband	24,97,31		90	6	25				180
Infinity Delta 60	700	Striking and massive floorstander, lots of speaker for the price, but seems a victim of its own complexity	16-29,115,41		90	4	25				183
Infinity Reference 1i	150	Although not to our tastes, this is a competent speaker, and decent material value	20,34,20		89	6	50			1403	148
Jamo BX100A	350	Offering a cracking output for their size, these rock boxes can be a bit bright but have decent bass	31,5,54,28		91	8	40			1758	155

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Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) SENSITIVITY (dB/W) FLOORSTANDER BASS FROM (HZ) IMPEDANCE (Ω) CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PRICE	SENSITIVITY	FLOORSTANDER	BASS FROM	IMPEDANCE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom'n'tizz character sounded crude	22,90,29	90	4	28	●	●	1659	152
Jamo Cornet 195	350	Loads of bass, should have plenty of yooof-appeal – it looks the business, and is priced attractively	20,5,91,31	●	90	3	26	●		183
Jamo 477A	500	Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price	19,77,28	●	88	4	40	●	1549	138
Jamo 507A	700	Imaginative styling keeps the front view super slim yet still it packs a punch. Glass top is a nice touch	22,94,37	●	88	3	40	●	2126	174
JBL LX2	250	<i>Inigorative, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with considerable enthusiasm</i>	22,40,27	87	8	40	●	●	2022	170
JBL L20	700	Pricely, heavy and a bit laid back, but this is a fine rock'n'roller which is dynamic and communicative	26,42,28	86	8	30	●	●	1550	138
JBL SVA1500	700	A distinctive Pro-style bi-radial horn tweeter, with a fun sound, enlivened by a juicy bass thump	17,5,51,31	86	8	40	●	●	2127	174
JBL L40	1,000	Classic, large, stand-mount three-way is full of vim and vigour, with a superb sense of balance	30,65,31	88	4	23	●	●	1976	167
JBL SVA 2100	1250	Monstrously large and brutish styling, goes very loud as well as deep. Fine focus but some boxiness	37,114,52	●	91	8	<20	●		180
JBL L90	1,500	<i>A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a bit crude</i>	24,94,35	●	91	6	23	●	1348	143
JBL LX70	550	Bassmeister supreme, shame the rest doesn't match up. Fine sensitivity but an itchy scratchy treble	26,5,94,30	●	91	4	33	●		183
JM Lab Spectral 909.1	1,375	Multi-driver array in a large and very substantial enclosure. Good scale but lacks delicacy and sweetness	27,107,35	●	90	4	20	●		180
JM Lab Tantal 515	495	<i>Lively and open if bright. Sound is entertaining and informative, but presentation is nondescript</i>	20,94,26	●	92	5	32	●		183
JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	7,250	Looks good and sounds even better. A genuinely big speaker with fantastic coherence	35,115,47	●	92	4	30	●		186
Jordan Watts JH400	565	Piano-finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid	28,38,21	86	8	50	●	●		106
JPW Mini Monitor	60	<i>Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way</i>	18,27,175	86	8	50	●	●	1781	156
JPW Gold Monitor	80	<i>More informative than Mini Monitor – but fiercer too</i>	18,27,175	86	8	50	●	●	1782	156
JPW ML510	130	<i>Lots of good-quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components</i>	20,34,22	88	5	50	●	●		169
JPW ML710	230	Good material value but disappointingly uneven bass – check out the 510s instead	20,88,30	●	88	5	40	●	2202	177
JPW ML910	330	Loads of speaker for the money, plenty of headroom and loudness capability, but sounds dull	23,104,30	●	91	4	43	●		183
JPW ML1010	400	A seriously substantial speaker for the price, and an obvious choice for those who like their music loud	22,5,115,40	●	91	6	25	●	2031	170
JPW Ruby 1	400	Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good, if slightly edgy balance	19,32,21	87	6	55	●	●	1572	139
JPW Ruby 4	1,000	Twin metal-cone main drivers improve the dynamic performance and bass extension, with little sacrifice	22,94,26	●	88	8	25	●	2132	174
KEF Coda 7	129	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be tauter; build tougher	18,30,23	88	6	50	●	●	1783	156
KEF Coda 8	189	Outstandingly well-balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29	86	6	28	●	●	1784	156
KEF Coda 9	299	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●	1785	156
KEF RDM One	499	Cute and tiny, nice midband but lack of bass warmth and weight	23,30,24	88	6	70	●	●	1913	164
KEF Reference Model 2	1,599	Classy, large floorstander that has massive headroom and clean mid-to-treble, but limited deep bass	23,103,34	●	89	4	30	●	1987	167
Kelly KT2	700	<i>Chunky floorstander has tacky finish but whopping sensitivity and a very involving, (if characterful) sound</i>	23,89,34	●	94	4	33	●		183
Kelly KT3	1,200	<i>Super-high-sensitivity, hefty floorstander sacrifices smoothness for dynamic realism</i>	25,95,36	●	95	4	28	●	2133	174
Keswick Audio Aria II	379	<i>Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in</i>	21,42,24	89	8	20	●	●	1405	148
Keswick Audio Torino	999	Good value, lively contender with distinctive styling. Goes loud and deep but could be smoother	18-26, 93,28	●	90	4	20	●	1977	167
Linn Keliidh Passive	750	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive	20,83,28	●	87	4	22	●	1552	138
Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving	20,90,28	●	87	4	25	●		118
