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BEST BUYS 99
BEP 204

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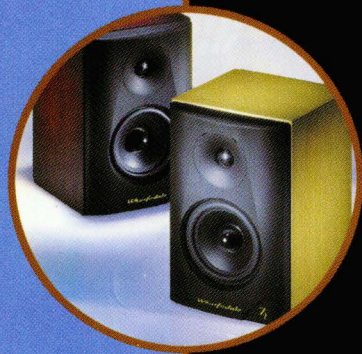
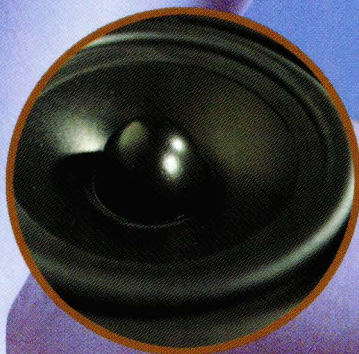
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Diamond 7.2*	£129.95
Diamond Anniversary	£149.95

HI-FI CHOICE

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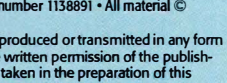
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EISA AWARD

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

It's that time of year again, and Jason Kennedy's your guide to the Guide...



Welcome to the 1999 Best Buy Guide, *Hi-Fi Choice's* celebration of all the great kit we've discovered in the past year. Because we've got all the Best Buys, Recommendations and Editor's Choices, there's something for everyone from the total novice to the die-hard audio maniac.

If you're new to the pursuit you can use our recommendations to pick a selection of components that offer what you're after, then go and listen to them as a system. But don't be afraid to try a few alternatives at your hi-fi dealer's suggestion – after all, it's what they do for a living. Half the fun of hi-fi is the ability to mix and match components and arrive at a sound that suits your taste, the other half is playing your favourite music and hearing it as the artist intended, rather than the pale imitation that you get with midis and micros.

When we find a product that offers superior quality there are three ways of showing our approval. Best Buys are great all-round products that offer impressive value for money, while Recommendations go to fine components that don't make the Best Buy grade because of a higher price or less

competitive overall sound quality. Best Buys and Recommendations are only awarded to group tested products.

The Editor's Choice, on the other hand, is available for individually tested products and has typically been given to the stars of our high-end review section.

In many respects, the way components interact with one another in a system is more important than their absolute standard as an individual item. The art of system building is about picking the Recommended products that work together, rather than going for kit that gets awarded five out of five for everything. So a system carefully made up from a mix of Recommended and Best Buy components might well out-perform a solid Best Buy line-up.

So take a look through the best that 1999 had to offer and see how it compares with your own findings, and don't forget to play loads of good music in the process.

Jason Kennedy

THE EDITORIAL CHOICE 1999

THIS YEAR WE HAVE MOSTLY BEEN LISTENING TO...

In the absence of any new products to warrant the Editor's Choice seal of approval this month, I've pressed the editorial team to pick their favourite albums from the past year. Check out the tunes that rocked our world in 1999.



Darkdancer
Les Rhythms Digitales
(Wall of Sound)

Lively tunes by a bloke called Jacques who's from... Reading. He's

got a bit of fixation with old school hip-hop, but he also uses real musicians, so he must be all right.



Euphoria Morning
Chris Cornell (A&M)

Welcome return of the lispng former Soundgarden frontman, who's now touting his lovingly and finely crafted songs on a solo basis. Worth the wait.



Head Music Suede (Nude)

Almost Bowie-esq vocals, guitar and synths on upbeat and almost ballady tracks make for a complete and almost nostalgic album.



Motion The Cinematic Orchestra (Ninja Tune)

Modern jazz in the blunted beats and sweetly sampled vein with live instruments and sophisticated arrangements. Oh and a snippet of Shirley Bassey. Available on both polycarbonate and vinyl. Nice.



Naturally JJ Cale
(A&M, Vivante vinyl)

A 1971 cajun/country rock classic reissued on 180g vinyl, Cale's subtly layered tunes define 'groove'.



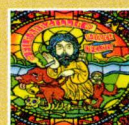
The Contino Sessions
Death in Vegas (Deconstruction)

A deep, dark millennium melt-down; ice-cold dance rhythms spliced with a dense swirl of guitars.



The Man Who
Travis (Independiente)

Dark and moody overtones, great vocals and acoustic guitar. Likely to bring out the winter in you.



Touch Of Cloth
Fila Brazillia (Tritone)

Studio meisters produce their most energetic recording to date. Modern jazz in the pre-millennial sense.



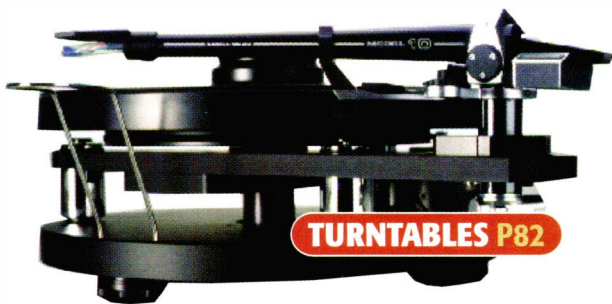
Vertigo
Groove Armada (Zomba)

Chill-out classic *At the River* dripped from hi-fis around the country during every post-dub session.

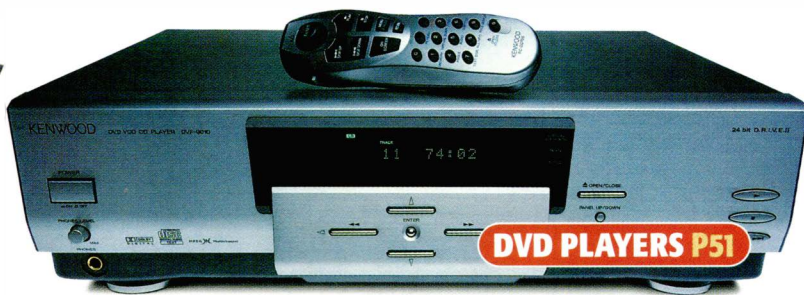


Very Mercenary
The Herbaliser (Ninja Tune)

Rap, samples and live instruments combine in a mix of dance and leisure-oriented new jazz tunes.



TURNTABLES P82



DVD PLAYERS P51

CONTENTS

BEST BUYS 1999 ISSUE 197



LOUDSPEAKERS P58

THE YEAR'S BEST KIT

6 INTRODUCTION

Paul Messenger introduces Choice's definitive guide to the hottest hi-fi of 1999.

8 AMPLIFIERS

The year's best integrated, pre/power combos and phono stages for all your amplification needs.

27 BLANK MEDIA & MP3

Make the very best digital recordings using the top-rated CD-R and MiniDisc blank media. Plus the pick of the latest portable MP3 players.

30 CABLES & INTERCONNECTS

The vital link between components; give your hi-fi the arteries it deserves and let the life-blood flow.

35 CARTRIDGES

Our selection of five of the best cartridges which are guaranteed to bring your vinyl to life.

38 CD PLAYERS

The pick of the crop of this year's award-winning CD players ranging from £130 to £5,965.

47 DIGITAL RECORDERS

Make your own compilations on the year's hottest CD-R and MiniDisc recorders.

51 DVD PLAYERS

Thinking of taking the AV plunge? Look no further than these five sensational DVD players.

55 HEADPHONES

The ultimate 'phones for hi-fi and portable use plus our cordless Recommendation.

58 LOUDSPEAKERS

A *Choice* selection of speakers ranging from an affordable £130 to an aspirational £20,000. Time to start saving for those Bishops...

THE YEAR'S BEST KIT

74 ONE MAKE SYSTEMS

One-stop hi-fi shopping with three manufacturer-suggested systems that sing with synergy and cut the sonic mustard.

77 EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

Give your hi-fi system the lift it deserves with our pick of the best equipment support.

79 SPEAKER STANDS

Are your speakers sitting comfortably? See our guide for the speaker stands that really deliver.

81 TUNERS

Digital radio is on the horizon, but analogue still has a lot to offer. See our pick of the bunch.

82 TURNTABLES

For those into the black stuff, here are the players that cut a class groove during 1999.

95 EISA WINNERS

A summary of the finest hi-fi equipment as voted for at this year's European EISA Awards.

98 INSTANT SYSTEMS

Take the headache out of system-building with six systems recommended by the specialists.

OPINION

3 EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Bringing you the biggest Best Buy issue to date plus *HFC's* very own top ten albums of the year – because in the end, it's all about music.

READER PAGES

85 HELP

Tim Bower grapples with those particularly pithy hi-fi problems, opens up your listening options and comes up trumps with some top tips.

BUYING GUIDES

118 PRICE GUIDE

Hi-Fi Choice's definitive guide to every hi-fi component currently available in the UK.

130 DIRECTORY

A complete listing of all currently available hi-fi components reviewed by Choice over the years.

READER SERVICES

116 READER CLASSIFIED

A plethora of lovingly pre-owned hi-fi kit is waiting for you to give it a good home.

109 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Save time and money when you subscribe to the finest hi-fi magazine in the world.

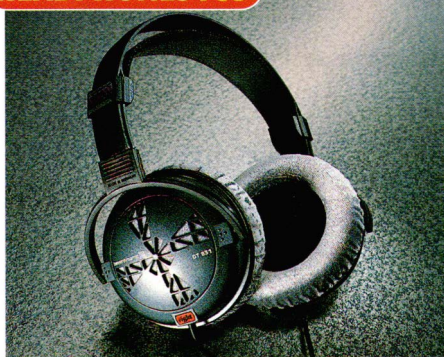
147 THE HI-FI CHOICE ARCHIVE

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

CABLES P30



HEADPHONES P55



MP3 PLAYERS P28



PRODUCTS IN THIS ISSUE

INTEGRATED AMPS

Advantage A300	99
Arcam Alpha 8R	8
Arcam Alpha One	8
ATC SIA2-150	9
Cambridge Audio A500	9
Copland CSA 28	9
Creek 4330	11
Cyrus 7	11
Harman/Kardon HK630	11
Musical Fidelity X-A100R	13
Myryad MI120	100
NAD 317	13
NAD C320	13
NAD C340	14
Naim Nait 3R	14
Pioneer A-300R	100
Pioneer A-407R	14
Pioneer A-607R	17
Primare A30.1	17
Rega Mira	74
Roksan Caspian	75
Rotel RA-971 MkII	17
Sony TAF-B730R	19
Token Audio K50	19

PRE/POWER AMPS

Arcam Alpha 9C/10P	20
AVI S2000MP/MM	98
Border Patrol 300B SE	20
Bryston BP-20/Powerpac	60 98
Creek P43R/A52SE	21
Crimson CS610/CS630	21
Densen B200/B300	99
Mark Levinson 380/334	21
Myryad MA120	100
Naim NAC92/NAP90	74

PHONO STAGES

Creek OBH-9	23
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	23
Michell Iso/Lithos	23
Moth 30 Series Phono	25
Musical Fidelity XL-P	25
QED Discsaver DS-1	25

INTERCONNECT

CABLES	
Kimber PBJ	30
Nordost Solar Wind	30
QED Qnect 4S	30
Straight Wire Sonata	31
Supra EFF-ISL	31
van den Hul PB5	31

SPEAKER CABLES

Chord Company Odyssey	32
Ixos Gamma 6006	32
Kimber 4PR	32
QED Qudos Silver	32

CARTRIDGES

Dynavector DV-20X L	35
Lyra Lydian Beta	35
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	35
Reson Reca	35
Sumiko Blue Point Special	35

CD PLAYERS

Acoustic Precision Eikos	98
--------------------------	----

Arcam Alpha 7SE	38
Arcam Alpha 9	38
Cambridge Audio CD4SE	100
Cyrus dAD1.5	38
Denon DCD-435	39
Harman/Kardon HD740	39
Marantz CD7	39
Meridian 508.24	99
Musical Fidelity E624	41
Myryad MC100	100
Myryad T-20	98
NAD 524	41
NAD S500	43
Naim CDS 3.5	43/74
Naim CDS II/XPS	43
Rega Planet	74
Roksan Caspian	75
Rotel RCD-991	44
Sony CDP-XB930	44
Sony SCD-1	44
TAG McLaren Audio CD20R	45
Talk Electronics Thunder 3	45
Wadia 830	99
YBA CD1 α	45

DVD PLAYERS

Denon DVD-5000	51
Kenwood DVF-9010	51
Pioneer DV-515	53
Pioneer DV-717	53
Yamaha DVD-S700	53

DACS

Musical Fidelity X-24K	41
------------------------	----

DIGITAL RECORDERS

Kenwood DMF 9020	47
Pioneer MJ-D707	47
Sharp MD-R1 MkII	47
Sony MDS-JA20ES	49
Sony MDS-JA555ES	49
Sony MDS-JB920	100
Traxdata Traxaudio 900	49

HEADPHONES

Audio Technica ATH-D40FS	55
Audio Technica ATH-M40	55
Beyer DT831	55
Grado SR-125	57
Grado SR-60	55
Jecklin Float 2	57
JVC HA-W200RF	57
Sennheiser HD570	57
Vivanco SR950	57

LOUDSPEAKERS

Acoustic Energy AE520	58
Acoustic Energy Aegis One	58
Audio Physic Step	99
Audiovector C2	58
AVI NuNeutron	59
AVI Positron	98
B&W 603 S2	59
B&W Nautilus 801	59
B&W Nautilus 805	99
Bluroom Minipod	61
Celestion A Compact	61
Chario Ac. Millennium 2	63
Chario Hiper 1000	61

Dynaudio Audience 40	63
Heybrook Heylette B	63
Heybrook Optima	64
JBL 4312 II	64
JMLab Mezzo Utopia	64
JPW ML510	100
KEF Q15	65
Linn Kan	65
Living Voice Avatar OBX-R	65
Mission 771	67
Mission 773e	67
Musical Technology Falcon	67
Naim Credo	74
Neat Elite	69
Orelle The Swing	69
PMC TB1	98
Rega Jura	69/74
Roksan ROKone	75
Ruark Excalibur	70
Ruark Prologue	100
Tannoy Revolution R2	70
TDL Nucleus 2	70
Triangle Zephyr II	71
Veritas H3	71
Wilson benesch Bishop	71
Zingali Overture 2	71

MP3 PLAYERS

Diamond Rio PMP500	28
Pine D'music	28

BLANK MEDIA

Fuji	27
Hi-Space	27
Sony ES	27
TDK CD-RXG	27
TDK Cool	27
TDK RXG	28
Traxdata	27

EQUIPMENT

SUPPORTS	
Aavik Furniture A4	77
Atacama Europa	77
Audiophile Furniture Base	77
Avid Isochelf	77
Elemental Audio Isotube X4	77
Standesign Design 4	77

SPEAKER STANDS

Atacama R724	79
Custom Design RS/300	79
Elemental Isotube SZse	79
JPW HS1	79
Partington A-4	79

TUNERS

Cambridge Audio T500	81
Creek T43	81
Denon TU-260L II	81
Myryad T-30	81

TURNABLES

Avid Acutus	82
Michell Gyro SE	82
Michell Orbe SE	82
Pink Triangle Tarantella II	83
SME Model 10A	83
SME Model 20.2A	83
Wilson benesch The Circle	83

THE YEAR'S BEST HI-FI!

No one really knows what the future of hi-fi holds, but we can tell you what's hot right now. **Paul Messenger** brings you the great and the good of 1999.

AMPLIFIERS	p8
PRE-/POWER COMBOS	p20
PHONO STAGES	p23
BLANK MEDIA	p27
INTERCONNECTS	p30
SPEAKER CABLES	p32
CARTRIDGES	p35
CD PLAYERS	p38
DIGITAL RECORDERS	p47
DVD PLAYERS	p51
EISA WINNERS	p95
HEADPHONES	p55
LOUDSPEAKERS	p58
MP3 RECORDERS	p28
'ONE-MAKE' SYSTEMS	p74
STANDS & SUPPORTS	p77
TUNERS	p81
TURNABLES	p82

Since 1975, the famous *Hi-Fi Choice* reviews have scrutinised thousands of components, many of which have received our coveted Best Buy and Recommended swing tags. In case you don't keep up with the hi-fi scene month by month in our normal monthly editions, this bumper Best Buy compilation will fill in the gaps and get you up to speed on the year's hottest hi-fi.

Our comparative group tests, with full laboratory and unsighted listening test back-up, are respected around the world. Since last January we've found 41 new Best Buys and 87 Recommended products. We've also instituted a new Editor's Choice category to give due recognition to

superior quality 'high-end' components that have been tested outside the group context, and

there are 18 of these new 'EC' components.

Loads of other features provide the definitive and complete guide to 1999-style hi-fi, but cramming everything into a single edition of *Hi-Fi Choice* has required very heavy editing. If you want the full and unexpurgated versions of any particular review, take advantage of our Back Issues and Factsback services (details are on p147). Meanwhile, cyberphiles the world over are clicking on our Website at www.hifichoice.co.uk for interactive review searches and hot chat areas.

LOUDSPEAKERS

There are more Best Buy speakers than any other component, simply because loudspeakers come in a wider range of sizes, styles (and prices) than the other product categories. Our review findings merely reflect the diversity of the market.

Our lounges are all different shapes and sizes, and built from a wide range of materials too, so it's obvious that 'one size fits all' isn't a viable option. Big speakers work best in big rooms, no question, but





if your circumstances are more modest, you can get away with something a bit smaller and less expensive.

Loudspeakers are also a very visible part of the furnishings, so you

get to choose from a wealth of attractive wood veneers, too – at a price.

Voicing and balancing a loudspeaker is a very subjective process, and personal taste plays a significant part in any evaluation. Use our citations as a guide to help compile a shortlist of candidates which will suit your requirements. Then take your ears (and a disc or two) down to your local hi-fi shop to make the final choice.

CD PLAYERS

The arrival of 'dual role' DVD players has certainly affected sales in some segments of the CD player market, but all our test results make it clear that a CD player is and is likely to remain the best choice for extracting

maximum musical enjoyment from your collection of CDs, while the huge variety of CD software available ensures that silver disc replay will remain the cornerstone of home music reproduction for much longer than the foreseeable future.

Prices at the budget end continue to creep downwards, so our

Best Buys tend to be biased towards low-cost players. But a rich variety of Recommended models provide plenty of interesting alternatives, and considerably

greater sonic refinement, too.

AMPLIFIERS

Amplifier sales remain buoyant, reflecting the vital sonic contribution these components make at the core of the system, bringing all the sources together and hopefully telling the loudspeakers exactly what to do.

Although the sonic differences between alternative speakers is more immediately obvious, the differences between amps tend to be much more insidious.

The right amplifier will contribute more to your long-term listening pleasure than any other component, so taking the time and trouble to choose wisely is especially important. Our reviews will help you get a feel for the market, appreciate the surprisingly wide range of models available at different prices, and build a shortlist of likely contenders. Then it's down to you, your ears, and your dealer's patience.

AND THE REST

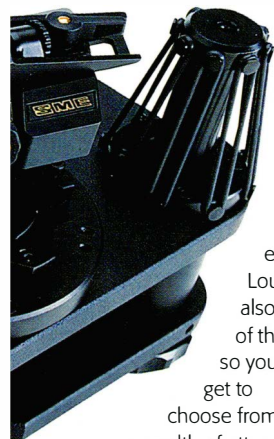
Speakers, CD players and amplifiers might represent

the core of the hi-fi system, but other components are needed to get maximum pleasure from your favourite music. The connecting cables which link everything together are one vital factor, as is the support furniture you use underneath the electronics and bookshelf-style speakers.

Those accessories are crucial, but traditional sources such as radio tuners, turntables, tone-

arms and cartridges remain important parts of the mix. The flexibility of DVD players to play CDs as well as video discs has attracted plenty of attention, while MiniDisc and CD recorders (and the blank discs they use) are now joined by 'solid state' portable MP3 recorders, broadening the range (and sonic aspirations) of digital recording media. We've also taken a look at

some serious 'one make' systems, a solution which can have some real advantages over the 'pick 'n'mix' approach.



AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM Alpha One £229.90

Arcam's new starter amplifier, the 35 Watts per channel, £230 Alpha One looks very similar to other recent Arcams, the only obvious change from the previous Alpha 7 entry-level model being deletion of the remote control sensor window and, indeed, the remote control itself. Around the back there's just one switchable set of BFA speaker terminals (where the

Alpha 7 had direct and switched sets). The power output and other specifications come in just below Alpha 7 levels too.

Otherwise, the two could have been shelled from a pod, with a feature set that includes tone and balance controls, a direct 'bypass' switch, a speaker on/off switch and a headphone socket. There are six

inputs including the tape circuit, all of them at line level.

Panel complaints about this amplifier were mild and varied, which is a good sign. "There's plenty of 'air' around this amp, which is nice dynamically and has good grip," was a typical comment from a listener whose notes included the observation that the Alpha One is "authoritative (and) especially good with piano and orchestra". The long and the short of it is that Arcam's

baby is no more circumscribed than you would expect of any budget amplifier. Arguably it has a few too many features, but it is otherwise hard to criticise, managing a particularly good blend of agility, dynamics, strongly painted stereo properties and power output. This makes it is an unusually fine starter amplifier, and clear Best Buy material.

A&R Cambridge

☎ (01223) 203203

Reviewed in HFC 186



ARCAM Alpha 8R £379.90

It's often instructive to examine an amp from the back. Noteworthy features here include two sets of speaker connectors, one permanent, the other switchable, and a tiny switch to convert the phono into a line level input. Best of all is a switch labelled 'processor/normal', which converts the AV/DVD input into one at fixed gain, allowing the Alpha 8R to act as a slave main channel amplifier when used in conjunction with

an AV processor. From the front it looks like most other recent Arcam hardware. Features include a five position rotary input selector, a tape monitor switch, bass, treble and balance controls along with a direct 'bypass' switch. Improvements over the earlier Alpha 8 include an enhanced power supply and a higher grade volume control. A palm-sized remote handset operates volume and mute.

The panel clearly liked this amplifier, which was tested in several presentations over two days. "A subtle and communicative amplifier," opined one, and this turned out to be almost the universal view. "Clear, detailed and focused... light, airy and spacious," (Weber) and "three dimensional, with rich tonal colours," (Prokofiev) were other opinions.

Of course there was criticism too – of a suggestion of sibilance, and occasional complaints about some hardness with some material – but this did not reflect the views of the

panel as a whole. The hands-on tests simply served to underline the Arcam's overall strengths: its strong resolving power and almost architectural solidity and soundstage presence. These remained consistent factors with various loudspeakers, implying that it is comparatively insensitive to the load.

In a nutshell, this Arcam 8R stands head and shoulders above the crowd.

A&R Cambridge

☎ (01223) 440964

Reviewed in HFC 192



ATC SIA2-150 £1,984.00

ATC is better known for speakers than amps, but the SIA2-150 integrated amplifier was reviewed in HFC 192 as part of a 'buy one, get one free'-type 25th Anniversary bargain package, bundled with the company's SCM 10 speakers.

On its own, the amplifier costs a substantial £1,984, and has something of the appearance of a professional amp, with blackened alloy fascia, beefy styling and rack-mount dimensions. Delivering a powerful 150 Watts RMS per channel, somewhat disappointingly there are just

four line level inputs, and no vinyl stage. A remote control handset is supplied.

After giving the amp time to warm up – product literature indicates three hours to reach optimum results – I settled down to listen, starting off by using the already resident and familiar Ruark Equinox speakers. Having previously got to grips with the rather appealing Equinox, my thoughts turned to the improved stereo imaging, depth and spacious soundstage which the ATC amp provided.



The level of detail that the SIA2-150 delivered in its clean musical presentation enhanced previously indistinct instruments and background vocals into becoming noticeably clearer and more apparent.

The SIA2-150 is a versatile integrated amp powerful enough for

most domestic situations, delivering an engaging and detailed soundstage, and producing well projected and open vocals without being too overbearing.

Loudspeaker Technology (ATC)

☎ (01285) 760561

Reviewed in HFC 192

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO A500 £199.95

The A500 follows on from the A500RC, and nothing much has changed externally. The slimline case has an aluminium fascia, a large central volume rotary and includes tone, bypass and balance controls.

Physically and visually it's very workmanlike, without transcending its pricing. Five line inputs are available, one a tape circuit, and an accessory MM phono input can be specified in place of one line input for an extra £20. Inside, the encapsulated output modules of the original make way

for a more complex discrete design said to provide greater current delivery

and improved control. The amp is rated at 50 Watts/channel into 8 Ohms, and barely more into 6 Ohms, suggesting it's optimised for nominally 8 Ohm speakers.

The panellists identified and approved the A500's warmth, and noted that it came across as "loud" and "powerful" with "a well controlled sense of detail", but it was also deemed "inconsistent" and its bass was felt to "boom". The A500 is clearly more in charge of proceedings than its predecessor. Nevertheless, inconsistency is the main problem, a slightly reined-in extreme treble and rather sloppy deep bass taking their toll. It's at its best driving relatively straightforward compact speakers, is euphonic and enjoyable and, on balance, taking the respectable packaging and high power yield into account, deserves a Recommended rating.

Audio Partnership

☎ (0171) 940 2200

Reviewed in HFC 196



COPLAND CSA 28 £1,349.00

Replacing the popular but five-year-old CSA 14, the CSA 28 has changed incrementally rather than radically to meet evolving market requirements, most obviously by including a remote handset which can select inputs and adjust volume. To avoid any compromise and noise introduced by the latter, Copland has adopted a 'bypass' arrangement, strictly for purists.

The design is otherwise closely related to the CSA 14, albeit in a slightly slimmed and still more elegant case, with the same hybrid valve/transistor configuration. Five inputs are provided, including an MM phono, and tape monitoring is also available.

In reality, there are few obvious

valve-like cues in this design. As far as the panel was concerned, the CSA 28 was a little dry and bright, but with sometimes slightly garish "Technicolor" tonal hues in material rich in the lower registers. The performer's "enthusiasm and sense of drama" came through in the Dohnanyi, and the "combination of

analysis and passion" it brought to the Volodos attracted particular praise. The panel's view that this amp is a little sharp and almost excessively detailed, with rather constrained soundstaging and some loss of solidity and image presence, is hard to refute.

Still, the Copland was one of the better all-rounders in the hands-on group testing. It demonstrated a firm grip and an often quite sophisticated

way of handling difficult material, and its apparent edginess turns out to be speaker dependent: the Copland simply provides enough rope for partnering hardware to hang itself. Good, then, but check with your proposed system, and avoid bright or edgy speakers and source components.

Absolute Sounds

☎ (0181) 971 3909

Reviewed in HFC 189



PRAISE WINNERS

Revolution R2

WHAT HI-FI? ★★★★★
May 99

"Best of all is the way they can hang a soundstage picture in thin air before you."

"Fantastic speakers that are well worth your hard earned cash."

T3 September 99

"What distinguishes the R2 is its overall blend of qualities: the R2 is superb value."

Hi-Fi News August 99

R3



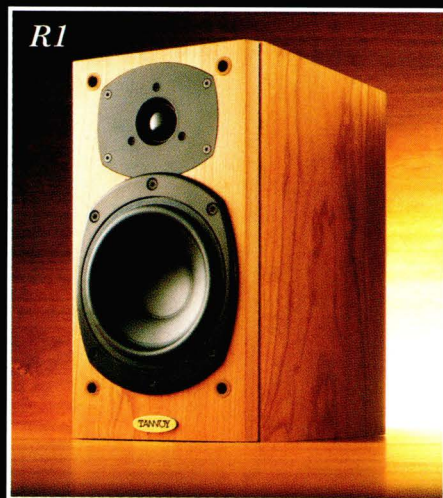
Loudspeakers
Best Buy £401-£600

Revolution R3

WHAT HI-FI? ★★★★★
August 99

"Massive orchestral slam, luminous vocals, grumbling bass lines, airy and unrestrained atmospheric and, simply, musical enjoyment: the Tannoy's deliver them all with consummate ease."

R1



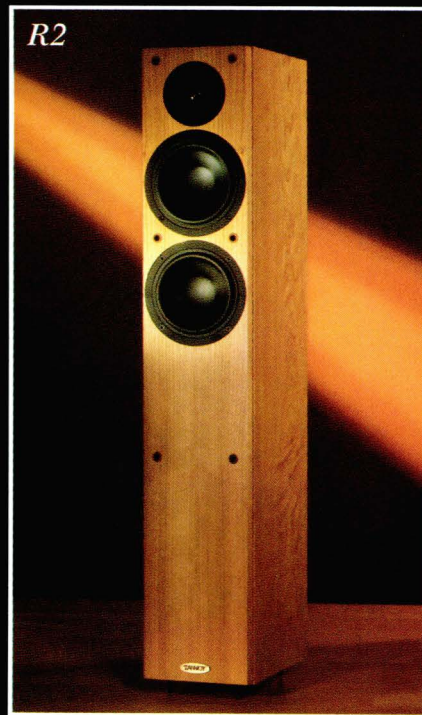
Revolution R1

WHAT HI-FI? ★★★★★
September 98

"Assured is the best way to describe the Tannoy sound... Always sounding much bigger than their price or dimensions... this is one convincing package – viva the Revolution!"

"...there's probably nothing to touch it right now: it's a steal." Hi-Fi News January 99

R2



The Revolution Series

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AMPLIFIERS

CREEK AUDIO 4330 £279.00

The 4330 is small and neat, the front panel home to a volume control, a rotary input selector, a tape monitor switch and power switching. It's based on the 4240, with a passive preamp section feeding a MOS-FET output stage rated at 40 Watts, with high peak current capability and new, more benign current limiting.

There's an extensive options list including MM and MC vinyl input boards (£49 and £59), an active line level board (£49), and a line output and headphone output board (£55). This model is also available with remote control volume, in a high-grade alloy case and

with a higher power output (50 Watts per channel).

The standard input provision is rather meagre: a moving magnet phono input which can be adapted for use as a line input, and that aside there are just four line inputs, one of which a tape circuit.

What started as a slightly coarse,

dry-sounding design blossomed into something more meaningful once it had been thoroughly run in and warmed up. It is still a little dry sounding, but it has a strong sense of control; it "grabs the speakers and makes them move" as one panellist put it, while another commented: "This amplifier has a very strong sense of drive."

However, the hands-on listening was less favourable. The 4330 is

indeed a gutsy performer, with a propulsive quality and strong timing cues, but it also seemed rather congested and lacking in ambience, and the lowest level of subtle detail seemed rather muted.

But the bottom line here is an enjoyable, credible design, attractively compact, simple and with a long and flexible options list.

Creek Audio ☎ (0181) 361 4111
Reviewed in HFC 192



CYRUS 7 £700.00

Cyrus recently regained its independence from the NXT operation, and this has helped breathe life into a brand that at times had looked tired. The 7 marks a subtle change in emphasis towards optimising sound quality. No component from previous models has been included unless it could make its case musically, but while the shoebox packaging has been retained, ABS replaces magnesium for the base.

Cyrus has managed to squeeze two sets of loudspeaker connectors alongside the six inputs, the preamp outputs, the PSX outboard power supply socket (optional) and the

headphone socket on the dinky back panel. Remote control is included.

The 7 turned out to be a peach with the merest whiff of lemon. There was a smattering of mildly dismissive comments from a couple of panellists during one presentation, but the general view was consistently positive. "The best so far," as one put it. "There are real dynamics and energy here (and) image scale is big, yet the bass is well controlled." Another commented that it encouraged listening and provided real insights into the music.

The hands-on listening confirmed this is an assured amplifier, with a

fine sense of poise, real clarity and impressively strong control, marking a significant upwards turn for Cyrus. It's lucid, detailed and well controlled across the band, and not above getting its hands dirty and kicking ass

when the occasion demands. But its stand-out qualities are its refinement, soundstage precision and the usual superb packaging.

Cyrus ☎ (01480) 451777
Reviewed in HFC 196



HARMAN/KARDON HK630 £229.99

The £230 HK630 is a low-cost integrated amplifier rated at 40 Watts/channel (8 Ohms), and 60 Watts into 4 Ohms. On the whole, it's very straightforward, but the styling is individual and effective. The control set includes bass and treble controls, independent switching for

two pairs of speakers and a source direct switch. There are just four inputs at line level, including tape, plus a moving magnet phono input. Tape monitoring is possible and headphones can be connected.

Around the back, you'll find two sets of 4mm binding post speaker

terminals (a welcome sight on a budget amplifier), input sockets and preamp out and main amp input sockets. Although this does enhance flexibility, there's no ready way to attach a second amplifier for bi-amping purposes. A remote control handset is included.

There were complaints that the HK 630 was "a bit artificial" and "lacked detail", and consistent comments that it

tended to sound rather

"spiky" but, on the whole, these were seen as cosmetic failings in an amplifier that was generally lifelike and communicated enthusiasm from the music.

Although not the optimum choice for use with larger speakers, the little harman/kardon always seemed in control, with crisp bass lines and even crisper upper harmonics and treble detail.

The HK 630 won't set the world alight – it's a little too raw and undisciplined for that – but it is a cracking budget design, with a clarity and a *joie de vivre* that sets it apart from the crowd and which retains a strong measure of clarity even when the music becomes dense and complex. Just avoid brash, forward-sounding speakers.

Gamepath ☎ (01908) 317707
Reviewed in HFC 192



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DYNAUDIO
AUTHENTIC FIDELITY

AMPLIFIERS

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A100R £999.00

This X-A100R is related to both the X-A1 integrated amp and the X-AS100 power amp. Electrically it's closer to the latter, but in market position it is a kind of upmarket X-A1, with a 75 Watts per channel output and a remote handset which controls input selector and volume. Compared with the X-A1, the power supply is more sophisticated, and the bipolar output stage uses selected matched pairs of output devices. There are no superfluous features, not even a balance control, the six line inputs including a single tape circuit with off-tape monitoring. Build quality is excellent, although the fluting at the top is a dust trap. The external power supply is housed

in a moulded case, and connected to the amp via a long umbilical.

There was not complete agreement about this amplifier's musical integrity, but its basic aural fingerprint was not in doubt. Two listeners felt it improved as the test progressed. One remarked that the Claire Martin track started out sounding as though the voice was emerging from a PA stack, but that by the time the track had ended he felt the amplifier was "subtle and revealing, as well as being tonally very acceptable".

Although not notably dynamic or punchy, it's articulate, refined and



spacious. If you want an amplifier to knock your lights out at twenty paces, look elsewhere. If you want one that will power medium-sized systems at moderate levels, and which reproduces the musicianship,

tonality and sense of space captured on worthwhile recordings, especially acoustic ones, the X-A100R is a significant bargain. *Musical Fidelity*
☎ (0181) 900 2999
Reviewed in HFC 189

NAD 317 £399.95

Since our review in HFC 168, sufficient changes have been made to the 317's circuitry to make a re-test worthwhile – and to add icing to the cake, the price has been cut, too. It's built around a large 500VA Holmgren transformer and a bank of small reservoir capacitors, cross-connected in to provide a powerful but stiff power supply capable of working with low impedance and other difficult loads without suffering current starvation.

It has all the usual NAD features, including bypassable tone controls, removable

pre/power amp links, a headphone socket and six inputs all at line level and including two tape circuits. Remote control is included.

A test piano recording was "beautifully

portrayed", while depth, ambience and presence were all identified as strengths, and the muddled, congested feel of the original model 317 that was particularly noticeable with the throttles wide open is simply not a factor with the new version.

The strengths of the NAD

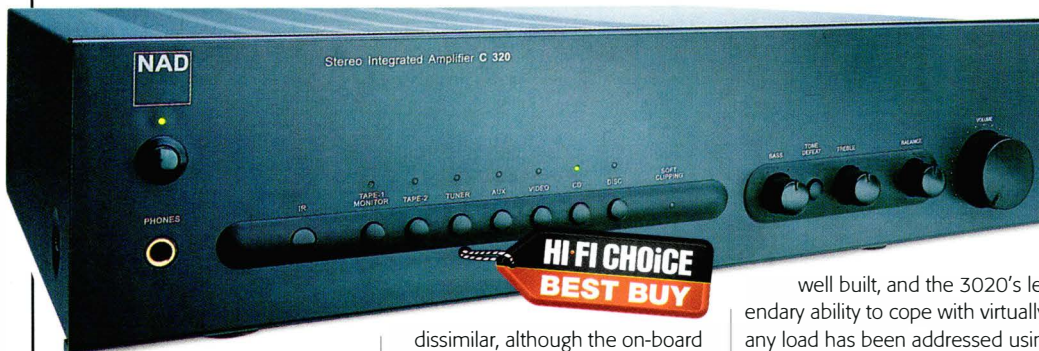
were equally apparent in pre- and post-panel session testing, where the 317 showed itself to be virtually indifferent to the nature of the loudspeaker load and capable of playing cleanly at high volumes.

One of the feet detached itself during the test programme, which doesn't speak well of the build, and in truth the NAD 317 doesn't really look like a £400 amplifier in terms of external presentation. But this shouldn't reflect negatively on its musical ability, which on current form is good to very good indeed.

The Audio Club
☎ (01296) 482017
Reviewed in HFC 196



NAD C320 £199.95



Billed as the true successor to the NAD3020, the C320 is the most recent of a number of pretenders to the 3020's legendary status, and stakes the strongest claim so far. It retains the trademark grey fascia and the controls are not

dissimilar, although the on-board phono input has disappeared. Familiar features including switchable high level limiting (soft clipping) and pre output/main input sockets remain. Tone controls are retained, with a bypass switch, there's a headphone socket, and system remote control. This amp is

well built, and the 3020's legendary ability to cope with virtually any load has been addressed using Impedance Matching Circuitry (ISC), which minimises feedback requirements, yet allows a useful 40 Watt RMS continuous output.

For all the external and internal changes, the experience of listening to the C320 is comfortingly familiar. Sure, it is a little crisper and drier

than the sometimes lush 3020, but it's both informative and relaxed, which sits well with comparably priced source components and speakers. It's also surprisingly powerful, with unusual consistency as the volume is increased. At high volume it sounds very big and three-dimensional – a good result for such a low-cost amp.

The panel awarded the NAD a moderately strong overall score. Strong dynamics were consistently noted, yet there was a hint of softness, and a mild defocusing of fine detail. The NAD is an interesting amplifier with both bottle and finesse, and a great budget buy – but leave the soft clipping switch off unless you're giving a party.

The Audio Club
☎ (01296) 482017
Reviewed in HFC 186

AMPLIFIERS

NAD C340 £269.95

The C340 is only the second NAD amplifier to use the impedance-sensing circuit premiered with the C320, which is designed to deliver lots of current into low impedance loads without starving higher impedance loudspeakers of voltage drive. The benefit is primarily cost-related, because to deliver the same power into all kinds of load would otherwise mean a much bigger power supply. There's a quality motorised volume pot, but the C340 casework still feels rather rattly and insubstantial.

The little NAD worked well with some obscenely expensive loudspeakers, strutting its stuff, often at quite high volumes, without any

sense of aural strain and with no apparent danger of overheating. It should be said that the ability to cope electrically and to make music are two quite different skills, and its ability in the music stakes is best summed up by remarks that the it sounded "quite musical and enjoyable, but not special". This represents pretty much the consensus and is precisely in tune with the hands-on listening, which found it consistently easy and smooth, with a



real feeling for image depth – there seems to be just a subtle hint of excess in the upper bass and an equally subtle suggestion of HF roll-off – but lacking a little in bite and dynamics.

Ultimately, this isn't an amplifier for everyman. The emphasis is absolutely on its train-like ability to

cope with any kind of load, whereas it's the comfort factor that comes across when playing music – which is no bad thing for an amplifier destined for use with moderately priced source components and speakers.

The Audio Club

☎ (01296) 482017

Reviewed in HFC 192

NAIM Nait 3R £799.00



The remote-control version of Naim's entry-level model, the Nait 3R is every inch a thoroughbred, with a standard Naim fascia and back panel which uses recessed 4mm speaker plugs (twin-spaced 4mm spaced plugs are supplied) and DIN socketry for all bar one line input. Although it has quite a large

footprint, the unit is slimmer than average and comparatively lightweight, reflecting the small power supply needed for the 30 Watt rating. MM and MC cards are available, and the Nait can be converted into a preamplifier. Outboard power supplies such as the Flatcap can also be added to the preamp stage.

Clearly less powerful than most at

its price, within reasonable limits the Nait 3R sounded surprisingly ballsy, and will do fine with medium efficiency speakers as long as your room isn't too big or absorptive.

Naim amps are widely described as having a particular kind of sound, but it still came as a shock to find the stereotypes reiterated in the blind listening tests. "A sense of rhythmic patterns, of parts behind main parts"

and "a great sense that this is a quiet amp, which provides real space for the notes to move in – dynamic and controlled" were typical conclusions, along with others such as "dynamic", "good timing" and "believable". Hands-on testing gave very similar results, with a strong sense of image presence, a dryish bass and a foreshortened image depth.

The Nait does ultimately lack refinement and the perception of image depth is undernourished, but in a sympathetically constructed system, few amplifiers near the price can rival the 'sense of being' it conjures up.

Naim Audio ☎ (01722) 332266

Reviewed in HFC 189

PIONEER A-407R £200.00



Rated at 45 Watts per channel, the A-407R is comprehensively equipped. Highlights include an extruded alloy front panel and a number of anti-resonance features, both in the construction of the case and in a new heatsink design,

although the top panel remains rather rattly. It uses proprietary Direct Energy MOSFET output devices, as well as a Wide Range Linear Circuit which eliminates the usual output choke and phase compensation capacitors.

The feature set is similar to other mainstream designs, and includes

remote control and bypassable tone and loudness controls. Two pairs of speakers can be connected and switched independently, and there are inputs for a record deck, three line inputs and two tape decks, with monitoring available on one tape circuit.

Panel test scoring was extremely consistent in the two presentations, with considerable unanimity of opinion, too. The score was not itself remarkable, but the character of the comments was more than just benign: "Very taut and musical, with holographic imagery."

The hands-on testing, conducted over a wider range of volume levels and partnering equipment, did nothing to puncture the picture of a fine, detailed and airy sounding amplifier. There's meat on the bones too, the Pioneer sounding solid and in command of the various speakers used.

The A-407R's ability to reproduce a coherent soundstage and avoid smothering subtle ambience was as valued as its general tunefulness and tonal credibility.

There is always a trade-off for adding features to an amplifier, but if your requirements are for an amplifier with tone controls, speaker switching, headphone socket and so on, the A-407R is a particularly good choice.

Pioneer ☎ (01753) 789789

Reviewed in HFC 186



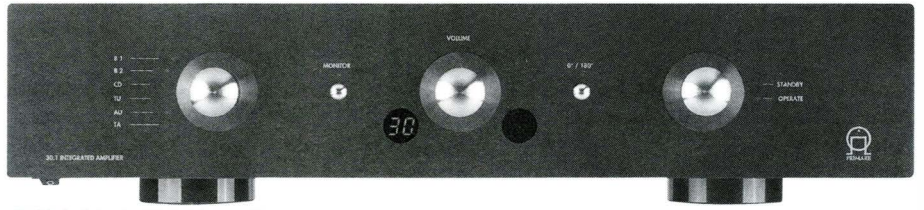
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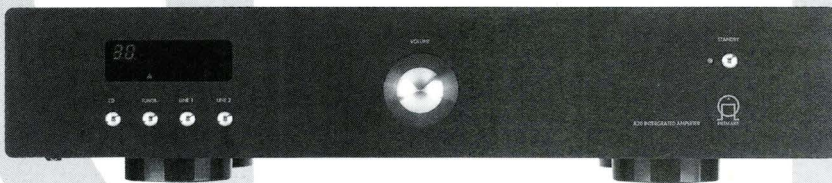


D 30.2 COMPACT DISC PLAYER

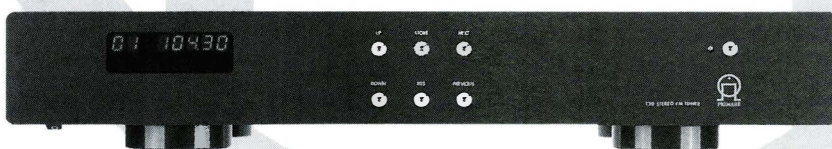


Primare Systems a perfect partnership

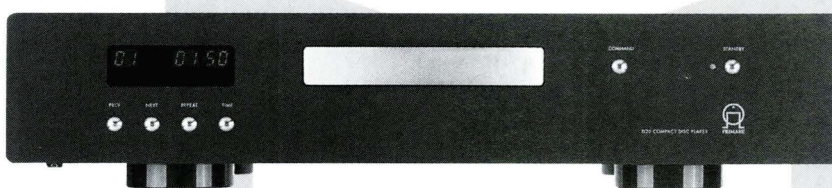
A 20 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER



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Audio Excellence, Swansea. 01792 474608



AMPLIFIERS

PIONEER A-607R £300.00

The A-607R has a busy front panel, with central volume control and rotaries to take care of bass, treble, balance and source selection. Additional switching covers two pairs

of speakers, the loudness circuit, tape monitoring, record selection, muting and direct, to bypass the tone, loudness and balance circuits, backed up by enough LED tell-tales

to turn night into day. Well, almost. Design highlights include a toroidal transformer and individual heatsink extrusions for each output power device, plus a number of features designed to reduce power consumption in standby mode. The main technical thrust of the amp,

however, is the use of active devices called HEX power MOSFETS in the output stage.

One of the joys of reviewing high-fidelity components is having your expectations confounded. The

A-605R was modestly successful in our previous tests, but the A-607R turned out to be more than just a chip off the old block. One panel member commented: "It's very atmospheric, with lots of detail... I particularly liked the imaging, which is very open and atmospheric." Another remarked: "It's qualitatively different, rather like taking a veil away... it sounds as if the producer must have wanted it this way."

This Pioneer is more than just well equipped and high-tech, it also has authority, focus and good rhythmic drive, along with a strong sense of detail. It remains a little ragged compared with some, but the clincher is attractive pricing and a high power yield.

Pioneer ☎ (01753) 789789
Reviewed in HFC 192



PRIMARE A30.1 £1,499.99



A great looking amplifier, the Primare 30.1 is big, although not grossly so, and is one of the densest and heaviest pieces of hardware of its type, thanks to a massively endowed power supply section which is responsible for the

100 Watts/8 Ohms (180 Watts/4 Ohms) power ratings. The front panel incorporates a stand-off to house the display and control circuits, which is aesthetically effective, but the most impressive features of all are the three turned controls, which are simply the best.

A dual mono design with a 300VA transformer for each channel, there are six relay-switched inputs an impulse generator volume control offering high precision 1dB stepped attenuation

and good channel balance even at low volume settings, which is difficult to achieve with rotary potentiometers. Controls are limited to volume and source selection, there's no tape monitor facility, and two of the inputs are fully balanced.

There was no big disagreement about this one, except on the one

occasion about the musical merit of the amp. By common consent this was an easy, light and open amp. Diction was particularly good, and tonality generally warm and open. "Intimate, tactile, and with good timing," was a typical comment. This is indeed an impressive amplifier, with plenty of subtle, tactile detail and a coherent, solid balance – an amp, moreover, that worked consistently well in each system tried.

This is one of the most naturally balanced, least intrusive and thoroughly enjoyable amplifiers around, whose sound is (for once) sophisticated and complete enough to justify its cost. What more can you ask?

CSE ☎ (01423) 359054
Reviewed in HFC 189

ROTEL RA-971 MkII £250.00

The RA-971 MkII looks like just about every other Rotel amplifier of recent times. All the new work has been expended where it will do most good – inside.

The only obvious external change is the addition of a preamp output, which allows the RA-971 MkII to be used in a bi-amplified set-up using a matching Rotel power amp. Internally there have been a number of component changes, the net effect of which is said to be improved dynamics, openness, and bottom end. It has bypassable tone controls, switching for one of the two sets of speaker outputs, and headphones can be accommodated, too.

The preamp can cope with six sources, including two tape circuits,

with independent source and listen selectors. The volume control is a twin mono friction coupled-type.

"By far the best amp today," was one panellist's conclusion near the end of one day's listening sessions, which bought instant agreement from others in après-listening

conversation. "I thought I couldn't fault the last one, but this amp sounds much more controlled and lucid," he said, complimenting the Rotel's "liveliness" and describing it as a "delight. I'd take this one home." What wasn't obvious from the panel tests was its tremendous power output and apparent indifference to the nature of the load it was driving. The Rotel was consistently able to play

music at window-shaking volume levels without any obvious change in musical character – or at least none that weren't swamped by the non-linearities of the human hearing process. The bottom line: superb value for money, an outrageous real-world power yield and an unequivocal Best Buy.

Gamepath ☎ (01908) 317707
Reviewed HFC 196





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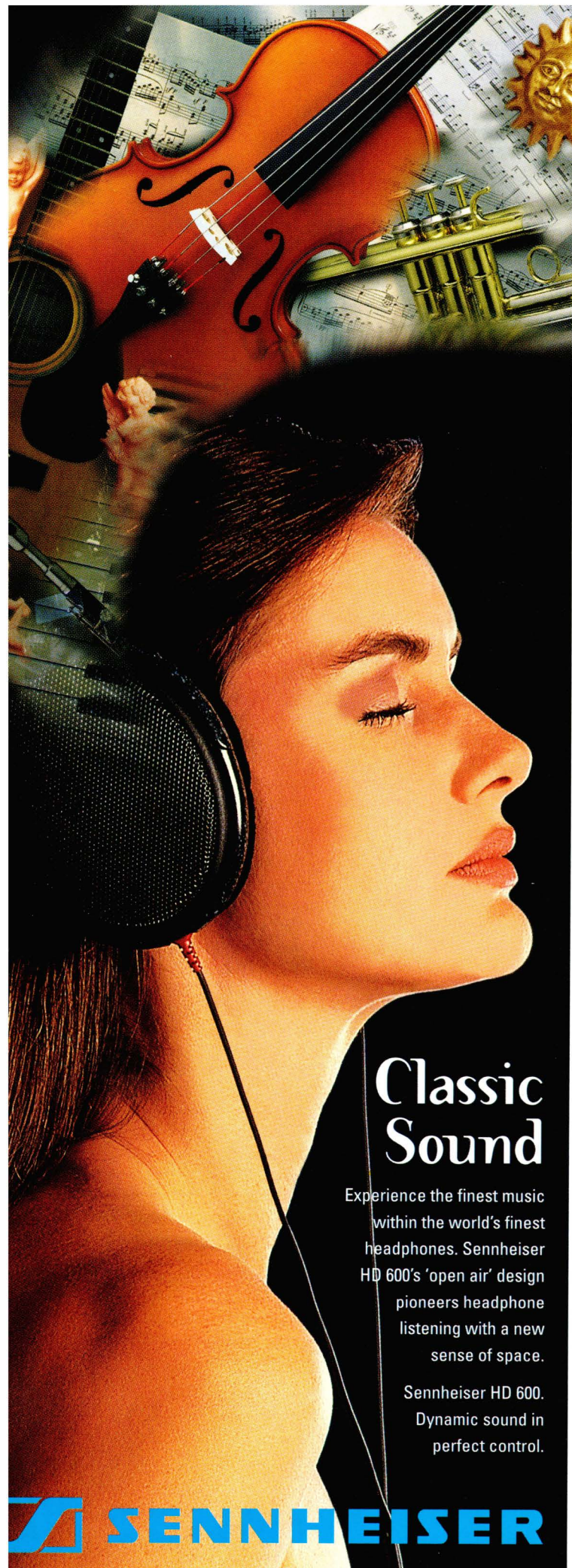
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AMPLIFIERS

SONY TA-FB730R £199.00

The retro fascia could have dated from any time in the past 30 years, with outsize volume and source selector rotaries, tone controls, switching for two pairs of speakers, balance, tape monitor, loudness, even a subsonic (high pass) filter. More 1990s are the EON link which works in co-operation with Sony's RDS tuner, and the source direct switch. It also comes with a basic system remote control.

However, the 730 has also been extensively modified, the 2 x 40 Watt MOSFET power amplifier (8 Ohms) using upgraded supply capacitors and a simplified signal path. The power supply has been more effectively separated from the audio circuits, and other measures have been taken to reduce microphony.

The Sony polarised opinion like no other in its test group, and it clearly wasn't everyone's cup of tea. One felt that it "threw all its energy behind the music", although he also felt compelled to point out that it was "somewhat aggressive".

However, this was one amplifier in its group that reproduced classical piano with the vitality and impact of the real thing; indeed, it was the only one that reproduced a Steinway with

the lid very obviously raised, and gave a near holographic sense of imagery, all of which had a big impact on the listening experience.

At the same time, the Sony's limitations can't be glossed over, and there were times when it did sound rather raucous and 'transistorist'.

Clearly this is not an amplifier for all reasons. While I found the Sony flawed but compelling, the panel was clearly split. However, sound this good at a price this low cannot be ignored.

Sony ☎ (0990) 111999
Reviewed in HFC 196

"This was the one amplifier in its group that reproduced classical piano with the vitality and impact of the real thing."



TOKEN AUDIO K50 £345.00

An independent brand, designed and manufactured by Principia of Cambridge, the K50 amplifier will cost £345 with a glamorous stainless steel finish and gold plated knobs, but could be also be bought for £325 in a more utilitarian black suit of clothes.

For an amplifier from a small, specialist brand, these prices seem almost too low. Notwithstanding a rather stiff input selector, the test model looked good and handled well – our favourite feature being the Token badge with a 'reversed' K' motif. Rated at 50 Watts/8 Ohms,

the K50 is a minimum-features, straight-line amp. The amplifier is bipolar, with 'very low' feedback, whose circuit is contained on a single PCB, with a minimum of hard wiring, star earthing and a leavening of 'selected' passive components.

The K50 acquitted itself well in two presentations to the panel, with

extremely consistent scoring between listeners and sessions. "Very clear, informative, detailed and dramatic," wrote one panellist of the percussion piece, while of the Friend and Fellow track he described the K50 as "possibly the clearest amp yet" in the test, although he felt that the vocals could have been "warmer and friendlier".

The hands-on listening tests found an amplifier that was naturally

distanced, with a smooth, unprocessed quality, although dynamics weren't particularly strong, and there was comparatively little adrenaline in the music. The tonal balance of the K50 is notably warm, but the overall prognosis has to be favourable.

This is a high quality, minimum features amplifier which is distinguished by surprisingly reasonable pricing. It is not the most powerful or dynamic model around, and detail resolution is really only fair, but its transparency is first rate. It therefore gets a Recommendation. Hailey Audio ☎ (01992) 442425
Reviewed in HFC 186

"This is a high quality, minimum features amplifier which is distinguished by surprisingly reasonable pricing."



PRE/POWER AMPS

ARCAM Alpha 9C/Alpha 10P £399.90/£599.90

Arcam takes the possibilities of home cinema and multi-room installation seriously, and the Alpha 9 preamp is well equipped for such duty. 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' and intended to drive remote amps. Zone 1 carries the same signal as the main preamp out, while Zone 2 has its own selector switch.

A remote control changes the volume and main input selector, a phono stage is an option, and tone and balance controls can

be bypassed. The power amp is a simpler affair, but still manages to offer two switched speaker outputs and a headphone socket. It can be upgraded by adding a third channel for home cinema use (at a cost of £250). Both units are neatly designed and assembled.

The sound was generally good,

criticisms being 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 of those was serious, and there's much to praise in terms of detail, solidity and confident dynamics.

Bass was rather odd, seeming at times (particularly on transients) a bit light, and at other times rather too heavy. Tonality in the midband was fine and there was never any feeling of lack of power or drive. Quiet passages were very relaxed, although some very quiet piano playing was slightly lacking in communication.

Modified rapture, perhaps, but still a good result overall, with excellent flexibility and upgradability, backed up by Arcam's good reputation for reliability and support.

A&R Cambridge

☎ (01223) 203203

Reviewed in HFC 187



BORDER PATROL 300B SE £3,995.00

More than a few amplifiers have been created to use the legendary 300B valve and its meagre 7.5 Watt output, most of them single-ended designs where one tube drives one channel, the least powerful yet also least compromised way of operating a triode.

What marks out the Border Patrol 300B SE is the attention paid to power supply design. The secret lies in the hefty black box that accompanies the solid wood-framed chassis. The black box contains three separate choke input filter power supplies for the high voltage, negative bias and heaters, leaving only the signal amplifying tubes on the main chassis. Even rarer is the use of interstage driver transformers, which present a very low impedance to the output tubes.

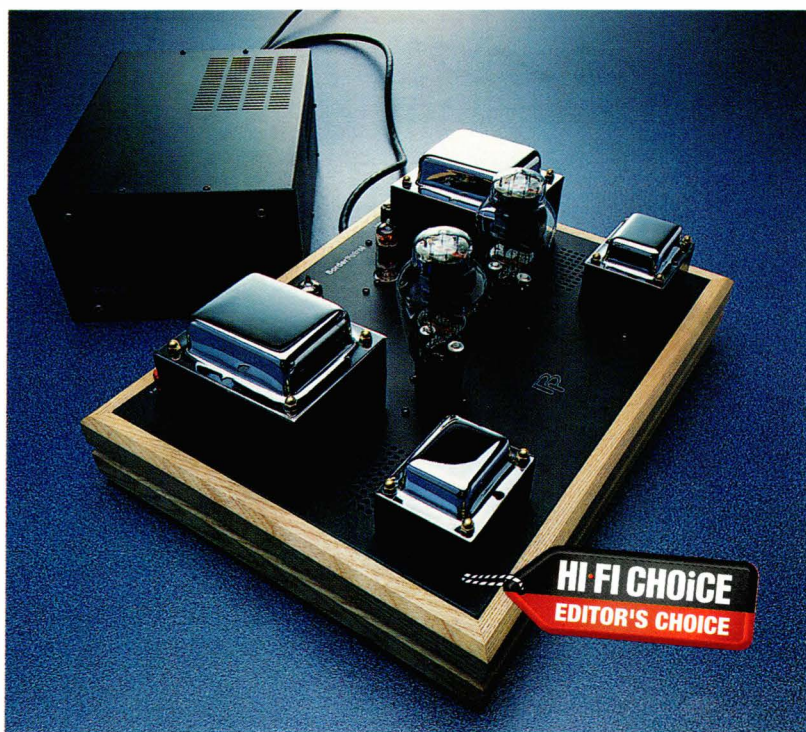
Having heard the Border Patrol a few times in the past I wasn't surprised by its nimbleness, speed, agility and grunt. I was, however, shocked to hear it coping with B&W Nautilus 802 speakers. But the BP isn't just about power, it's about the ability to reproduce music with its timbral and dynamic elements fully

intact. You tend to take good tone for granted with tubes but when it's created with so little coloration, as it is here, you can fully appreciate its beauty and richness.

Instruments are created for their tonal character, yet so little audio equipment can reproduce this in its full glory. A lot of trannie amps dry it up, while many tube amps add extra rose tinting. The 300B, when used with this much attention to detail, appears to add no colour of its own and combines that skill with lightning speed, leaving you with no sense of electronic intervention. In some respects the lack of tube-type colorations make this an extremely difficult amplifier to get a handle on, but ultimately

it has a more honest, bare-bones style that rewards improvements in source material to a far greater degree than usual. It makes a lot of amps sound thick and earthbound with its superb transparency and

fleetness of foot. And while it doesn't quite match good trannie bass it does a far better job than any other SE I've heard, and I've heard a few. *Border Patrol* ☎ (01273) 276716
Reviewed in HFC 186



CREEK P43R/A52SE £350.00/£599.00

This £950 pre/power combo is well thought-out, with plenty of scope for upgrading. The preamplifier in particular is very flexible: it starts out as a passive unit, but can come 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 remote adjustable.

The power amp also sports a few features: two sets of speaker outputs (relay switched) and no less than eight phono sockets to facilitate 'looping through' to a second amplifier in a bi-amped system or (using the phase-inverted input) to the other channel for bridged operation, for the power-

hungry. The preamp has six inputs, including two tape loops with separate 'listen' and 'record' selectors.

Sonically the best liked combination in its test group, 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. 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 right up to clip it remained unflustered. It seemed just a shade coloured with one or two solo vocal recordings, and loud piano occasionally sounded a little processed, but

apart from those two really very minor criticisms the sound was generally excellent.

This is clearly a highly capable combination which should provide a substantial upgrade on a typical integrated amp and is also highly upgradable. Definitely Best Buy material.

Creek Audio ☎ (0181) 361 4133
Reviewed in HFC 187



CRIMSON CS610/CS630 £1,075.00 inc. DNM Solid Core cables

Crimson first appeared in the '70s, and it's been revived pretty much wholesale, including original circuits, circuit board layouts and the distinctive 'end-on' packaging in a black anodised aluminium box section. I never saw the attraction of large facias and find it quite

elegant. Features are basic. The pre-amp has five inputs (including phono), one tape output and a balance control. The quite complex audio path uses discrete transistors with a couple of integrated-circuit regulators. The power amps 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 by making the case act as an auxiliary heatsink, backed up by a thermal cut-out.

There's a notion around that

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

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. Whether you like the looks is another matter, but judged strictly on sound this combination certainly cuts it. It's admittedly basic and not very upgradable, but taken as it is it's certainly worth Recommending. *Virtual Reality Audio Systems* ☎ (01277) 227355
Reviewed in HFC 187



MARK LEVINSON 380/334 £3,995/£5,495

Mark Levinson belongs to the solid state school of high-end hi-fi electronics, and its designs use sophisticated electronics for monitoring and other housekeeping tasks and inter-component communication. The 380 line-level preamplifier and the 334 dual mono 125 Watts/channel power amplifier on test here cost £9,490 in combination and can talk to each other in various ways. The preamp itself is fully remote controllable, and is also extensively programmable. There are four unbalanced and two balanced inputs, all at line level, and the power amplifier can be driven in either mode. Internally, the audio

signal path is short. The 334 is a similar proposition, again with very simple audio circuit and very complex housekeeping.

After some hours I realised I was as far from being able to pin down how this combination sounded as I was when it was first switched on. I'm not that much wiser now, but was able to form a strong picture of its musical abilities. The combination is hard to

hear at all. Somehow the impression of fine, filigree detailing that hangs in the air with many high-end amplifiers is not as obvious here, but the

midband is significantly more subtly three dimensional and tonally colourful than expected. It has a level of subtlety and refinement usually missing from big muscle amps, but make no mistake, this is a big muscle amp. More important still was the system's superb ability to let music tell its own story without obvious intervention – that's what defines the qualities of the music-making experience, and by extension the hardware that was used to play it.

Path Premier ☎ (01494) 441736
Reviewed in HFC 195



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PHONO STAGES

CREEK OBH-9 £129.00

This diminutive box is a model of restrained design – every detail has been honed to keep costs down. Although it's quite plain I must admit I find it an appealingly sweet little thing visually. It's an MC-only amplifier with no adjustments for gain or loading and, like most of its test contemporaries, it's powered by a simple external power supply. Internal circuitry is based on discrete transistors and decent quality passive components, neatly enough done – although the electronic assembly isn't the tidiest I've seen.

Sensitivity is possibly a little high given the rather limited headroom: cartridges with a nominal output of 0.2mV to 0.4mV will suit best.

(Creek also offers a version with lower gain.)

Noise was just audible over the surface noise of really quiet pressings, but that's with a very-low-output cartridge. Possibly partly due to that noise, the sound was at times a little muddled and lacking in fine detail. However, there's a basic likeability to the sound that does a lot to redeem specific minor shortcomings. Bass is extended and very natural and, although the tonal balance may in fact be just the tiniest bit over-warm, it is in essence neutral.

In 'bypass' testing (with the inverse RIAA filters) this unit showed a slight tendency to dryness with some material, but no alarming symptoms. Lab tests showed nothing

untoward. Frequency response is very nearly flat apart from a minute lift in the high treble, with extension to over 100kHz. Given its price and likely application, this unit seems worth Recommendation.

Creek Audio

☎ (0181) 361 4133

Reviewed in

HFC 189



ELECTROCOMPANET ECP-1 £499.00

It's amazing what a nicely polished piece of acrylic can do to smarten up a drab metal box. That apart, there's little externally remarkable about the unit. Gain is switchable for MM or MC cartridges and power is from a dedicated 'wall wart'. Internally, the works are based on discrete transistors, quite a lot of 'em, with the MC input stage apparently using the principle of a current input. This is a

difficult discipline to master but has some theoretical advantages. It can lead to surprises in the perceived



output level of cartridges, but that's no cause for concern.

This turned out to be the star of its test group, in a pretty good field too. From the start, when its low noise sank below the level of run-in grooves on even the quietest pressings, it came across as having an exceptionally detailed sound which didn't

sacrifice smoothness nor long-term listenability.

Bass digs deep and remains tuneful, while treble has that combination of

sweetness and extension that characterises the best LP replay equipment. On the difficult bypass test, this unit came closest of all to matching the sound of the reference, with only very subtle bass lift giving the game away. Detail, imaging and ambience were all first-rate. The only test result that might be significant is the very high (in context) current it passes through a cartridge's windings, up to 0.2mA. It certainly won't do any damage, but with some cartridges might affect the sound. That apart, this is an extremely fine piece of kit and is strongly Recommended.

Castle Acoustics

☎ (01756) 795333

Reviewed in HFC 189

MICHELL Iso/Lithos £599.00

The basic Iso is already a well respected product, designed for Michell by Tom Evans, who has now added the Lithos power supply to his portfolio. This is a small sub-board which fits inside the Iso and

replaces the usual IC regulators with a higher-performance regulator of Tom's devising. Existing Isos can be upgraded, or a

complete Iso/Lithos ordered from Tom. Apart from the Lithos, the Iso consists of a single circuit board populated with a combination of high-quality op-amps and selected passive components, joined to the mains supply via a lump-in-the-lead transformer. The only rather dumb

feature is the earthing post, which is underneath and stands proud of the feet when anything more than a very thin wire is trapped under it.

Undoubtedly one of the better contenders, the Iso somehow managed to give the impression of a very slightly excessive upper bass, though measurements subsequently disproved this. However, there was a persistent, very mild,

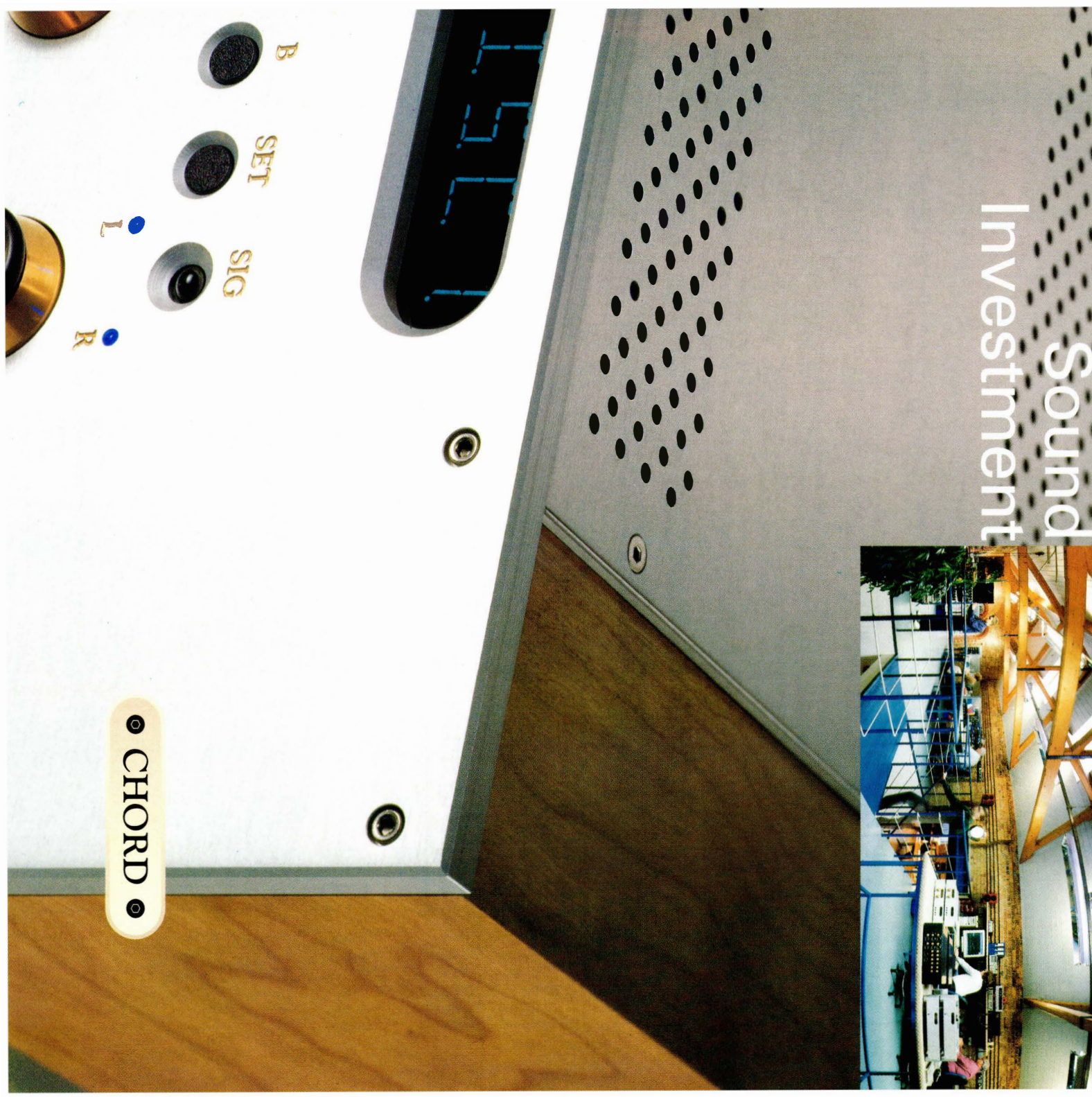
tonal thickening – which is by no means unpleasant. On the bypass test it just missed the ultimate degree of image depth, but it was very good at portraying ambience and was also notable for the conviction with which it kept the bass going through thick and thin. Voices sound very natural, as do orchestral strings and piano – all difficult tests – and long-term listenability is good. In the lab the Iso showed evidence of careful and intelligent design, with flat response, high sensitivity (but adequate headroom for cartridges up to about 0.5mV nominal) and low noise. The case is plastic, so it can be a little hum sensitive, but it certainly achieves Recommended status.

Tom Evans Audio Design

☎ (01443) 833570

Reviewed in HFC 189





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PHONO STAGES

MOTH 30 Series Phono £249.00

This unit has stood the test of time, if nothing else: I reviewed it in 1990 and liked it so much I bought one. Comparing old with new, the only obvious change is the front panel, which has gone from solid hardwood to veneered MDF, but the all-important innards seem identical.

The circuitry is based on a full-size motherboard with four small (identical) daughterboards mounted on it, well stuffed with discrete transistors. At the rear, a single pair of input sockets and a gain switch cater for MM or MC cartridges.



Power is from a 'lump in the lead'. Has the sound stood the test of time? On the whole, yes, although perhaps by comparison with a

couple of (much more expensive) others there's a slight hardness to the sound. Noise is low (as low as any active MC stage I've tested to this day) and the tonal balance is extremely neutral. Imaging is particularly good and the recorded acoustic is always clear to hear. The

Moth's manners on the test bench were exemplary, although there's some DC present on inputs (which I've never found to be a problem) and outputs, which may cause 'scratching' as a volume control is turned, and input loading is the same for MM and MC cartridges at 47kOhms. Overall, however, it's still a great little performer and a natural Best Buy.

Moth Group ☎ (01234) 741152
Reviewed in HFC 189

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP £129.00

Another unit housed in a case of striking design, this is part of a range from MF sharing the distinctive round/oval profile. Inside is a single circuit board bearing what really is an astonishing amount of circuitry for such a low-priced product. However, closer inspection reveals some careful cost saving;

although the important components have not been skimped, some of the passive components and the circuit board material are decidedly unesoteric. That's no criticism, though: good design need not rely on tweaky components at all points in the chain! There are separate

inputs for MM and MC cartridges, with gain for the latter relatively low, but probably still adequate for all but the very meanest cartridges.

If there's a weak point in the X-LP's armour it's the bass, which does ultimately lack some weight. It's what some call 'fast' bass but in bypass testing it was clearly slightly shy, this being most obvious in music that contains fairly subtle low-frequency information such as full orchestra playing at moderate levels.

Once or twice some sibilance crept in, too, but otherwise there was a pleasingly rounded tonal balance on most music which served

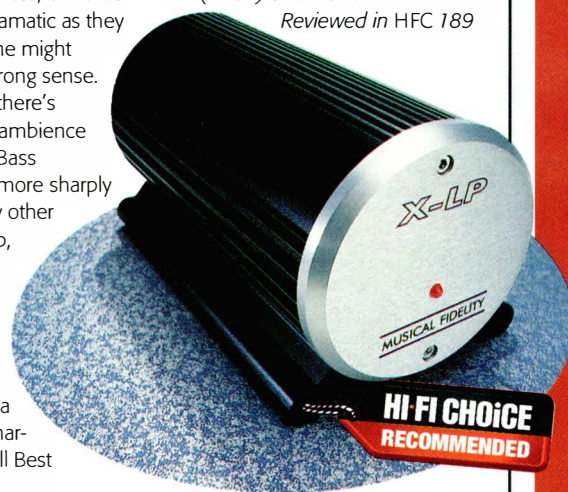
voices particularly well. Perhaps because of the lightness, climaxes are not always as dramatic as they might be – 'loud', one might almost say, in the wrong sense.

Imaging is good, there's plenty of detail and ambience is well reproduced. Bass response is indeed more sharply curtailed than in any other unit in the test group, but noise is low and everything else is in order. Given its impressively low price the X-LP certainly walks off with a Recommendation, narrowly missing the full Best Buy Monty.

Musical Fidelity

☎ (0181) 900 2866

Reviewed in HFC 189



QED Discsaver DS-1 £35.00

They don't come much more basic than this. A dual op-amp, a power supply regulator chip and 34 other

components make up the sum of the circuitry. Power is by battery



(PP3) or optional wall-wart supply, the case is plastic and there's no earthing point. Um, that's it. Leads are not included: a pair of those (cheap'n'cheerful) and just one PP3 battery will make this about the same price as the NAD, and battery life is unlikely to be more than about 50 hours. Component quality is actually perfectly decent, but I suspect this would also be an ideal test-bed for up-and-coming audio tweekers – perfectly safe and cheap enough that you won't cry if it blows up!

Granted, this won't blow any of the pricier units into the weeds, but it does what it's paid for. The most obvious limitations are in the area of refinement, which is conspicuous by its absence. The sound

frequently verges on the coarse and suffers from some muddle and confusion. All the same, it's all there if you listen for it, and the dynamic ebb and flow of a piece of music is reproduced quite happily.

Bass is rather odd, seeming if anything on the heavy side in quiet passages but receding a good deal as the music gets louder, but treble seems honest enough if occasionally a shade bright. Operating from a 9V supply inevitably limits headroom, but QED has judged gain very carefully and overload is very unlikely. Noise performance is adequate and frequency response fine.

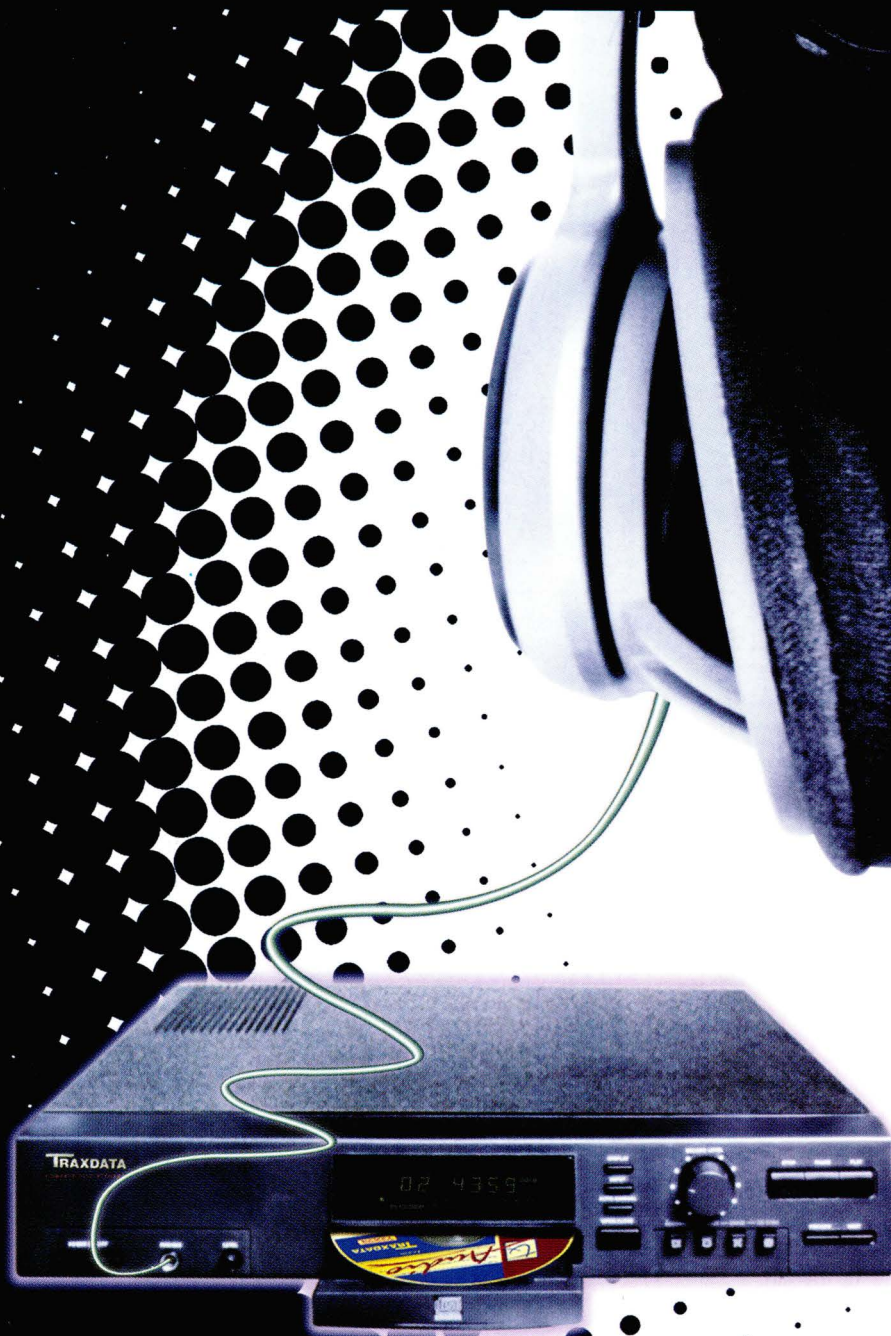
Overall, then, a quite suitable addition to any phono-less integrated amp. Recommended.

QED Audio Products

☎ (01276) 451166

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BLANK MEDIA

FUJIFILM £3.99 each

With a generally brighter, sweeter and livelier sound that was deemed closer to the vigour and enchantment of the original material, this disc was clearly preferred over the Maxell and Pioneer copies that had preceded it.

The same view was repeated with both Theta and NAD players, as was a suggestion of 'boominess', an added warmth and plumpness in the upper bass that, in both instances, "smudged the lower octave of Christy Moore's voice".

Nevertheless, and despite betraying a hint of 'CD-R smoothness', the FujiFilm-based copies

kept the bite of guitar and sparkle of percussion with sufficient style to hold the attention of the panel and warrant a Recommendation.

FujiFilm ☎ (0171) 588 5900

Reviewed in HFC 191



HI-SPACE (MPO) £1.99-£2.99 each

Providing a sharper stereo focus than the BASF, HHB and Sony 80 discs, percussive elements within a recording were still a little muted, but vocals carried a good deal of the emotion and enthusiasm we had come to expect. Lesley Garrett regained a suggestion of her earlier passion, the recording "decently layered" and enjoying a good sense of space.

Similarly, the bustling Whiskeytown track maintained a fair measure of the drive and dynamics of the original, with a far better sense of integration than had been achieved by most competing MDs. Quite simply, despite the 'loudness'



and intensity of the recording, the music still flowed naturally, making for essentially stress-free listening. Recommended.

Hi-Space (MPO)

☎ (0181) 600 3900

Reviewed in HFC 194

TDK CD-RXG £3.99 each

In both high-end and budget CD systems, recordings made on this 'high-tech' CD-R formulation were described as "smoother, possibly slightly more compressed and certainly less weighty". It's as if the music is 'cleaned up' – forced to sound more civilised, but stripped of some spontaneity *en route*. Nevertheless, one listener preferred this disc for its lack of any harshness or aggression: "It sounds very musical and more analogue," he suggested.

Other listeners pointed to the slight loss in top-end air and freshness that would otherwise accompany Christy Moore's track, and the

impression that Lesley Garrett's trademark ebullience was somehow muted. All in all, this disc makes for easy but not necessarily accurate listening.