Living Voice Auditorium	1,500	<i>Pretty, compact floorstander has wonderful coherence, high sensitivity and fine dynamic integrity</i>	21,5,98,29	●	91	4	25	●		180
Magnat Vector 77	450	Tall, dark and a lot of speaker for the money. Beautiful balance, but lacking in subtlety and transparency	22,115,29	●	89	5	30	●		183
Magnat Vintage 720	1200	Slightly crude in some respects but lots of heart, fine scale, decent dynamic coherence and integrity	29,113,32	●	88	4	20	●		180
Mission 700	130	A lot of speaker for the money. Good bass weight and extension and goes loud with ease	18,34,26	87	8	40	●	●	2257	179
Mission 731 PRO	140	<i>Cautious balance makes a fine match with budget equipment. A classy baby for smaller rooms</i>	17,5,31,5,20	89	8	55	●	●		169
Mission 750LE	250	Fabulous cosmetics and a great midband carry the day, though size will out and bass is inevitably limited	17,28,27	86	7	45	●	●	2203	177
Mission 733i	330	New tweeter gives a more open sound; a good all-rounder that doesn't sound as big as it looks	20,5,88,30	●	88	8	45	●	2027	170
Mission 774	500	Gorgeous floorstander is an entertaining communicator, despite some balance oddities (bright treble)	18,95,31	●	90	4	40	●		183
Mission 752 Freedom	578	<i>A beautifully judged compromise in the art of combining presentation with a decent sound</i>	20,90,25	●	89	8	45	●	2123	174
Mission 753 Freedom	798	<i>Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics</i>	21,90,31	●	89	4	40	●	1914	164
Mission 754 Freedom 5	1,298	Tall but exceptionally elegant floorstander gives fine midband projection; goes loud but limited deep bass	22,111,31	●	88	4	40	●	1981	167
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	400	An exceptionally discreet floorstander; sonically uneven, but capable of fine results	16,91,21	●	88	5	30	●	2032	170
Monitor Audio Monitor 4	500	An oddball balance but an entertaining sound, and a good looking real-wood-box at a realistic price	20,87,24	●	84	6	23	●	2210	177
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	600	Good-looking luxury compact with all-metal diaphragms: lovely midrange, but occasionally edgy	22,35,26	89	8	45	●	●	1661	152
Monitor Audio 702PMC	700	A good all-round stand-mount with intimate midband focus	20,40,25	87	8	30	●	●	2128	174
Monitor Audio MA703 PMC	800	Lovely but pricey floorstander has up-front, coherent, 'shiny' sound	20,89,27	●	88	8	50	●	1826	160
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000	A real looker, but sound and content are a bit on the small side for the price	17,92,20	●	90	8	28	●	1349	143
Monitor Audio 705PMC	1400	Beautifully finished compact floorstander with fine midband coherence, but limited bass and top end	20,94,28	●	89	4	25	●		180
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	<i>Up front, bouncy and a whole lot of fun</i>	18,5,30,5,20	86	8	50	●	●	1789	156
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Slightly shut-in and coloured quality is offset by fine bass and impressive communication	25,43,28	90	8	28	●	●	1662	152
Musical Technology Kestrel SE	300	Brighter and drier-sounding than the standard Kestrel (and not the better for it)	20,84,19	●	84	5	50	●	1915	164
Musical Technology Harrier	400	Very pretty package, good measured performance and even sound. Sensitivity is low, and dynamics limp	25,80,23	●	86	8	25	●	1663	152
Musical Technology PM15	450	<i>A subtle, understated but very involving example of the 'classic' luxury-finish compact standmount.</i>	20,41,27	88	5	38	●	●		183
Musical Technology Condor	1,000	Lots of clever ideas in a floorstander, which places transparency and smoothness ahead of dynamic drama	25,91,23	●	85	4	28	●	2134	174
Naim Intro	660	<i>Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth</i>	24,89,27	●	89	6	30	●	1916	164
Naim Credo	1,060	Involving sound, but rather forward and cold. Good clarity, but some coloration and a lack of richness	24,89,30	●	88	8	28	●		180
Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy – smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	●	88	6	25	●	1352	143
Neat Critique 2	445	Contemporary standmount has a clean, crisp sound with lovely natural midband voicing	22,32,24	86	6	50	●	●		183
Neat Mystique Mk2	575	<i>This elegant package delivers a fine overall sound quality; some might find the top end too insistent</i>	20,86,18	●	85	6	23	●	2211	177
Neat Petite II/Gravitas	2,000	Beautifully presented miniature/subwoofer combo with ribbon tweeter gives smooth, laid-back sound	23,105,40	●	85	6	25	●	1988	167
Origin Live Conqueror	1,650	Chunky floorstanding three-way has lovely cabinetwork and lively sound, but limited deep bass	24,94,27	●	88	8	30	●	1989	167
PMC TB15	430	<i>Pro-audio version of TBI</i>	20,41,30	87	6	40	●	●	2207	177
PMC TB1	482	<i>A classy, laid-back performer that likes going loud and loves the bass guitar</i>	20,40,31	87	8	45	●	●	1830	160
PMC LB1	935	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited	18,53,25	89	4	33	●	●		110
PMC AB1	1,496	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room	26,79,43	89	6	22	●	●		114
Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	●	89	8	25	●	1155	138
Polk RT16	799	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39	●	91	4	22	●	1831	160