TDK ☎ (01737) 773773

Reviewed in HFC 191



SONY ES £6.99-£7.99 each

The contrast between the Sony 80 and this ES grade disc could not have been greater, as the latter enjoys a fundamentally greater sense of atmosphere and occasion. The ES offers a better sense of realism and musical vibrancy, and is just much easier to listen to.

Lesley Garrett sparkled as on no other MD, although there was some impression of an "artificial echo". Christy Moore sounded bigger and more enthusiastic, but also smoother and less sibilant.

And all this was achieved while providing a realistic sense of dynamic contrast – particularly in its reproduction of guitar strings and the keyboard lead-in. Even

Whiskeytown's *Strangers Almanac*,



which is a very, very loud and busy track, sounded far smoother, detailed and more dynamic than it had any right to.

Repeated A/B comparisons consistently put the Sony ES at the top of the MD test pile.

Sony ☎ (0990) 111999

Reviewed in HFC 194

TRAXDATA £2.99 each

This Kodak-sourced CD-R proved to be something of a revelation, making copies that sounded closer to the original than any other disc in this survey. Our Theta combination revealed a slightly 'busy' sound, but one that was intriguing, enjoyable and bubbly. The treble proved open, expressive and utterly free of the cloying smoothness that – to one degree or another – persisted with every other CD-R recording. This was obvious with Whiskeytown's *Strangers Almanac*, which remained full of drive and energy.

Using the NAD player, it was impossible to distinguish the Traxdata copies from our silver originals. Whichever disc was in play (copy or original), the natural gruffness and character of Christy

Moore's voice was retained, the recording capturing every quirky phrase of his musical story.

And, for once, Lesley Garrett sounded as bright and airy as she had on the original – a unique achievement in our survey.

Traxdata ☎ (01753) 891444

Reviewed in HFC 191



TDK Cool £2.99 each

"At least the bass line has returned," commented one listener as this TDK disc followed a couple of particularly soft-sounding rivals. This budget derivative provides a better body to vocals with a little extra spontaneity and pizzazz to the upper octaves.

Christy Moore sounded much more like his amusing and colourful self, with the guitars now cleanly differentiated into two distinct performers. Lesley Garrett's vocals were also articulate, but the inherent passion and atmosphere of the track still suffered somewhat from the inevitable MD 'flattening'.



On something of a roll, the busy Whiskeytown track bundled along with plenty of pointed detail and a dry vocal presence, while avoiding much of the aggression and compression heard elsewhere.

TDK ☎ (01737) 773773

Reviewed in HFC 194

BLANK MEDIA

TDK MD-RXG £2.99 each

Every time the TDK RXG was loaded up, our listeners returned the same result. This is evidently a class act that's well suited to heavyweight performances with an ambience to match, although some verve and friskiness is lost in the process.

Opinion was divided over the success of this compromise. The velvety-smooth sound and the better sense of detailing and ambience

must be weighed against a slight loss of transient attack and some 'letterbox imaging' of central performers.

Christy Moore sounded slightly laid back, but nevertheless enthralling, and the dark atmosphere and momentum of the piece as whole was well conveyed. Whiskeytown, too, boasted a real 'presence' without sounding aggressive or forceful, largely thanks to the

well-defined bass line and articulate voices. TDK RXG looks like a sober, smooth and sophisticated alternative to Sony ES.

TDK
☎ (01737)
773773
Reviewed
in HFC 194



MP3 PLAYERS

DIAMOND Rio PMP500 £220.00

Diamond's original PMP300 paved the way for others to follow; now the PMP500 has set a new standard. This is the first genuine second generation MP3 personal, and sports a number of improvements to support its inflated price.

Its standard capacity is 64MB, which means it's the first MP3 personal to let you store a whole album length CD at a rate of 128Kbps without expansion. It also uses USB connection from your computer, which means faster downloads than through parallel ports.

What's more, it comes bundled with the best software package

we've yet used. It's also small (6x9x2cm), is one of the first MP3 personals to be Mac-compatible, and comes in black or a selection of translucent colours.

This isn't just the most expensive unit in its test group – it's also the best performer by some margin. It sounds clean, and conveys music with more life and depth than the other models, although it's still a little cold and lacking in ambience compared to the best CD/MD personals at the price.

Diamond Multimedia (UK)
☎ (0118) 944 4400
Reviewed in HFC 195



PINE D'music £129.00

This little 32MB beauty came late to our test, but it's a damn good thing it did, because in the world of MP3 portables it's a bit of a bargain.

It's a solid unit with a lovely tactile feel, small at 6x8.5x2cm, with good control layout and an informative display. A voice recording feature gives added value, letting you store more than two hours of memo-quality speech through a built-in microphone, with repeat, random and five EQ presets completing a fine roster of facilities. The supplied software is excellent too.

This is the only MP3 player in this group which can really compete with the best CD/MD personals at its price point. It sounds clean and consistent, with a little more punch and verve than most. It's still a little cold and 'squeezed', which is more a fault of the format than the player, and frequency extremes could be better controlled, but only the Diamond Rio PMP500 beats it here, and the Pine is the cheapest of the lot to boot.

Pine Technology UK
☎ (01908) 218812
Reviewed in HFC 195





Product of the Year
(AV processors/Amps/Receivers)
Receiver STR-DB930



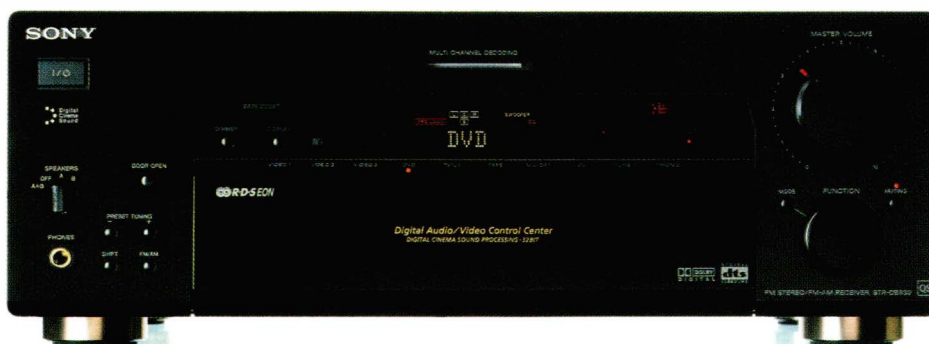
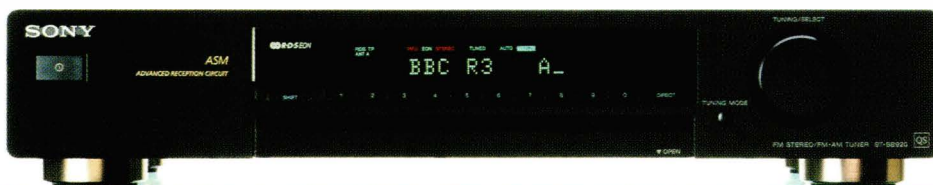
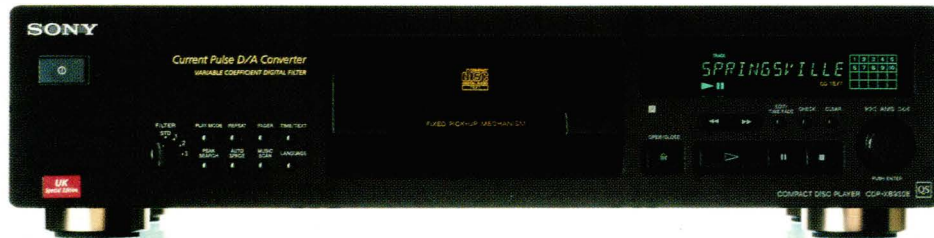
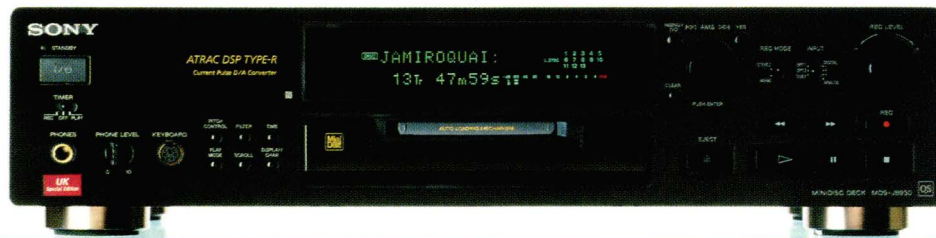
Product of the Year
(Recorder)
MD Player MD-SJB930



Best Buy
(£201-£300)
CD Player CDP-XB930



Best Buy
(£151-£200)
Tuner STS-B920



Tuned specifically for the British ear. (Sounds incredible, doesn't it?)

A hi-fi tuned for British ears? Are you hearing things? Well, only what you're meant to hear. Our sound specialists understand how demanding the British ear can be. And, being the perfectionists that we are, we felt obliged to tune our QS separates to suit that ear. Even going to the extent of tilting the circuit board within each component by 2 degrees. But this attention to detail doesn't only let your ears pick up the finer nuances of sound. It also helped us pick up a raft of awards from What Hi-Fi? magazine. Awards won: Best Buy (£201-£300); CD Player CDP-XB930E. Best Buy (£151-£200); Tuner ST-SB920. Product of the Year (Recorder); MD Player MDS-JB930. Product (AV Processors/Amps/Receivers); Receiver STR-DB930.

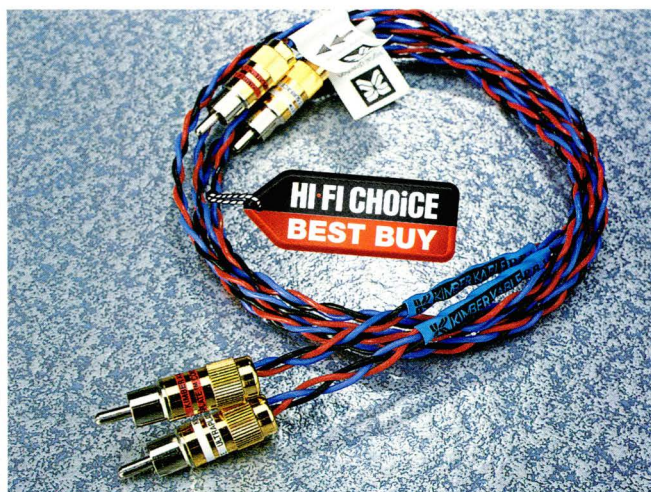
INTERCONNECT CABLE

KIMBER PBJ/Ultraplate £61.00/1m pair

Yet another variation on the Kimber theme: here, three conductors are plaited so that two connect grounds and the other the centre pins. There's no screen, but that seldom seems to be a problem in practice – much computer and communications equipment does perfectly well without one in situations at least as demanding as a typical hi-fi system. Kimber's Ultraplate phono plugs are of moderate quality and there's no cable clamping arrangement at all, so handle with care! Conductors are stranded high purity copper, insulated with Teflon.

No HFC reviewer has yet found fault with Kimber's cables, and I'm not about to buck the trend.

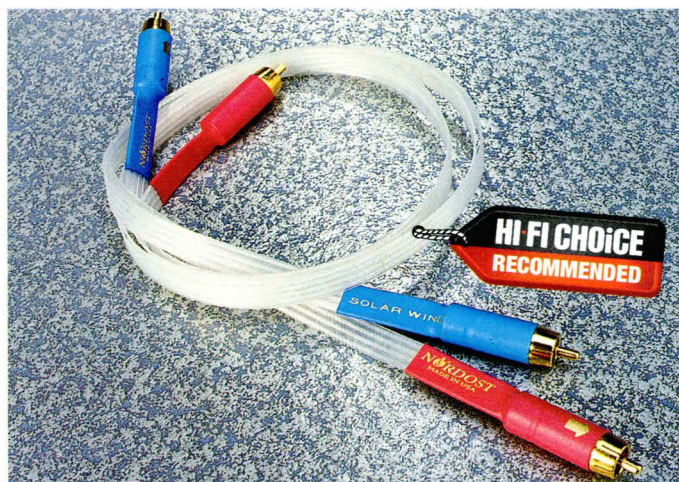
Downside? In one operation except a solo baritone seemed just a touch less resonant than with one or two other cables, and later in the same recording the front-to-back image of a female chorus seemed a little less than secure. Otherwise it's good news all the way. Treble is clear, extended, detailed and natural, supported by a midrange with that pleasing 'hear-through' quality that always marks out good hi-fi. Bass is well extended but neither lumpy nor plummy – just comfortably there when required. The build up to big climaxes is always suitably exhilarating, not marred by roughness or dynamic jolts, and the climax itself is never less than full-bodied and



satisfying. With sound quality that good, and exemplary test results to boot, a Best Buy is inevitable.

Russ Andrews Accessories
☎ (01539) 823247
Reviewed in HFC 188

NORDOST Solar Wind £84.95/1m pair



Most Nordost cables are based on a familiar theme. In this instance, the style is a few thin, solid core conductors laid side by side and insulated with an overall web of Teflon. The resulting very thin construction makes for convenient cables which easily disappear under carpets; that's less of an issue with interconnects, but these are still easy to route out of the way. Solar Wind, at just under half an inch wide, consists of eight conductors, terminated in solid, businesslike phono plugs.

A capable conductor, Solar Wind attracted a variety of positive comments, including compliments on its handling of double bass pizzicato (a tough test) which was extended, tuneful and precise, and on the very

natural decay following high-pitched transient sounds such as triangle. Sounds such as trumpet and violin were handled well. Occasionally a little more bass extension and detail might have been expected, mostly on instruments like bowed double bass where a powerful fundamental is accompanied by a complex mix of harmonics, and some climaxes were a shade thin. Otherwise, all is very much in order, with good dynamics and rhythmic drive. Imaging is very good. Although the side-by-side layout might be more prone to interference than twisted types, it's sonically very acceptable and therefore Recommended. Nordost ☎ (01352) 730251
Reviewed in HFC 188

QED Qnect 45 £70.00/1m pair

Like Kimber and Nordost, QED offers a substantial range of cables for all applications. Unlike those brands, however, here you never know what you're going to get next. Qnect 45 is a striking looking cable, thick but not hopelessly inflexible, and fitted with QED's very high quality phono plugs. This is a four-core pseudo-balanced cable, with opposite conductors paired for good hum rejection and a screen connected at one end. Unfortunately, one cable had the screen connected at both ends by mistake. It doesn't usually seem to make a vast sonic difference, but is evidence of sloppy QC, uncharacteristic of QED. The conductors are silver-plated OFC, insulation is polythene (plus a filler

which, as so often, degrades the good qualities of the polythene), and the screen is a solid affair of aluminised mylar tape plus silver-plated copper – real belt-and-braces stuff.

This cable definitely favours the bass – not that this is in any way excessive, rather that it's the most confidently handled part of the spectrum. There's depth, weight and detail which makes for a good strong bass and rhythm section. Further up the frequency range, however, things can become a little coloured and dirty tonally, with an associated loss of image focus and less 'hear-through' quality. There's some straining at climaxes, and sounds like triangle are not as pure as they might be. All the basic ingredients



are present and mostly correct, and measured results were largely good; this just warrants Recommendation.

QED Audio Products
☎ (01276) 451166
Reviewed in HFC 188

STRAIGHT WIRE Sonata £80.00/1m pair

Straight Wire likes to put a little technobabble on its packaging, but basically seems to be one of the more 'no nonsense' brands. There's certainly nothing unduly exotic about Sonata cable. It's a coaxial design, with a fairly thick (low resistance) central conductor of high purity copper, Teflon insulation, a braided screen and a flexible PVC sheath. The fitted phono plugs are also standard but good quality, and are well fitted with a tight cable clamp.

The sound of Sonata seems dominated by a slightly bottom-heavy character. There's certainly always plenty of bass there, and as long as not too much else is happening at the time it's pretty detailed too, but it can get a bit muddled when the rest

of the band strikes up. Pizzicato double bass is resonant and reasonably easy to pitch, but sometimes a bit diffuse in time and space – falling short in attack and imaging. Solo male voice also tends to be a little coloured, while female voice is probably more neutral, but even higher tones such as small percussion instruments can be subdued behind voices and other midrange sounds. But apart from that, detail is on the whole good, and imaging, while perhaps lacking ultimate depth, is still pleasingly specific. High capacitance mitigates against use with passive preamps, but basic sound quality is good enough for Recommendation. CSE ☎ (01423) 359054
Reviewed in HFC 188



SUPRA EFF-ISL £79.95/1m pair

The Supra catalogue's technobabble is only slightly more accurate than usual, but the cable itself is immaculately assembled. It consists of a pair of tubular conductors (stranded around a non-conducting core) made of silver plated copper and insulated with polythene. An aluminium foil screen is wrapped around each conductor, and the whole lot embedded in PVC. The conductors are connected in pseudo-balanced mode with the screens connected at one end, and the plugs are exceptionally rugged types with collet cable clamping and a locking clamp to ensure a tight fit – so use with care on cheap sockets.

This unusually capable cable easily topped its test group. At the start

of listening this cable was the most assured, with effortless low frequency extension but no lack of detail – possibly just the slightest hint of plumminess, but it's hard to be sure. As other instruments joined in, the sound never lost its focus and control, and the bass was soon perfectly complemented by sweetness and detail in the treble. Quite simply, if there are drawbacks to this cable, it's hard to find them. Detail across the board is first class and never at the expense of tonality or dynamics. Imaging is stable and precise at any level, and the sound just has a 'rightness' that makes for relaxed long-term listening. An obvious Best Buy. Glave ☎ (01622) 664070
Reviewed in HFC 188

VAN DEN HUL PB5 £49.99/0.8m pair

This interconnect is one of van den Hul's series using hybrid conductors – a mixture of metal and carbon fibre which is claimed to avoid the crossover distortion that plagues metal conductors. I'm not aware that anyone has proved the existence of such a phenomenon, but it's hard to see how the addition of carbon fibres can do any harm. The cable is a coaxial type, very flexible and supplied with collet-type phono plugs, well fitted with proper screen termination and careful avoidance of short circuits. The sample supplied was 0.8m long.

With so many variables between one cable and another, it's impossible to determine how much of this cable's performance is due to its unusual conductors, but it certainly sounds the business.

To be ultra-picky, it didn't quite bring out the last bit of vocal resonance in one particularly tricky operatic solo, and perhaps at times it fell a semitone or two short of ultimate bass extension compared with the best available, but at the relatively modest price that's hardly criticism.

Tonal balance is always neutral, from the bass right up to the sweet and detailed treble, and at any dynamic level the sound remains controlled and full-bodied while retaining its natural decay. Rhythmic music is hard-driven without being tiring, and orchestral climaxes are effortless, the sound never tending to shout or become rough.

At this price the PB5 is an obvious Best Buy. van den Hul ☎ (0181) 997 4280
Reviewed in HFC 188



SPEAKER CABLE

KIMBER 4PR £65.00/5m pair

Kimber's 4PR uses cheaper (although still high quality) dielectric, and the strands within each of the eight conductors are the same, unlike the 'varistrand' construction of others. Kimber's familiar braiding is a well-established technique which provides excellent interference rejection and good handling properties. It also gives a good balance of electrical parameters, with lower-than-average inductance, and capacitance well within the stability limits of all but the most fussy amps (the ones sold with warnings to use only the manufacturer's own cables, basically). Good-quality nickel-plated plugs were fitted to our sample.

Considering it's one of the cheapest cables in its test group, 4PR more than held its own. All the usual cable trouble spots – imaging, bass extension and detail, treble 'air' – are

handled confidently. Flawlessly, perhaps not (Kimber probably does have a point, after all, in offering more expensive versions), but what flaws there are do little to interfere with musical enjoyment. Only in the most critical tests did this cable show any limitation in the bass, although ultimately such tricky sounds as some busy orchestral double basses can just about catch it out. The jazz double bass (plucked) test, however, it passed with flying colours: excellent body and pitch. Choral voices just occasionally sound slightly dry, and imaging lacks the last degree of depth, but apart from that it's really a very rosy picture all round. Climaxes are always dynamic and clean, with minimal compression of image size. A clear Best Buy.

Russ Andrews Accessories
☎ (01539) 823247
Reviewed HFC 192



IXOS Gamma Series 6006 £5.00/m

I still haven't entirely managed to work out what Ixos' 'Gamma Geometry' is supposed to achieve, and the promotional literature doesn't make it much clearer. Essentially, two perfectly conventional copper conductors, insulated in hard, high quality dielectric, are braided with a 'dummy' core of solid dielectric in such a way as to approximate a figure-8 cable in which the spacing of conductors is slightly variable and the twist is given rapid clockwise/anti-clockwise alternations. While I can't see any advantages over twisted pair to justify the extra bulk, inflexibility and, presumably, cost, it handles quite well and looks neat. The fitted banana plugs, although giving good contact in sockets, were not terribly securely clamped.

Sound is inconsistent – at best, good. Bass seems to be a strong

point: it has well-defined pitch and good extension, but once or twice in recordings with subtle bass, it seemed a little woolly and indistinct. Less assured is the treble, which has the unfortunate (but not uncommon) combination of a recessed quality in the lower regions and some slight spit in the sibilance region, which can make female voices – particularly en masse – hard on the ear.

Probably for the same reasons, piano sounds a little processed and artificial, at least in the upper octaves. Imaging depth is pretty good and lateral imaging is good going on very good. Overall, this cable is a perfectly reasonable compromise in the context of its price and can safely be Recommended.

Path Group ☎ (01494) 441736
Reviewed in HFC 192



CHORD COMPANY Odyssey £17.00/m

Nothing particularly bizarre going on here – nor does the manufacturer claim there is. This cable in fact is one you could make at home if you really fancy buying conductors in bulk: two cores of industry-standard, silver-plated, Teflon-insulated, stranded conductor are twisted together in a classic construction. The twisting makes no difference to basic electrical parameters, but does reduce susceptibility to radiated interference and also makes a cable slightly easier to handle.

Plugs fitted were the usual bananas, soldered and insulated with heat-shrink rather than the usual plastic body, heat-shrink being, if anything, both slicker and more robust than the latter.

Neatly demonstrating that 'plain vanilla' cable construction is perfectly viable, this turned in one of the best performances in the group test. Particularly commendable is the

Odyssey's imaging, which stands out from the crowd – literally, if the recording is good in that regard. Lateral placing of instruments is very good and depth is very believable, if ultimately still a little behind the best (and more expensive) cables around. Detail in the midrange and treble is good, and human voice comes over well too. Decay on percussive sounds is realistic, and climaxes are full-bodied, although with just a little added grain at times. Bass, strangely, is rather unpredictably dependent on programme, sometimes seeming almost over-full and sometimes (particularly in dense textures) a trifle shy. Overall, and taking into account the highish price, this cable still turns in a performance worthy of Recommendation.

The Chord Company
☎ (01722) 331674
Reviewed in HFC 192



QED Qudos Silver £5.00/m

QED79 was the classic budget speaker cable, going back pretty much to the days when cable was cable. It was only ever a substantially beefed-up variant on bellwire, but was hugely successful and much copied, the same basic formula continuing in today's various Qudos models. This Silver is, in a sense, the ultimate QED79, with silver-plated conductors and high quality polythene dielectric. It's still a basic figure-8 construction, with a fair amount of conductor efficiently packed into a relatively small cross-section. The banana plugs fitted were QED's own 'Ailoc' types, pressure crimped rather than soldered, but of standard single-spring contact design – OK until the spring weakens.

This is still a budget cable by most reckoning, and on that basis it does

what a good budget product should do: everything passably, and most of it well. No colorations leap out at the listener, no strange imaging effects intrude – it's all very well behaved. There's just a trace of a fairly common bass oddity, whereby bass on its own is slightly emphasised while bass in a complex musical texture is if anything light, but any such deviations really are small and not bothersome. Detail in

the midrange is good, while treble has just the merest suggestion of restriction. Imaging is very slightly compressed front to back, and dynamics are natural and unforced. Springing no surprises in the lab, just demonstrating classic middle-of-the-road behaviour, Silver delivers a more than creditable performance all round, and is a Best Buy for sure.

QED Audio Products
☎ (01276) 451166
Reviewed in HFC 192



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I Prefer Smaller Knobs

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CARTRIDGES

DYNAVECTOR DV-20X £299.00

Japanese company Dynavector has long been among the most admired of cartridge makers. Here we have a neatly built moving coil cartridge put together to the maker's usual high standard and featuring an aluminium body and cantilever.

Inside this body lies Dynavector's flux-damping coil, there to soak up excess flux that can be detrimental to sound, and its 'unique' use of iron to focus the magnetic field.

SOUND QUALITY

A lithe, airy character is apparent the moment its stylus hits the groove, blessed with agile bass and impressive HF

detail. Tone is a touch bright, but its conveyance of ambient detail and overall transparency are fine.

It seems at its best with light acoustic music, its nimble footing and fine resolution making for vivid listening. But vocal projection is a touch weak, and more rhythmic material can sound a little dry.



This model earns a cautious Recommendation, depending on the nature of your record collection – if it's predominantly rock or dance, other cartridges might suit better.

Pear Audio
☎ (01665) 830862
Reviewed in HFC 192

RESON Reca £250.00

The Reca is the only moving magnet cartridge in this group – most fall below this kind of price level – but it's actually something of a stonker. If its form looks familiar there's a logical reason: it's based on Goldring's evergreen 1012, and therefore joins a prestigious line which includes the likes of Roksan's Corus Black.

Construction is simple but effective. A light, rigid polyester-based material called 'pocan' is used for its one-piece body casing, coupled with the well regarded Gyger S diamond-tipped stylus.

The Reca comes at a £130 premium over the standard 1032 model, apparently owing to higher tolerance parts and strict diamond quality control, but value is increased by a £65 price cut if you trade in an old cartridge.



SOUND QUALITY

Anyone who thinks that moving magnet designs are necessarily inferior to moving coils should have a listen to the Reca – it's good enough to give plenty of MC models in the £200-£400 bracket a run for their money. It's a spirited performer that puts heart and soul into music, underpinned by solid bass and an enjoyably rhythmic character – and without edginess.

Resolution is good, but it's not the most transparent cartridge for the money, and soundstage depth front-to-back is a little constrained. But, with a rhythmic groove resting beneath its stylus tip, its controlled expression makes such subtle omissions easy to ignore.

Virtual Reality Audio Systems
☎ (01277) 227355
Reviewed in HFC 192

LYRA Lydian Beta £599.99

This is the entry-level model from Lyra, a Tokyo-based specialist. As an 'open' design it demands great care when handling, but this is an extremely well crafted cartridge fashioned from high quality materials. The upper body is machined from a block of aircraft-grade aluminium alloy and boron is used for the cantilever. Output is medium, and a mirror-faced template is included.

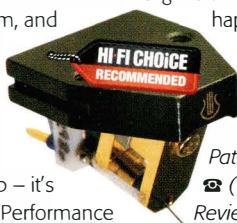
SOUND QUALITY

This is the most costly cartridge in its test group – it's also the best sounding. Performance

is crisp, clean and dynamic, full of engaging punch and snap, yet it remains smooth and coherent.

Levels of energy and detail are good and soundstage depth is superb, bringing an absorbing sense of perspective to orchestral pieces.

Any criticisms? Very few, save for a slight slowing in the bass and perhaps a little lack of 'air'. But its sound is so satisfyingly musical, so energetic yet so poised that its price is undoubtedly justified.



Path Premier
☎ (01494) 441736
Reviewed in HFC 192

SUMIKO Blue Point Special £249.95

Its name sounds like a cigarette, but it's actually an open-bodied, high output moving coil cartridge, top-of-the-range in Sumiko's Oyster

Series. Its skeletal construction makes it the most physically vulnerable of this group, although the overall structure is sound – complete with aluminium cantilever – and electrical engineering is impressive throughout.

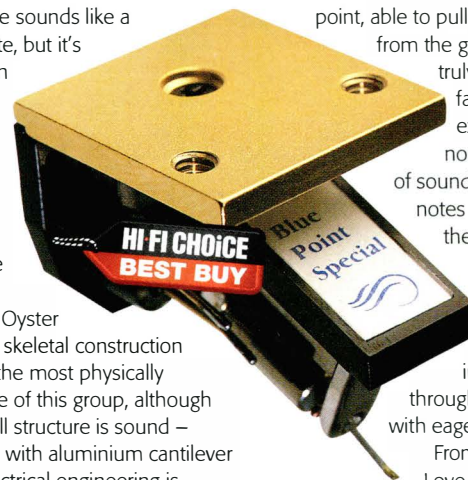
The Special is an upgrade from the standard £119.95 Blue Point, incorporating an uprated generator exposed behind the stylus. A brush is included for cleaning, but there's no stylus guard – Sumiko claims removing and reinstalling it makes damage more likely. Fair point, given the cartridge's delicate disposition.

SOUND QUALITY

This is one of the most enjoyable cartridges I've tried below £300: pacy and dynamic, crisp and to the

point, able to pull musical life from the grooves in truly toe-tapping fashion. It exudes a no-nonsense kind of sound, playing the notes and hitting the rhythms without adding any unnecessary dressing, soaring through the tracks with eager aplomb.

From House of Love to Sibelius, it proved an engaging performer on test. Bass has pleasing authority and drive, and it passes the percussive test with ease – snapping snares and solid kick drums are an instant hit. At times it's a touch rough around the edges, and one or two competitors offer better front-to-back perspectives and some buyers may prefer a richer balance. But from where I'm sitting, this Sumiko's direct musical statement makes it a Best Buy at the price.
Path Premier ☎ (01494) 441736
Reviewed in HFC 192



ORTOFON MC 10 Supreme £300.00

Ortofon is a giant of cartridge manufacture with one simple aim for the future – to be the last company in the market when all the others are swamped by the digital revolution. At this rate, its chances are good: cartridges like the MC 10 Supreme keep it in the driving seat.

The basic moving coil MC 10 design has been around for more than 20 years, and the Supreme is its pinnacle thus far. Substantial body and cantilever are fashioned from aluminium, and internal features include a rubber suspension system and a static-reducing carbon fibre plate attached to the armature.

SOUND QUALITY

This is a smooth yet detailed sounding cartridge with an expressive mid-range, able to separate instruments cleanly and project vocals with aplomb. Performance is full-bodied and musical – a touch colourful, but still an enjoyably cultured listen.

Treble is a touch wispy and bass slightly muted, and there's less snap and air to its sound than that offered by the likes of the Dynavector. But it's a more consistent performer and less musically fussy, well suited a range of turntables. A fine all-rounder, then.
Henley Designs
☎ (01491) 834700
Reviewed in HFC 192



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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)

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(August '98)

Cable Talk Studio 2
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Quoting **HFC BB/99**

CD PLAYERS

ARCAM Alpha 7SE £349.90

Arcam's Alpha 7, topped the sales charts for a full three years. Now comes its replacement, the Alpha 7SE, with a new motherboard, a new and more modern DAC – the 24-bit – and a new, better remote control. It features the old, familiar curvy mid-grey fascia with a bright green, dimmable display. Connection possibilities now include an optical digital input. The 7SE can also be

upgraded to any of the more costly models in the range.

Demonstrating an easy superiority over its predecessor, the Alpha 7SE turned in very good listening test results. This is not perhaps the most seductive player around, but it has strong clarity and communication abilities.

Overall, the

Arcam impressed with its light touch, clarity and open midband and treble. However, the bass tended to lack impact, and this contributed to a loss of soundstage depth and sonority. Remaining criticisms were sporadic, and mainly concerned a feeling that instruments were not always fully separated alongside comments about colorations – a grubby violin in one example – and a suggestion of blandness.

Such criticisms should be weighed against the price, which leaves no doubt that this is an excellent value player and, moreover, one that can be easily and economically upgraded, making Best Buy status obligatory. It may not suit all systems well – thin, bright ones might be rubbed up the wrong way – but the inherent resolution and control wins through.

A&R Cambridge

☎ (01223) 203203

Reviewed in

HFC 195



ARCAM Alpha 9 £799.90

Top model in Arcam's very popular CD player line-up, the £800 Alpha 9 looks and operates in much the same way as its cheaper stablemates, all of which can be upgraded to A9 spec and performance. It's a busy-looking machine, duplicating most features on both player and handset, although build and finish reflect its common heritage with budget players. The key to its elevated status, however, lies inside, in the use of a dCS 'Ring DAC', an

analogue-to-digital processor claimed to combine the strengths of single-bit and multi-bit technologies.

The Alpha 9 did not immediately impress the listening panel, partly because it made a poor match with the speakers used for the formal sessions. Nevertheless, it attracted praise for its ability to resolve an acoustic space, and for sounding: "alive – fast and rhythmic, with good vocal separation

from the instruments," while receiving some criticism of: "a constrained, mono-ish quality" and "a prominent upper bass".

However, it revealed its true qualities as a smooth, well integrated and refined player over a much longer period of hands-on use across a wide range of systems. Despite just

a hint of weakness in the lowest octave, this is a first rate player that can deliver more detail and structure from your discs than you might have realised was there – highly Recommended.

A&R Cambridge

☎ (01223) 203203

Reviewed in HFC 188



CYRUS dAD1.5 £400.00

The dAD1.5 is an update on the earlier and sonically rather disappointing dAD1. Its core is a Philips CDM12.1 mechanism, and it has multiple regulated power supply rails for different functions. Changes made for the 1.5 include a change in the oversampling rate in the digital filter, and some retuning of the post DAC analogue low pass filter. The results, says the company, are enhanced timing and detail levels.

Otherwise, all is as before. Built into a standard Cyrus half-width (215mm) box, made from alloy with an ABS moulded base, the player features a simple backlit display and a remote control which offers no more

than basic navigation and play controls, although a more sophisticated controller is also available.

The panel made criticisms that mirrored those made of the dAD1, but they tended to be milder in tone, and this time around there were no complaints that the player was hard to listen to for extended periods.

This is still no dAD3, but it does seem to be a usefully improved player which has a generally more natural and transparent sound, although one panellist complained of a 'steely' coloration or glare in the midband, noting that he found himself listening more to the detail than to the music. Recorded percussion, especially cymbals, was criticised for adding a certain glare to the music, and this player certainly sounds drier than most, the lean and tuneful bass helping propel the music along at a good clip.

All the evidence lends itself to the conclusion that this model has been weaned away from its previously rather synthetic quality.

Cyrus ☎ (01480) 451777

Reviewed in HFC 191



DENON DCD-435 £129.99

Replacing the DCD-425 and partner to the PMA-250SE amplifier and TU-215 tuner, the £130 DCD-435 is Denon's new entry-level player. It's physically lightweight, with a simple plastic fascia, but the mechanism is smooth and quiet, and the display can be dimmed or switched off, with some benefit to sound quality. The digital clockwork includes a Burr Brown 1716 Delta Sigma DAC,

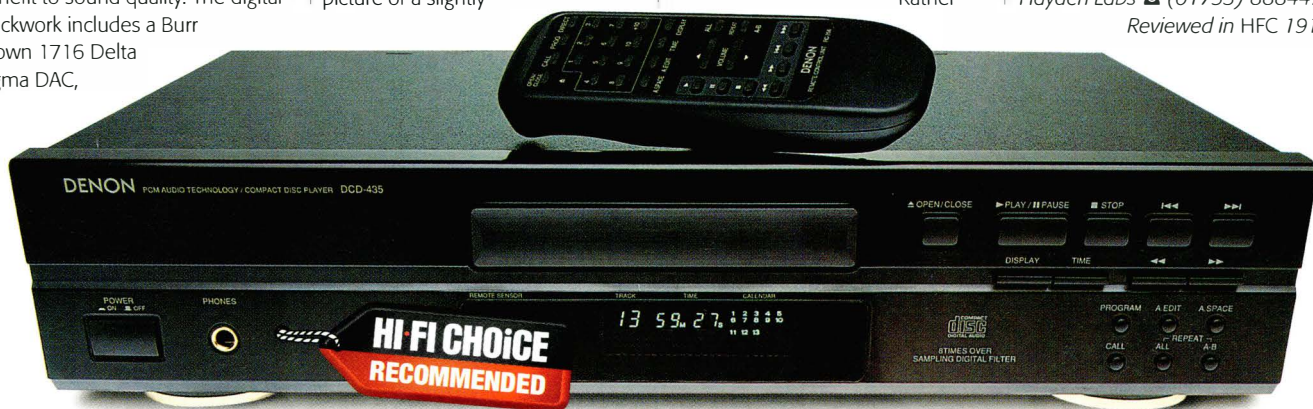
with noise-shaping and 8x oversampling filters. Features include random track access and an output volume control, both on the remote control only, the latter varying the output of the player main output and the headphone socket, which is not such a clever idea.

The hands-on testing painted a picture of a slightly

ill-disciplined but fundamentally quick-witted and likeable player. Commenting on the Weber clarinet quintet, one panel member felt that imagery was well defined, but the stringed instruments lacked naturalness, while another wrote that the clarinet was edgy. Common criticisms were of a slightly congested treble, and a lack of really deep bass, although the midband was sound and the player bounced along nicely. Rather

shallow in tone, with modest levels of detail and constrained dynamics, tonally and spatially the Denon was up to par, and notably consistent from system to system. It's easy to pick holes in this player, but the price is extremely keen and the trade-offs are well judged. As one of the panellists put it: "If this is a cheap CD player, it's astonishing compared with what was possible only a few years ago."

Hayden Labs ☎ (01753) 888447
Reviewed in HFC 191



HARMAN/KARDON HD740 £299.99

If the HD740 looks familiar, that's because it follows the pattern set by previous ranges, which are best characterised as solid, straightforward and honestly specified. Visually and operationally, it's typical harman/kardon, with its characteristically unfussy front panel layout and widely spaced controls.

The technology includes two 20-bit Burr-Brown 1702 D/A converters with 8x oversampling filters feeding a discrete analogue output stage. The HD740 also has a display dim/off switch and can perform the usual intro scan and repeat play modes. Headphones can be

connected, and the volume controlled, but the main analogue output is at fixed level. The handset is chunky and solid, but perhaps not the most helpfully organised.

This player was liked by the panel for its innate transparency, and an ability to play music without getting in the way. It was consistently described as 'neutral' and of having a balance that "felt right" and that "didn't draw

attention to itself". There was mild but consistent criticism of the frequency extremes, the bass being described as "slightly overblown", and the treble of being "hard", and the player as a whole of "struggling when (the music became) complicated". But these isolated remarks should be set against others praising

its "delicate, light and airy presentation" and "good string separation and its natural acoustic". This is a solid and honestly specified player, and it makes music which is focused, articulate and alive, with a near ideal blend of dynamic integrity and subtlety.

Gamepath ☎ (01908) 317707
Reviewed in HFC 191



MARANTZ CD-7 £3,499.90

The CD-7 is a flagship player bristling with serious technology as well as champagne good-looks. Build quality is exemplary, fortified by a copper-plated diecast chassis, and it uses a Philips CDM12 'Industrial' mechanism. Marantz has developed its

own digital filtering technology for the CD-7, the 'Linear Music Filter' (LMF) having three settings that provide a degree of sonic tailoring. Elsewhere, IC op-amps are eschewed in favour of discrete

components, while analogue, digital, control and power supply blocks are independently fed by a stabilised power supply. Input/output options include balanced and unbalanced analogue outputs, one optical and two coaxial digital outputs, and a set of three digital inputs.

Here is a Marantz of undoubted stature; the CD-7 is a disc-spinning *tour de force*

that lives up to its prestigious flagship status. Its sound is all about control, precision and resolution, particularly at the frequency extremes. Bass is determined and weighty, yet without an ounce of flab, and the pristine clarity of high frequency detail is every bit as impressive. It's incisive, detailed and confidently dynamic, a sound that says 'class' from the moment the music starts.

I have to admit that on occasions it seemed a touch cold and hard, notably with poorer recordings, and I missed some of the seductive qualities that other players can conjure. However, its sense of drama is impeccable, and if it sometimes sounds flat or ruthless, blame the recording, not the player.

Marantz (UK) ☎ (01753) 680868
Reviewed in HFC 194





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MUSICAL FIDELITY

CD PLAYERS



MUSICAL FIDELITY E624 £500.00

Sharing much of the componentry and technology of the £800 X-RAY CD player (HFC 184) and £300 X-24K DAC (HFC 187), specifically the 24-bit Burr-Brown digital-to-analogue conversion, this E624 is

much more conventionally attired than those X-series models – and rather less expensive to boot. It has a thick black gloss finish facia, cosmetically matching the E-series amps, and is equipped with a rapid-acting

Sony drive mechanism. A five-pole filter gives a clean ultrasonic spectrum, and the low output impedance will suit any amplifier.