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SPECIFICATIONS

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STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PRICE	SENSITIVITY	IMPEDANCE	BASS FROM	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Polk LS70	1,200	High sensitivity, but balance has too much midbass boom; mid-top is laid back	31,94,37	● 90	8	22	●	●	1084	132
Proac Response 2.5	2,700	For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good boxes, this speaker should be first port of call	22,107,25	● 86	8	30	●	●	1457	149
QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal stand-mount with heavy, laid-back balance but remarkably unboxy sound	27,37,36	● 83	4	25	●	●		167
Quad ESL-63	3,450	Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without	66,95,27	● 86	8	34	●	●		60
Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative	19,31,19	● 87	8	50	●	●		114
Rega EL8	298	Kyte drivers in compact floorstander give more bass but less coherence	17,72,20	● 86	8	55	●	●		122
Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20	● 87	8	40	●	●	1578	139
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing	20,82,30	● 89	6	40	●	●	1083	132
Rehdeko RK 115a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic coherence	34,42,27	● 95	8	55	●	●	1982	167
Revolver Colt	139	A good all-rounder, if a little bland, and excellent value for money	30,19,22	● 88	6	48	●	●	1407	148
Revolver 250	250	A nice price for a floorstander, but over-bright sound balance has potentially fatiguing consequences	21,85,5,25	● 87	8	22	●	●	2023	170
RMS Revelation Series 1	1,299	Innovative metal-box compact with integral port/stand - clean with good timing but very laid-back balance	20,99,24	● 81	8	22	●	●	1983	167
Rogers GS1	179	Classy looking small box with equally classy, if slightly over cautious sound	19,30,17	● 85	8	45	●	●	2258	179
Rogers dB101	250	This shapely sub-miniature is fast and agile but lightweight and forward: great voices; lacks bass	20,26,20	● 88	6	45	●	●	2024	170
Rogers LS3/5A	699	Clever AB1 stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot	19,31,17	● 82	12	45	●	●	1354	143
Rogers Cg/28	1,399	Large floorstander with carbon-fibre tweeter. Sounds better than it looks, especially through the midband	25,103,29	● 88	6	20	●	●		167
Roksan ROKone	595	Large stand-mount is musically very communicative if a little coloured	21,45,33	● 89	6	30	●	●	1834	160
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance	28,76,46	● 88	8	20	●	●	1082	132
Roksan OJ3X Black	995	Innovative low-line, 2-way floorstander with decoupled tweeter; great bass and fine dynamic range	28,79,46	● 84	8	20	●	●	1979	167
Royd Minstrel	275	Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing; a bit bright	18,69,12	● 86	8	30	●	●	1167	135
Royd Doublet	485	Great value compact floorstander: lively and very informative, if a little uneven	18,93,19	● 90	4	28	●	●	1835	160
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Extremely musical and communicative speaker that's fun to listen to. Aesthetics could be better, though	20,31,18	● 86	8	35	●	●		139
Royd Abbot	695	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance	20,81,30	● 90	8	43	●	●		118
Ruark Epilogue	269	Beautifully finished miniature with a lively balance and plenty of charm; best suited to smaller rooms	17,29,23	● 87	8	47	●	●		183
Ruark Sceptre	599	'Traditional' cabinetwork with classy veneer and shiny gilt fixings, hampered by rather wayward sound balance	21,38,31	● 87	8	40	●	●	2129	174
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence	23,84,32	● 88	8	30	●	●		118
Ruark Crusader	1,599	Elegant luxury three-way with wonderfully even-handed, if rather laid-back balance	24,94,31	● 85	6	22	●	●	1990	167
Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to vanish behind the music	25,88,34	● 88	6	45	●	●	1227	140
Ruark Excalibur	7,000	A big handsome speaker with a big, laid-back, but open sound, rocking bass and loads of headroom	30,125,53	● 90	4	30	●	●		186
SD Acoustics SD3R	649	SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature, good bass and low sensitivity	20,38,30	● 87	8	25	●	●		106
SD Acoustics SD5	1,549	Bass suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth. Has ribbon tweeter	20,110,30	● 88	8	30	●	●	1081	132
Sequence 400	329	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great	25,100,7	● 86	8	45	●	●	1917	164
Shahinian Arc	1,875	Occasionally wonderful, small, floorstanding omni directional design: bright but coherent and revealing	35,69,25	● 88	6	24	●	●		110
Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact: neutral if bright, tough work for amps	20,40,25	● 83	3	30	●	●	1918	164
Spendor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound	18,89,27	● 87	8	30	●	●	1836	160
System Audio 1130	499	Super-slim, super smooth, involving experience, but not ideal if you like your bass deep and loud	3,100,21	● 89	4	43	●	●		183
Tangent Monitor 5	80	An uneven performer best suited to small rooms and generous volume levels	17,5,27,18	● 83	8	55	●	●		169
Tangent Monitor 9	150	Budget floorstander that motors when the music demands, with a solid bass but occasionally raw treble	19,5,75,5,22,5	● 90	6	45	●	●	1926	165
Tannoy Mercury M1	120	Sounds much bigger and expensive than it is. Solid, tuneful bass, wide open soundstage, excellent imaging	17,30,20	● 87	8	50	●	●	2259	179
Tannoy Mercury M2	140	A fine all-rounder with big box and deep bass for the price; could be sweeter and tighter	20,5,38,28	● 87	8	25	●	●		169
Tannoy Mercury M3	230	Good-looking floorstander; very neutral and evenhanded, with fine midband but weak dynamics and drive	20,5,87,28	● 87	7	20	●	●	2025	170
Tannoy Precision P20	400	A creative and attractive design with time-aligned drivers, but the sound lacks sufficient excitement	21,80,30	● 88	5	25	●	●	2208	177
Tannoy D300	999	Gorgeous-looking compact floorstander. And a fine all-round performer, too!	16-24,85,23	● 87	6	26	●	●		167
Tannoy D500	1,999	Plenty of muscle and stereo, but short of poise and delicacy. Hard work for amps	31,93,34	● 91	6	20	●	●	1355	143
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600	These awesome horn-loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive	large	● 99	8	38	●	●		C93
TDL RTL3SE	450	A touch of boom'n'tizz might be to taste, but this is a lot of box for the money, with floor-shaking bass	20,91,39	● 89	6	22	●	●	2124	174
TDL CF100 Chiltern	450	Tiny but classy monitor has a laid-back balance, a fine midband and a surprising bass; but needs space	20,29,23	● 85	8	50	●	●		183
TDL CF200 Cotswold	650	Fine midband tonality and dynamic range, but less happy towards the bandwidth extremes	22,5,78,23	● 86	6	40	●	●	2212	177
TDL T-Line 3	700	Plenty of bass and treble, but broad midband is rather repressed	20,97,38	● 86	8	20	●	●	1921	164
Technics SB-M20	200	Well-balanced with natural perspectives and fine midband coherence, but bass is a bit boxy and uneven	20,32,23	● 70	8	50	●	●	1413	148
Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass, heavy balance and low sensitivity	25,78,37	● 85	8	25	●	●	1666	152
Totem Model One	1,195	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size	17,31,23	● 87	4	28	●	●		122
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness	41,101,27	● 88	7	23	●	●		86
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140	A good-hearted, lively and up-front performer that's a little lacking in subtlety and smoothness	19,29,5,23	● 88	4	45	●	●		169
Wharfedale Valdus 400	200	Very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	25,80,26	● 91	8	30	●	●	1414	148
Wharfedale Valdus 500	300	These rock boxes can move plenty of air, albeit not as subtly as alternatives	25,108,26,5	● 91	4	40	●	●	1758	155
Wharfedale MFM-3	350	Smooth broad midband gives fine voice rendition; bass could be better	22,89,28	● 87	8	40	●	●	1922	164
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal-cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun	14,22,12	● 88	8	30	●	●		110
SUBWOOFERS										
Acoustic Energy AE108S	299	Lots of loud subwoofer for your money, though ultimately more film than music oriented	50,42,43			20	●	●	2247	179
B&W ASW1000	499	(Active) Very competently engineered all round, and goes (unnecessarily) very loud	54,47,48			20	●	●	2248	179
B&W AS6	500	(Active) Good material value with a fair amount of low bass from 100W design	45,51,45,5	●		30			1736	154
Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass for high sensitivity speakers	52,19,34	● 86	8	45	●	●		128
Jamo SW600	530	(Active) Has some neat styling touches and remote control, but deep bass is limited	38,41,53	●		30			1736	154
JPW SW60	349	A real heavyweight, sounds clean and transparent, if perhaps a little understated. Usefully flexible	55,47,39			20	●	●	2249	179
KEF Model 30B	499	(Active) Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension	38,5,37,43	●		45			1736	154
KEF AV1	2,499	(Active) Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky	56,43,50	●		45				128
M&K VX-7B	450	(Active) Baby of a big range; this active design delivers deep, plenteous bass but lacks transparency	35,25,37	●		40			1736	154
M&K MX70	900	(Active) Justifies cost and belies its diminutive size, with an agility that makes sense of the toughest material	25,5,46,35	●		25	●	●	2250	179
REL Q50	375	(Active) Genuinely deep, clean bass from an attractively compact and cost effective package	40,41,42			20	●	●	2251	179
Rogers AB1	549	Subwoofer-cum-stand designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures	19,57,16	● 82	8		●	●	1354	143