The panel wasn't particularly enthusiastic about the E624, but that reaction seems to have had more to do with the speakers which were being used for the panel tests, than the player itself. In hands-on testing with other systems, the E264 had the happy knack of sounding

consistently neutral, transparent and lively, with near ideal imagery in the lateral and depth planes. It is also a player that wears well in extended listening, with a particularly refreshing tonality and quality of air and spaciousness. The only fault, if it can be called that, is what might be described as a slight lack of drama. The panel's reservations should not be dismissed, and the player should certainly be auditioned in your particular system, but I found the E624 blithely indifferent to the loading presented by different amplifiers, and its particular sonic balance and musical integrity should suit most quality systems.

Musical Fidelity

☎ (0181) 900 2999

Reviewed in HFC 188

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-24K DAC £299.00

Although demand for add-on digital to analogue converters has rather fallen away over the past decade, the arrival of 24-bit, 96kHz-compatible audio discs on DVD-Video is providing a new lease of life. Some 11 years ago Musical Fidelity, with the Digilog, was one of the first companies to place a digital processor in a separate box as an upgrade. While there's no MF DVD player as yet, this 24/96 convertor puts the company back at the cutting edge of digital technology.



The £300 X-24K feels solid and well finished, using MF's familiar extruded casework with its alloy front panel. There's no basic power-on LED, but a string of others identify 32kHz, 44.1kHz, 48kHz, 88.2kHz and 96kHz sampling rates.

There two digital inputs and the DAC can switch between the two on the front panel.

Used as a regular 16-bit DAC with a decent but ageing Meridian player, the DAC offers more of an alternative to the on-board sound than any direct improvement. Used with a lesser, older Marantz CD

player, it enhanced the sound in audio terms, but wasn't actually any better from an outright musical stance. There was a discernible improvement in the imagery and detail retrieval, and some extra warmth, but the actual tempo and metre of the music remained unchanged. The biggest benefit is found when playing 16-bit CDs on a DVD player, where the improvement over the on-board sound system is noticeable and more than justifies the cost of the DAC.

Musical Fidelity

☎ (0181) 900 2999

Reviewed in HFC 187

NAD 524 £249.95

Developed from the 522 (tested, not altogether favourably, in HFC 179), the slightly more expensive 524 is said to perform comparably with the next level of players. It has relatively few baubles, a fairly simple grey finish, and an attractive back-lit LCD display. It uses the 24-bit (word length, not resolution) Burr-Brown DAC, in this case with a four pole filter. Power supply arrangements have received

particular attention, polypropylene capacitors are specified for critical areas, and there's only one capacitor in the signal path. There's no headphone provision, and all the usual operating controls are available on the front panel, supplemented by a numeric keypad on the chunky trapezoidal remote control.

This player's

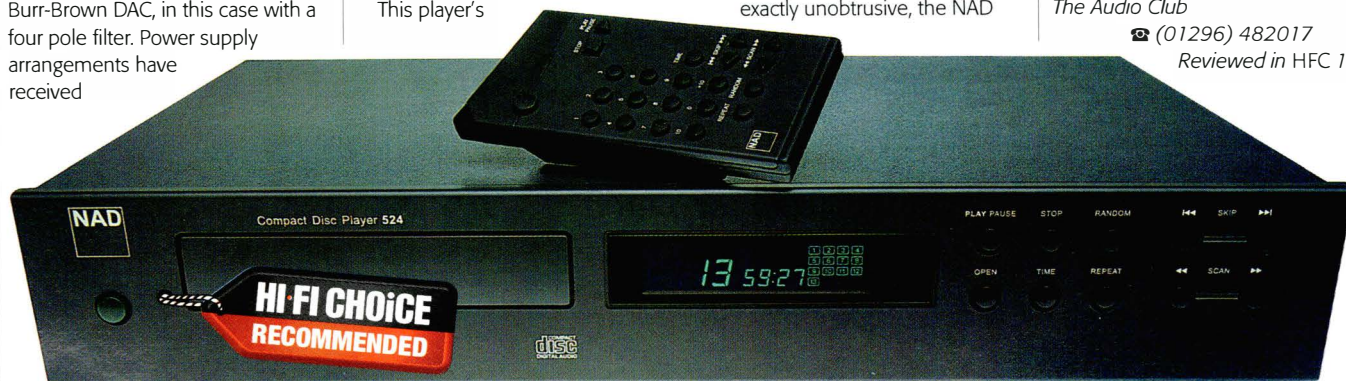
performance was a little underwhelming, although far from being actively disliked, it had its fans on the panel. "I was not inspired, but not put off [by this player]. It does most things well, but nothing spectacularly well," was one fairly typical comment. Although not the most enticing or the smoothest sounding player in the test, it was consistently clear and detailed and provided easy access to the music. While not exactly unobtrusive, the NAD

was fairly transparent on balance and imagery was handled well, with a clear impression of depth information. The bass lacked power though, which perhaps accounted for a rather constrained image scale. A good player, the 524 goes about its business with a quiet confidence, and if it doesn't cover all the bases, and it is a little expensive, its fundamentally musical stance makes an attractive buy.

The Audio Club

☎ (01296) 482017

Reviewed in HFC 191



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Absolute Sounds also offers amplification and Compact Disc replay products from **Jadis**, **Krell**, **Audio Research** and **Copland**.



The **Theta Voyager** (left) is a Universal DVD/CD/LD transport that will play any digital disc out there. It's performance has been described as: "a definitive lesson in what separates a true high-end product from the mainstream". **Casablanca** is the most exciting home entertainment component ever. Modular design lets it be anything you want — an audiophile analogue preamp, a high performance digital preamp, a home cinema processor, a high fidelity video switcher or surround sound processor with up to nine sound channels.



Vidikron offers the ultimate performance from projection television. Inside the elegant Pininfarina designed bodywork is a video projector comprising advanced digital circuitry, high definition optics and precision construction that transcends current video standards to deliver a performance that rivals traditional film quality. **Dwin Electronics** line doublers and the fabulous Dwin data grade CRT projection system are also available.



Krell already leads in solid-state power amplifier designs. It's HTS (Home Theater Standard) full-AV system component with Dolby-Digital, Pro Logic, DTS and dual zone capability — is the perfect way for Krell music system owners to add home theatre. Krell KAV 500 multi-channel power amplifiers are especially suited to home theatre system design.

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CD PLAYERS

NAD Silverline S500 £1,100.00

The S500 is a very pretty player with its matt silver finish and side panel fluting. Socketry includes the usual analogue and electrical digital outputs, fully buffered and fed via a transformer, along with a set of balanced alternatives. The digital converter is a 24-bit Crystal, coupled to an unusually elaborate five-pole analogue filter, and a

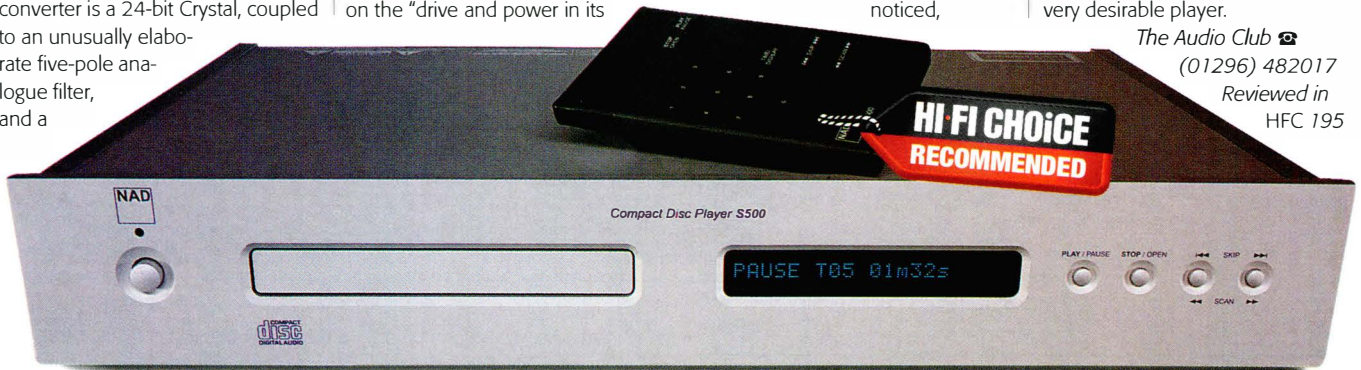
discrete low output impedance Class A output amplifier. The converter is a modular, upgradable design.

The NAD emerged from our tests with a clean set of results and a raft of enthusiastic comments, from a panel which variously remarked on the "drive and power in its

presentation compared to what has gone before... good authority and dynamics, detail and imaging... breathy detail, excellent resolution", and more in a similar vein. The player was summed up by one listener as "very inviting and musical". The overall balance is on the warm, effusive side, and some losses of extreme treble were occasionally noticed,

although fine detailing was a notable strength. My own tests gave consistent and consistently likeable results in several systems, where the player's natural warmth and grace was never cloying or musically damping, though the player lacks the easy informativeness of some rivals. The lack of frivolous extras and excellent aesthetics make this a very desirable player.

The Audio Club
(01296) 482017
Reviewed in
HFC 195



NAIM CD3.5 £1,080.00

Successor to the CD3, which we described as "arguably the most willfully idiosyncratic single box CD player in current production", the £1,080 CD3.5 retains its oddball status but is almost all new inside. The player mechanism is hinged at one end and is swung out manually to change discs, which are held by a manually applied magnetic puck – unusual, but very satisfactory in practice. Key components are from Philips, but operate

under Naim's software code and clock. It's an unusually slim player, to match Naim's less expensive

measurements. Audio output is via a DIN socket, in the Naim tradition.

The CD3.5 received consistently strong average scores in the panel tests, though the accompanying comments were a little more equivocal.

matching lack of bass weight, though actual bass quality was universally praised. The result is a player which leaves few musical niches unexplored. However, there is an edgy and slightly crude quality which doesn't do full justice to well recorded acoustic material, even though it seems, paradoxically, to reinforce the rhythmic strengths of rock music.



amplifiers, and can be upgraded by the addition of external power supplies, which further improve already good jitter

The panel liked its lack of obvious flaws, its pacey timing and good control, though there were repeated comments about what was perceived as a forward balance and a

Although this player is a little short of finesse, the traditional strengths of the marque, including clarity, timing and control, remain unaltered. Naim Audio (01722) 332266
Reviewed in HFC 188

NAIM CDS II/XPS £5,965.00

Naim's top CD player, the CDS II, looks and behaves very much like its predecessor, although all the key internals have been changed. There are two boxes here: a complete player, top-loading with manual magnetic puck, and a massive outboard multiple power supply, the two connected by a very stiff multi-way cable. The player unit incorporates extensive mechanical decoupling, while elsewhere it follows in the Naim tradition, favouring simplicity over features, and incorporating just a single DIN socket to supply audio output.

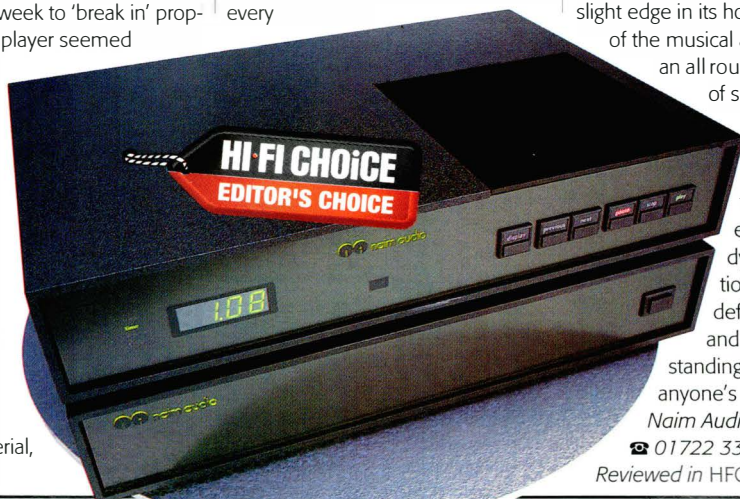
Having regularly used the original CDS for some years, I greeted the arrival of the MkII with great anticipation. It didn't disappoint. First

impressions were positive, even disregarding the advice that the player would take a week to 'break in' properly. The new player seemed quite clearly superior to its predecessor in every obvious respect. It showed exceptional dynamic range, fine neutrality and overall even-handedness across a wide range of material, one visitor

commenting: "It doesn't sound like a Naim CD player – you could use this in any system!" The CDS II actually sounds quite distinct from its predecessor, and superior in nearly every

respect. It's much cleaner, tidier, sweeter and more delicate, with superior fine detail and dynamic range resolution, though sometimes the older model showed a very slight edge in its holistic expression of the musical argument. But as an all round player capable of slotting into any high end system, with the good manners to match its exceptional dynamic resolution, CDS II holds a definite advantage, and is a truly outstanding CD player by anyone's standards.

Naim Audio
(01722) 332266
Reviewed in HFC 188



CD PLAYERS

ROTEL RCD-991 750.00

Rotel's 'flagship' RCD-991 looks and feels solid and businesslike. While not exactly pretty, it's in no sense unfriendly. The front panel is typical Rotel, but taller, barer, and with a handful of basic controls (open, play, pause, stop, and skip) the remote control adding the usual extras (but not display dim). Its most unusual feature is seven-way switchable dither, which is an option in the Pacific Microsonics PMD-100 8x digital filter, which also provides HDCD compatibility. Connections can be made in single-ended (phono) and balanced (XLR) form, and from electrical and optical digital outputs.

The adjustable dither levels do change the sound, but our tests indicate that the best approach is to find the setting that best suits you and your system, and stick with it.

This is a good to excellent player, although I wouldn't rate it in the high-end class – and neither did the panel. "It plays with enthusiasm, if not the last word in resolution," wrote one, while another wrote of its "good dynamics and image... [and] spaciousness with good tonal accuracy and resolution".

"It's all very solid and musical," he wrote. "Everything is in its place." A third panellist concluded that it was a "classy player, sophisticated, well balanced... melodious and tuneful".

Just occasionally there were some complaints that the player sounded loud and fatiguing, and of a slight loss of presence, although certainly

not output, in the deep bass. Here's a player that offers near-battleship build, is extremely well endowed and has been voiced superbly, with a performance that wouldn't disgrace some well liked players at twice the price.

Gamepath ☎ (01908) 317707
Reviewed in HFC 195



SONY CDP-XB930E £299.00

The CDP-XB930E is the latest in a long line of players modified for the UK market. Besides a name that's threatening to become unmanageable, it has a number of features designed to limit microphony, including a rigid, reinforced and damped chassis and a slanted circuit board. On the electrical side, the S-TACT complementary D/A converter has

a novel clock topology designed to remove jitter. Operating features include a five-way digital filter option.

The various filter options were tried, and the basic filter was simply more consistent. The similarity between this player and previous Sonys is fairly obvious, and the new

model has the same lean, keen presentation and open midband. "The timing appears better than average, making all tracks enjoyable to listen to," wrote one panellist, while another heaped special praise on the piano track. The only dissenting voice felt the mid and upper midband balance could sound a little too forward. This can make the Sony strong medicine with some

systems, making some titles sound a bit too fierce, but this is a marginal problem, and the Sony's open mid, explicit imagery and dynamic integrity make it among the strongest performers in the test. The latest in a run of well priced, well engineered Sony models with consistently excellent sound quality, the CDP-XB930E delivers a strong, spirited performance with vivid tonality and dynamics.

Sony ☎ (0990) 111999
Reviewed in HFC
195



SONY SCD1 £2,500.00

The first example of the eagerly anticipated 'super' digital audio format players to come our way, a Japanese sample of Sony's SCD1 was scrutinised in some detail in Paul Miller's *Oasis* columns for issues 193 and 194, following assurances that 230V UK examples would be effectively identical (after the mains supply). SACD (Super Audio CD) is Sony/Philips' new high definition, wide bandwidth format which is CD-compatible. The plan is to issue dual-layer discs, one layer

(readable by any conventional CD player) containing a normal (44.1 kHz) CD soundtrack, the second carrying the high speed/bitstream DSD format signal which SACD players read.

The SCD-1 is a large and handsome top-loading machine with retractable cover, using a version of Sony's 'Fixed Pickup' mechanism, with two separate optical pickups for the two disc layers. Using conventional CDs the sound was

very neutral but not as entertaining as possible, lacking some musical colour and spontaneity. Using a number of hybrid CD/SACD test discs, the superiority of the Super format over its predecessor was immediately and unambiguously evident in extra musical realism and information, and a freedom from

stress or strain – all very un-digital, in fact. As one very enthusiastic listener put it: "This is what I've been waiting for: digital audio that you can turn up loud; that doesn't hurt and sounds genuinely realistic."

This test has at least confirmed the potential sound quality benefits of SACD over the regular CD format, but questions remain over whether a worthwhile software base will be established to support the format, especially while the rival DVD-Audio format is trying to perform the same trick.

Sony UK ☎ (0990) 111999
Reviewed in HFC 193/194





TAG MCLAREN AUDIO CD20R £1,249.95

Based originally on an Audiolab player which already existed when TAG took the company over, the £1,250 CD20R is effectively an all new machine – at an all new price point – having been comprehensively redesigned inside and out. It has new PC boards and layouts,

and higher quality components where these were deemed beneficial in panel tests. External finish is to a very high standard, although the result is a shade anonymous, but the backlit LCD display panel is first rate. Technology highlights include a Philips CDM12.4

mechanism with discrete master clock, a Crystal DAC and a Burr-Brown output filter/op-amp.

The CD20R has a quite distinctive sonic character. It has a good strong sound with a propulsive but rather lightweight bass, but there's a degree of constraint and a 'dryness' here too. The detail comes through, but in a detached way, with little sense of acoustic from recordings that normally display such qualities in abundance. That said, the player

has a clean, expressive midband with plenty of presence and vitality, and the control

evident at the frequency extremes turned out to be just what the doctor ordered with the panel test loudspeakers. A difficult model to sum up, because there were times when the CD20R seemed to outperform all comers with its presence and vitality, and others when it seemed too dry and constrained, but it clearly does what it sets out to do very well, and is built with the precision of a Swiss army knife.

TAG McLaren Audio
☎ (01480) 415600
Reviewed in HFC 188

TALK ELECTRONICS Thunder 3 £999.95

Talk's Thunder 3 is one step up from the Thunder 2, looks very similar, and has similar features – which means not very many. Differences are mainly limited to the power supply, which here boasts 16 separate low noise regulators.

The output stage is a discrete Class A amplifier, and the converter stage is built around a

Crystal 24-bit DAC. The digital filter is supplemented by an improved version of the Thunder 2's two-pole analogue filter, using better quality components.

The improvement in sound quality over the Thunder 2 was difficult to miss, and hands-on listening revealed a

player that was lean, clean and mean, with a powerful quality and transients that helped piano recordings grow in stature and believability. It also had strong timing cues that gave music a sense of momentum and flow. Dynamic qualities of this kind are subtle, yet extremely telling, and make all the difference. The panel agreed: "The sound is three dimensional, quite bold

and times well," said one, while another noted: "This is the best [player] so far, and the first time [today] that the piano track has made sense." Negative comments were limited to occasional complaints of a loss of stereo focus and of a "muddy" bass quality, although neither observation was widely supported. This is an excellent player: *Talk Electronics*

☎ (01276) 684422

Reviewed in HFC 195



YBA CD1α £3,895.00

The CD1α is top of a three-strong range of high-end YBA CD players, each upgradable from the last via improvements to the power supplies. It's a top-loader, the mechanism accessed through a manually-operated sliding door. The chassis is made from

steel alloy and supported by three small feet – two bare and the other felt-covered for sonic reasons – and a magnetic puck is supplied to stabilise discs as they spin. The most unusual feature is a blue LED that

rides alongside the standard red laser beam as it reads the CD. The theory being that it bathes the underside of the disc in blue light, creating a random 'noise' that effectively amplifies very small signals through a phenomenon described as 'stochastic resonance'. Socketry is limited to phono analogue and coaxial digital output.

The CD1α is not an obvious sounding player.

It doesn't hit you with incisive detail or cataclysmic dynamics, neither does it impose an overt character. It simply plays music, and you, the listener, will fall in love. Its performance is magnificently airy and transparent, with a 'listen-through' quality that sparks instant admiration. What's more, your appreciation can only grow as time slips by. It's perhaps not the most inherently neutral of players, nor is it endowed with especially deep bass or snappy attack, but there's plenty of momentum to keep the beats swinging.

The CD1α isn't a perfect player, and it's possible to pick holes in aspects of its performance, but its superbly musical sound surely justifies its asking price.

Sound Image UK
☎ (0181) 255 6868
Reviewed in HFC 194



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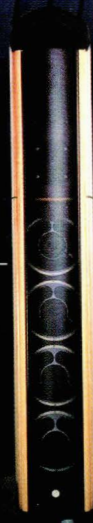
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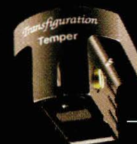
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DIGITAL RECORDERS

KENWOOD DMF-9020 £500.00

Phew, what a whopper! Given the size of the internal sub-assemblies there's no obvious reason for it to be this big, but the DMF-9020 does at least look very smart. Kenwood's new-look front panel has the usual knobs and buttons, but also a unique (to date) 28-pin mini-DIN socket for a PC keyboard, so you can title all your discs in a fraction of the time the usual jog dial takes.

Internal build quality is very good, with the one exception that, despite the acres of space inside the case,

the headphone output board is right next to the mains transformer, giving a permanent mild hum on cans.

Kenwood's MD decks have always done pretty well in HFC tests, and this one's no exception. Tested as a DAC or replaying pre-recorded material (given that ATRAC decoding on any deck *should* give digitally identical results) it produces a good, solid sound with fine bass extension and believable voices, plus quite good retrieval of ambience. Imaging is also good, if not quite at the level



of the best current mid-price CD players, and tends to converge towards the centre with loud music. It sometimes feels as if imaging is 'pumping' with the dynamics of the music. The analogue input is good apart from a very slight loss of detail – nothing at all alarming. On sonic

grounds, this is one of the more successful MD decks around, and the keyboard socket gives it high marks for useability. It's still not completely acoustically 'transparent', but it gets close.

Kenwood ☎ (01923) 816444
Reviewed in HFC 191

PIONEER MJ-D707 £250.00

Pioneer first brought relatively cheap CD-R to the masses and has continued to pursue that line, but clearly feels that MiniDisc is something it can't ignore forever.

And here for the first time in HFC is a Pioneer MD deck, and it looks promising, offering an impressive list of features for a none-too-alarming

sum of money. The compromises it makes are arguably the right ones, its own speciality being a 'Digital NR' which acts on record or playback to cut down high-frequency noise.

It actually works reasonably well, although there's always a trade-off

between reducing real noise and encroaching on the music. And there's also a useful 'Time Skip' function that allows much faster searching within a track. The '707 is easy to operate, and the metering is unusually responsive.

As a replay deck, or when monitoring the input, things are good if not great. The sound seems just a little bit over-bright and lacking some image depth, although

bass is on the whole strong and realistic, and the midrange is clear and quite detailed, at least as long as there isn't too much treble happening at the same time.

However, judged on its recording performance this deck was something of a disappointment. With classical music, which in general has less high-frequency content than jazz and popular styles, it was relatively harmless, but things really came adrift with HF-rich material, where it was not hard to hear the

effects of Pioneer's ATRAC encoding in the background. Despite that, the deck is flexible in use, inexpensive, and thus deserves a qualified Recommendation.

Pioneer ☎ (01753) 789789
Reviewed in HFC 191



SHARP MD-R1 MkII £180.00

It's certainly small and dinky, although looks are a matter of taste, and for me these are a bit too reminiscent of a car radio. More seriously, though, miniaturisation has led to the controls being rather uncomfortably cramped, and operation is frankly fiddly, if reasonably straightforward.

Features are essentially the basic MiniDisc set, but Sharp has thoughtfully incorporated a real-time clock and a timer function, which usefully also date-stamps recordings. Build quality is thoroughly consumer-grade, although given the price that's hardly surprising. The display is distinctively Sharp, with very large letters for the title and the same section of the display giving clear, but

rather low-resolution, metering in record mode.

The initial record/pause monitor listening was not altogether encouraging: the MD-R1's DAC and output stage clearly loses some image precision and a degree of bass extension and weight. As a result, images tend to collapse towards the centre, sounds like pizzicato double bass recede into the mix, and loud climaxes also err on the rough side. Sharp has its own version of ATRAC coding, which is

prone to add borderline-audible background garbage with more difficult, very HF-rich material. Classical music recordings were tonally fine but lost some ambience. In a price context, this deck is not severely compromised, and indeed

it would appear in many ways to offer similar performance to some models at rather higher prices. It works well enough, and its small size may well be attractive to many. Sharp ☎ (0800) 262958
Reviewed in HFC 191



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DIGITAL RECORDERS

SONY MDS-JA20ES £499.99

Baby brother to the JA30ES (HFC 177), the two models are very similar indeed, and their differences pretty esoteric. Among the extensive feature roster, 'Time Machine Recording' is very smart, storing six seconds of audio in a buffer so that you can start recording just after you hear the opening notes of your favourite tune on the radio, and still not miss any of them.

Digital level control is also handy, replay speed/pitch is variable in small increments over a wide range, and both replay and recording can be faded in and out. Potentially

most powerful of all are the editing functions, which give far more flexibility than most other MD recorders. This model scores well on ergonomics – it all feels very solid and is friendly to operate.

Once again, Sony comes up with an MD recorder of rather superior performance. There is still some degree of 'MiniDisc-ness' – a small loss in the sense of involvement that one should feel when listening to a well-recorded piece of good music – but that seems to be getting less significant with every generation of

recorders, and is not a major limitation in this case. Tonally, the sound is always solid and well balanced, with particularly fine bass that never overwhelms but is always there when required.

Imaging is on the whole good, although at times the front-to-back definition falls a little short of the mark and sound sources become a little two-dimensional. This machine is certainly among the MiniDisc leaders, and the impressive range of useful features combine to make a very flexible and sophisticated home recorder.

Sony
☎ (0990) 111999
Reviewed in HFC 191



SONY MDS-JA555ES £649.00

At first glance the MDS-JA555ES looks little different from current 'ES'-designated CD players. Pick it up, though, and its vast weight immediately suggests that it's a bit out of the ordinary. Most is down to the dramatically over-specified chassis, but two generous mains transformers help.

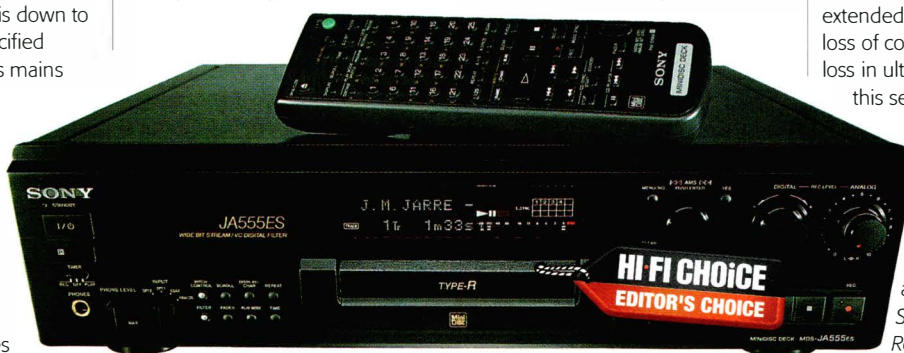
The transport mechanism also has more metal parts than usual, instead of plastic. The main feature is a new 'Type-R' ATRAC coding, a tweaked implementation to give better sound, and this machine also includes

high-bit processing, variable coefficient digital filters, digital input and output level control, 'Time Machine' recording and comprehensive editing and titling.

To my ears, this is the most successful MiniDisc recorder yet. I still wouldn't put hand on heart and say it's 'inaudible' on all material, but on all the MD 'torture tracks' I've yet encountered, it makes less of a meal of things than any other. There's still some discernible roughness on the

sound, but it's considerably less marked than on the best of its forbears. With classical music, which is less prone to produce obvious artefacts, the 'disinterest factor' (which for me has been the main drawback of MiniDisc) is likewise diminished, and it is possible to listen for extended periods without fatigue or loss of concentration. There is some loss in ultimate involvement, but this seems to be smaller than ever before.

There's no doubting the fine value of this deck. It's probably the best MD recorder yet for sound, and is well built and loaded with features. Sony ☎ (0990) 111999
Reviewed in HFC 194



TRAXDATA Traxaudio 900 £399.00

What is Traxdata? According to the company's Website, it's a young outfit specialising in recordable media for computer back-up. This Traxaudio 900 has a very competitive price tag firmly on its side, comes with eight free Traxdata blank discs, and is otherwise virtually identical to the Marantz DR700 and Philips CDR-880 domestic audio CD recorders.

All such machines are deliberately hamstrung in a number of ways

in an attempt to prevent piracy – they have to use special 'audio' CD-R blanks, which are still more costly than physically similar computer blanks.

Nevertheless, a simple deck like this allows the easy assembly of

track-by-track compilations with full 16-bit PCM quality.

Digital copies of CD are basically 'blameless', limited only by the deck used to replay them. Playback sound from this deck is good, although not outstanding, and its recording quality from digital sources at 32kHz and 48kHz and from analogue inputs is good, if detectably short of

perfection. And as the cheapest of three basically identical machines, this model would seem to be the one to choose.

It's capable of very decent replay performance (although presumably you'll already have another CD player, or what are you planning to copy from?) and surprisingly good recording quality from the analogue inputs, too. As a 'bit bucket' this

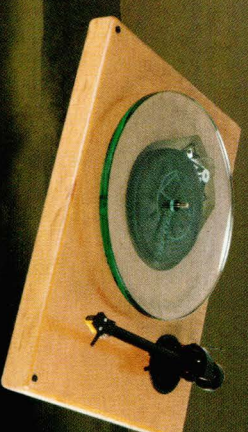
is exactly as good as any other such device, and the generic model also seems to be reliable in use. Traxdata ☎ (01753) 891444
Reviewed in HFC 191



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DVD PLAYERS

DENON DVD-5000 £1,600.00

Denon's DVD-5000 weighs in at a meaty 19kg – almost three times as heavy as any of its peer group. It's also the most expensive of the Japanese players seen to date, and marks a distinct high-end pitch for Denon's DVD outlook. It's a regular Region Two (European) DVD-Video player, but with a few twists that will appeal to the audiophile. Digital outputs support Dolby

Digital and dts digital surround formats, and both allow the user to play 24/96 AAD discs either on-board or through a compatible DAC.

The video performance of the Denon is noticeably superior, but the biggest plus-point surely hinges on a musical performance from CD that, for once, matches that of a decent CD player in its own right. The DVD-5000 shines regardless of

format, and regardless of whether it's being fed music or video.

Its performance with the few available 24/96 AAD discs is exemplary, and old analogue tape hiss in 24/96 DVD sounds a lot more 'right' than it does in 16/44 CD! Pop in a regular 16-bit CD and many may prefer the open, precise and controlled sound of the DVD-5000. Others, however, may find it a little sterile compared with the richness of other more romantically inclined CD players.

At its best, the Denon throws a decent soundstage and has stacks of pin-sharp detail; at its worst, it just falls a little flat.

That the DVD-5000 performs well as a CD player is only one plus point. Add in its basic performance, the power of the on-board 24/96, the AAD potential, and the fact that it is an extremely competent DVD player, and the DVD-5000 makes extremely good sense.

Hayden Labs ☎ (01753) 888447
Reviewed in HFC 187



KENWOOD DVF-9010 £1,000.00

Kenwood's top-of-the line DVD player is physically massive and has an extraordinary articulated drawer. If nothing else, this model is clearly an individual, and there's a lot of Kenwood proprietary technology inside. The remote control is a real peach – tiny, chunky, with a limited

number of multi-function controls and a small but particularly well designed joystick. The player's basic specifications don't stray too far from the norm: dts, DVD and CD-R compatibility aren't on the menu, but the Kenwood has a full 24-bit, 96kHz low jitter D/A converter,

"The Kenwood has an unusually open, expressive quality, and dynamically the sound is wide open."

although the digital output is limited to 16-bit/48kHz maximum. The player includes integral Dolby Digital AC-3 and MPEG-2 Audio converters, and secondary features include a CD Text display which goes some way towards bringing navigation with compact discs up to the standard offered by DVD.

Compact disc replay is very impressive – well, almost. The Kenwood has an unusually open, expressive quality, and dynamically the sound is wide open in a way that eludes virtually all others. There's real sparkle here, but at the same time the sound lacks an edge of

stability and discipline that finally led to a marginal preference for off-player D/A conversion. Nevertheless, this is about as good as DVD gets this side of very serious money indeed. Dolby Digital AC-3 results were quite exceptional, and high-resolution PCM performance was also good, both when reproduced directly and via the digital output.

The Kenwood has a clear edge in CD and Dolby Digital AC-3 replay, and these abilities are more than enough to earn it Recommended status.

Kenwood ☎ (01923) 816444
Reviewed in HFC 190



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GENESIS SILVER SPIRAL

DVD PLAYERS

PIONEER DV-515 £400.00



This entry-level model replaced the popular DV-505 early this year and typically sells for about £50 less than its predecessor. Finished in a sober black, there are core similarities to the DV-717, but where the 717 boasts a

dual layer chassis and extruded front panel, the 515 contents itself with a simpler, single-layer chassis, a plastic fascia, and without the isolated loading tray. The player weighs so little that at first we thought it was empty. The

range of outputs is somewhat thinned, but still includes electrical and optical digital outputs capable of streaming a 24-bit/96kHz signal – a Pioneer exclusive. Just one Burr-Brown PCM1716 instead of two, simplified power supplies and a more basic remote handset mark it apart from the senior model.

Performance-wise, this player is perfectly adequate. The sound quality worked particularly well with data-reduced codecs like Dolby Digital AC-3 and dts, but scored less well with PCM compact disc material. Here it sounded clean and detailed, but the lower octaves seemed to lack the density and

drive delivered by a good CD player. Although far from objectionable, treble was lacklustre, though still surprisingly detailed and with a clear edge on the prevailing standard among less costly DVD players. Best sound quality came with 24-bit 96kHz material like some of the Chesky recordings, which sounded impressively vivid and dynamic, although lacking the air, space and strong dynamic structure found with the more costly Pioneer player. A kind of general purpose, everyman version of the DV-717, the 515 has all the key features but lacks the senior model's extra audiophile appeal.

Pioneer ☎ (01753) 789789
Reviewed in HFC 190

PIONEER DV-717 £550.00

The £550 Pioneer DV-717 is a feature-rich design with some fancy under-the-skin engineering to distinguish it from its less costly DV-515 stablemate, and a close similarity to the US DV-05 Elite THX model means that the DV-717 is effectively THX-compliant in NTSC mode. Twin diodes enable it to read low-reflectivity CD-Rs, and the 717 can also recognise dts data. It has a dual layer aluminium chassis, a 'satiny gold' front panel, and a mechanically decoupled loading tray. The electrical stuff includes twin Burr-Brown PCM1716 DACs, and the digital outputs can stream

24-bit/96kHz digital audio. There are separate regulated analogue and digital power supplies and a symmetrical audio channel circuit layout. Virtual Dolby Surround creates a surround-like effect from two speakers,

and other toys include a plethora of screen readouts such as a real-time indication of data transfer rate.

The sound is good to excellent, depending on the type of disc. With conventional compact discs, the DV-717 struggles to match dedicated CD players at half the price, but even this level of achievement is rather better than

most. Although slightly flat and dry sounding, there's better detail and ambience extraction than most. Some high-resolution discs could sound almost frighteningly real, with a strong presence. Multi-channel audio sounded grainy and vaguely inarticulate when compared with stereo PCM, but somehow sustained interest better in the long term. Add in picture quality that was difficult to unpick on the test screen and the package is hard to fault. The DV-717 seems to have the right capabilities at the right price. It is thoroughly modern in conception, and plays anything you throw at it.

Pioneer
☎ (01753) 789789
Reviewed in HFC 190



YAMAHA DVD-S700 £600.00

This deceptively ordinary-looking player is based on the Panasonic DVD-A350, but Yamaha has taken its time with some subtle modifications to give it an authentic Yamaha stamp. Although the £600 DVD-S700 does not read CD-Rs or dts soundtracks on DVD, in other respects it's a thoroughly modern design. The player has a full 24-bit/96kHz D/A converter, although the audio is downsampled to 16-bit/48kHz at the digital outputs. Dolby Digital AC-3 and MPEG-2 Audio decoders are built in. It's not exactly awash with

outputs, although the basics are present, including electrical and optical S/PDIF digital outputs, twin composite video and one S-Video output, and a complete set of eight analogue outputs – two stereo and six to feed the six (5.1) channel inputs of a Dolby Pro Logic or other home

cinema amplifier. There's no headphone socket and no Scart output.

The Yamaha was one of the top players in the group. There are no particular outstanding points, but no real weaknesses either: this player is simply a strong all-round performer, with a lack of picture processing artefacts (pixilation, aliasing and the like). The excellent picture quality is

almost matched by the sound. As is usual at this price level, a series of better results were available when performing digital conversion outside the player, but the Yamaha remains well above average and often sounded exceptionally clean. Compact disc was rather less exciting, however, and although acceptably clean and detailed, the Yamaha really doesn't qualify as quality CD player, its internal converter sounding a bit weak through the lowest octaves. Nevertheless, this is a fine all-round package, and comfortably Recommended.

Yamaha

☎ (01923) 233166
Reviewed in HFC 190

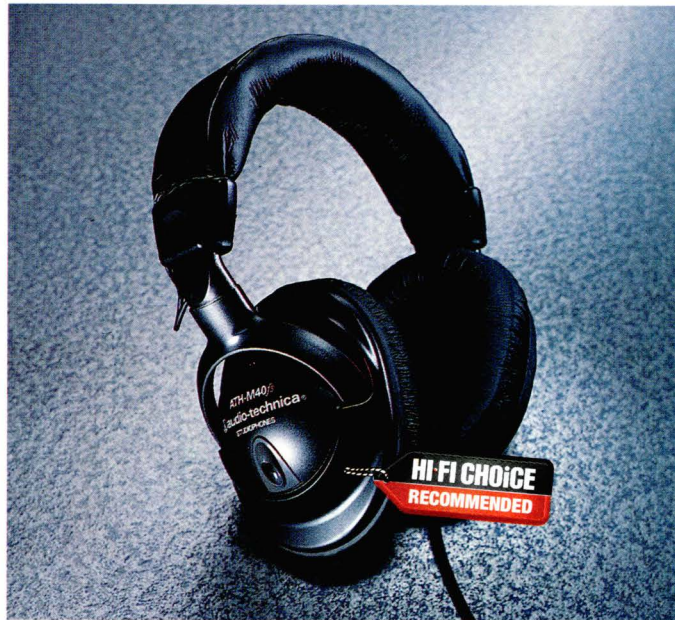


CYRUS



HEADPHONES

AUDIO TECHNICA ATH-M40fs £99.95



The Audio Technica's circumaural cushions sit snugly around the ears, while the headband holds the head in a reassuring, yet gentle way. The look of the 'phones is also quietly confident, with no lairy colours, no gimmicks, just a pair of quality cans doing their job. However, further investigation did reveal one party trick: the earpieces' ability to turn 180°, which is handy for DJs.

These 'phones have an uncontrollable desire to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but. They simply take a piece of music and tell

it how it is. I have to admit at first I found this strict professionalism somewhat irritating. But this almost clinical edge began to grow on me. The percussion on *You Goin' Miss Your Candyman* was so clear, I began to pick out instruments and effects not previously noticed.

These are good, honest headphones, which refuse to add anything to the original recording, yet take nothing away.

Audio Technica
☎ (0113) 277 1441
Reviewed in HFC 186

BEYERDYNAMIC DT831 £135.00



The DT 831s feel fantastic. In fact, the velvety cushions were such a joy to my cheeks that my ears had to fight to get a look in, although they were rather cumbersome and heavy on my dainty little head, and the coiled cord is attached to both 'phones, which I found a little bit restrictive – it ensures that you and your hi-fi remain at a cosy distance at all times.

Sonically a treat, the bass was clear and strong, the midrange confident, and all vocals took on a crispness and reality lacking in most

other headphones. Each track seemed to improve with exposure, like a great painting. The only criticism I can muster is that at higher volumes the bass could be a little boisterous. But on the whole, the music had a warm glow that made me want to curl up and listen and listen. Sheer unadulterated comfort, with the ability to recreate all types of music the way the artist intended. Dynamic, delightful and de-lovely. An undeniable Best Buy. *Veda Products* ☎ (01279) 501111
Reviewed in HFC 186

AUDIO TECHNICA ATH-D40fs £99.95

Billed as 'precision studio diophones', the £100 D40s certainly have a professional, quality feel about them. The luxurious roll-cushions and sumptuous padded headband held my head with all the comfort and feel of a top-of-the-range product. A closed-back design with circumaural sound coupling, they provide good isolation from external noise, and remain fairly free from unpleasant humidity even after prolonged listening.