Stands & Supports

Hi-Fi supports are more important than you might imagine – they can have very subtle effects on the sound of your system! There are two kinds of support: those for equipment and those (stands) for loudspeakers. Equipment supports keep vibrations and resonances from affecting electronic components, while speaker stands hold enclosures stock-still and ensure they are at the correct height for your ears. Equipment supports may be rigid affairs fabricated from steel or more exotic materials; or they may have a form of suspension. Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models, and vary between open-frame and solid-pillar types. Always check with speaker and electronics manufacturers to see which supports they recommend.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **HEIGHT (cm):** How tall is your support?
- **TOP PLATE SIZE (cm):** Dimensions of top surface on stand or equipment support.
- **FILLABLE:** Some speaker stands can be mass-loaded with sand or lead-shot to improve sound.
- **WELDED:** The better stands and supports are welded together rather than just bolted.
- **NUMBER OF SHELVES:** The number of tiers on an equipment rack or support.
- **SHELF TYPE:** The material from which shelves are made. Wood generally means Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF).
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the magazine.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.

H High End Review

B BEST BUY

R RECOMMENDED

E EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stands & Supports

SPECIFICATIONS

TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)
HEIGHT
FILLABLE
WELDED
NUMBER OF SHELVES
SHELF TYPE
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT (€) COMMENTS

EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

Alphason GR 17/17-AS	275	Great looks but sound can be bettered at this price	36	60,39		4	Glass	181
Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1199	Blockbusting size and build. Super sound quality	92	45,49	●	4	Marb	181
Fi-Rax R4	399	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass				5	Glass	1633 151
Frameworks H500/H175	404	Two-shelf stand and isolation platform combo in tubular steel – made a spectacular impression on audition	70	52,34	●	3	Glass	1952 166
Ixos Deadrock 704	250	Looks unassuming but sound is full and inviting		46,39		4	Resin	181
Kudos Corinthian	599	True heavyweight that doesn't quite manage knockout sound	91	46,38		4	Wood	181
Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	King of its type: angle iron, chipboard and glass combine to make a significant difference to sound quality	56	49,39	●	1	Glass	147
Mana 5 Tier Sound Table	600	Infinitely upgradeable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle-iron design that adds speed and bandwidth	91	49,39	●	5	Glass	1633 151
Optimum Int 2000 OPT490	299	25kg stand with shelves between variable-height tubular uprights. Sounds smooth and relaxed with sturdy bass	50	60,40		4	Glass	1953 166
Optimum Int 2000 OPT660	349	Glitzy style isn't reflected in sound, which is wholesome	82	60,52		5	Glass	181
Quadraspire Q4	250	Easy to live with, tonally neutral	54	40,49		4	MDF	1633 151
Sound Organisation Z038	135	Too lively and lacking order – but inexpensive	50	84,40	●	5	Wood	1633 151
Sound Organisation Z560	160	Welded and bolted members give structural integrity. While performance is not up with the best, it's great value	90	46,36	●	5	Wood	1954 166
Soundstyle X100	230	Looks lovely, sounds lively but slightly bright	64	49,28	●	4	Glass	181
Soundstyle Select 6105	290	Respectable sonics: structurally solid and smart	78	43,36		5	Glass	1633 151
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320	Veneered shelves clamped between tubular uprights. Delivers with classical material	82	48,27		4	Wood	1955 166
Sound Organisation Z545	150	Budget gem from the stalwarts of sound supports	70	46,36	●	4	Glass	181
Stands Unique Sound Tower	289	Wooden uprights combine with glass shelves to provide a fresh, forward sound, but bass could be quicker	81	72,42		5	Glass	1633 151
Target B5	175	Free of colorations, fine grip and good value	81	49,36	●	5	Wood	1633 151
Townshend Seismic Stand	1245	It's big, it wobbles and it's pricey. But this is the ultimate equipment support	72	58,45		3	Wood	181
Wilson benesch Asside	590	Sounds even better than it looks. And it looks wonderful	72	37,50		4	Wood	181

SPEAKER STANDS

Alphason NC I	45	Filled single-column design without threaded spike holes, that's appropriate for non-critical applications	40-60	16,16	●			1373 146
Alphason NCII	84	Tall, slim and elegant, though sound and value are unexceptional	40-60	17,17	●			159
Alphason Titan	125	Excels in the midband and allows voices to come across in a detailed and expressive fashion	40-60	16,16	●	●		1373 146
Apollo AZ6	80	Fine engineering value, but sound is unexceptional and top-plate small	66	15,13	●	●		159
Atacama BD21	55	Good-looking and good value, but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17	●			159
Atacama SE24	70	Stands out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of its performance	61	19,57	●	●		1373 146
AVF Tower 400	35	Ridiculously cheap and much better than no stand at all	54	17,20	●			159
Kudos S50	100	Better sound than the budget stands, particularly in low-frequencies	60	15,21	●			159
Kudos S100	270	The best all-round stand around... Probably...	63	15,21	●			159
Mana Soundframes	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks, these make music effortless and natural. Can be stacked	5		●			1373 146
Revolver RS1	70	A good blend of performance and appearance for the price	53	18,18	●			159
RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	349	Pricy carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A				159
Stands Unique HP	220	Real wood disguises high-performance tuned technology	59	22,23				159
Target R1	280	Truly high-mass four-pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack	53	15,21	●	●		1373 146
Target TR60	68	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less-than-audiophile-oriented, twin-column design	60	15,15	●			1373 146

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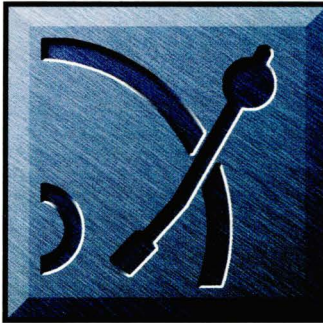
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Tonearms

Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). However, hard-core vinyl fans should invest in a more expensive separate motor unit with specialist tone-arm – the only way to make the most of vinyl LPs. It is essential to achieve operational synergy between such components, so this is one area of hi-fi where the skills of a knowledgeable dealer are invaluable. The quality of a tonearm's construction and design affect sound quality significantly. There are three basic arm designs listed in the key, and each has strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, being usually the most practical and affordable.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **EFFECTIVE MASS:** This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.
- **PARALLEL TRACKING:** An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
- **PIVOTED:** Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.
- **UNI-PIVOT:** Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
- **EFFECTIVE LENGTH (CM):** Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.
- **ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT:** Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
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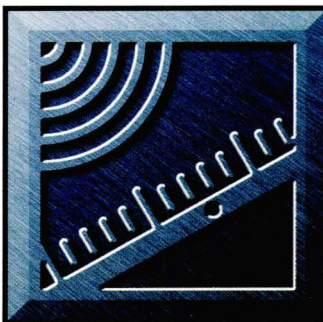
Tonearms