Wow! was my initial reaction. The 'D40s claim a bass enhanced frequency response, and give the oodles of bass you would expect,



alongside good midband transparency and a detailed treble. While the quality is good, the bass can at times tend to sound a little bloated, making string sections sound rather warm and coloured.

The Audio Technica 'D40s are a well-built, studio-oriented headphone with a transparent sound and deserve a Recommended flag. They sound great for all types of music, but especially rock and pumping dance beats, and may well have professional DJ appeal.

Audio Technica
☎ (0113) 277 1441
Reviewed in HFC 194

GRADO SR60 £79.00

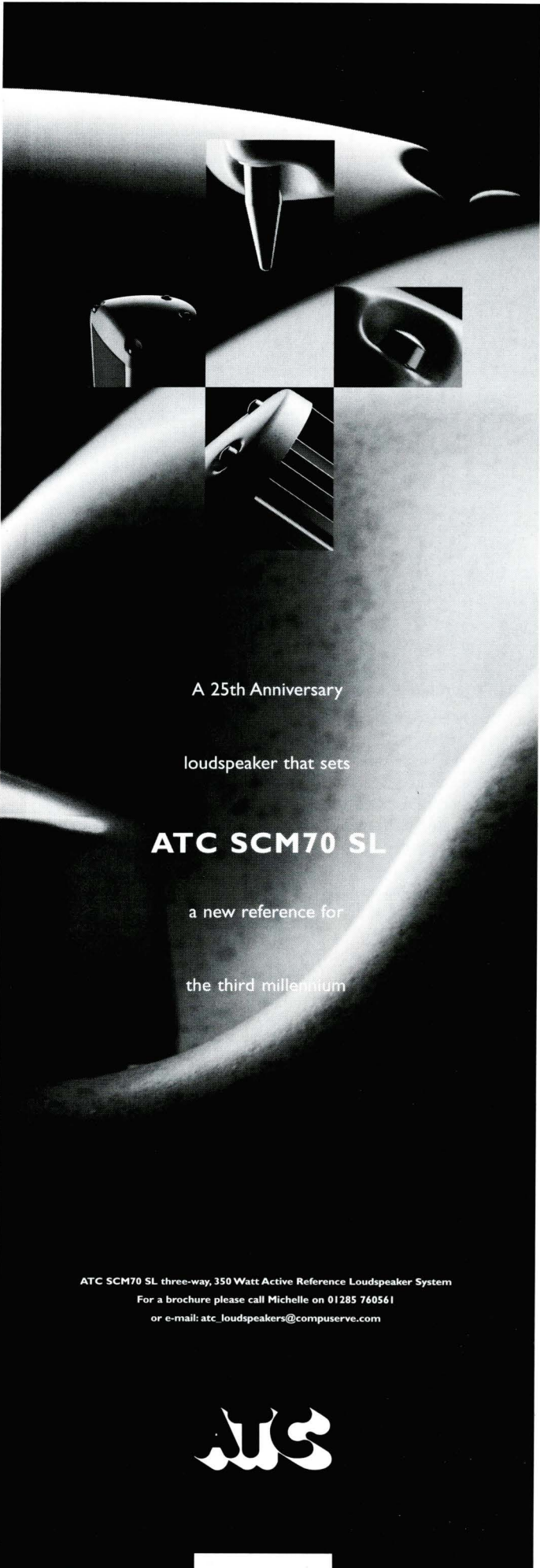
Despite rather old-fashioned looks, these 'phones feel surprisingly lightweight and comfortable to wear. An open-back design, this Grado has a single loop headband and supra-aural foam ear pads. The former gives adequate tension to hold the 'phones reassuringly in position, while the removable foam ear pads allow the ears to 'breathe' even after prolonged use. The only teensy criticism I would make is that the headband would benefit from extra padding.

The moment I listened to the SR60s, I was blown away. Not by the bass, although

there is plenty of it, but by the sheer articulation and lack of coloration. This is what headphones should sound like. The SR60s gave perhaps the best balanced frequency response in the group test. Transparent to a fault, the Grados breathed new life into recordings, highlighting intricacies in the music that were masked before. An

exceptionally neutral performer which adds nothing and takes even less away, this is just a simple pair of headphones doing its job properly. They sound superb, and are an outstanding Best Buy. *Goldring* ☎ (01284) 701101
Reviewed in HFC 194





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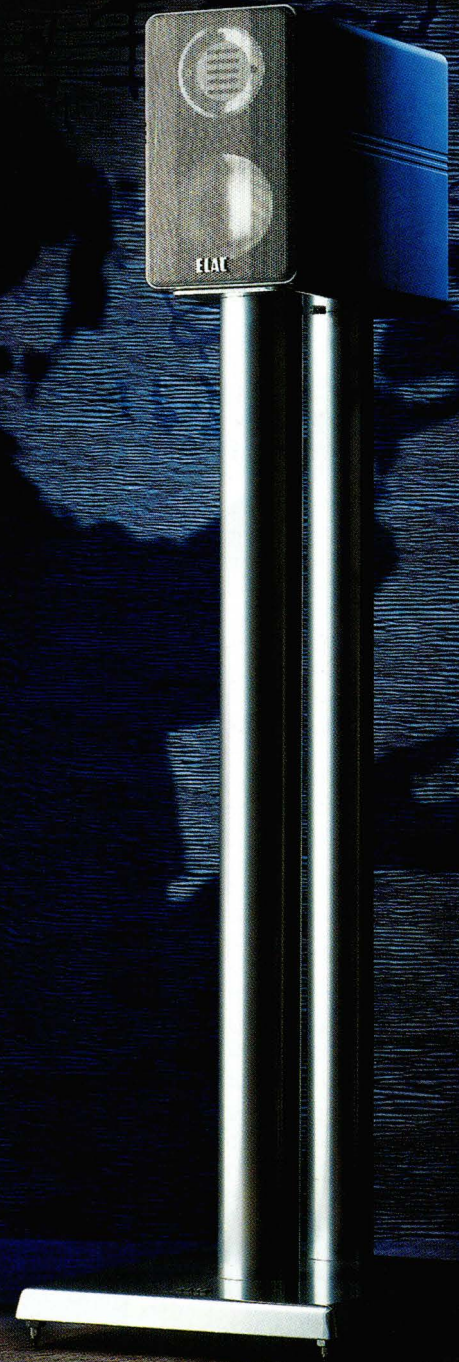
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HEADPHONES

GRADO SR125 £150.00



These SR125s seem to take an almost perverse pleasure in their retro styling. However, if looking like a radio operator on a Cold War era submarine appeals, these hard plastic cans will fit the bill perfectly.

There is fair amount to moan about with the design of these 'phones, but that said, I found them surprisingly wearable, their compact size and supra-aural ear-pieces sitting very snugly and neatly on the head.

As soon as I pressed play on the CD player, I felt that the SR125s and

I were going to be good friends. The top end sparkled without ever feeling too sharp. The sound as a whole was open and warm with the bass part handled easily and never becoming boomy.

Over the course of a long listening session the upper frequencies became a tiny bit pushy and bright, but they were still a joy to put on each time. If you don't mind the styling, these are fine phones.

Goldring ☎ (01284) 701101
Reviewed in HFC 186

JVC HA-W200RF £70.00-£80.00

Simple but effective sums up the HA-W200RF's styling. The double headband ensures they sit firmly on the head, and the circumaural ear pads have maximum squidginess for sensitive ears. The closed back design means that external interference was well and truly kept at bay, and a nice touch is the fact that the aerial doubles up as a stand for the 'phones to sit on when not in use. The only complaint I might have is that these 'phones aren't self-tuning.

Once tuned in, however, they were really rather good. There was almost no discernible hiss, and all types of music were conveyed with warmth and real beef. There was also good clarity, drums and bass were punchy without being dominating, the treble was clean if a little unrefined, and the closed-back design did result in a slightly shut-in sound. Moving around the house

barely affected the signal. All told, this is a good all-rounder that knows its job: no nonsense, no messing and, thankfully, no hiss.

JVC UK ☎ (0181) 208 7654
Reviewed in HFC 186



JECKLIN FLOAT Two £99.00

The Jecklin Float Twos are possibly the most unusual looking headphones around. Although they feel and look quite lightweight, they're bulky and certainly stand out from the crowd. An open-back design, the Float Two rests somewhat precariously on the top of the head, with earpieces positioned directly over, but not upon, the ears. Sort of circumaural-ish in design, Jecklin says this gives a natural flow of air between ear and 'phones and helps to prevent fatigue over longer listening periods.

The Floats are all-round excellent performers, and have

a superbly balanced frequency response. Sonically they have it all and give the listener a great sense of being immersed in a huge pool of sound. The one (very small) nagging drawback is slightly over-damped bass attack, which doesn't quite give speedier music the pace and fluidity it needs. Nevertheless, the



Jecklins produce an extremely neutral and satisfyingly well balanced sound. If you're not too concerned about their looks, then they come highly recommended.

May Audio Marketing
☎ (01756) 793777
Reviewed in HFC 194

SENNHEISER HD 570 Symphony £89.95

The HD 570s have a simple moulded-plastic lightweight design with circumaural oval shaped ear-pieces and velour roll-cushions which sit comfortably around the ears. They feel secure on the head whilst the single headband with its ample padding provides additional comfort and distributes the light weight evenly. They were possibly the most comfortable pair of 'phones in the test, even after prolonged listening.

This open back design gives a spacious sound with a good sense of out-of-the-head stereo. They have a detailed quality which

ensures you're not missing out on anything, but can exhibit a slightly hard edge on brighter recordings. At the lower end of the scale they have sufficient bass to drive most tracks along, but it isn't particularly well extended. Fast rhythmic tracks came across with gusto, but ultimately lacked the bass depth that other 'phones in the test managed to convey. The Sennheiser HD



570s offer unrivalled comfort with spacious stereo, but may be better suited to classical and jazz musical tastes.

Sennheiser ☎ (01494) 551571
Reviewed in HFC 194

VIVANCO SR 950 £79.99

The SR 950s are described as a 'half-open' design. Their circumaural ear coupling and plush velvet roll-cushions provide a comfortable fit, but one that feels slightly odd due to the earpiece shape.

The SR 950s have a high enjoyment factor. Bass is even and sounds well-extended, with a good sense of pace and control. There's adequate treble too, providing sufficient detail but with an occasional rough sibilant edge, while the mid-band tends to sound

slightly recessed. Strings sounded full and detailed but lacked the openness of the Grado model. Speedier music gives an outstanding bass thumping performance, but was ultimately a little too laid-back and relaxed to score top

marks here. These are a finely built, comfortable pair of headphones with pleasing sonic abilities. All in all, not the most neutral in the test, but certainly worthy of Recommendation.

Vivanco ☎ (01442) 403020
Reviewed in HFC 194



LOUDSPEAKERS

ACOUSTIC ENERGY Aegis One £149.95

Acoustic Energy's Aegis One looks a very tempting proposition at £150. It's a solidly built stand-mount, larger than heavier than most at the price, and uses a main driver with a pukka-looking metal alloy cone, matt-silver finished, complete with the pointy little black metal dust dome that has become an AE trademark. If the rest of the package is rather more prosaic, there's no evidence of skimping.

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. The room 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.

A little too smooth and laid back for some tastes, the Aegis One is more refined and restrained than most of its competitors, and exceptionally even-handed through the midband, with notably natural perspectives on acoustic and particularly classical material. It 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 room, but it packs

at least its fair share of drive and weight. This is a lot of interesting looking loudspeaker for the money, especially since metal cone technology has traditionally commanded a significant price premium.

Acoustic Energy ☎ (01285) 654432
Reviewed in HFC 186



ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE520 £999.95

Top of Acoustic Energy's up-market 500 series, the AE520 is one of the better looking compact floorstanders around. It's seductively neat and compact, beautifully veneered all round with nicely radiused baffle edge, and comes complete with a cast alloy plinth. This feels exceptionally solid and ensures good spike connection, and its 3D curves and crackle finish bring a welcome completeness to the whole affair. This is actually a full three-way design, with a trio of little cast chassis metal cone drivers, below a 25mm soft dome tweeter, and a flexible three pairs of terminals on the rear. The enclosure is exceptionally solid and rigid, with internal braces running in various directions, while factory-fitted mass loading provides extra stability. The room response was rather up and down: free space siting looks like the best bet, but you might get away with being closer to a wall.

Everyone liked this speaker, despite its rather wayward balance, for the way its wide dynamic range brought out the subtleties of

the music, and underpinned them with a fine sense of power. Three-ways rarely have the coherence of two-way designs, but this one gets very close, showing fine timing and a good sense of rhythm. While the presence is just a little 'shut-in', and dynamics lack the exuberance of high sensitivity designs, the bass is quick, dry and impressively deep, with a convincing combination of thump and drive. It may fall a little short on classic tonal neutrality, but that doesn't stop it being a thoroughly rewarding experience.

Acoustic Energy ☎ (01285) 654432
Reviewed in HFC 189



AUDIOVECTOR C2 £699.95

'Classic contemporary' probably best sums up the appearance of this smart, understated floorstander. Tall, slim and rather monolithic in appearance, the sharp edges might not be the latest fashion, but there's good detailing, especially in the neat, chamfered plinth which is an integral part of the enclosure.

The three drivers operate in a 'two-and-a-half-way' configuration, with just one of the twin main drivers operating right up to the tweeter crossover point while the other helps out at the bass end. The box is apparently built from an allegedly superior NRFB variation on the fibreboard theme, with heavy internal bracing – the whole thing certainly feels solid. Room measurement indicates pronounced midbass excess even with the speakers well out from room boundaries, so free space siting is mandatory.

"Very listenable" and "A good all-rounder" were typical comments about this speaker's big, generous sound and fine

overall balance, although some panellists were careful to qualify their praise with criticisms that it was all a little bit too "easy listening" for their taste.

The midband sounds open and clear, but also squashes some of the dynamic expression out of voices, ending up sounding a little 'small' as a result.

The fulsome bass adds a touch of chestiness to male speech, and bass instruments lack something in poise and tension, but happily the overall sound stays free from excessive boom or thump.

Weighing up the pros and cons, the C2 is a good looking and very well balanced all-rounder.

Glaive ☎ (01622) 664070
Reviewed in HFC 189



AVI NuNeutron £500.00

The NuNeutron is a very small speaker considering its price tag, especially as you'll probably have to find some more money to buy a decent pair of stands. Yet while the sub-miniature breed might not suit every taste and room, there's no denying it has a strong appeal to many customers, as well as certain inherent advantages – a small enclosure surface area to radiate unwanted coloration, for starters.

The NuNeutron has an enclosure volume of just five litres, and a main driver with a 90mm doped paper cone, port loaded at the rear. The tiny box is rather understated, but nicely finished in real wood veneer. Room measurement confirmed the

manufacturer's recommendation for close-to-wall siting, and while the bass is inevitably limited, the mid to treble is very well ordered, and smoother than most.

One could hardly describe the NuNeutron as a giant-killer. That's just not its style. Of course it lacks weight, drive and dynamic excitement, but accept those limitations and the subtleties elsewhere start to become apparent in an exceptionally even and well ordered balance, little in the way of boxiness, and fine stereo imaging.

The midband is quite expressive, and acoustic material is handled with some precision and welcome timbral accuracy. Our choral extract

was particularly convincing.

While it's not obviously good value, this is an impressive example of the sub-miniature subculture, with a smoothness and delicacy rarely encountered in larger, beefier designs.

AVI (01453) 765682

Reviewed in HFC 189



B&W Nautilus 801 £8,500.00

Technological tour de force, the bottom section of the £8,500 Nautilus 801 is decidedly fat in order to accommodate a 15-inch bass driver, while the separate mid and treble enclosures are attractively sculpted from special composites. A total weight of about two hundred-weight (104kg) is testament to the substantial amount of physical engineering. The 140mm Kevlar cone midrange has a 'free edge' surround and unusually skeletal frame; the tweeter uses a 25mm aluminium dome, again with 'free edge' surround.

The room averaged response is impressively flat through the broad midband decade, 150Hz-1.5kHz, but there's a quite obvious depression of about -5dB in the presence zone 2kHz-4kHz, while the bass delivers massive output in the lowest 20-40Hz octave. The impedance involved makes hefty demands on the current delivery of the partnering amplifier.

The bass is the first thing that hits you – literally, given enough power on tap and the right music playing. It goes astonishingly deep, sounding clean and immensely powerful with a genuine and decidedly uncommon stop/start grip and effortless headroom.

Like the bass, the midband has a marvellously wide

dynamic range and unusually low distortion. Instrumental timbre and tonality sounds uncannily 'right' and makes the whole experience very engrossing. I was particularly impressed by how stable the sound and image remained as one moved around the listening room.

The Nautilus 801 richly deserves its Monitor tag and is definitely the business if you like your music really loud, but can be a little too laid back and under-projected at quiet domestic listening levels.

B&W (01903) 750750
Reviewed in HFC 186



B&W 603 S2 £549.99

No one would describe the 603 S2 as stylish, or swoon over its vinyl woodprint surfaces. B&W has other ranges in real wood finish: here the emphasis is firmly on the engineering, and the basic driver dimensions determine the rather dumpy shape. A two-and-a-half-way design using a separate, proper bass driver in place of the passive ABR diaphragm used in the original 603, the cast alloy frame drivers have generous 140mm cones, the familiar kevlar for the bass/mid unit, and a paper/kevlar mix with stiffening dust dome for the bass only.

The tweeter is even more radical, compact neodymium magnets helping rearward output to be absorbed down a transmission line-type tube several inches long. Both cone drivers have separate port-loaded enclosures, and B&W includes several foam bungs of different densities, allowing considerable flexibility in adjusting the bass alignment. Our room responses point towards free space siting, but also highlight a rather obvious presence region dip (1.5-4kHz).

The unsighted listening tests were a little disappointing, mainly because this is a speaker that likes – or even needs – to be played loud, and rather louder than the levels we use for the panel tests. When it came to winding up the dance music, the 603 S2's bottom end drive, control and sheer headroom was in a different class from everything else in the test, and it could be driven harder and harder without getting aggressive. However, the other side of that coin is that the

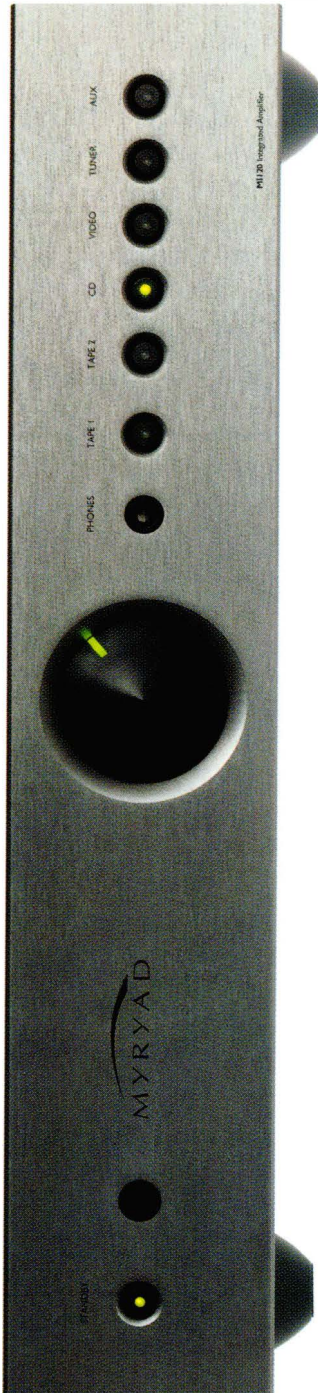
sound is slightly dull and shut-in when the system is playing at lower or very low levels.

B&W (01903) 750750
Reviewed in HFC 193



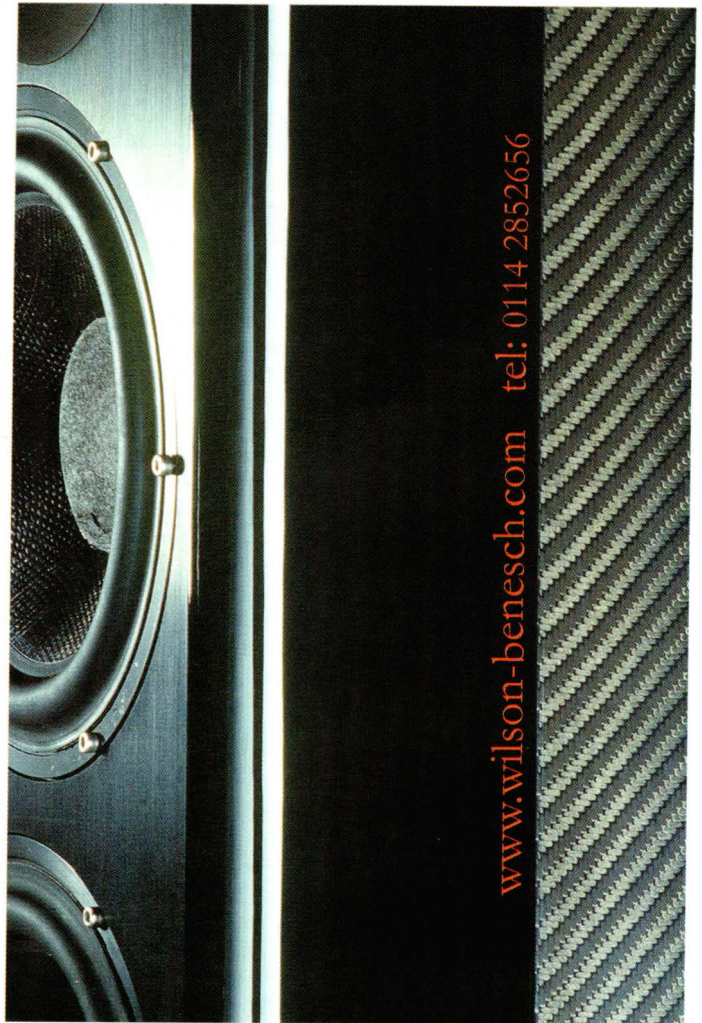
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LOUDSPEAKERS

BLUEROOM Minipod £249.00

The coolest and most outrageous looking speaker on planet hi-fi, the Blueroom Minipod, now made from moulded ABS plastics, sells for a relatively affordable £249. The initial plan is to use the Internet: check out www.minipod.com and www.blueroom.co.uk. Looking like a teddy bear from the front, or a giant beetle from the rear, the curvaceous enclosure actually has powerful acoustic advantages over the regular rectangular box, both inside and out.

A very clever tripod foot arrangement allows some tilt adjustment, and an optional wall bracket is being prepared. It uses a small, port-assisted main driver with 90mm Kevlar cone, and not surprisingly, the

in-room responses show limited bass output below 100Hz, which indicates that close-to-wall mounting is mandatory – a bit of a shame perhaps, because wall reflections will tend to interfere with the potential midrange smoothness.

Sonically the basic lack of bass weight and power is a limiting factor, but in other respects the Minipod does rather well. It doesn't have a particularly dynamic sound, but does have a refreshing freedom from the usual 'wooden box' character which is endemic with conventional small box loudspeakers. It's a very clean-sounding model, and delivers a wonderfully spacious and 'out-of-the-box' stereo soundstage. One

should not dismiss the Minipod as a joke, the punch-line being that it actually works rather well, and can show most of its size/price competitors a few things about freedom from boxiness as well as style. **Blueroom** ☎ (01903) 260033 *Reviewed in HFC 193*



CELESTION A Compact £599.00

Celestion's A-series is its most upmarket and prestigious range, which is why the tiny little A Compact costs an extravagant £600, but the test programme only served to strengthen the maxim that size isn't everything. Indeed, the small enclosure has an advantage in reducing box colorations, although there are inevitable trade-offs in terms of bass extension, sensitivity and power handling with just a five litre internal volume, and an 80mm diameter main driver cone. The most interesting feature is the way the main driver and tweeter are integrated onto a single complex cast

chassis, giving exceptional mechanical integrity. Some close-to-wall bass reinforcement may be needed but, if possible, do leave some space behind this speaker to avoid compromising its very well voiced midband.

The panel was genuinely surprised to be told the identity of this speaker, as it certainly hadn't sounded as small



as its appearance might suggest. It's no bass excavator, of course: there's some lack of warmth and loss of scale here, and consequently a slightly 'thin' overall character. Dynamics, too, suffer from some lack of punch, but again the effect seems well disguised.

The midband proper is quite expressive, and both the presence voicing and the treble quality are exceptionally clean, clear, classy and sweet – just as long as it isn't pushed too far. Provided the room isn't too large and your tastes aren't too heavy or too loud, this is a really surprising and charming little number.

Celestion ☎ (01622) 687442 *Reviewed in HFC 193*

CHARIO Hiper 1000 £299.99

Italy is known for style, and Chario provides it in abundance, this £300, compact standmounter coming finished in a beautifully figured, real Italian walnut veneer. 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. More controversially, perhaps, the reflex port is set into the base of the enclosure, with little rubber feet to keep the base above the mounting surface. The main driver has a cast frame, large magnet and a small 90mm cone, and the whole thing feels reassuringly solid. Room responses indicate it should be kept well clear of walls for fear of generating excessive midbass output. In free

space it's notably well balanced and relatively smooth, too.

The panel reacted quite positively, enjoying the Hiper 1000's 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 element. It doesn't go particularly deep, or have much grip or authority either, one panellist complaining of a 'grumbly' character, while another described it as 'soft and amorphous'. The Hiper 1000 might not set any new sonic standards for the price, but it has a mellifluous sound alongside the most beautiful cabinetwork I've seen for £300, and that would seem ample justification for Recommendation.

Musical Design Company ☎ (01992) 573030 *Reviewed in HFC 190*

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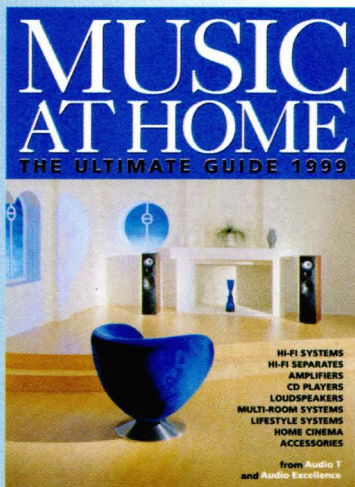
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LOUDSPEAKERS

CHARIO Academy Millennium 2 £1,799.99 (stands £300 extra)

Here is a speaker that's just dying to be noticed: Italian style and swagger evoked in a walnut shell. It hails from Milan and it's called the Chario Academy Millennium 2. It may be a standmounter, but this isn't one to blend into the background. The 53cm high cabinet is tall but relatively slender, and clad in sumptuous, sinuous walnut, with immaculate attention to detail throughout. The '2.5 way' drive unit configuration uses a pair of compact mid/bass units with composite carbon fibre/paper diaphragms, the



lower handling just the bass frequencies. Anyone spending £1,800 on a pair should surely consider splashing out an additional £300 for the matching stands, similarly draped in solid walnut, to complete an utterly distinctive look.

Although many of the best hi-fi components don't really grab you at first listen, this speaker absorbs your ears from the off. From both musical and analytical standpoints, its qualities are considerable.

Performance is impressively devoid of box coloration, promoting a sound that's

rock-solid and free from obvious constraint, while an eminent flair for dynamics takes your breath away with the right material coursing through its drive units. Bass doesn't extend especially deep, but speed and authority down low is superb, allied to a slick, expressive midband and a grain-free treble that clearly shows the quality of its tweeter. Chic, flair and style – all the adjectives that commonly represent the Italian aesthetic – find embodiment here. It's a thoroughbred both visually and sonically, and a real front-runner in the £2,000 Speaker Chase.

Musical Design Company

☎ (01992) 573030

Reviewed in HFC 187



DYNAUDIO Audience 40 £400.00

This is a lot of cash for a small, vinyl-finished two-way. On the surface this is a simple, demure and understated two-way in a classic 'miniature' seven-litre enclosure for standmounting, but Dynaudio has built its reputation on serious engineering, with proprietary driver technology and pretty solid cabinetwork. The *pièce de résistance* here is the unique main driver with its combination cone/dome 100mm plastic diaphragm, driven from an oversized (75mm) voice coil, and cast chassis.

Although in-room measurements confirm the expected lack of deep bass, the 40 still has sufficient mid-

bass output to avoid the need for wall assistance – use the bungs if you want to place them close to a wall. The trace is exceptionally well balanced across the band, with just a faint dip around the crossover point, and a slightly brighter than average treble.

The 40 delivered a stonking performance in the listening tests, with



two listeners rating it their joint 'best of the day'. The bottom line is it does nearly everything well, and can compete with floor-standers in everything bar dynamics and bass grunt. The sound is clean, clear and beautifully balanced, with just the minor caveat that it might be a shade on the bright and shiny side for some partnering electronics. Few, if any, speakers of a similar price and size can offer the same winning combination of neutrality, dynamic range and sheer musical involvement.

Dynaudio UK

☎ (01732) 451938

Reviewed in HFC 189

HEYBROOK Heylette £199.00

A neat two-way standmounter of about eight litres internal volume, the Heylette first appeared at £269 (HFC 170), but this revised B version costs a much more competitive £200. It's soberly styled with a very well built, real wood-veneered box. 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 price – and a small 100mm plastic cone, while the tweeter uses a 19mm soft fabric dome with short horn flare. The in-room measurements show the Heylette cuts off quite sharply below 50Hz, but gives a smooth and even response down to that point when mounted well clear of walls.

What was previously a rather dull sounding speaker is now, in Goldilocks' words, "just right", with a balance that skilfully treads the fine line that divides 'forward' from 'shut-in'. Well liked by the listening panel, there's no avoiding the fact that this is a small speaker with limited bass capabilities, but the news further up the band is nearly all good. Voices are notably articulate, and the 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. Audio Group International
☎ (01752) 333800
Reviewed in HFC 186



LOUDSPEAKERS

HEYBROOK Optima £259.00

A compact floorstander at a very reasonable £259, you get a lot of loudspeaker for your money here, no question, although the build is strictly budget-econobox, and the sharp-edged, vinyl-wrapped cabinet-work looks rather simple and crude. A straightforward port-loaded two-way, the shape is rather squat and dumpy – partly to accommodate the single, decent sized main driver, and partly to ensure good overall stability.

Said main driver has a 120mm diameter cone, while the tweeter uses a small 14mm dome/annulus diaphragm. The bottom end is well aligned for free space siting, and the midband is unusually smooth and flat for a speaker of this type, while the overall treble level is below average, and not too smooth, either.

Even though the sound does have its cosmetic deficiencies, there's at least a soupçon of dynamic tension here, alongside a degree of bass weight, scale and drive that's extremely uncommon at this sort of price. The Optima's weak spot lies in its rather dull balance, as output from the little tweeter struggles – and ultimately fails – to keep up with that generated by the main driver. But the bottom line is that it communicates well, times well, and knows how to boogie, all of which adds up to a fun loudspeaker, warts 'n' all. Don't expect a sophisticated sound from this stubby little floorstander, but in terms of delivering the most bang for your bucks, the

Optima will take a lot of beating at anywhere near this price.

Audio Group International ☎

(01752) 333800

Reviewed in HFC 193



JMLAB Mezzo Utopia £7,300.00

Extravagantly styled, engineered and priced, the Utopias are JMLab's top-of-the-line models. This floorstanding Mezzo is by no means a huge speaker, but it does stand well over a metre tall and feels hefty and solid. Presentation is delightful, the surface finish an artful mixture of high quality piano gloss with hardwood. A three-way design, it's constructed in three boxes, with angled front baffles to time-align each driver. The cast frame bass and midrange drivers use a proprietary 'W-sandwich' cone material, while the tweeter has an inverted titanium dome and super-powerful magnet.

The Mezzos don't have a 'spectacular' sound, but as time passed I found myself getting ever deeper into their groove. It may be a cliché to state that the whole is more important than the sum of the parts, but the real strength of this speaker is very much the way it pulls everything together into an unusually coherent whole, making it easier to ignore the sound and concentrate on the music. There's no tendency to boom, but the bottom end is firm, deep and stays refreshingly light on its feet, merging seamlessly with a truly outstanding midband. Voices do are slightly 'shut-in', and the top end is a shade exposed, but also exceptionally clean and precise. Imaging is superb. Loudspeaker design is all about compromise, and for the typically modest sized British living room, the Mezzo

Utopia is simply the best all-round compromise I've heard (or seen).

Sound Image UK

☎ (0181) 255 6868

Reviewed in HFC 186



JBL 4312 II £1,000.00

JBL's 4312 II retro-speaker is firmly based on the original L100 Century, from about 1970, and one of the earliest hi-fi speakers to embrace the electric rock era wholeheartedly. The three-way driver lineup, chunky cast frames and that dazzling Omo-white Aquaplas 12-inch bass driver cone are all about headroom and loudness. You might like the 1970 styling, even the horrific blue-painted baffle.

The wide, shallow, squat shape was (and is) intended for bookshelf mounting – finding an appropriate stand will not be easy. The bass and mid drivers look like the originals, although the titanium tweeter is of much more recent vintage. The room measurement confirms its

'bookshelf' suitability, as close-to-wall siting gives the best bass alignment.

The listening panels responded rather erratically to the 4312 II, which actually makes sense, as this is an erratic speaker. Where it's good (in the bass and dynamics), it's very, very good. Where it's bad (in the



midband coloration, imaging and phasiness), it can sound pretty horrid. That's much too simplistic a synopsis, but the 4312 II is certainly an uneven performer, and also very different from today's speaker norms. How does one weigh up the relative crudeness of the midband coloration against the splendid dynamic tautness and punch, and the awesome headroom and lack of strain when winding up the volume? If your tastes run to choral, opera and other essentially acoustic music, approach this one with caution. But if rock is your main thing, and the electric bass the prime instrument, check this out – it's a whole lot of fun.

Gamepath ☎ (01908) 317707
Reviewed in HFC 189

KEF Q15 £199.00

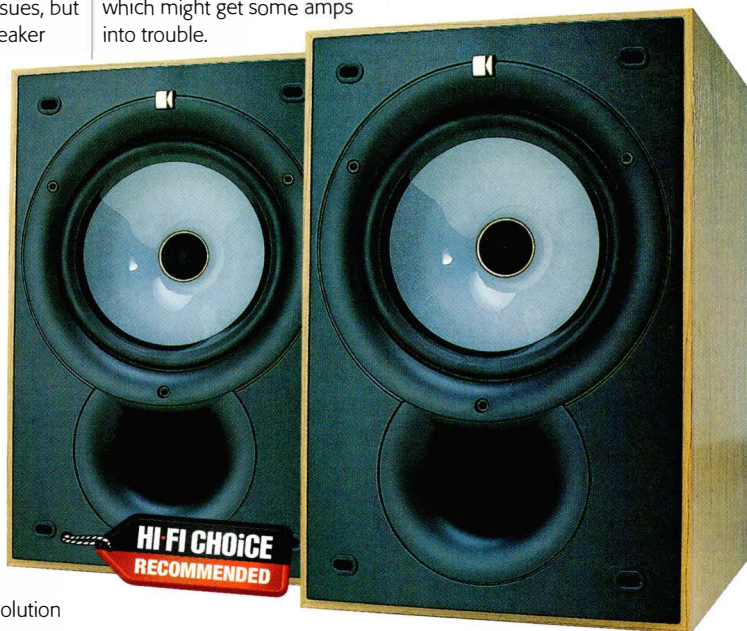
Least expensive model in the Q-series, the £200 Q15 shares the same Uni-Q drive unit technology as most upmarket KEF models, ultra-compact rare earth tweeter magnets allowing this to be mounted 'co-axially' – directly onto the polepiece in the middle of the main driver cone. Build is perhaps a little lightweight, and the surface finish mere vinyl, but the 115mm diameter main driver cone is rather larger than most of the immediate competition. The room responses suggest close-to-wall siting, and while the midband and presence regions aren't the last word in smoothness, overall balance is exceptionally good.

The Q15 ended up on top of the group test heap after the first day's listening – and then repeated the same trick the following day! Uninspired listening tests can't

address all of the relevant issues, but strongly suggest that this speaker has a great deal going for it. A 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, some lack thereof). But the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and the overall even-handedness and coherence is very persuasive, even though the dynamic range and bass resolution

are both a bit limited. A fine all-round performer at a realistic price, the one reservation lies in a load which might get some amps into trouble.

KEF Audio ☎ (01622) 672261
Reviewed in HFC 186



LINN Kan £295.00

Linn's first Kan appeared way back in 1980, and while its true successor is the £550 real-wood-veneered Tukan, the original intention was always to provide an 'entry-level' speaker – hence this £295 revival, brought up to date Millennium-style with a vinyl finish, carbon fibre cone, ceramic tweeter and even offshore (Taiwan) manufacture. Like its predecessor, the new Kan feels immensely solidly built, but unlike the earlier model it's a port-loaded design, aiding overall efficiency and allowing it to be used a little further out from the wall than the original, improving midband coloration as a result.

In the formal listening tests, the Kan received particular praise for the good impression of scale and

weight. The sound is a little pinched, nasal 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 the box manage to avoid cluttering everything else up. Timing is 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. Its bass drive and dynamic range is quite exceptional in a group context, and although the midband might not be to everyone's taste, the overall communication skills are high enough to merit a Recommendation.

Linn ☎ (0141) 307 7777
Reviewed in HFC 187

LIVING VOICE Avatar OBX-R £4,000.00

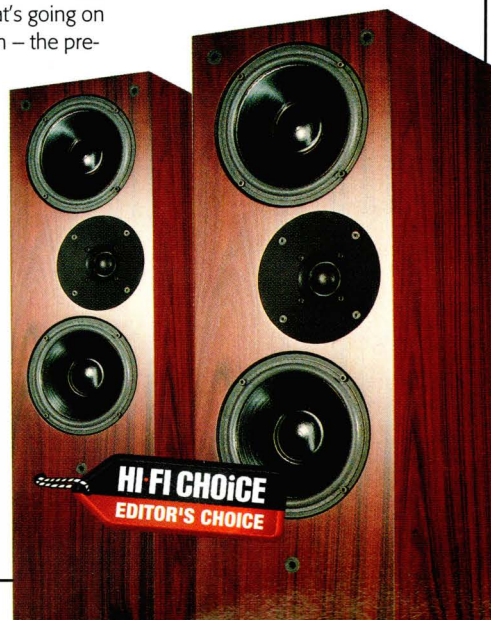
Although Living Voice's heart remains in giant horn loudspeakers, real world practicalities led it to develop rather more lounge-friendly products such as the £1,500 Auditorium, (HFC 180). Subsequent development has led to two Avatar models based on the same basic box size and d'Appolito twin main driver arrangement, with better quality basic ingredients. This £4,000 Avatar OBX-R has a more lavishly 'stuffed' outboard crossover, a better tweeter and a more extensively braced cabinet. LV has used the very best crossover network components available, and these are housed away from the electromagnetic and

mechanically hostile environment of the loudspeaker itself. More controversial, perhaps, is the choice of triple-braced, 750 density chipboard for the cabinetwork – preferred to MDF on sound quality grounds.

This is an unusually coherent speaker with a superb ability to reproduce complex material without compromising timbre and timing. That, coupled with a degree of transparency rarely encountered at any price, puts this speaker in competition with a good many highly regarded and priced alternatives, although a slight lack of evenness in the bass meant that certain notes could set the port off. But if you

really want to hear what's going on in your music collection – the precise level of individual notes, the exact timbre of specific instruments and the location of live recordings – get a great valve amp, a superb source and a pair of these speakers. They'll fit into your living room without complaint and turn you back into the raving music nut that got you started in the first place.

Living Voice ☎ (0115) 973 3222
Reviewed in HFC 196



CLASSIC Curves

The Scots have a flair for making hi-fi kit that inspires passion in its users. **Tim Bown** has been finding out about a new range of stylish gear that aims to continue this tradition.

The Scots know a thing or two about passion. Just ask the Romans. Or assorted English kings. Fearsome resolve is a national trait, carried through generations to emerge first on the battlefield, now through the emotion-racked gaze of art, film and literature. Perhaps that's why the Scots have such a flair for making hi-fi: it's the perfect source to fuel their passion.

"Take a little of Alan Hansen's 'grit and determination', add a pinch of Irvine Welsh's artful brilliance and stir in a dash of William Wallace's 'braveheart' courage."

"Too many hi-fi companies lack fire in their belly," says Jim Cooper, Sales and Marketing Director of new premium hi-fi brand Samuel Johnson Audio. "We aim to put a bit of passion back into the industry."