SPECIFICATIONS

- PARALLEL TRACKING
- EFFECTIVE MASS
- PIVOTED
- EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)
- ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT
- UNI-PIVOT
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	PIVOTED	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	UNI-PIVOT	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
▲ Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,250	Large, solid and well-made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High	●	●	●	●	●	79	79
▲ Linn Ekos	1,500	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Medium	●	●	229	●	●	67	67
▲ Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low	●	●	237	●	●	60	60
▲ Rega RB300	174	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low	●	●	237	●	●	60	60
▲ Roksan Tabriz Basic	275	Targeted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases – a touch bright though	Low	●	●	240	●	●	91	91
▲ SME Series IV	983	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low	●	●	233	●	●	60	60
▲ SME Series V	1,461	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price	Low	●	●	233	●	●	60	60



Tuners

TV has stolen radio's status as the foremost broadcast entertainment medium, but with its Radio Four plays and Radio Three music, the BBC still makes a potent case for audiophile reception equipment. For how much longer, under the cost-conscious Birtist regime, remains to be seen. Another new impediment is the arrival of digital radio broadcasting, though reception apparatus is currently non-existent outside of the in-car market. These days tuners play second fiddle to hi-fi sources like CD, but in many ways they are a greater engineering challenge than digital equipment, and thus higher price-tags clearly equate to superior performance. High-quality, roof-mounted antennae are essential for audiophile listening, so factor them into your budget.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **WAVEBANDS:** FM – (VHF), M – MW, L – LW.
- **PRESETS:** Number of station frequencies that can be stored.
- **RDS:** (Radio Data System) was originally designed for in-car applications. RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, traffic news and other information about broadcasts.
- **REMOTE CONTROL:** Infra-red control handset supplied.
- **SIGNAL STRENGTH METER:** Indicates strength of signal from aerial – useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation.
- **ROTARY TUNING KNOB:** Experience has shown that this analogue throwback is ergonomically far superior to the button-based approach.
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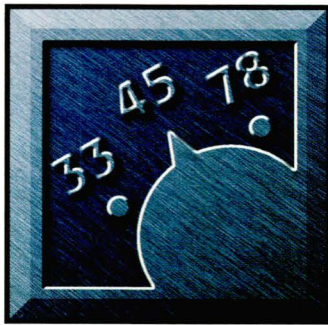
Tuners

SPECIFICATIONS

- WAVEBANDS
- PRESETS
- RDS
- REMOTE CONTROL
- SIG. STRENGTH METER
- ROT. TUNING KNOB
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
▲ AMC T7	130	Performance adequate but price is sharp, especially with remote control. Some hum	FM, M	30	●	●	●	●	1945	166
▲ Arcam Alpha 7	230	Indifferent RF performance but a touch of audiophile sound quality with clean, strong signals	FM, M, L	24	●	●	●	●	1946	166
Arcam Delta 280	300	Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. Remote £60 extra	FM	20	●	●	●	●	120	120
▲ Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound	FM, M, L	20	●	●	●	●	93	93
▲ Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	1947	166
▲ Denon TU-1500RD	250	A well-balanced and clean sound with good bass and treble extension	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	184	184
Magnum Dynalab FT11	499	All-analogue tuner: receives weak or tightly packed stations but loses out on noise and sonic neutrality	FM	3	●	●	●	●	184	184
▲ Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Bulky but effective, delivering fine RF performance and good sound for the price	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	1948	166
▲ Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price	FM	80	●	●	●	●	1254	142
▲ Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation	FM	●	●	●	●	●	72	72
▲ Marantz ST-48	120	A classic budget model which manages a performance only just behind much more expensive models.	FM, M	60	●	●	●	●	184	184
▲ Micromega Tuner	750	Has digital output but even without the Micromega DAC, this provides exceptional sound quality. Looks good too	FM	39	●	●	●	●	1810	157
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	Open, generous soundstaging gives the music plenty of foundation, if a touch shut-in at the top	FM	29	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and with a subjectively larger-than-life presentation	FM	20	●	●	●	●	1810	157
Myryad T-10	530	A very smart unit which works well and offers good rhythmic drive and vitality, albeit at a price	FM	20	●	●	●	●	184	184
▲ Naim NAT01	1,730	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM	●	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance; slightly disappointing sound	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	1949	166
▲ Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	300	Lots of features, plus a sound that's low on noise and high on communication, adds up to a good value package	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	184	184
Roksan Caspian	595	Neat fascia with great ergonomics, but sound is not really any better than models at half the price	FM	50	●	●	●	●	184	184
Rotel RT-935AX	160	Good ergonomics and sound quality at a realistic price, but limited features and RF selectivity	FM, M	20	●	●	●	●	1950	166
Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to perform at its best	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	1810	157
▲ Sony STS-B920S	180	A little hiss and image compression don't detract from the clean performance of this feature-packed tuner	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	184	184
Technics ST-GT350L	130	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	1254	142
Thorens TRT2000	499	Not exactly neutral sounding, but nonetheless makes listening fun	FM, M	59	●	●	●	●	1810	157