And why not? The firm is Scottish, after all. Talk to the guys and their eyes spark like firecrackers, lighting up the conversation with a genuine zest for the long, hard quest ahead. To get a feel for the company: mix and match a little of Alan Hansen's "grit and determination," add a pinch of Irvine Welsh's artful brilliance and stir in a dash of William Wallace's 'braveheart' courage.

It's a Scottish recipe, through and through.

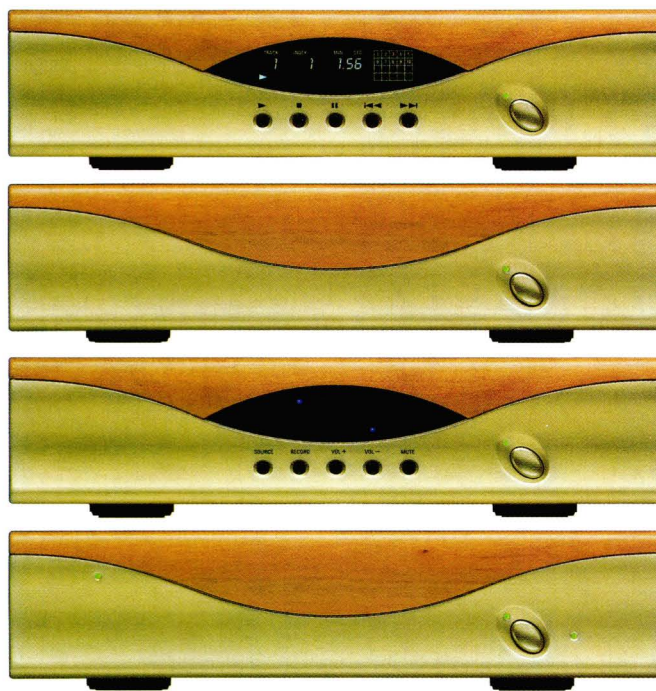
The firm's debut is fronted by four separate hi-fi components, each aimed squarely at the Linn/TAG McLaren corner of the market. Emphasis has been placed on their dreamy aesthetics, the desire being to create a look as arresting as their sound.

Finish options are virtually infinite: silver, black and champagne are available as standard, or customers can request their own colour to suit. What's more, each unit sports a wooden inlay from the firm that supplies Rolls Royce for its luxurious dashboards.

Customers can choose 'off the shelf' from mahogany, beech, walnut, cherry and birds-eye maple, or plump for matching or contrasting metalwork. The result is smooth, silky and sensuous – so 'touchy-feely' you just have to stroke it.

First products to hit the shops are a preamp, the PCA 100, and its matching dual-mono power amp, the PPA 100. Both are 'clean sheet designs', their designers going back to the drawing board to build it their way. Purity of sound is key.

Much effort has been applied to minimise 'transient inter-modulation distortion', an effect which can lead to a hard or metallic type of sound. You see, an amp is the beating heart of any hi-fi system, and SJ Audio reckons this might be the best remote controllable combo available for a projected price of about £4,000.



Taking the SJ Audio range from the top: the CD player and DAC will be available by Christmas, while the PCA 100 preamp and PPA 100 power below are out now.

By Christmas, the amplifier components will be followed by a CD transport and separate DAC, adhering firmly to the same aesthetic and sonic principles. There's plenty more to come next year too, and this range will eventually hold the middle ground in SJ Audio's line-up, flanked by systems both more affordable and more costly. SACD is also on the cards – this is one company that doesn't intend to just sit back and let others grab the lime-light. A starring role could well be on the cards.

There's just one question left to ask: with such Scottish life-blood coursing through its veins, why was this company named after an English literary icon? Ah. Dr Samuel Johnson created the first definitive dictionary, and SJ Audio aims to re-define the term 'hi-fi'... plus, its chief designer is called Johnson, and Samuel J once toured Scotland, and... no matter. In the world of hi-fi, Samuel Johnson is a name that's here to stay.

SJ Audio ☎ (01292) 470000



SJ audio

• no compromise - just music •

Samuel Johnson Audio - creators of definitive premium audio

LOUDSPEAKERS

MISSION 771 £169.90

This small but beautifully styled and finished two-way miniature standmounter is unusually competitively priced for a model featuring real wood veneer. An object lesson in modern industrial design and manufacture, the ultra-thick (38mm) front baffle is particularly clever.

The main driver is a small affair with a 90mm aerogel cone and a zippy little 'chrome'-plated pole-piece in the middle, while the 25mm soft fabric dome tweeter has a form of leaf-spring decoupling built into its faceplate. The room response looks beautifully judged and unusually smooth, while a little wall reinforcement will help fill out the midbass (there is no low bass).

A strong result in the blind listening tests reflects the excellent balance and voicing of this speaker. Ultimately, the lack of any real bass weight, drive or authority is the most obvious handicap and limitation, but the midband 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.

Although bass weight and drive are clearly not its forte, in every other respect this is a superbly judged

design which undoubtedly merits a Best Buy rating on sonic grounds alone, notwithstanding the bonus of real wood veneer at a surprisingly affordable price.

Mission Electronics

(01480) 451777
Reviewed in HFC 187



MISSION 773e £399.90

Originally launched as a two-driver floorstander, the 773 was relaunched as an 'e', along with an extra main driver, making it very similar to the 774, albeit with a slightly smaller box and £100 off the price. One of the best looking speakers around, it's an object lesson in combining high class industrial design with modern manufacturing. Key points include a 38mm thick front panel, and two small main drivers with 90mm aerogel cones. The shape ensures good stability, as does a moulded outrigger. The room responses point towards close-to-wall mounting for the best bass alignment.

This isn't the most neutral speaker, which is probably why it received somewhat below average blind listening test scores. In truth, the sound is a bit small, too warm and shut-in, and with a bit of a sting at the top. But one adjusts quite quickly to balance anomalies, especially when the trends are, as here, smooth and progressive. Behind the balance, the 773 has a sweet top end, a generous helping of midband expression, and an attractive freedom from boxiness. The biggest limitation is perhaps the sheer lack of welly in a bass end. But for a speaker which works better when placed quite close to wall, it has an unusual airy spaciousness and freedom from boxiness. It might not be the cheapest real wood floorstander around, but for

sheer design class the 773 sets an exceptional standard.

Mission Electronics
(01480) 451777
Reviewed in HFC 193



MUSICAL TECHNOLOGY Falcon £625.00

Musical Technology's key features include its unique variation on the metal cone main driver theme, and unusual pentagonal shape floorstanding enclosures. One of the company's largest models, the Falcon is still a two-way design, but has an extra main driver above the tweeter, which makes for a tall and quite imposing looking speaker. Given the price and size, finish is inevitably vinyl, but the appearance is enhanced by heavily chamfered edges which help to soften the lines. The drivers are neatly flush-mounted, and two separate ports attest to the twin enclosure system. An optional steel-plate plinth (£55) adds considerable stability, but it's far from pretty. The manufacturer recommends siting it 10-30cm from the nearest wall, but more space might be desirable.

Sonically, the Falcon delivers a generous yet cultured performance with a fine impression of scale and headroom. There may be a touch of wooden boxy colour, but there's also a fair attempt at genuine dynamic expression, and a freedom from the over-damped congestion that too often afflicts this scale of speaker. The sound is smooth, even-handed and impressively 'big', in scale as well as height, although the bass can sound a bit 'thumpy'. A speaker this big and inexpensive has no right to sound so smooth and well behaved.

A beautifully balanced all-rounder, the Falcon does nothing obviously wrong, and nearly everything rather well, setting a standard which is difficult to beat at its realistic price. All it really needs is a nicer, cast alloy plinth.

Musical Technology
(01656) 842000
Reviewed HFC 189



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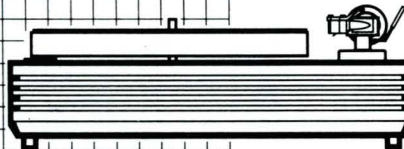
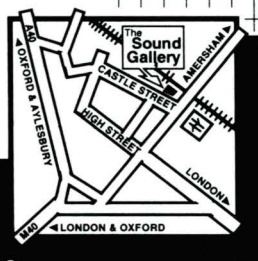
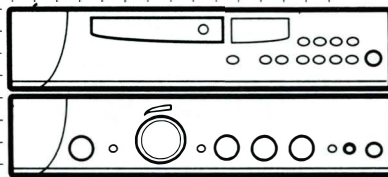
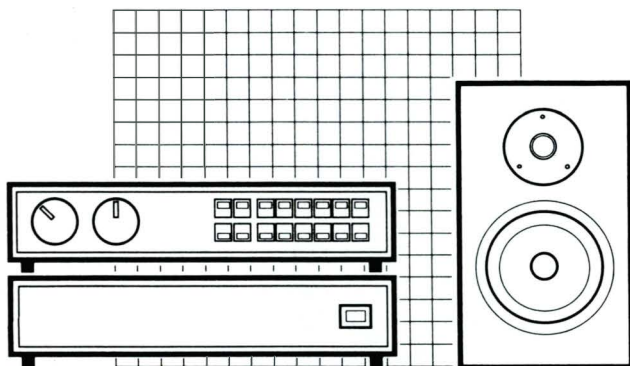
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LOUDSPEAKERS



NEAT Elite £1,195.00

The £1,195 Elite sits second from the top of the Neat hierarchy, and in broad outline takes the compact floorstanding enclosure of the Mystique, beefs it up, fits the superior driver line-up and crossover componentry of the redoubtable Petite standmounter and provides a slate plinth.

It's a relatively simple two-way design, a touch wider than it is deep in order to accommodate a decent sized main driver, and has two separate ports. The main driver has a cast frame and 120mm doped paper cone while the tweeter is an unusual

'area drive' device not unlike a ribbon. The room averaged traces point towards free space siting as likely to give the best balance, although some wall reinforcement should be permissible.

The Elite sounds delightful, with a beautifully neutral and even-handed delivery, fine dynamic range and a surprisingly deep and articulate bottom end considering its compact dimensions and discreet appearance. In the final analysis it might not have quite the drive and authority of bigger, higher sensitivity designs, giving very little away in those

departments, yet it has a delicacy, subtlety and coherence that is rarely matched by larger and more complex designs. The top end does indeed sound smooth, but a slight fizz also draws attention to itself. It remains fully articulate and informative at low listening levels, yet handles power with considerable poise and aplomb, showing no sign of strain or compression.

Not a natural choice for large rooms or those who like their music really loud, it seems exceptionally well suited to the British scene, both aesthetically and acoustically.

Neat Acoustics

☎ (01833) 631021

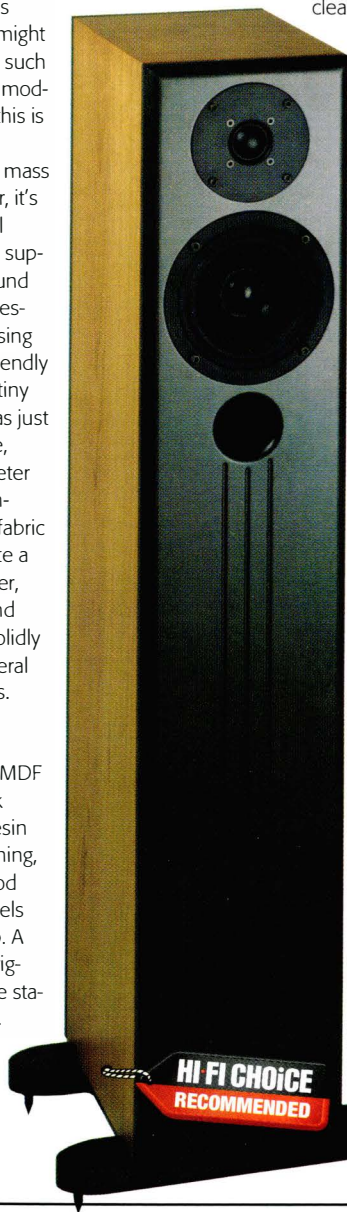
Reviewed in HFC 195



ORELLE The Swing £1,200.00

The Swing's price tag might seem high for such a superficially modest affair, but this is not a speaker pitched at the mass market. Rather, it's a niche model which aims to supply special sound quality in an aesthetically pleasing and lounge-friendly package. The tiny main driver has just a 90mm cone, while the tweeter uses a conventional 27mm fabric dome. It's quite a tall loudspeaker, but narrow, and exceedingly solidly built, with several internal braces.

Styling is demure, the charcoal-grey MDF front and back coated with resin for extra stiffening, while real wood veneered panels form the wrap. A couple of outriggers widen the stability footprint. Deep bass shouldn't be expected here, but the speakers can be used well



clear of walls to the benefit of the midband.

After a week spent thoroughly enjoying the Swing's fine combination of coherence, ruthless timing, superb focus, fine balance and freedom from boxiness, this model did much to dispel some of my prejudices against small loudspeakers. It's no deep-bass excavator, and is probably better suited to smaller rooms, but those prepared to sacrifice that last octave of weight and scale will find a high quality and unusually smooth bass end. Power handling and loudness capability are also more than one has any right to expect. Ultimately, The Swing does lack some dynamic punch and tension, but sonically we're in joy division here, with a vim, vigour and expert timing many larger speakers would envy.

Orelle ☎

(0181)

991 5591

Reviewed in HFC 195

REGA Jura £475.00

The Jura has a larger main driver than previous Rega speakers, the better to handle the demands of dance/techno types of music. To accommodate said main driver with its 130mm paper cone and classy cast frame, the shape is rather squat and dumpy, albeit nicely decorated in good quality real wood veneer. The tweeter has a largish 28mm soft fabric dome, and both drivers are neatly flush-mounted into the front panel.

Two pairs of rear terminals provide the bi-wire/-amp option. The Jura's big main driver and 40Hz-tuned port give more than ample bass output, and the speaker is best kept well clear of walls. Elsewhere, the midband is impressively flat and quite smooth, although the treble does become rather focused at 10kHz.

The Jura put in a pretty strong performance on both listening test days. A

major strength is its broad midband neutrality, helped by a fair measure of dynamic grip and tension, although there was also some criticism that the bass was a

little to "fat" and full, and the treble a shade strong.

There's a touch of the 'boom'n' tizz' about this speaker under our listening conditions, which might or might not be to taste, depending on room, system and personal preference. But both top and bottom ends have good clarity and agility, and the midband is exceptionally communicative. Although there is a touch of nasal, pinched coloration, that large main driver really does seem to direct-couple the music to the ears. It proved very easy to listen to long term, remaining informative at low listening levels.

Rega Research

☎ (01702) 333071

Reviewed in HFC 193



LOUDSPEAKERS

RUARK Excalibur £7,000.00

The Excalibur represents Ruark's first real attempt at a serious high end loudspeaker. It's an impressive debut, this two-box system looking exceptionally handsome and imposing, with plenty of innovative thinking. Better suited to larger rooms, the lower box contains two bass drivers, port-loaded, while the upper one has twin midrange drivers, mounted above and below a single tweeter. As big speakers go, it's reasonably discreet and very tastefully styled, too, while the total weight of 80kg for each complete loudspeaker gives some evidence of the considerable engineering content.

A big, generous and gently laid-back sound makes the Excalibur very easy to like and live with. There's plenty of effortless, articulate, driving bass on offer, which is nice for its own sake – especially if you enjoy dance music –

but also means this speaker is very well suited to delivering high impact movie soundtracks. In some systems and rooms the overall character might be just a little too heavy and the midband a trifle under-projected, but the absence of any obvious bal-

ance anomalies right across the band, alongside an obviously wide dynamic range, has its own rewards in minimising listening fatigue. The Excalibur handles high powers with aplomb, plenty of room-shaking ability and a fair measure of dynamic tension. Timing is good too, but the bass sometimes seemed a little detached, and the midband might have been sweeter. However, the net result is not only a large and very handsome looking loudspeaker, but also a sound which exceptionally easygoing and free from strain.

Ruark Acoustics ☎
(01702) 601410
Reviewed in
HFC 186



TANNOY Revolution R2 £349.90

Tannoy's Revolution series – one step up from the best selling budget price Mercurys – feature real wood veneerwork throughout, and are designed primarily to appeal to music (rather than movie) fans. This £350 R2 is a tall, very slim and not particularly deep floorstander which looks attractive but could have better stability. The bass and bass/mid drivers both have 100mm doped paper cones in plastic baskets, while the tweeter has a 25mm soft fabric dome. The 17.5 litre enclosure is rear ported, and our room measurements show a fine bass alignment with the speaker clear of walls – indeed, the overall balance is quite smooth and very well ordered.

Topping the listening test lists on both days, the R2 is clearly a stand-out performer – ironically, because it simply doesn't stand out. It has very little

character of its own, and gets on with understatedly reproducing music naturally and neutrally, without the exaggerations and balance-shifting that most of the competition brings to the party. Ultimately perhaps just a little dark and laid back for some tastes, the bass can sound rather ponderous at times, and dynamics are slightly limp. It therefore might not have the most exciting or involving sound around, but the lovely midband voicing and a sweet treble are their own reward, the speaker delivering a good sense of scale, free from obvious boxiness and coloration, and with fine 'out-of-the-box' stereo imaging. Add a very competitive price for a real wood finish floorstander and you have an obvious Best Buy recipe.

Tannoy
☎ (01236) 420199
Reviewed in HFC 193



TDL Nucleus 2 £129.99

Better known for large, upmarket, floorstanding loudspeakers with transmission line bass loading, recent years have seen TDL shifting towards the budget sector. This £130 Nucleus 2 looks very much the stereotype two-way budget standmounter, and while vinyl surface finish is pretty inevitable at this price, it looks decent enough, and the front baffle edge has an elegant post-formed contour.

It's a chunky looking little box, and feels chunky too, with a 98mm diameter doped paper cone in a moulded plastic frame, plus a 19mm soft fabric dome tweeter. The room response looks very well judged, with a notably smooth crossover transition, while the bass

alignment suggests that some wall reinforcement might be helpful.

The Nucleus 2 succeeds sonically because it doesn't do too much wrong, but falls somewhat short of better models further up the price scale. The balance and voicing are very well judged indeed, so what colorations there are remain reasonably well under control. Ultimately there's no getting away from the fact that this is a small loudspeaker, with consequent lack of weight and drive. It's not particularly smooth, and can get rather congested when the music becomes dense and

complex, but good basic coherence and timing plus a measure of dynamic life gives a result which is fundamentally entertaining. It's worth spending more if the money's available, but if

things are tight the Nucleus 2 offers solid value for money.

TDL ☎ (01494) 447446
Reviewed in HFC 187



TRIANGLE Zephyr II £599.00

Triangle (pronounced Tree-ngle) is a French speaker specialist, and the £599 Zephyr II is quirkily different from the British stereotype. It's a two-way compact floorstander with oddball styling and some unusual drive units, too. The enclosure proper consists of a nondescript textured vinyl box, somewhat improved by an attractively curved front panel. The most interesting feature, however, is the rather old-fashioned looking main driver with a lovely cast frame, a 115mm flared paper cone, a 'bullet' phase plug and a pleated fabric surround. With no need for wall reinforcement, the room measurement gave an essentially flat response across a surprisingly broad bandwidth, especially in light of the high sensitivity. The relative treble level is a dB or two stronger than average, while the midband (200Hz-2kHz) looks distinctly uneven.

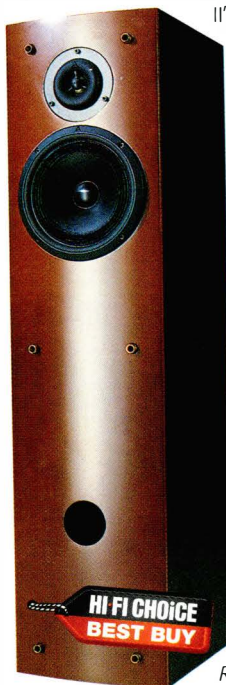
A real hit with the listening panel, the Zephyr II's invigorating dynamics "put some real life into the hi-fi", going much

further than most in breaking down the barriers between musician and listener. But it's not the smoothest or most subtle sound around. While we were well impressed by this speaker's exceptional communication skills, the sound is unquestionably bright and somewhat 'in yer face' – characteristics which won't necessarily have universal appeal.

It's also possible that the Zephyr

II's wide dynamic window and ruthless timing might highlight the inadequacies of components further up the chain. Nevertheless, it goes straight to the top of my personal wish list for speakers costing up to twice its asking price, simply because this level of dynamic drama and time coherence is rare at any price, and suits my particular prejudices better than less invigorating but smoother, lower coloration alternatives. Check out your own preferences and see whether you agree.

The Audiophile Club
☎ (0181) 882 2822
Reviewed in HFC 190



WILSON BENESCH Bishop £20,000.00

Wilson benesch's 20 grand Bishop is probably the tallest and most expensive speaker ever reviewed by *Choice*. It's a logical development of the ACTs One and Two. All three use CFC enclosure panels, while the Bishop and ACT Two use Wb's new 'Tactic' driver. This top gun in the range is considerably the larger and heavier, with complex twin cabinet construction and no fewer than ten drive units in each speaker. It's unusually tall (1.6m), and quite deep (600mm), but the front view is an exceedingly slim 220mm and the detailing quite delightful, so the result is imposing but exceptionally elegant. Each speaker uses nine Tactic units, eight as bass drivers in four 'clamshell isobarik' pairs.

The Bishop's debut was inauspicious, but it really started to sing sweetly after conversion from a three-way to a '2.5-way' configuration. The whole thing timed much better, providing a rare – probably

unique – combination of neutral, full-bandwidth transparency with exceptional temporal musical coherence. The mid/treble axis is a few degrees above seated ear level, which gives an unusually high effective sound source and an unfamiliar but seductive spaciousness to the sound. While it doesn't have quite the pinpoint image focus of smaller speakers, the narrow front and exceptional freedom from boxiness give excellent lateral precision with fine depth perspectives too.

The Bishop's success is down to subtlety, in the beautifully even, open balance, and the uncanny lack of box colorations which allow you to hear the music unencumbered by the usual cabinet grunge. Limited ultimate loudness potential is the unavoidable price to pay for the excellent time coherence.

Wilson benesch ☎ (0114) 285 2656
Reviewed in HFC 189



VERITAS H3 £6,000.00

Based on horn-loaded full-range Lowther drivers with enormously strong magnetic fields, light paper cones and dramatic sensitivities, this Veritas is a very substantial speaker, though not unduly bulky. Each H3 uses two Lowther DX2 drivers, one facing forward, the other upwards, and is loaded at the rear by a horn, the double-folded horn and double-layer ISB enclosure making for very solid construction. Sensitivity is a remarkably high 104dB, and the overall balance is impressively flat – if uneven. Output is significantly stronger than average through the presence and treble (1-10kHz), and about 3dB too light through the bass region (50-200Hz).

Compared directly with more conventional speakers, the H3 sounds distinctly coloured, lightweight and almost aggressively forward. But acclimatisation only took a few hours, after which I started falling in love. The H3's an oddball, but its faults seem fundamentally benign, while its astonishing coherence and dynamic integrity brings a new dimension, particularly to acoustic music. The H3 does lack serious

bass grunt, but the quality and subtle dynamic contrasts it can convey puts conventional box loudspeakers to shame. The H3 has true grip and poise. The biggest strengths lie in the midband, with beautifully subtle orchestral textures, even when playing at a very low level. It's the sort of speaker which can drag you past the sonics and get you into all sorts of new music.

Veritas ☎ (01263) 741417
Reviewed in HFC 190



ZINGALI Overture 2S £1,895.00

The Italians do have a habit of coming up with some bizarre but beautifully made loudspeakers. One feature which distinguishes this very substantial standmounter from the rest of the market is an extraordinary looking tweeter – the so-called Omniray Horn, with a deep, large diameter flare beautifully crafted from poplar wood. The 2S costs £1,895 and weighs in at 24kg, which makes it one of the biggest and most expensive of the breed, and the box has clearly been built to survive an apocalypse or two. The room balance is exceptionally well ordered and the bass alignment suits free-space mounting.

The question is, does the 'differentness' of the horn-loaded tweeter translate into a worthwhile subjective advantage? Happily, it does. The top end of this speaker has a creamy smoothness that seems unusually free from unwanted nasties, and proves to be exceptionally informative. The result is wonderfully inviting and involving, and voice reproduction is superb, conveying subtleties with a confidence that few rivals can match. Voice band coherence and

focus is outstanding, but the bass is just a little ponderous by comparison. It's not maybe the first choice for delivering those block rockin' beats, but the slightly warm and cuddly overall effect is always exceptionally inviting, and a positive encouragement to switch on the system and explore the music.
Zentek ☎ (01892) 539595
Reviewed in HFC 195



Five Stars

Paul Messenger explains why you should visit an independent

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

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

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

Power of the Press

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Role of the Dealer

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

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

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

If you go in and say you're looking for a CD player, and want his advice on what to choose, things are liable to become more interesting. The



for Value

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

onus is now on the dealer to show what he can do. His first task is to ask the right questions to try and get some idea of what you might be after.

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

Putting together a successful hi-fi system might not be as difficult as it was twenty or thirty years ago, but it's just as easy to make a mess of things. Put the 'wrong' combination of components together and it'll still sound a lot better than any cute little mini system package. It might even

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

rate a five star review. But it won't match the potential of a carefully balanced and properly installed system, and it certainly won't cater for your own particular preferences and personality.

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

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

You know full well that your music collection is as individual as your wardrobe, and just as precious too, so it's worth taking the time and trouble to search out the dealer and equipment

that will make that collection come alive, and give you a new buzz every time you play your favourite discs.

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

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

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

I agreed to write this signed piece, irrespective of the specific sponsors, because I believe the independent specialist dealer plays a vital role in giving customers long term hi-fi satisfaction. The views and opinions expressed here are my own and not necessarily those of Hi-fi Choice.

Paul Messenger

The specialist Dealers listed here are professional and enthusiastic.

Give your nearest a ring for a demonstration.

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service
facilities
verdict



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0171 226 5500

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61/63 Webbs Road, Battersea
0171 924 2040

W4 MARTIN-KLEISER Ltd
109 Chiswick High Road
0181 400 5555

SOUTH

Ashford, Kent
SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI
40 High Street
01233 624441

Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI
216 Moulsham Street
01245 265245

East Grinstead
AUDIO DESIGNS
26 High Street
01342 314569

Kingston-upon-Thames
INFIDELITY
9 High Street Hampton Wick
0181 943 3530

Lakeside Retail Park
RAYLEIGH HI-FI
Dansk International Furniture
World
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 AUDIC
278 High Street,
01895 465444

MIDLANDS

Banbury OVERTURE
3 Church Lane
01295 272158

Birmingham SOUND ACADEM
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

ONE MAKE SYSTEMS



THE NAIM SYSTEM £3,172.00

This isn't Naim Audio's entry-level system; it's a rung or two up the ladder in the amp and speaker departments, although the CD3.5 CD player (HFC 188) is the company's base model. This hooks up via the supplied interconnect to a NAC92/NAP90 pre/power amplifier combination (HFC 165), and on to a pair of Credo speakers (HFC 180) using NAC A5 speaker cable. One impressive aspect of this system's architecture is the sheer breadth of upgrade paths that are open to the purchaser.

Sum up this system's sound in a word? Snap! To those familiar with the experience it's unmistakably Naim, less subtle than some of the company's more costly set-ups, yet able to pull listeners effortlessly to the edge of their seats. It communicates with urgency and has the talent to unravel music to its very heart and soul - a touch too vigorously at times, but usually in a seriously gripping manner.

This system is geared for pace and rhythm, and it's hard to imagine a similarly-priced system doing greater justice to an enthusiastically-thwacked drum kit. Snare, tom and kick drum are delivered with realistic dynamic impact and, although bass lines can lack weight, there's no shortage of tension and agility. With acoustic music the mid-forward balance

is still entertaining, but the performance sometimes seems a little forced and artificial. Treble extension is ultimately limited and there's a lack of subtle ambient detail, but the overall impression remains clear and vivid. Here is hi-fi that wants to entertain you. So does Robbie Williams, but we'd rather see *this* Big Naim lined up on the bill.

Naim Audio ☎ (01722) 332266
Reviewed in HFC 196

THE SYSTEM

Naim CD3.5 CD player	£1,080.00
Naim NAC92 preamp	£485.00
Naim NAP90 power amp	£460.00
Naim Credo speakers	£1,090.00
Naim NAC A5 spkr cable	£5.70/m



THE REGA SYSTEM £1,693.98

Maintaining a no-compromise approach to design and styling, Rega has put together a selection of components it feels will also cut the sonic mustard at an affordable price point. The system's source is the top-loading Planet CD player and amplification is Rega's Mira integrated amplifier, rated at 60 Watts per channel (8 Ohms). Speakers are Juras (see HFC 193), a two-way floorstanding design, and the cables Rega's Couple interconnects and two-core speaker cable.

This Rega combo produces musical, foot-tapping, head-nodding enjoyment. Its midband neutrality is immediately apparent, vocals portrayed with an open and transparent sound and incredibly wide, yet focused, soundstage, and this is

complimented by a well balanced and detailed top and bottom end. Bass is agile, tight and self-assured, and packs a real punch with a tremendous sense of timing. Treble is detailed but can, on occasion, sound a little brittle and abrasive on brighter recordings and when the wick is turned up. However, and unusually, this is a system that sounds as good at lower volumes as it does when working hard.

Classical music fares well, the system capturing the full sense and scale of the test pieces, but by far the system's greatest strength is its deft touch in reproducing rock, pop and dance material. This is a system that pleases. With its quirky styling, the characterful Rega sound just gets better the more you listen. It's a



THE ROKSAN SYSTEM £2,210.00

The Caspian system starts off, logically enough, with the Caspian CD player (*HFC 169*), an aesthetically exceptionally pleasing player, and this shares style cues with the Caspian 70 Watt integrated amp (a Best Buy in *HFC 168*), the two linked via Roksan's own HDC-02A interconnects. More Roksan cable hook the amp to a pair of ROKone speakers (*HFC 160*), which were perched on top of Partington's A-4 stands.

Once properly warmed up, this system delivers some seductive aural pleasure. There's a great deal to commend the way it presents music: soundstaging is superb, full of depth, solidity and confidence, and its imaging qualities make it easy to pin-point instrumental location when a precise recording is used.

Bandwidth is excellent, with good bass weight and well extended treble, and a slightly mid-forward balance adds a tangible presence to the sonic mix, from which vocals glean particular benefit.

It all adds up to a sound that's amply proportioned from a 'macro' point of view, yet also finely detailed from the 'micro' perspective. It fared particularly well with music of an acoustic nature, classical and otherwise. Mind you, to an extent it's a case of the whole being greater than the

sum of its parts. There are things to criticise: upper bass is a touch lumpy, and although high frequency resolution is excellent, it's also quite hard-edged and glassy. This isn't the system to buy if you want to play at party volumes, but with the right music it weaves a magical musical spell, and material value-for-money is also good.

Roksan ☎ (0181) 900 6801
Reviewed in *HFC 196*

THE SYSTEM

- Roksan Caspian CD player £895.00
- Roksan Caspian amp £795.00
- Roksan ROKone speakers £400.00
- Roksan HDC-02A interconnects (1m pair) £60.00
- Roksan HDC-01S speaker cable (5m pair) £60.00



supremely engaging system that's adept with every kind of music and will have you listening for hours.
Rega Research
☎ (01702) 333071
Reviewed in *HFC 196*

- THE SYSTEM**
- Rega Planet CD player £475.00
 - Rega Mira amplifier £475.00
 - Rega Jura speakers £475.00
 - Rega Couple interconnects £69.00
 - Rega speaker cable £199.98/5m pair



CASTLE



Castle Acoustics Limited,
Park Mill, Shortbank Road, Skipton, North Yorkshire BD23 2TT England.
Tel: (01756) 795333 Fax: (01756) 795335
Email: sales@castleacoustics.co.uk www.castleacoustics.co.uk

EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

AAVIK Furniture A4 £350.00

Danish brand Aavik is a relative newcomer, and the £349 A4 looks like a conventional modular design, but is secured by three tension rods clamping the shelves together. The design is modern, fresh and pleasing with each shelf beautifully sculpted in a tapered design with a smooth, rounded back. It's available in several real wood veneer finishes as well as black lacquer, and assembly is straightforward and intuitive.



As you'd hope from a product that looks this good, it sounds good, too. The presentation is very well balanced, providing a full and open soundstage. Bass is tight and authoritative, if somewhat muddled and confusing with more up-tempo tracks. The scale of classical music was well portrayed, and treble was smooth if a bit recessed and a little short on high frequency detail. **CSE** (01423) 359054 *Reviewed in HFC 193*

AVID Isoschelf £1,100.00

Avid's Isoschelf equipment support stand was still in its pre-production form when reviewed. It's an impressive looking beast employing an elaborate isolation system on three of the five shelves. The suspended shelves sit on top of springs with a frequency oscillation of 8Hz, and also have lateral damping. The stand is decidedly substantial, and set-up proved a little more fiddly than usual. The Isoschelf gave a



stunning subjective performance. Tonally even, the bass was fast and tight, carrying the music along with fine pace and drive. Classical tracks appeared to have a greater depth of scale and sounded more vivid than before, though the treble seemed a touch recessed at times. The most expensive stand in the group test, its high-tech looks and fine sound quality provide ample justification. **Avid** (01525) 717487 *Reviewed in HFC 193*

ATACAMA Europa £239.99

The attractive Europa picks up the trend for combining natural and high-tech materials. It is styled with fine, wood-veneered shelving and aluminium sheen-finished spacers. Assembly was easy, although the table wasn't exactly rigid – even after checking for tightness. This stand seems to convey a warmer, more rounded sound no matter what hi-fi equipment you sit upon it. Perhaps occa-



sionally the bass did tend to get a little muddy and bloated, but ultimately the stand has an endearing quality. If you need to tame an overly bright CD player this could be the stand for the job. Stylish looks with a full-bodied sound, this is a great stand at the price, with additional shelf versatility plus an eight-shelf version. **Atacama** (01455) 283251 *Reviewed in HFC 193*

ELEMENTAL AUDIO Isotube X4 £849.00

The £849 Isotube X4 weighs in at a mighty 58kg with glass shelves installed. Manufactured from thick-walled steel and TIG welded for rigidity, Elemental claims this design produces excellent standing-wave dispersion characteristics. Finishes include gold, silver, pewter and bronze. The X4 surpassed all others in its test group for sheer detail, articulation and musical involvement. Treble was



clear and detailed while the bass sounded tight, with accurate timing carrying the music along. Classical tracks also came through well, conjuring up strong images. The Isotube X4 demonstrates just how much of a difference a good equipment support stand can make. It's worth every penny as a serious upgrade if you want a detailed and revealing sound. **Elemental Audio** (01840) 211045 *Reviewed in HFC 193*

AUDIOPHILE FURNITURE Base £615.00

A bit of a space oddity, the three-legged Base is finished in matt black and wouldn't look out of place on the set of *Star Wars*. The Base is a modular design that can be expanded as your hi-fi gear grows. Three different shelving heights are available, and assembly is simplicity itself. The vibration control Baseboards sit on top of each shelf, this novel isolation system using compliant beams.



At £615 this product came in at the mid-price point in its group test, but is quite dear in the greater scheme of things. Having said that, the Base does transform a system's sound and can be considered a significant upgrade, with particularly refined and natural treble detail. This superb-sounding rack is clearly one of the best in the group. **Audiophile Furniture** (01342) 826262 *Reviewed in HFC 193*

STANDESIGN Design 4 £189.90

The Design 4 has a unique style that sets it apart. First, it has the most ample shelf height on test; second, it's styled with a sloping spinal column, giving a sculptural appearance. With all-in-one tubular, fully welded construction, assembly is completed in a matter of seconds, the toughened smoked glass shelves resting on adjustably spiked crossbars. The Standesign is transparent and well controlled and makes for extremely enjoyable



listening. With its tight, rhythmic bass, most tracks came across with pace and drive. Treble is defined but well balanced, presenting the listener with the detail but without being overly harsh or splashy. At less than £200, the Design 4 is a grandstand and well worth considering. It might not have the sonic performance of the best, but good styling and value make it an extremely worthy equipment support. **Standesign** (01329) 828202 *Reviewed in HFC 193*

Our starter system



Buying a new hi-fi system can be totally confusing. At Grahams Hi-Fi we understand that. Which is why, although we're highly specialised, we won't baffle you with science. In a relaxed, friendly environment, we'll listen to what you want from your system. And then, using our expertise and passion for music, we'll recommend a system that reflects your taste.

So over tea and biscuits, we won't *sell* you a system, we'll give you the information you need to buy one.

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October '99

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SPEAKER STANDS

ATACAMA R724 £149.99

Atacama's famous SE24 is still the sub-£100 model everyone wants to beat, but this £150 R724, another truncated 'triangular' pillar design, is the company's flagship model. Attention to detail is immaculate, and perceived value is way ahead of the pack.

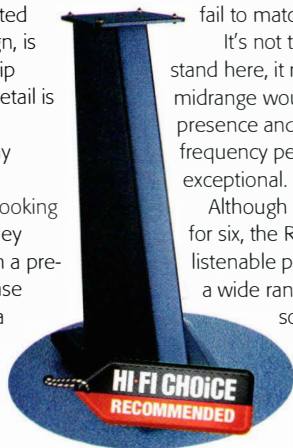
Arguably the best looking stands in their test, they come ready-built with a pre-filled mass-loaded base which is attached to a fillable high mass steel column. The R724 is a well-balanced performer,

smooth and coherent, coping calmly with all kinds of music and showing a level of control that many others fail to match.

It's not the most gripping stand here, it must be said, and the midrange would benefit from more presence and openness, but high frequency performance is quite exceptional.

Although it never knocks you for six, the R724 put in a highly listenable performance and suits a wide range of speakers. Good, solid stuff all-round.

Atacama ☎
(01455) 283251
Reviewed in
HFC 189

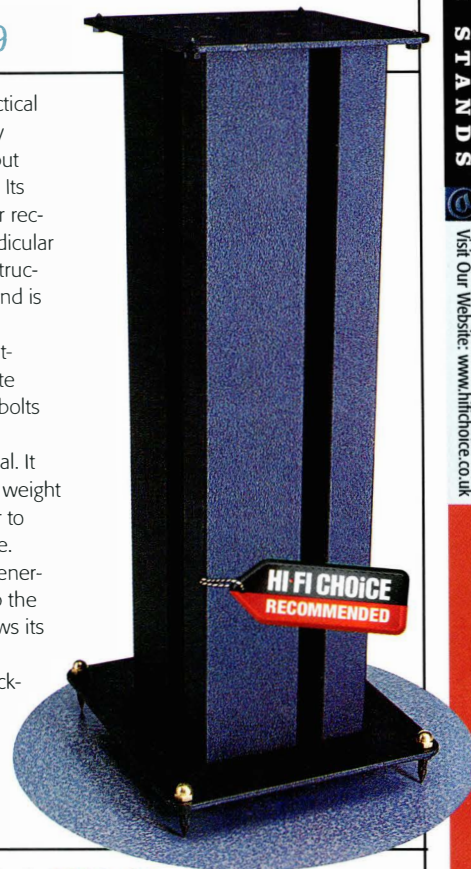


JPW HS1 £119.99

The HS1 is a solid and practical design, neither particularly attractive nor especially ugly, but indisputably well put together. Its upright section consists of four rectangular pillars placed perpendicular to each other. The entire construction is made from mild steel and is quite heavy even without its columns filled. It's supplied flat-packed, with bass and top plate requiring no fewer than eight bolts each to fit together.

This stand has instant appeal. It conveys low frequencies with weight and solidity, helping a speaker to deliver bass in ample measure. Midrange expression is also generally good, but a little higher up the frequency range the JPW shows its limits, its treble performance sounding a little dense and lacking openness. Still, it's a solid overall performer.

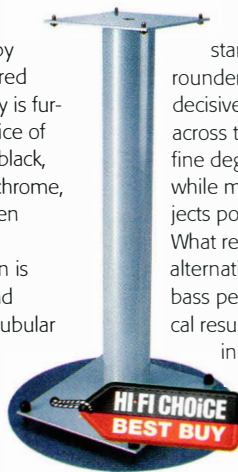
JPW Loudspeakers
☎ (01752) 333800
Reviewed in HFC 189



CUSTOM DESIGN R/S 300 £74.99

Aesthetics are clean and simple, offset by eye-catching, gold-coloured detailing, and domesticity is further helped by wide choice of finishes: gun grey, gloss black, champagne, burgundy, chrome, dark sapphire blue or even British racing green!

The entire construction is made from mild steel and comes flat-packed. The tubular column can be mass-loaded with Custom Design's Inert filler – £5 per bag – use one or two per stand.



A hidden gem, CD's stand is an excellent all-rounder, putting in a robust and decisive performance right across the board. Treble has a fine degree of 'air' and detail, while midrange expression projects powerful music with gusto. What really sets it apart from alternative sub-£100 stands is bass performance, the net musical result satisfying like no other in this test group's lower echelons.

Custom Design ☎
(0191) 262 4646
Reviewed in HFC 189

PARTINGTON A-4 £119.00



The A-4's style is a smidgen eccentric, replacing the reassuringly solid bass and top plate of other designs with a collection of odd-looking 'barrels'. Seven protrude from a large, cylindrical steel torso – three at the top and four at the bottom – each equipped with a single spike. The column itself should be mass loaded, as should each of the barrels at the base of the stand.

It may look odd, but there's no arguing with the sound quality, which is tight and precise, and succeeded in sounding musical and engaging with every speaker we placed upon its crown. Bass is agile but not lightweight, midrange is spacious and well-defined, and treble offers that kind of clean extension essential for a tactile, 'listen-through' sound. Without a doubt, this is one of the most talented stands you can buy for less than £150.

Partington ☎
(01474) 709299
Reviewed in HFC 189

ELEMENTAL AUDIO Isotube SZse £599.00

This £600 'se' version of the SZ stand features the same welded steel tube construction, but is mass loaded with both sand and lead shot and weighs in at 30kg. The result is a high mass, low volume stand, and a reasonably pretty one too – it comes in four standard finishes, with others available at a premium.

As a structure, the SZse is not entirely resonance-free, but



its engineering principles are sound and the result is excellent performance – even at this lofty price. They free the sound from the boxes in a way budget stands can't, helping to give voices and instruments free reign within a convincing soundstage. Bass is a touch light, but a wonderfully deft touch imbues a heightened sense of 'air' right through the range. Expensive, but worth it.

Elemental Audio
☎ (01840)
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Reviewed in
HFC 189



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TUNERS

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO T500 £179.95

One of Richer Sounds' 'house brands', Cambridge Audio commissions designs from leading UK designers, then builds them at low cost in contract factories in the Far East.

The designer this time is Mike Creek, and it's based on a fairly new chipset from Philips Semiconductors, using the principle of 'double superheterodyne' conversion. Features are limited but cover the essentials, including both MW and LW. Build quality is pretty good,

although the components are clearly cheap commercial grade.

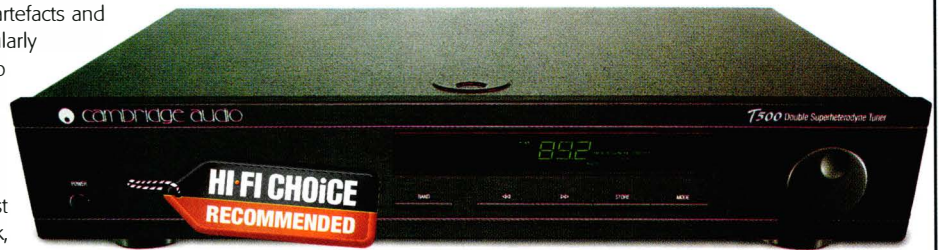
With a neutral tonal balance and good clarity and detail, this tuner has a very pleasing sound which is low in audible artefacts and with particularly good stereo imaging and low hiss. The bass is perhaps just a little weak,

lacking some power and extension, and the sound can become slightly congested at dimaxes.

With less than ideal reception this tuner scores highly for listenable sounds, both in terms of freedom from interference and absence of background noises with weak

signals. AM reception is better than average, too. In short, this is a very capable tuner that offers good performance in a wide variety of situations, and it can be confidently Recommended.

Richer Sounds ☎ (0500) 101112
Reviewed in HFC 193



CREEK T43 £399.00

This looks like a typical Creek product, with the familiar green lettering and diminutive dimensions. Inside, however, lurks a dead ringer for the Cambridge Audio T500 reviewed in the same group. Same

circuit board layout, largely the same parts, but more than twice the price. So what gives? Yes, the Creek does use the same Philips chipset as the Cambridge, but almost every passive component is of significantly higher

quality and/or closer tolerance, and the circuit board is also apparently a higher quality material. The main features include three bands, a rotary tuning knob and a handy remote control.

Sonically there's something of a family similarity with the Cambridge, but this tuner just had the edge in low hiss levels. Music came across as more neutral, and Creek has managed to improve the bass

too, with greater depth and considerably more assurance. Stereo imaging is good both side-to-side and front-to-back, and the sound remains clean when loud. Only with delicate, very HF-rich sounds such as orchestral violins and triangle does a hint of mild coloration and dryness creep in to the equation. Reception on AM, with a suitable aerial, is remarkably listenable.

All things considered, this tuner offers fine performance for its price and certainly merits a *Hi-Fi Choice* Recommendation.

Creek Audio ☎ (0181) 361 4133
Reviewed in HFC 193



DENON TU-260L II £129.99

Replacing the budget tuner of the 1990s, the TU-260 MkII now has RDS, a nice rotary tuning knob, plus a few more presets (there are now 40) at no increase in price. The circuitry is based on some familiar ICs on the top of the board, and some less familiar surface-mounted ones underneath. Assembly is decidedly 'budget Far East', but neat, tidy and robust for all that. The display seems to be well

judged for legibility and brightness.

This is a very quiet tuner. Tonal character is very neutral across the band, and it has firm, deep bass.

Side-to-side stereo is good, front-to-back is less so.

Ambience and fine detail are well preserved, too, with only

a little dryness on delicate sounds like triangle or high piano notes. Performance is still good with an indoor aerial, and AM reception is fair, if sometimes prone to whistles. The 260 gave a typical set of lab results, with particularly good stereo

separation. It's a little microphonic and may benefit from some decoupling. All things considered, it seems as much of a bargain as its predecessor and another classic Best Buy. Hayden Labs ☎ (01753) 888447
Reviewed in HFC 193



MYRYAD T-30 £399.95 inc. remote

Internally very similar to Myryad's MT100 (HFC 184), the E400 T-30 is £130 cheaper, sacrificing the rotary tuning dial and some aesthetic

appeal. Still, the 30 is still by most standards a very smart unit. The display is a basic but functional green affair which shows tuned frequency

(no RDS or station titling here!) and signal strength. Covering FM only, Myryad provides 29 memories and manual mono selection.

Remote control gives direct access to presets, the quality of components shows signs of careful selection, and it would be hard to fault assembly.

Noise is low but with a slightly insistent character. Otherwise, the T-30 scores highly for tonal neutrality and for its assurance with 'difficult' passages of loud and complex music. Bass is clear and well

extended, and the treble sails cheerfully up to the frequency limits of the FM system, in this instance just a little coarsened. Front-to-back imaging is a little flattened but there's plenty of detail.

Although performance is perhaps not literally outstanding when placed against the high standard of current FM tuners, it is good, and this tuner's high standards of build and finish count in its favour too: Recommended.

Myryad ☎ (01705) 265508
Reviewed in HFC 193



TURNTABLES



AVID Acutus from £3,995.00

Turntable design tends to fall into one of two schools. On the one hand, there's the lightweight, spring-suspended approach; on the other, you find high-mass platters supported by meaty plinths. The Acutus, with its hefty 10kg platter, falls into the latter group. The purpose of all its heavy, all-aluminium engineering is to isolate the sensitive parts of the system from the outside world, and to maintain constant (angular) velocity at the stylus/vinyl interface.

Used with a variety of exotic ancillaries, first impressions were of considerable presence and precision, a good LP taking you right to the musical event, such is the degree of

ambient resolution. After a while it becomes clear that this is largely due to the turntable's extraordinarily low noise floor. It redefines the classic phrase 'inky blackness', and does so in such unobtrusive fashion that you often wonder, when you've just let go of the arm lift, if the needle is on the record at all. Suddenly there's sound; it makes you jump – it also makes you wonder how much rumble there is on most other turntables. There's little you can say about the Acutus apart from what your records sound like, because that's what you get to a greater extent than with any other turntable I've tried.

Avid ☎ (01525) 717487

Reviewed in HFC 194

MICHELL Gyro SE £775.00

Based on the revered GyroDec, this £775 Gyro SE ('Spider Edition'), was born from a desire to refresh the range and maintain a competitive edge. Essentially, it's a GyroDec without the large acrylic base and dust cover, which cuts £200 off the price; instead, the chassis is supported by a three-pronged acrylic 'spider', and the entire construction is left exposed to dust. Three changes are claimed to improve the sound, too: making the motor free-standing; an upgraded toroidal power supply; and a new spring design.

Considerable assembly is required before the Gyro SE is ready to play, and it's essential to spend

some time levelling spider and suspension for optimum results. A wide variety



of arms can be fitted, our tests using a Rega RB300 arm (£146), and two Ortofon cartridges – the MC 30 Supreme (£550) and Rohmann (£1,000). Michell's QC

power supply (£399) was also tried. The Gyro SE has a strong mix of

pace, resolution and control. It's not the most immediate sounding turntable around, but its overall balance is hard to fault, an open and lucid midrange blending seamlessly with tight, clean bass and well-extended treble.

With all the necessary ancillaries, the Gyro 'SE' can compete with

decks way above its price. For the vinyl vanguard, it's a designer dream.

Michell Engineering

☎ (0181) 953 0771

Reviewed in HFC 190

MICHELL Orbe SE £1,725.00

Based on Michell's standard 'flagship' Orbe, the SE is a more affordable 'Spider Edition', leaving out the acrylic plinth and dust cover, and replacing the original's dual plinth arrangement with two smaller, three-pronged acrylic pieces called spiders – one stacked on top of the other, decoupled by three small metal spikes. Spring assemblies attached to the top spider form a compliant suspension, and a weighted sub-chassis slots neatly over the top. Michell's QC power supply comes as standard, and adaptor plates are available for a variety of tonearms.

Michell recommends SME arms to optimise the Orbe's performance, but we thought it would be interesting to try Rega's excellent RB300, restricting the cost of turntable and arm to £1,899, with Ortofon's £1,000 Rohmann cartridge completing the player. After a week's listening I can conclude that this turntable is one of the best money can buy. Timing, sound-stage depth and sheer realism; a deck like this reminds you just how good vinyl is. This turntable is good enough to revel in the quality of the very best ancillaries, but the low-cost

Rega arm opens up its delights to a wider audience. What's more, it's a combination that really works, which just goes to show how good the Rega can be – and how

special this turntable irrefutably is.

Michell Engineering

☎ (0181) 953 0771

Reviewed in

HFC 192



PINK TRIANGLE Tarantella II £850.00

The Tarantella II is a decidedly different kind of turntable. It's named after a manic, whirling style of dance that originated in Italy, and its triangular plinth is pretty wild to look at too, illuminated from beneath by a pair of red LEDs. This is turntable design stripped to its bones, the aim being to make a simple, low mass structure in order to store minimum energy and cut coloration. It's worth noting that the Tarantella's reliability record is reportedly not too hot. It's not as fragile as

it might look, but there's little protection, and some of the competition is cut from sturdier cloth.

However, it should be stressed that I encountered nothing untoward with the Tarantella II. Listening to it in harness with a Rega RB300 tonearm and Ortofon Rohmann cartridge (a combined cost of £2,024), it left me with nothing but the broadest of grins. The highs are high, the lows are low and the midband imparts the kind of open, free-breathing expression that beckons the listener

into the sound of record after record. It consistently involves, and does so without a hint of artifice. Minor concerns about practicality and reliability aside, the Tarantella

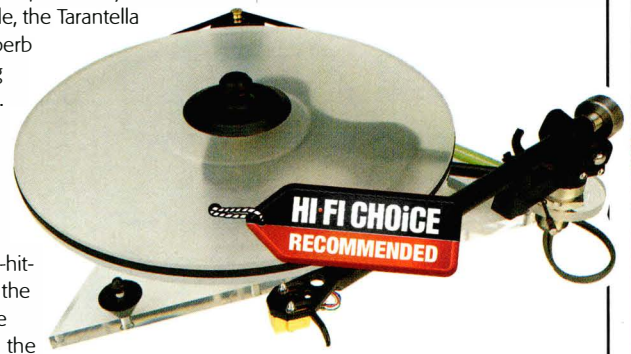
II is a superb sounding turntable. It's as smooth and fluid as it is dynamic and hard-hitting, and the better the cartridge, the

better the turntable's performance.

Pink Triangle Projects

☎ (0171) 703 5498

Reviewed in HFC 192



SME Model 10 deck £2,643.75, arm £689.33

The Model 10 is SME's 'entry-level' model and has a matching

Model 10 tonearm, the combination nevertheless retailing for more than



£3,000. Quite unlike its Model 30 and 20 forebears, the 10 has a circular base and protruding arm board, with a T-shaped subchassis supported on low compliance isolators.

The new arm is a variant on the popular Model 309 theme with the same detachable headshell and counterbalance system, augmented by a threaded tube to allow precise vertical tracking angle (VTA) setting.

Having used an SME Model 20A for some time now, the Model 10 was up against tough competition, but its limitations are very skilfully disguised and all that I really missed of the 20 was its

end power – a factor, no doubt, of the 10's lighter platter and less compliant suspension. It's clearly a nimble deck and is not phased by complex material. What's more, bass power is not in short supply. Massive Attack's bass-heavy *Angel*, for instance, had me transfixed with its power and presence.

The SME Model 10 is a welcome addition to a very fine range, handling all manner of material with an open and persuasive balance that encourages you to keep on listening and hunting for more vinyl.

SME ☎ (01903) 814321

Reviewed in HFC 195

SME Model 20.2A £4,863.00

Based on SME's original Model 20 turntable, introduced in 1992, the Model 20.2 has an improved outboard power supply, while this £4,863 20.2A comes complete with 'Special Edition' Series V arm together as the complete player. The first reaction on seeing an SME player is to comment on how small it is; then, when invited to lift it, how heavy it is. The player is deliberately small and heavy to reduce vibrations, which are further controlled by the damping pot under the main bearing. This control of vibration is fundamental to the design of the player and goes much of the way to explaining the

stunning tonal and dynamic neutrality that it exhibits.

This neutrality and even-handed behaviour is the great strength of this player – I would say that it imposes less of its own character onto the music than any other I have used. The Model 20.2A is not 'boppy', it does not 'boogie', it isn't 'fast' nor does it exhibit outrageous 'dynamics'. In fact, these euphemisms for an identifiable sonic character so often used in praise of other players simply do not apply. In fact, you forget that you're listening to records, you forget that other record players even exist; you forget about everything but enjoying

your best records.

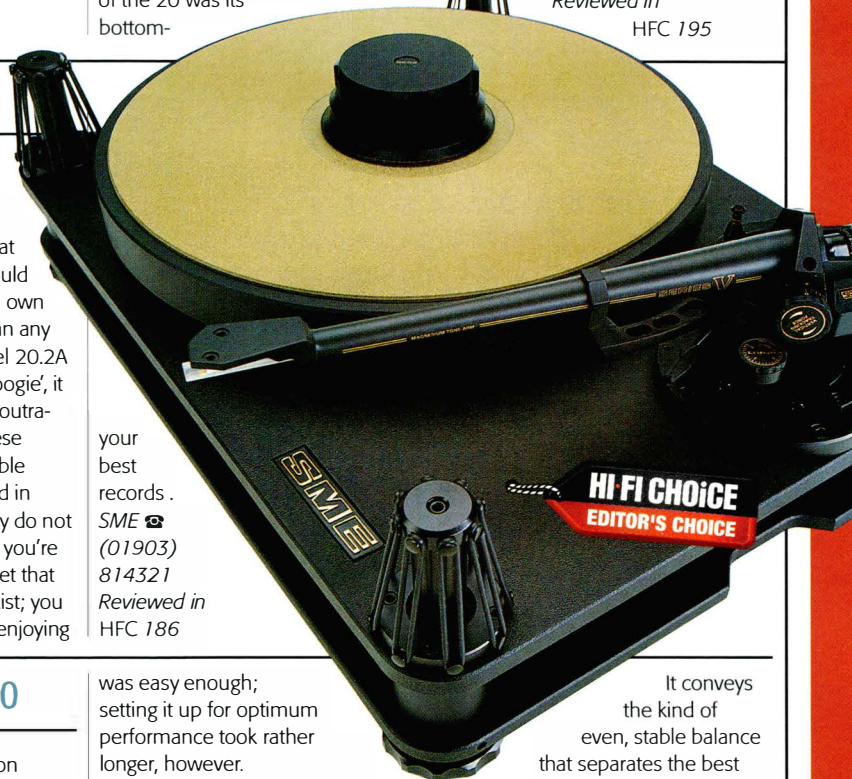
SME ☎

(01903)

814321

Reviewed in

HFC 186



WILSON BENESCH The Circle £795.00

The Circle is Wilson benesch's most recent and affordable turntable, a superbly satisfying creation from both visual and sonic standpoints. To the eyes it's so perfectly round, so utterly feng shui, so in tune with its purpose. Drop a record on its platter and you know it belongs. It's very well built using a variety of materials, including Wb's favoured carbon fibre composite to

provide a measure of isolation decoupling, and acrylic for the platter. Putting the player together



was easy enough; setting it up for optimum performance took rather longer, however.

Wilson benesch supplied its Full Circle package (£1,995) for this review: I kept the ACT 0.5 arm but replaced the Ply cartridge with an Ortofon Rohmann, the resultant threesome coming to £2,590. The Circle is every bit as pleasing to the ear as it is to the eye. Its sound has a subtlety of touch that's rare at any price, and quite exceptional at £795.

It conveys the kind of even, stable balance that separates the best

from the rest, digging out the detail to a fine degree without ever putting analysis ahead of the musical whole. The Circle is something of a bargain, its combination of sound, style and build making a most desirable proposition.

Wilson benesch

☎ (0114) 285 2656

Reviewed in HFC 192

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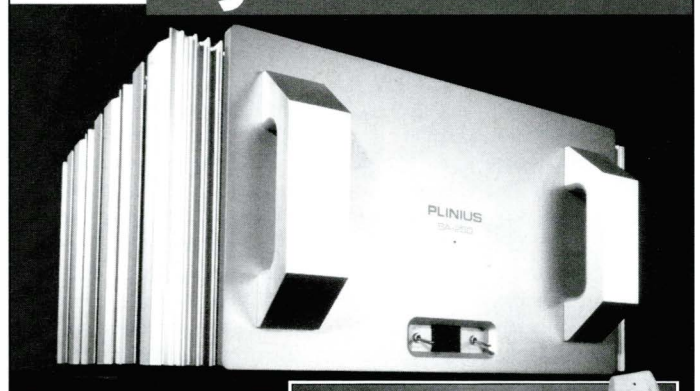
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HELP!

Please form an orderly queue if you wish to consult Mystic Tim Bown, hi-fi soothsayer.

QUERY OF THE MONTH



I'm a complete technological dunce who thinks that "100 Watts RMS" means a "loud, really magical sound", and "input sensitivity" means how much volume should be in your voice when you talk to your amplifier! Well, doesn't everybody? Having said that, I know what sound I like, which is why I have spent an arm and a leg on a system from AVI. However, I keep reading that everything has to be left on 'standby' for the purposes of 'burning in'.

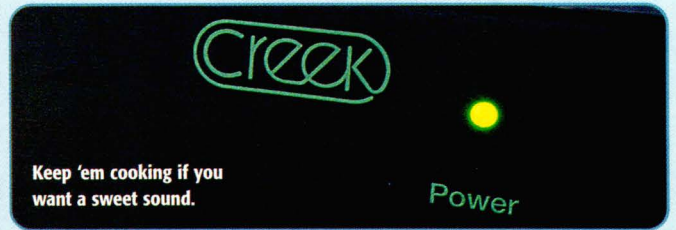
Could you explain to me, in a non-technical way, why this is necessary? For somebody born before the Second World War this seems a complete waste of generated power.

RW Fredrick, Cornwall

All hi-fi components benefit from a degree of running or burning in, with benefits that vary from component to component. Speakers need to

KEEP IT GREEN WITH HI-FI CHOICE!

The reader whose letter is our Query of the Month will receive one of these stylish, lovingly crafted and, dare we say it, groovy green clothing items courtesy of – well, us.



loosen up before they reach their optimum performance, the diaphragms' movement becoming freer as music is played. Even cables benefit from burning in, their sound improving with use.

With CD players amps and so on it's valuable to keep circuits warm and ready if you want optimum performance from the very first note. That means leaving them on 'standby' or actually 'on': running your system from cold is like starting your car on a frosty morning with the choke pushed in! Most gear uses very little electricity when idle, which is good news for both your bank balance and the environment. But class A power amps draw more current and produce more heat in their idle state, and the decision whether or not to leave switched on must rest with the user.

MUSIC MEETS THE MOVIES



I'm stuck in a dilemma that I'm sure many other readers are currently experiencing, or are about to. I'm trying to buy an amp to use for both home cinema and hi-fi use – my interests are split about 50:50 between music and movies. I have auditioned the Arcam 10/10P/DAVE set-up and liked it a lot, but should I also consider the Denon AVC-A1D? Perhaps I should forget them both and go for a Sony STR-DB930 amp just for home cinema, and maintain my current system (Arcam Alpha 7 CD

player, Alpha One amp, KEF Coda 9 speakers) for music only?
Aaron Brewer, via e-mail

The Alpha 10/10P amp combo with Arcam's add-on DAVE AV board, is one of the most affordable amplifier options around for anyone who wants to combine hi-fi quality two-channel and multi-channel sound. It may be more complex to set up than Denon's AVC-A1D, but its musical performance makes it a better bet.

Anyone interested in adding multi-channel sound to their system should get our next issue. It's a

'multi-channel special': everything you need to assemble a genuinely 'hi-fi quality' system for both two-channel and multi-channel media.

Arcam Alpha 10/10P.



MINI 'MARE



I bought a (horrors) mini system – the Aiwa CX-NA505, which has a line input and output. Its sound from CD is actually quite reasonable, but it lacks detail and I hope to get something better. My (strict) budget limit is £650 in total for an improved CD source, amplifier, speakers, stands and cables. Which components should I buy first, second and last? Also which headphones would you recommend in the £40-£50 price range?
Geoff Pollard, Brazil

Almost invariably, the weakest part of a mini system is its speakers. Replace them first, choosing alternatives with an amiable nature and high-ish sensitivity – Mission's 700 is a popular choice for upgrading a mini, being punchy-sounding and easy to drive, while Tannoy's Mercury M2 is a smoother sounding alternative (£120). You should also consider the Cresta 2 at £150,

while JPW's ML510 (£130) and B&W's DM302 (£150) are further options.

After the speakers, it's a bit of a toss-up between the CD player and amp. The safest bet is probably to go for the amp, picking a partner for your chosen speakers and taking a line-out from your mini's CD player. Consider products like Arcam's Alpha One (£230), Rotel's RA-971 MkII (£250) and Sony's TA-FB730R (£200). Finally, look at CD players from the likes of Sony and Kenwood.

When it comes to headphones, if you need to keep things under £50 we'd probably go for the Grado SR-40 (£45).



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BASS CONTROL



TAG McLaren 60i.



I recently traded in my JBL TLX-4 speakers for a pair of KEF Q35s.

Unfortunately, when used with my NAD 3130 amp and Arcam Alpha 5 CD player, their bass sounds a little uncontrolled in my room. I want to change the amp, and hopefully tackle my bass problem in the process. My personal favourites include the following: Arcam Alpha 8R, Audio Analogue Puccini SE, Copland CS8, TAG McLaren 60i RV, Marantz PM66 KI-Signature and Yamaha AX-492.

Paulo Reis, Portugal

By all means change your amp – the right model would certainly improve your system's overall performance – but there are other things you should consider in order to tackle your specific bass problem. If your room is exaggerating the KEF speakers' bass, they're fully

spiked and you've experimented with positioning away from walls/corners and so on, try placing them on a pair of concrete slabs to improve their low end control. Better still, get hold of some Mana Sound Base plinths (around £175 per pair) or even Townshend Seismic Sinks for speakers – well worth £500 per pair.

On the amp side of things, the Q35 tends to bond nicely with Arcam amps, though they're not necessarily the best choice if you want fast, lean bass. Of those you suggest, the Marantz or TAG McLaren might be better options, and you should make sure you hear Musical Fidelity's X-A1 (£479) too. Also note that the Q35 responds well to bi-wiring, so get hold of some bi-wire speaker cable, or four runs of single-wire cable – something evenly balanced like QED Qudos Silver (£5/m) would do nicely.

“If your room is exaggerating the KEF speakers' bass, they're fully spiked and you've experimented with positioning away from walls/corners and so on, try placing them on a pair of concrete slabs.”

SINGAPORE SWING



My system consists of a Kenwood KD-650 turntable with an Audio

Technica arm and moving coil cartridge, Marantz CD-67SE CD player, NAD 3155 amp and Ruark Equinox speakers, bi-wired with Monster speaker cables. Now is the time to upgrade my amp, and I'm considering a Krell integrated model, but unfortunately it doesn't have a built-in phono stage. I'm not sure what else to try – I can't find a review of the Equinoxes anywhere, which must mean the magazines all think they're lousy speakers, but I think they're rather pleasant over long listening sessions. How about a NAD pre/power combination? My budget is around £1,500.

Jeffrey, Singapore

Actually, we have reviewed the Equinox (£1,849) – back in issue 140. It's anything but lousy, delivering a smooth and precise sound with a level of transparency that allows the speakers to vanish

behind the music. Unfortunately, they are fairly demanding of their partnering gear, and there's no doubt that the rest of your system is not in the same league as source components included.

You're probably right to consider the amp as your first upgrade – seeing as the Ruarks are already in your possession, concentrate on getting the amp/speaker interface right before moving on to the front of the chain. Unless you can stretch to the more costly Silverline range (the S300 integrated amp costs £1,900) we'd discount NAD with you budget in mind. Instead, consider the Creek P43R/A52SE pre/power combo (£949), a Musical Fidelity X-Pre (£200) with a pair of X-A200 monoblocks (£1,000) or a Roksan Caspian integrated (£695) with a Caspian Power (£595). You should also give Primare's A30.1 integrated a listen – it's a great amp and smack on your budget; then again, if you've set your heart on that Krell, don't forget you can always add an off-board phono stage like Moth's 30 Series Phono (£249).



Primare A30.1.

HINTS & TIPS



To improve absolute sound quality and maintain consistency, some enthusiasts prefer to leave parts of their hi-fi system switched on day and night. Transistor preamps certainly benefit, as do CD player, tuners, and phono stages. Leaving equipment switched on all the time allows circuits to stabilise and reach their natural operating temperature, improving sound quality and reliability by avoiding the stress of switch-on surges of current. Power amps benefit in much the same way, but from a safety angle it's not such a good bet. Should a fault develop, the power amp could 'go DC' and feed its rail voltage straight to the loudspeakers, frying the voice coil. Luckily, power amps as a breed seem to be less sensitive to the vagaries of cold operation – generally speaking. So you can switch this item on and off as you need it, without suffering the penalty of poorer sound quality.

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THE MOON ON A STICK



I have just upgraded my CD player from a Technics SL-PG580A to a Pioneer PD-S505 Precision, which I'm using with a pair of B&W DM601 speakers and a Kenwood 3020SE amp. The change has brought a substantial improvement, but I suspect an amp upgrade will help it maximise its performance. Any suggestions? I like a presentation that's clear but not harsh, and weighty but not bass-heavy. I'd also like an amp with an on-

board phono stage and the ability to run two sets of speakers. How about Arcam Alpha 7R or 8R, Sony TA-FB920 or Technics SU-A900?

Mike, via e-mail

The obvious option is to go for a Pioneer A-300R Precision (£400) to match your Precision CD player. They go together like ice and a slice – cool, subtle and wonderfully refreshing! It should make sweet music with your B&W speakers, and its on-board phono stage caters for all moving magnet cartridges.

There's just one problem – it only has one set of speaker outputs. If that's a big problem for you, you'll need to look elsewhere.

Of the amps you mention, the two Arcam models are worth considering, particularly the excellent 8R (£380). However, my experience of matching Arcam amps with B&W DM600 Series speakers is not entirely satisfactory – the resultant sound is generously proportioned but a little stodgy. The Sony might prove a better bet, or even the Rotel RA-971 MkII at £250.



Arcam Alpha 8R.

SUPER SONY?**Sony CDP-X930E.**

I am considering upgrading my CD player. In issue 194, the 'one liner' at the back of the magazine was extraordinarily enthusiastic about the Sony CDP-XB920E. I looked at the more detailed review on your web site, and concluded that was the one for me.

Unfortunately, that model has now been discontinued, and most dealers quote the CDP-XB930E as its replacement. However, its price is significantly lower than the '920E, which leads me to suspect it has a lower specification. Is it as good, or should I try to track down a '920E? Also could you recommend other players around £300 I should listen to?

I must admit, I'm sometimes surprised by your findings regarding players from the same manufacturer – more expensive models sometimes aren't as good as their less costly brothers. Whichever I choose, it will have to work with my Quad 33/303 amp and Tannoy Lancaster 15 speakers.

Graham Owen, via e-mail

It's natural to assume that the more expensive a CD player is, the better it must be. However, that's not always the case, even between products from the same manufacturer. It's rare that a more expensive product offers a fundamentally worse performance than its less costly sibling, but it's often debatable whether the performance gains of a higher priced component warrant the additional financial outlay.

As for the Sony CDP-XB930E, we can confirm that it officially replaces the CDP-XB920E. But we're not quite sure where your price differential comes from – Sony is no longer allowed to set an official retail price, but the '930E is 'officially' selling for around £300, the same as its predecessor. It's every bit as good as the '920 and then some, as the Best Buy rating in *HFC* 195 clearly illustrates. If you've found a price lower than £300, snap it up immediately!

When it comes to auditioning, have a listen to the also-excellent Arcam Alpha 7SE and Rotel RCD-971, both at £350. But, sound per pound, we reckon the Sony just about sneaks it.

DJ SAYS IT'S TWINS!

I'm looking to purchase a cassette deck but I'm confused by the options. I want a twin deck with auto-reverse on both sides, and I'll be using chrome tapes to record from MiniDisc (to give copies of my own mixes to friends) or off the radio. My current system consists of a Yamaha CDX-493 CD player, Sony MDS-JB930 MiniDisc, Denon TU-260L tuner, Cambridge Audio A500 amp and Eltax Symphony 6 speakers, with a pair of Technics SL-1210mkII turntables and a Gemini mixer. I'm also using Cambridge Audio Pacific interconnects and Gale XL315 speaker cable (bi-wired). I'd like the cassette deck to match up in terms of quality, while retaining all the features described above.

Stephen Reid, London

If you really need all the features you describe, it's going to be a bit tricky: there are very few decent-sounding twin decks on the market, and even fewer with auto-reverse on-board. It's down to the quality of transport mechanism employed – a deck with a couple

of transports and reversible heads is bound to be of lower quality than one which simply concentrates on the basic tenets of build and performance.

For that reason, our first recommendation would be to buy a pair of good quality, affordable single decks like Yamaha's KX-393 (£130 a piece). That way you get twin-tape facilities with single deck quality. You'd have to do without auto-reverse, though – hi-fi quality decks with such a feature have virtually disappeared. Alternatively, ask yourself if you really need twin-tape facilities. If you're mostly recording from MiniDisc and the radio, and not from tape-to-tape, is the trade-off between quality and convenience really worthwhile? If you decided to put all your money towards the best single deck you can afford, like Technics' RS-AZ7 (£270) or Yamaha's KX-580SE (£250) you'll get far better sound.

On the other hand, if you decide that a dedicated twin deck is the only way forward, we suggest you try Pioneer's CT-W806DR, with its sophisticated digital noise reduction system, or NAD's 616. Both cost around £300.

Pioneer CT-W806DR.**SOURCY SUGGESTIONS**

My current system consists of a Linn Axis turntable with a Goldring Elite cartridge, an Arcam Alpha Plus CD player and Alpha 9 amp, and Linn Keilidh speakers. My main musical source is vinyl, though I have some CDs, and my musical taste is primarily classical.

The Arcam player is now ten years old and past its best and tends to buzz when warming up, so I've allocated up to £1,000 for a replacement. Any suggestions? The Axis still gives considerable pleasure and its sound often exceeds the CD, but it's now more than 12 years old and I guess it may be time to consider its replacement. Can you

Rotel RCD-991.

recommend another turntable that's both easy to use and as pleasurable to listen to, again with a budget of £1,000?

Geoff Shaffner, Leeds

The Arcam Alpha Plus was a great CD player of its time, but these days you can make a significant improvement with £1,000 to play with. Start with Rotel's superb RCD-991, a player which outperforms many machines at £1,000 or more. Roksan's Caspian (£895) is also an essential listen, a touch harder-sounding than the Rotel but wonderfully engaging, or you could decide

to stick with Arcam (you obviously enjoy the company's sonic philosophy) and go for the excellent Alpha 9 (£800). If your wallet can stretch a little further, you should also listen to NAD's Silverline S500 (£1,100), particularly if you hanker for a warm, full-bodied musical performance.

On the turntable front how about whetting your appetite by auditioning Michell's Gyro 'SE' (£775). With a Rega RB300 tonearm and Grado Prestige Gold cartridge this offers a significant upgrade on your Linn and looks a million dollars to boot.

**HINTS & TIPS**

When setting up a pickup cartridge in a tonearm, there's an optimum downforce that gives a balanced compromise between sound quality and tracking performance. Set the playing weight too low and you'll get increased surface noise and poor tracking performance. Set it too high and the sound will be thick and leaden. As playing weight reduces, many pickups start to sound brighter and more lively. However, what may be the best weight for tonal balance and overall sound quality, may not be best for tracking. Opinions vary as to whether it's best to err on the side of slightly too heavy or slightly too light, but on balance it's probably best to set playing weight a little over rather than under – mistracking can damage your records and stylus, and is to be avoided at all costs.

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ITSY BITSY TEENY WEENY

 We live in Croydon, South London. Can you advise where we might inspect ZYP's A1 loudspeakers, with a view to purchase? Please also confirm their price – your magazine indicates £199, while a competitor suggests £229. Are there any alternatives we should be considering?

Tony and Robyn, Croydon

The ZYP A1 is distributed by Presence Audio, and can be ordered direct with a seven day money back guarantee. You can get hold of the firm on (01798) 813133. Alternatively, if you'd prefer to go the normal dealer route, you can get a demonstration at Grahams Hi-Fi: (0207) 226 5500.

The A1s now retail for £229 and there's a magnetically shielded version for A/V use called the A1T,


which costs £239, and both are available in a black or white finish.

There aren't many genuine alternatives to the A1, assuming you're considering it for its minute size – 14x22x12cm (HxWxD). The majority of speakers at similar prices are larger, and that includes most of our sonic favourites like Tannoy's Mercury M3 (£230) and Heybrook's Heylette B (£200). There is a beautiful little Technics speaker available called the SB-MO1E, with a height of just 23cm and a surprisingly big sound, but it costs £400. For the same money there's also the 26cm high Dali Royal Menuet II, or the 25cm Opera Mini at £300. But if you want a speaker under 25cm high and a little over £200 is your limit, the A1 is probably your best bet – its sound is pleasingly punchy, if a little ragged round the edges.



Technics SB-MO1E.

TRI AGAIN

 My system consists of an Arcam Alpha 9 amp with a pair of Alpha 9P power amps, a Musical Fidelity E624 CD player, Supra EFF-ISL interconnects and Russ Andrews mains plugs/mains block. I'm currently using Mordaunt-Short MS815 speakers, but I'd like to upgrade them with tri-wirable models so I can tri-amp with my Arcams.

I want more clarity and better dynamics, and I was planning to spend around £800 until I heard about the Epos ES22. I asked a dealer if they would suit my needs and he immediately started bowing and chanting, "we're not worthy"! Is it worth spending that bit extra, or is he just after my hard earned cash? By the way, I love your new magazine cover – it rocks!

Maverick Givdice, Colindale


The ES22 is a very fine speaker, able to deliver holographic clarity and detail, especially when tri-amped with a suitable level of amplification. However, it is rather fussy when it comes to partnering gear, so do make sure you listen in tandem with your Arcam kit before you part with any money.

If you want to keep the cost closer to your original budget, the choice is rather limited – there aren't many tri-wirable speakers around below £1,000. As far as we're aware, the most affordable is the Acoustic Energy AE120 at £500, though a better choice would be the AE520 at £1,000 – it should work well with your Arcam amplifiers.



Acoustic Energy AE520.

HINTS & TIPS

 Not everyone with bi-wireable speakers makes use of the facility; many run just a single cable from their amplifier and rely on linking wires to join the treble and bass terminals on the loudspeakers. The electrical integrity of this link is paramount, and a poor connection here can lead to crackling and distortion – even possibly a total loss of high or low frequencies. Sometimes it can look as though the connections are tight, but looks deceive! Try physically moving the link to ensure it's anchored firmly. And re-check every few months. Because loudspeakers vibrate, what starts out as a tight connection can easily work itself loose over a period of weeks and months. So, just because it was tight once, you can't just assume it'll be tight for ever and ever!

EIKOS ON THE BENCH

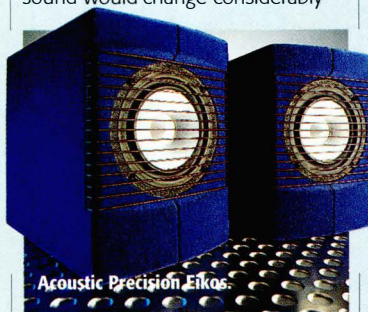
 I'm currently using a pair of Chario Academy Millennium 2 speakers, bought on the recommendation of *Hi-Fi Choice*, hooked up to a Conrad Johnson PV-12/MV-100 amp combo. I recently added an Eikos CD player, again following advice from *HFC*. I'm happy with my choices, but I'm wondering whether it's worth buying the Eikos FR-1 as a second pair of speakers as it's phase-linear? I can use a REL Stadium II sub-woofer if necessary, though it's not needed with the Chario.

Zoltan Kis, via e-mail

Nice system, Zoltan. The Eikos CD player is one of the best sources we've heard, and the Charios are a superbly expressive pair of

standmount speakers. Add your CJ amp and we would anticipate a sea of sonic delights – do you really feel the need to change?

However, if you've got the cash to splash on a pair of Eikos FR1s (£799) to use as a "second pair of speakers", there's no doubt the results would be interesting. The sound would change considerably –



Acoustic Precision Eikos.

not necessarily better, just different in style. The Eikos speaker is fast, clean and a remarkable producer of stereo imagery. It's also a touch ruthless. It sounds 'faster' than the Chario design but has smaller dynamic impact and considerably less bass depth. However, use it with REL's Studio II subwoofer and the combined performance should be startling – tune the sub so it's not obviously 'audible' and it'll make a huge contribution to soundstaging. Experiment with placement for best results.

There is a danger here however: the Eikos can do coherence and imaging so well that you'll be torn between using them and the Charios. You could end up being distracted by sonics and miss the music, which would be a pity.

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Magnum Dynalab FT 101 A. <i>New</i>	£500	£770
Nottm Analogue Mentor tonearm.	£400	£800
Horning Agathon Gold. Lowther PM4 horn. Mahogany.	£2000	£5800
Border Patrol MB Choke Input Power Supply.	£650	£995

Real World

Musical Fidelity A2 amplifier. <i>New, boxed.</i>	£400	£500
Snell K original with Huygens K4 stands.	£500	£850
Living Voice Auditorium. Walnut (HFC Best Buy!)	£900	£1500
Audio Innovations S.800 Anniversary. Power amp	£850	£1500
Audio Innovations S.800 Mk.1. Power amp	£450	£-----
Audio Innovations S.1000. Silver circuit. 50 watt push-pull	£1000	£2250
Musical Fidelity E624 CD player. <i>New, boxed.</i>	£400	£500
Art Audio Diavolo. 6300 B power amp.	£3000	£4000
Art Audio Quartet. Triode coupled power amp 15w.	£1200	£1800

City of Dis

Cary Audio CAD805C 30 watt 845 single-ended triode mono power amps. 2 years old, boxed.	£4500	£8500
Jardis JA80 60 watt triode connected 6550 parallel push-pull monos. 12 months old, boxed. <i>New valve set.</i>	£4900	£10000
Linn LP 12 Naim Aro Lingo and so on and so forth.	£1100	£4000
Linn LP 12 Basik K9.	£400	£1400
Sonus Faber Guarneri.	£3500	£5795
Naim CD2.	£1200	£2000

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RAGS TO RICHER'S**Cambridge A500.**

 I've got about £500 to spend on a budget system and I've been speaking to Richer Sounds. The shop recommends Cambridge Audio's A500 amp, which you reviewed favourably, with a Cambridge D300 CD player and either Eltax Symphony 4 or Mission 701 speakers. I've never heard of any of these – are they brand new models? If so, have you heard them yet? Well done for the magazine and a great web site.