Turntables

Specialist turntables are at the heart of high-fidelity sound. CD players may offer ultra-low noise and a flat frequency response, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative rhythmical timing taken for granted by serious turntable users. Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Because turntables are mechanical devices, designed to retrieve micron-small modulations engraved into vinyl, engineering quality is of paramount importance. This is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do, and require the finest equipment support systems.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MANUAL:** You do all the work.
- **AUTO:** The record player does all the work.
- **SEMI-AUTO:** You put the needle on, the turntable lifts it off at the end of the record.
- **SPEEDS:** In RPM to correspond with long-playing records or seven/12-inch singles.
- **SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS:** Sprung suspension to minimise structural interference.
- **EXTERNAL PSU:** Outboard power supply; generally indicative of higher-quality performance.
- **SUPPLIED WITH ARM:** Many turntables do not come with a tonearm fitted, but if this category is checked, the deck is already thus equipped.
- **SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE:** If a turntable comes complete with arm and cartridge.
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H High End Review

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Turntables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SUSP. SUBCHASSIS	SPEEDS	EXTERNAL PSU	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART.	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NO.
Clearaudio Reference	3,990	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail, but can sound bold	●				33/45				1328	144
DNM Rota 2	5,600	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on its own table	●				33/45	●	●	●	1328	144
Dual 505-4 UK	250	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph					● 33/45	●	●	●		103
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,950	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●				33/45	●	●	●		91
Linn LP12 Basik	1,100	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●				33	●	●			103
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains	●				33/45	●	●			91
Michell Gyrodec	875	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●				33/45	●	●			55
Moth Kanoot	329	Rather coarse-sounding deck that requires decent isolation and comes with a Rega RB300 arm	●				33/45			●	1907	164
Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	750	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●				33/45		●	●		159
Pink Triangle Anniversary	2,500	Possibly the most detailed, clear, neutral-sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny	●				33/45	●	●			91
Pro-ject 2	300	Remarkably effective at the price, with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●				33/45			●	1907	164
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	850	Don't think of this as a deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Orade Delphi – it's that good	●				33/45	●	●	●		138
Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●				33/45			●		48
Rega Planar 3	274	Sounds musical in a balanced manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●				33/45			●	1907	164
Reson RS1	600	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●				33/45		●	●		159
Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant-looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight	●				33/45	●	●			159
SME Model 20.2A	4,863	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	●				33/45/78	●	●	●		186
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/RB	400	Refined, solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM/MC budget cartridges	●				33/45	●	●	●		103
Thorens TD2001	700	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled					● 33/45	●	●			159
Well Tempered Record Player	850	Intriguing and challenging. Musically not ideal, but its limpid quality and lack of artificiality set standards	●				33/45	●	●		1180	136



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AUDIO T, 30 Crown Street, Brentwood CM14 4BA. Tel (01277) 264730 Fax: 01277 264731. Open Tues-Sat 9.30-6. Late night Thursday until 8pm. See our main entry under Oxford. We also sell Michell, Ruark & Technics. **BADA**

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LONDON

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AUDIO T, 190 West End Lane, West Hampstead, London NW6 1SQ. Tel (0171) 794 7848. Fax (0171) 431 3570. Open Tues-Sat 10-6 Late Thurs until 8.00. See our main entry under Oxford. We also sell Celestion, Michell, Monitor Audio, Proac, Roksan, Van den Hul & XTC.

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<p>SEPTEMBER 1998/ISSUE 181</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 Amplifiers £480-£900 8 HDCD CD Players 9 Equipment Supports dCS Elgar - 24/96 appraisal 	<p>OCTOBER 1998/ISSUE 182</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European (EISA) Awards Report 11 MD & CD Personals DVD-Audio news update Kuzma Stabi S Turntable 	<p>NOVEMBER 1998/ISSUE 183</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 Loudspeakers £300-£700 Integrated/Power Amp upgrades Speaker Cables below £10/m B&W Nautilus 802 speaker 	<p>DECEMBER 1998/ISSUE 184</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 CD Players £200-£800 7 Home Recorders (CD, MD, Cass) 7 Tuners £100-£600 TAG McLaren bonanza! 	<p>BEST BUYS 1998/ISSUE 185</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full listing of 1998 Best Buys, Recommended and Award-winning products, plus Best of Systems, Statements and Columns 	<p>JANUARY 1999/ISSUE 186</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Amplifiers £150-£350 Headphones £50-£150 High-end Loudspeaker Special Border Patrol high-end review
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YEAR	HFC N°S	SOLD OUT ISSUES	AVAILABILITY
1988	54-65	Jun, Jul, Sep	Very limited
1989	66-77	Jan-Mar, Sept	Very limited
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1991	90-101	Jan, Feb, Aug-Dec	Very limited
1992	102-113	All exc. Mar 92	Very limited
1993	114-125	Jan, Mar, Jun, Sep-Nov	Very limited
1994	126-137	Jun-Aug, Nov	Very limited
1995	138-149	All exc. Feb	Very limited
1996	150-161	Jun, Jul	Limited
1997	162-173	None sold out	Good
1998	174-183	None sold out	Good

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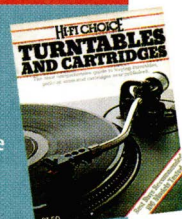
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Find the letters in the highlighted boxes within the crossword which form an anagram of a hi-fi related word, for you to decipher.

THE HI-FI RELATED WORD HIDDEN IN THE CROSSWORD IS:

Post this entry form to:

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC 902B)
Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North,
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All entries must arrive by First Post,
Thursday March 4th, 1999.

Name
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Please tick here if you are under 18.

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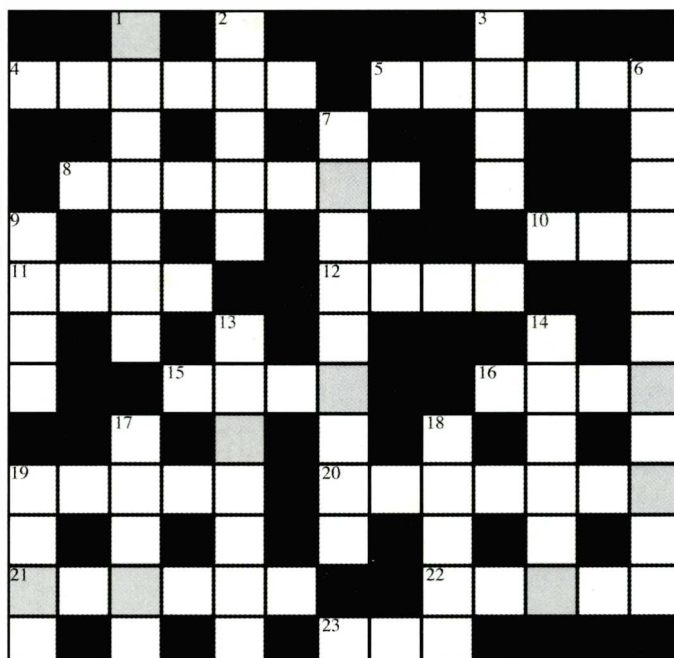
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- 1) The Closing Date for the Celestion competition is Thursday March 4th 1999.
- 2) Winners of the Celestion Competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, and drawn at random after the Closing Date given in 1) above.
- 3) All winners will be notified by post.
- 4) The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- 5) The Celestion Competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, the AAA Group nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- 6) We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- 7) No cash alternatives will be offered.
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CHFC 902B

THE HI-FI CHOICE CROSSWORD

Test your hi-fi knowledge and win a pair of Celestion C2 floorstanding speakers!



THE CLUES

CLUES ACROSS:

- 4) Avid cut us a unique turntable (6, anag)
- 5) Speaker sounding like a noisy dog! (6)
- 8) High-quality sound first found on both DAT and DVD (7)
- 10) Dolby HX system with professional origins (3)
- 11) They were once known as the tape company, inside a bleak airport (4)
- 12) A name in speakers occupying both ends of the bookcase (4)
- 15) Choice mag for such equipment (2-2, abbr)
- 16) Take the tape for a spin – it's a breeze (4)
- 19) Mordaunt seems to have a small following (5)
- 20) A vividly detailed equaliser (7)
- 21) Acoustic firm with plenty of get-up and go (6)
- 22) Messy paste in cassettes? (5, anag)
- 23) Some last words about the radio data system (3, init)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1) The all-singing all-dancing Fidelity X-RAY CD player! (7)
- 2) Sound-related field of 7 and 9 down (5)
- 3) Nosy about MiniDisc's inventor (4, anag)
- 6) An album and packs of cards on turntable units (6,5)
- 7) Manufacturer of the A3i amp goes to a university city (9)
- 9) The main sort of Credo and Intro speaker maker (4, anag)
- 13) A good year for wine and the Magnat 720 (7)
- 14) Religious man to get Wilson benesch's flagship speaker (6)
- 17) Hi-fi manufacturer as seen through micro television (5)
- 18) What's heard about units of power (5)
- 19) Look for the radio station search button (4)

After solving the puzzle, unscramble the letters from the highlighted boxes to spell out the speaker related prize word.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE ...

CD PLAYERS WORTH SAVING FOR

For the March '99 issue Paul and Alvin will be joining forces. This time it's to give you the low-down on the high-end of the CD player market. With a price range of £400 to £1,000, the line-up includes Helios, Primare, TAG/McLaren, Naim and Arcam. They've checked them out so you don't have to. Simply lie back and think of quality.

WIRED FOR SOUND

Richard Black brings you reviews of the finest interconnects on the

market today, they'll get your system singing like a lark. Our selection includes van den Hul,

Nordost, QED, Eiko, Soniclink and Tara Labs. They may only be bits of wire, but they've got the power.



THE CAT'S WHISKERS

Once again *Choice's* high-end tests brings you the most desirable kit. The March issue includes Wilson benesch's stunning new Bishop speaker and Arcam's DAB tuner.

■ **The March issue will be on sale on Thursday, February 18th 1999.**

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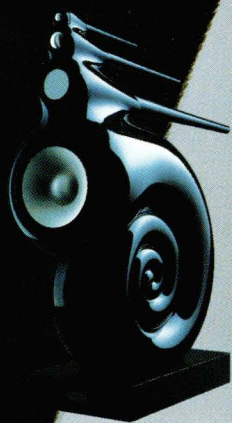
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