Brendan McCarthy, via e-mail

Not surprisingly, Richer Sounds is keen to sell you products from brands with which it has, erm, strong business relationships. The Cambridge brand is owned by Audio Partnership, a company with which Richer Sounds is intrinsically linked. Similarly, Richer Sounds is the number one UK outlet for Danish company Eltax, so the recommendations you received aren't exactly surprising.

Here's the good news: whatever the business reasons behind such advice, these products are genuinely good value for money. As

you've already read, we like Cambridge Audio's new A500 quite a lot – it's an engaging little number, and one of the best amps around at £200. Meanwhile, the CD player is also new but as yet untested, which is why you weren't aware of its existence. However, if its as good as recent Cambridge players it could be quite a bargain.

Both the Eltax and Mission speakers have been around for some time, but they're very different in nature. The 701 is a stand-mount speaker with an abundance of punch and impact, while the Symphony 4 is a much larger floorstander with a smoother sort of presentation. Both are good value at the prices Richer Sounds is quoting, so it's really a matter of personal taste.

Though we haven't heard all this kit ourselves, an educated guess suggests £500 is a very good price, but you'll have to do the listening to judge for yourself. As an alternative, try Sony's CDP-XE530 CD player (£120) with Rotel's RA-971 MkII amp (£250) and Tannoy Mercury M1 speakers (£120). And don't forget to budget for decent stands and cables.

MATCHING THE BEAT

I have a Densen Beat 100 integrated amp with 60 Watts per channel and I'm looking for a CD player and speakers to go with it. My listening room is 3x3.5m and I listen to vocal and jazz music, and occasionally rock and pop. My budgets are £500-£800 for the speakers and £500-£1,000 for the CD player. Any ideas?

Ralph, via e-mail

OK, let's deal with the speakers first. Your Densen amp is a rhythmic and musical sort of design, and deserves partners of similarly engaging character. Dynaudio's Audience 50 is in the right kind of mould, a stand-mount speaker with plenty of bold, open presence and a lovely midband. On the floorstanding front, try Triangle's Zephyr II (£599) and Naim's Intro (£660), both of which are controlled enough at the bottom end to work well in a room the size of yours. Roksan's Ojan 3 is also well worth considering, given your needs.

For the CD player, Roksan's

Caspian (£895) is a definite contender, as is Naim's CD CD3.5 (£1,000) and, at a lower price point, Rotel's RCD-991 (£750). Any of these should be a reasonable match for your system, but it may be worth holding out for Densen's own £1,000 CD player, much delayed but finally ready for launch – it might just be the best match of all.

**Naim Intro.****MADDENING, ISN'T IT?**

I have £2,500 to buy a CD player, an amplifier and some speakers. Can you suggest some products that

would fit my budget?

David Madden, via e-mail

Crikey David, this isn't *What Clairvoyant* mate! Not even a description of music taste, or details of your room's dimensions? OK, no job's too tough for *HFC*, so let's give ourselves a starting point...

How about a complete system from a single make? If you're starting from scratch, it's the simplest way to find components that are compatible, both visually and sonically. It just so happens we reviewed several such set-ups last month, and the one most suited to your budget is from Roksan, pitching the Caspian CD player and Caspian amp with ROKone speakers and Roksan's own cables. Total cost is £2,210, to which you'd need to add speakers stands. Performance-wise it's explicit and wide-ranging, a highly musical

system with a predilection for acoustic musical styles, though it'll play virtually anything well.

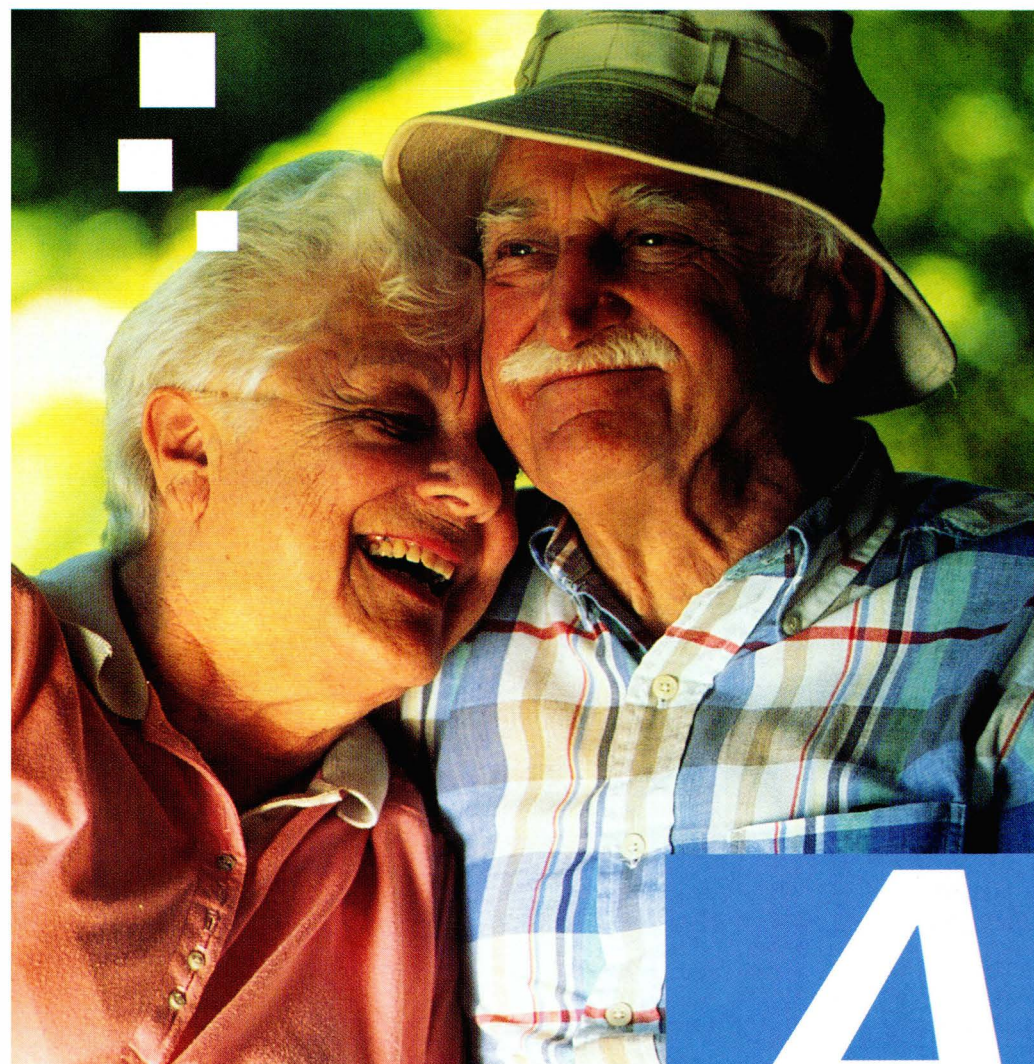
We're also very keen on the Rega system we tested for the same feature (Planet CD player, Mira amp and Jura speakers), although it comes in significantly under-budget at £1,693.80. Try it – you might find it's all you need (you could spend the rest of your budget on CDs!), or you could upgrade the amp and speakers to something higher in Rega's range. And don't forget Naim – the system we tested is too costly, but the company does have a system which matches your budget. Lastly, if you want to mix and match, try something like this: Rotel's RCD-991 CD player (£750), Arcam's Alpha 9 amp (£500) and Neat's Elite speakers (£1,195). It should work a treat!

**HINTS & TIPS**

Although a good hi-fi system must inevitably reveal some faults and limitations in recording quality where these exist, beware of systems that seem to be hypercritical of the slightest blemish – it points to a sound that's out of balance. In such cases what you hear is everything that's wrong with a recording, and little of what's right with it. It's possible to have a system that ruthlessly reveals technical shortcomings in recordings without giving a corresponding increase in musical clarity and detail. Fortunately, it's also possible to have a system that is highly detailed and articulate, yet surprisingly kind to faults. So, when making changes or upgrading, bear in mind that an increase in the reproduction of faults does not necessarily indicate a "better" more revealing sound musically – perhaps it indicates the very opposite.

**Roksan Caspian.**

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"From the outset the sound was crisp, beautifully timed, atmospheric and tactile. In a word, snappy. It is rare to come across a high power amp (400 Watts into four Ohms), that has a keen sense of timing, but this one does. It portrays the 'life' in a recording with startling vivacity, but without the often-attendant glare. It comes down to the combination of power to drive the lower



- "Music for the Masses" by Depeche Mode.

More than 110,000,000 copies of these discs have been sold around the world.

GamuT D200 – available with silver or black fronts, with or without handles

CRITICISMS

AMPspeaker, the manufacturer, has responded to the critical comments about appearance and has launched a choice of silver and black fronts, with or without handles, to match a wider range of owners' equipment. One thing is not "improved" though. The price is still £2995.

"This GamuT amplifier combines Naim-style timing with Levinson-style power and resolution. It may not look like much for the money, but it sounds like a bargain."

registers and detail in the higher ones, with a fluid midband, that's apparently transparent to whatever's coming down the line.

"The GamuT D 200 offers a unique amalgamation of many hifi virtues, such as timing and resolution, which are normally single facets of an amp's performance. Combined, the B&W N802 and GamuT D 200 showed why it is worth saving up for top notch hifi: lack of colouration.

"In both cases they domesticate the best parts of a studio monitor characteristic, which is neutrality. They prove that true neutrality is difficult and therefore expensive to achieve."

STUDIO ORIGINS

GamuT amplifiers were originally developed for heavy duty professional recording studio use. They have been the driving force behind famous CDs and LPs like:

- "Faith" by George Michael (was no.1 for the year in the US.)
- "Sleeping with the past" including "Sacrifice" by Elton John (his first UK no. 1)

HiFi News wrote: "What better test of dynamics than the Panufnik Concertino for timpani, percussion and strings. Most amps bottle-out into the ATC loudspeakers if you try to play the Panufnik at impressive sound levels, but not the GamuT D 200. It managed the not inconsiderable peak levels with aplomb, holding the bass units in a vice-like grip, to define clearly each drum tap.

"Through all types of music the GamuT D 200 shows spectacular three dimensional layering of the stereo sound stage." and... "excellent retrieval of ambience and an accurate rendering of the space around instruments.

"Those wishing to squeeze every ounce of detail out of a recording, as well as realise its full dynamic range, will find the GamuT D 200 hits the target."

GamuT D200 amplifiers have been purchased for reference and test use by these famous companies:

- dCS** – manufacturer of the dCS Elgar d/a converter. (Component of the Year 1997 in Stereophile magazine)
- Audio Physic** – manufacturer of the Medea loudspeaker. (Medea is the main reference in Stereo magazine, Germany)
- Peerless Loudspeakers** – world famous for their loudspeaker drive units.
- Avance Loudspeakers** – famous for home theatre loudspeakers in the US.
- Gradient Loudspeakers** – highly regarded by Stereophile and the absolute sound.

Why Gamut?

"the entire range of musical notes" Webster's dictionary

The amplifiers were originally known and reviewed under the name Sirius.

Manufactured by AMPspeaker ApS, Denmark. Tel int +45 56148585, Fax int +45 56148583, www.ampspeaker.com
UK Distributor : RT Services
 Tel: 01235 810455/fax: 01235 810324

EISA AWARDS

AMPLIFIER TAG MCLAREN AUDIO 60i Rv



TAG McLaren Audio has succeeded in developing an extremely refined integrated amplifier that combines truly high-end technology, high quality components and engineering and, most important, audiophile sound – all at a reasonable price. It comes with remote control and can serve as a standalone preamplifier or be incorporated in multi-channel and multi-room systems. Its sound is characterised by transparency, lightness of touch and a lucid, open delivery.

AUDIO RECORDER PHILIPS CDR-950C



Compiling your own CDs is becoming increasingly popular and the Philips CDR-950C makes it as easy as recording a cassette. Just push the button and the result is a bit-for-bit copy of a CD or your favourite tracks from different CDs (even HDCD discs).

Not only is the recording quality stunning, playback is now in the same league as that of regular CD players. The CDR-950C is an exceptional audio recorder with a rich, detailed and natural sound.

CAR AUDIO JVC KD-LX3R

The KD-LX3R from JVC – with its 'flat face' nickname – represents an exciting new approach to displaying information, theft deterrence and user convenience.

To the outside world, the front panel of this car CD receiver

changes from a completely black face when switched off to a vivid, highly informative screen when switched on. The owner doesn't have to carry a front panel, and further protection is ensured by a user-selectable password.



AV DESIGN GRUNDIG Fine Arts



The new Grundig home entertainment line is not only one of the best styled AV systems of recent times, it's also one of the most versatile. The design is very user-friendly. A two-way RF remote

handset controls the TV and built-in DVD player as well as the hi-fi system, the latter combining CD with analogue and digital tuners. Active speakers are wireless and thus offer easy to install multi-room options.

BEST OF THE BEST '99

Sony, Arcam, Rotel, Pioneer, Heybrook, Kimber & Creek all received the most 'Best Buy' awards throughout the year

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EISA AWARDS

HIGH END AUDIO **B&W NAUTILUS** 802



With the Nautilus 802, B&W has succeeded in condensing the exceptional technology and experience of its Nautilus 801 into a loudspeaker system of the highest quality, but at a lower price and smaller size. As a result, music lovers

can now experience at home the astonishing sound quality of the recording studio.

This speaker shows how to combine electrostatic transparency with horn dynamics and cut out coloration in the process.

COMPACT SYSTEM **DENON** SYSTEM 6.5

Denon's System 6.5 is a high quality compact system that competes not only with other such systems but also holds its own against separate components at similar and higher price levels.

It performs like a dream in either

large or small rooms, with precise sound reproduction even at higher volume levels. Overall, Denon has created a system with excellent build quality and first-rate sound which should appeal to a wide range of listeners.



CD PLAYER **ROTEL** RCD-971

The Rotel RCD-971 is excellent value. Its circuitry combines a digital filter with HDCD decoding and outstanding D/A converters normally used in far more expensive players. The analogue output components are built around expensive

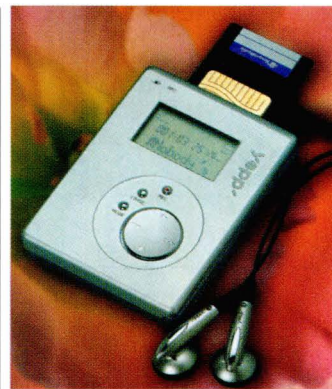
and carefully selected audiophile-grade components, while the power supply uses a very efficient transformer designed and produced by Rotel exclusively for this model. The RCD-971 also has a clear, incisive and very dynamic sound.



INTERNET AUDIO **SAMSUNG** YEPP YP-E32

Downloading from the Internet is made easier thanks to MP3 (MPEG-1 layer 3), a long established format in professional audio. The 'Yepp' is one of the first 'solid state audio' devices to make use of this system, which allows the user to record and play 'tracks' from the built-in flash memory and interchangeable 'Yepp card'.

The Samsung player comes with plug-and-play software for the PC and is ready to download or upload tracks from the Net.



LOUDSPEAKER **DYNAUDIO** AUDIENCE 40

Dynaudio has succeeded in implementing a wide range of sonic qualities in a small two-way loudspeaker at a reasonable price. High quality parts and the tremendous know-how of this Danish manufacturer make the Audience 40 a

clear winner. A speaker that fits in any environment and produces deep and powerful bass, few if any others of a similar price and size can offer the same winning combination of neutrality, dynamic range and sheer musical involvement.



INSTANT SYSTEMS

AVI/MYRYAD £3,897.00 + cables

There's more common ground and potential synergy between Myryad's mainstream, silver-faced CD player and AVI's keenly matched all-black, compactly packaged 'budget high-end' amp-speaker combo than you might imagine.

AVI's S2000MP preamp (£949 line-level, £1,149 with MM or MC phono stage) is one of those products often cited as an exemplar of the solid-state breed. Subjectively, it's what all good preamps should be — seen and not heard; transparent to the point of invisibility.

This would be a good preamp in any system but it just so happens that AVI makes a pair of matching monoblock power amps £1,399. That's reasonable when you consider that each one pumps out 150 Watts into eight Ohms, 225 Watts into four Ohms.

AVI's slim reflex box speakers are the £949 Positrons. Essentially, they're the floorstanding version of the excellent NuNeutron mini

monitor, except they use a higher quality 140mm bass/mid driver from Vifa to complement the 28mm Scanspeak soft-dome tweeter in a 12-rather than five-litre ported enclosure. The Positrons projected a big, ballsy 3D sound with a surprisingly forceful — if not very extended — bass that could become boomy with some material.

We could have had a ball with the hugely capable AVI S2000MC2 CD player (£899) making an enjoyable and user friendly all-AVI ensemble. Many have. As classic fit-and-forget one-make systems go, AVI ranks among the very best. But for some tastes it's a little too in-yr-face and unromantic.

The Myryad T20 (£600) opened my eyes. Ironically, when paired with its matching T-40 integrated amp, the

T-20 comes across as a little too 'nice' to be convincing. But what this 20-bit delta-sigma DAC equipped player does have in spades

is poise, transparency, focus and an open, fluid midband. It isn't muscular sounding, but the utterly revealing nature of the AVI amps and speakers did expose a tauter and more articulate bass than expected.

In an overall

system context, the Myryad CD player brings both greater insight and a less tense demeanour to the party, improving long-term listenability with only a small diminution of perceived power and slam. Sonically, it works.

Just make sure you order your T-20 in black.

AVI

☎ (01453) 765682

Myryad

☎ (01705) 265508

Reviewed in HFC 186



ACOUSTIC PRECISION/BRYSTON/PMC £4,321.00 + cables

Instead of asking a dealer for recommendations, this time we went direct to a manufacturer for a rather unusual combo.

The chosen system is from PMC, or The Professional Monitor Company. PMC's TB 1s are a two-way standmount speaker designed for the domestic market, and as a full review in HFC 160 revealed, it's capable of excellent sonic results.

PMC also acts as the UK distributor for Canadian amp specialist Bryston. The two companies have formed a close working relationship and PMC recommends the Canadian's product as a perfect match in the current-shifting department. PMC's suggested amp partnership takes a preamp and two small mono power

amp modules which bolt onto the back of the speakers.

Called Powerpac 60s, these £423 apiece 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. Second, there are sonic advantages in keeping cable length between amp and speakers to a minimum.

However interconnect cable runs are likely to be much longer between each power amp and Bryston's £1,125 BP-20 preamp.

PMC's choice of source forms the final, critical piece of the puzzle. Acoustic Precision's Eikos CD player, once described by our Editor as "the best source component I've heard to date". A Pioneer PD-S904 at birth, it

has since been enhanced beyond recognition by hi-fi miracle workers Tom Evans and Patrick Hanscombe to become a £2,350 player of supreme resolution and precision.

First impressions are of a wonderfully lucid sound, like dipping your ear into a pool of crisp, fresh sound. Bass is perhaps a touch indistinct and the mid-balance a little forward, but there's no sign of grain or gristle — just cool, liquid treble and vivid transparency.

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 presence.

Play more laid back music and this system is almost breathtaking. Space and definition are foremost among its talents while vocals are bold yet unstrained. There are times, however, when the total effect becomes somewhat dry and hard, particularly with more dense or aggressive material.

Nonetheless, it's 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.

Acoustic Precision

☎ (01443) 833570

PMC ☎ (01707) 393002

Reviewed in HFC 187



ADVANTAGE/AUDIO PHYSIC/WADIA £6,849

Imagine a customer with a provisional budget of around £7,000, give or take a few bob. He or she has varied music tastes and requires a CD-based system for use in a smallish room.

This system is put together by Jeremy Baldwin of The Right Note and simply represents a starting point for the high-end gear with which he deals.

Wadia is a US-based company of real distinction and much respected by those in the know. The Wadia 830 (£3,000) is its entry-level CD player, and while obvious savings have been made on the aesthetics it's a true high roller under the skin. A stable platter transport, multiple Burr-Brown DACs, temperature-stabilised clocking and a resonance-controlled cabinet combine to produce a thoroughly convincing musical performance.

Moving on through the system, our journey happens upon its most obvious hook — the omission of a preamplifier. By removing this link from the chain, the signal's path is made more direct and, in theory, higher sound quality results. That leaves us with just a power amp, the

Advantage A300 (£2,550) — a Swedish 175 Watt power house, with class-A operation, over-sized transformers and MOSFET transistors.

The system's final component touch is German — a pair of Step speakers from Audio Physic (£1,299 including stands) designed to deliver no-compromise performance in a 'small listening room' scenario. They're rather fussy about placement, preferring free space and relatively close proximity to the listener, but their performance when placed on Audio Physic's open-frame stands is still exceptionally pleasing.

The shocking thing, considering the diminutive size of the speakers,

is the utterly convincing scope of its soundstage — just close your eyes and listen. Music spreads far and wide, seeming to stretch beyond the cabinets and even room boundaries, creating such an illusion of three-dimensional space that, upon opening your eyes, it takes a couple of blinks just to re-orientate yourself. Ultimate bass depth is naturally constrained by the speakers' size, although the impression you get is anything but lightweight.

This isn't a system that seeks to wow the listener with massive dynamic peaks and thunderous ability at high volume, but in its own context it comes perilously close to perfection. Nothing too soft, nor too hard; sweetness and bite in equal measure, in fact.

It's a step up the ladder towards sonic Utopia, and as a CD-based system for small room use, this outfit gets closer than almost anything else I've heard. Bliss.

The Right Note ☎ (01225) 874728
Reviewed in HFC 189



B&W/DENSEN/MERIDIAN £5,946.50

Ah, the truth that's what we all crave in the end. Faithful and precise reproduction of our favourite music from the first note to the last.

The components, chosen here by Infidelity, are a juicy cut of Danish sandwiched between two slices of English excellence.

The guys selected Meridian's 508.24 CD player (£1,995), complete with a 24-bit-capable DAC hidden within its brick-like casing. The player's performance is every bit

Meridian, its smooth and delicate signature making a consummately civilised impression.

From Cambridgeshire to Esbjerg, Denmark, and the fine amplifiers of Densen Audio Technologies. This company's reputation for engaging gear gets stronger

every year, and the B-200 (£1,000) preamp featured here should further strengthen its singular UK image. It includes a dedicated processor input which can be switched in or out, plus four pre-outs, four line-level inputs and a pair of tape loops. When used with a

suitable two-channel power amp like Densen's own B-300 (£800) this makes for a potent combination, performance lacks a touch of delicacy but overall is musical and involving.

For the speakers it's back to the hallowed halls of B&W in West Sussex. The Nautilus 805 (£1,400) is the baby of the firm's universally-acclaimed high-end studio range, a 41 cm tall standmounter parading a remarkable level of engineering. Its sound is superbly clear and transparent, with the

sort of dynamic accuracy few speakers this size can even dream of.

B&W makes its own stand for the Nautilus 805, but Infidelity recommended we try one from an independent maker, HNE's Cableway 805 (£585). This version is 62cm tall on its spikes, and comes with a Nautilus-style base and top plate.

Infidelity's choice of cables is unusual, pitching Nordost's well-regarded Blue Heaven interconnects (£145) with bi-wire runs of Naim's NAC A5 speaker cable (£5.50/m).

At its best it sounds superbly transparent and box-free, able to suspend music in space and convey tonal contrasts in pure, unsullied fashion. The soundstage is so vivid you feel you could dive right in.

It's fast without being forced, endowed with the kind of mid-treble coherence and resolving power that makes you feel privy to the slightest recorded nuance. But when I tried some more beat-driven stuff it grabbed me less, its performance seeming to harden up and lose some heart and soul.

It's magical with voices and musically compelling, although its involving qualities are diminished if heavy bass lines and driving beats are called into the equation.

Infidelity ☎ (0181) 943 3530
Reviewed in HFC 192



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INSTANT SYSTEMS

CAMBRIDGE/JPW/PIONEER/SONY £702.00

Here's a solid, entry-level separates set-up, a classic 'student system' from Richer Sounds, the bargain-basement retail chain. This blockbusting budget set-up costs a pint over £700 for CD player, MiniDisc recorder, amp, speakers, stands and all cables.

CD source is the CD4SE from Cambridge Audio, probably the best player around for less than £200. OK, aesthetically it's a little

cheap and nasty, but the money has been spent where it counts, with Philips' respected CD12 transport and a pair of Crystal CS4327 DACs helping to put its sound comfortably above the budget pack.

The system's second source is Sony's £200 MDS-JB920 MD recorder (HFC 184), reflecting the format's hard-won popularity as a recording medium. There's no better machine to

show off MD's strengths, it's packed with features and is a joy to use.

Both sources hook up to Pioneer's A-300R amp (£120, HFC 149). Performance is fresh and vital allied with smart build and a flexible array of facilities. The volume is controllable via the supplied remote handset, and there are sockets for up to six sources including two tape loops and an MM phono input.

For speakers Richer Sounds recommends JPW's ML510 (see HFC 169), a budget box (£70) similar in character to Pioneer's sparky amp, supported by Atacama SE24 stands (£70).

And now to cables, the vital last link in the chain. We're using XL315BW bi-wire speaker cable from Gale (£4/m), and three pairs of Cambridge Audio Pacific interconnects (£90/m pair).

At its best this system is sheer budget genius. Slip a

clean and smooth-sounding CD into the CD4SE's drawer and you'd be hard pushed to find a sound that comes close for the money. It's so taught, crisp and communicative you'd think the system costs considerably more. There may be no real bass weight on offer, but the zest with which it delivers the music more than compensates, giving instruments real zip and sparkle. Orchestral pieces sound clear and well separated, while cleanly-recorded acoustic material is conveyed with more ambient detail than is usual at this price.

But things don't always sound so good. If a disc's sound is rough or 'toppy', the system emphasises its harshness and can border on the unpleasant.

More consistent is the quality of recordings made via the Sony MD recorder. It produces impressively faithful copies from CD, and adds greatly to the value of this set-up for anyone interested in making their own compilations. A whiff of high-end sound at a fraction of the price. *Richer Sounds* ☎ (0500) 101112 *Reviewed in HFC 194*



MYRYAD/RUARK £2,968.50

Cambridge-based dealer Systems Specialists in Sound have come up with a stylish high-end CD-based system that won't break the bank.

The system's source is Myryad's MC100 CD player (£700), a 24-bit player with a centrally-mounted transport mechanism. At the rear there's a coaxial digital output and a data-bus connection called 'My-Link', enabling synchronisation with the MI120 integrated amplifier.

The Myryad MI120 (£599) is a fully integrated

amp with four line-level inputs, two tape loops, one with off-tape monitoring, and a headphone socket. It's rated at 60 Watts per channel into eight Ohms and includes a 'pre-amplifier' output for a separate power amplifier, as in this set-up.

Myryad's MA120 power amp (£480) has a similar design specification to the MI120 and the company recommends using the MA120 to drive the tweeters in a bi-amped configuration, which it claims offers a cleaner sound.

For speakers, Systems Specialists in Sound chose Ruark's Prologue

One (£899). A two-way floorstander, it employs a twin, 140mm, treated paper cone mid/bass driver arrangement with an offset 28mm silk fabric dome tweeter. The model we used came mass loaded, as recommended by Ruark, for maximum stability and improved bass and imaging.

All cabling came from SonicLink with two pairs of SonicLink Violet interconnects (£85) and bi-wired SonicLink AST200 speaker cable (£59.50/5m pair).

The system's strengths are most apparent with well recorded and produced material. Classical, jazz and acoustic recordings are handled with tremendous agility. Soundstaging is wide and deep, with imagery and positioning so solid you feel you can walk around it. This is a notable quality of the speakers and is undoubtedly aided here by the bi-amping.

However, this system has sophisticated taste. Put on a CD with

heavy or less refined production and it's likely to reveal more than perhaps you or the producers had hoped. It has a tendency to highlight the less appealing elements of cruder recordings.

The midband forwardness gets you closer to the music, but there are likely to be some recordings you just won't want to get that acquainted with. Upbeat tracks can pack a real bass punch, but at times seemed to wander and lacked a sense of control on pumping dance beats.

This is a stylish and sonically compelling system that gets you closer to the music, revealing intricacies that are usually masked but is a bit too revealing on lesser recordings.

SSiS
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Reviewed in HFC 195



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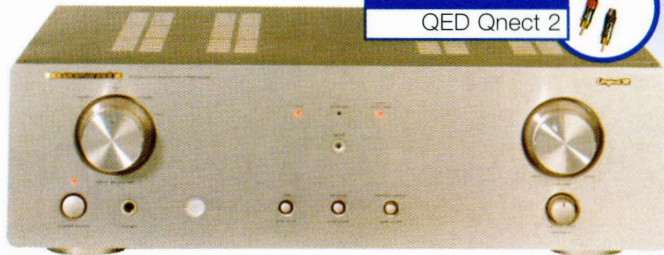


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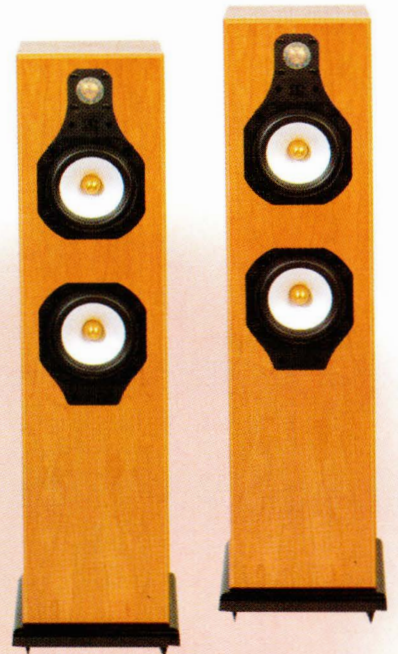
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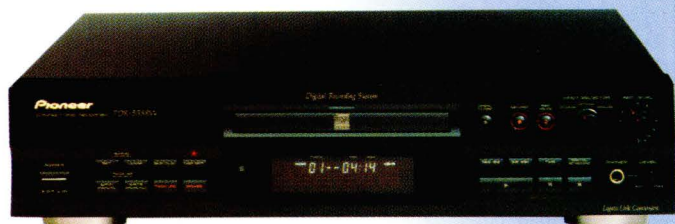
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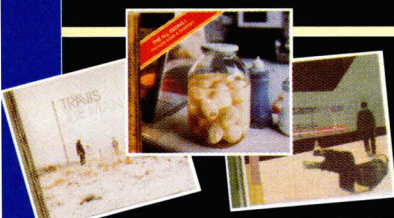
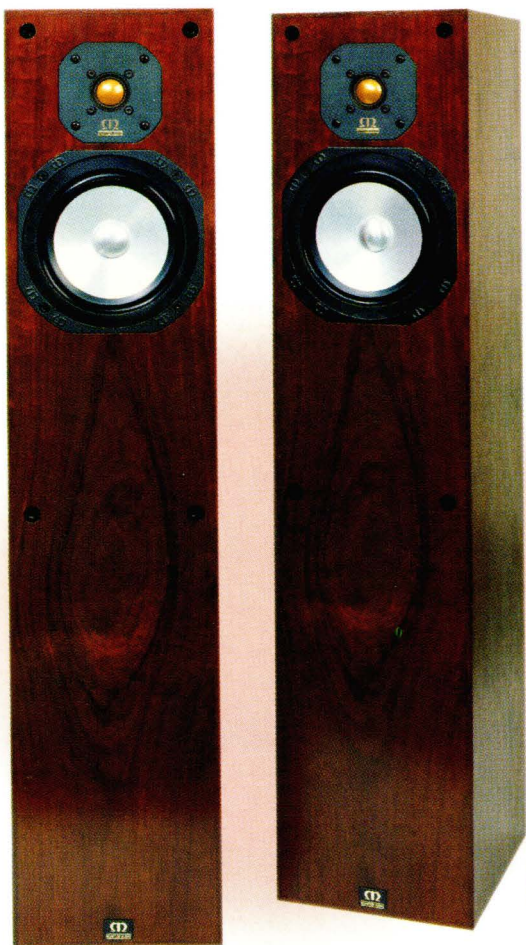


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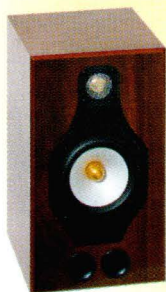
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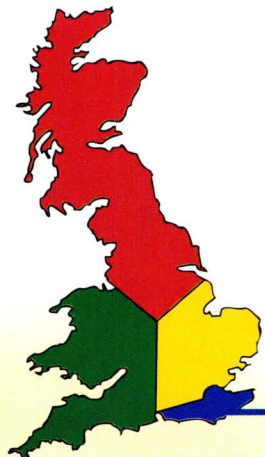
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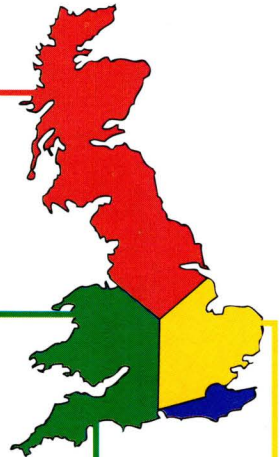
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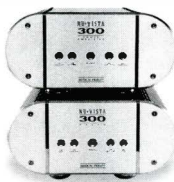
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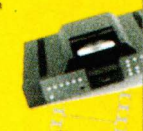
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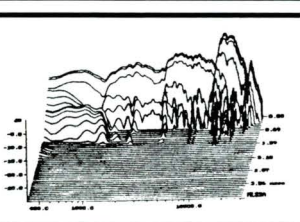
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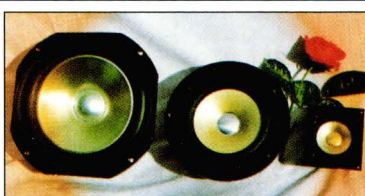
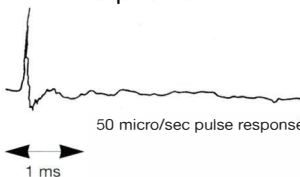
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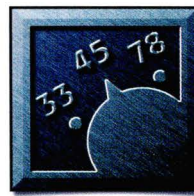
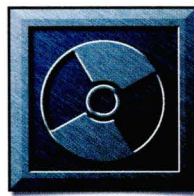
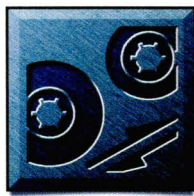
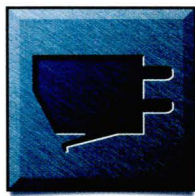
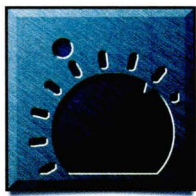
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● Kelly KT2 with spikes! £550. Arcam 290/290P, £300. Aiwa XK-009 Excilia cassette deck, £125. Call Ken (0181) 933 1141.

● Kestrel speakers, unused, boxed with base plates, black ash, £250. Yamaha DSP-E492 AV processor/amp, unused, £125. Call (01442) 822707.

● Linn Isobarik loudspeakers in good condition, reluctantly being sold to accommodate wife. Fabulous sound, £500 ono. Call (0171) 263 1804.

● Linn Sondek LP12, Ekos arm, Troika cartridge and table. Excellent condition, little used, £1,075.00. Call (01622) 690191.

● Loudspeakers: B&W 930, £285. KEF K1, £95. Sony 94/95, £175. All as new. Call (01273) 416151.

● Marantz CD63 SE, excellent

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condition, £165 ono. Castle Durham 900 speakers with stands, ex. cond., £175 ono. Denon TU260 tuner, ex. cond., £60. Call (01724) 853584.

● Marantz Model 7 (original) classic tube preamplifier. Good condition and working, 240V model with full gamut of facilities. - £2,000. Marantz Model 9 power amplifier. Pentode P-P design - £1,200. Call (0171) 917 7746 daytime.

● Meridian: 501 preamp, M20 active speakers, 506 (used as transport), 566-20 DAC, 504 tuner (new), vdH interconnects. Call (01425) 655940 for more details.

● Meridian 501 preamp inc. remote, £395. Sony TC-K590 3-head cassette, £125. Heybrook HB3/2 plus HBS3 stands, £200. Call (01926) 740254.

● Meridian 506 20-bit CD player with MSR remote control. Six months old, perfect condition, boxed, manuals, £700 ono. Call (01372) 742477 (eves).

● Meridian 605 monoblock amps (150W/channel), balanced, £750. Call (01703) 561132.

● Michell Gyrodec, bronze, £495. Michell QC power supply, £280. Naim NAT01 tuner, £920. All immaculate condition and boxed. Call (01843) 593958.

● Michell Gyrodec QC PSU/MC2SE/RB300, £750. Acoustic Energy AE111 including AE1 stands, £650. Call (01484) 427426.

● Musical Fidelity E100 amplifier, £325. Rega Radio, £110. Thorens TD160, £45. Goldring Elan, unused, £15. Call Malcolm Lee (01274) 582266 x2321 (day)/(0161) 633 6130 (eve).

● Musical Fidelity X-LP phono, X-PSU power supply, five months' old, mint, boxed, instructions and receipts, £75 each. Call (01603) 456312 after 6pm.

● NAD S500 Silverline CD, three months old, £700 - see November issue, p45. Call (0115) 953 0960.

● Naim NAC 42.5 (recond.) preamp,

£125 ono. Flatcap power supply, £260 ono. Nait 2 amp, £225. Linn Troika cartridge, £145 ono. Dynaudio Audience 50 speakers £425 ono. Call (0118) 946 1132 (E)/(0118) 958 5463.

● Naim NAC92R remote preamp, mint, six months' use. Boxed, as new, with instructions. (£670 new) £430 ono. Call (0151) 724 3776.

● Naim Nait 2 amplifier complete with Naim speaker leads and two Chord interconnects, £250. Call (02392) 470123 (Portsmouth).

● Naim top of the range preamp and power supply NAC52 + remote, £2,200. Supercap, £1,750. Both immaculate, any demonstration. Call (07970) 893712.

● Philips CD850 Mk2, mint and boxed, very low use. Cost £400, will sell for £100. Could post. Call (01278) 782622.

● Pioneer PD91 CD player, owner from new, £400 - no offers. Call (01708) 457691.

● ProAc Studio 150 floorstanders, mahogany, two years old, (£1,400) asking £800. Excellent condition. Call Davey (0181) 845 2387 (eves).

● Quad 33/303, £160. Yamaha CA610 amplifier, £45. Yamaha NSC110 centre speaker, £50. Call (01708) 457691.

● Quad 4051 power amp, £190. Also 33 preamp, £50 (£220 for both). No offers. Call (01524) 69816.

● Rega XEL speakers, four years' old, as new condition, little used, £595. Townshend Seismic Sink, £95. Call (0161) 337 0024.

● Revox B250 S amplifier, 120 Watts per channel, full remote control, unique features, more than £1,500 new, asking £475. Musical Fidelity X-Pre, £125. Call (01621) 772884.

● Rotel RCD-971, £259. Pioneer A300R Precision, Tom Evans, £320. Sony CDP920E, £175. Moth 30, £150. DNM spkr cable, £5.50/m. SME 309

tonearm, £450. Call (01582) 724414.

● Rotel RCD-965BX CD player with Discrete upgrade, £110. Heybrook Trio speakers, Walnut with S1 stands, £150. All boxed. Call (01235) 768415.

● Sony champagne shoebox separates, CDP-X3000ES, TAF-3000ES, both as new, HFC Best Buys. Accept £450 including interconnect. Call Andy (07974) 214055.

● Sony MDS-JA20ES MiniDisc deck, very sophisticated model. Unwanted gift, brand new in sealed box with proof of purchase, (£500) £380 ono. Call (01305) 266174.

● Spondor SP1/2 speakers plus stands, quality speakers, fine sound, reasonable condition, £200. Call (0181) 994 6976.

● Stax Omega II Earspeakers + SRM-007t Energiser, £2,650. Meridian 500 CD transport + remote, £700, 562v/157 multimedia controller, £675, all mint condition. Call (01274) 877646.

● Yamaha KX580SE cassette, £110. AR R/C tuner, £55. NAD 402 tuner, £75. Rotel RCD865, £65. Call (0121) 246 0486.

WANTED

● MSB Link DAC, Rega RB250/300 arm, Walker CJ55 turntable motor. Call (01642) 594645.

● Quad FM2 valve tuner with own power supply, or similar Armstrong, Pye, Rogers, Radford, Dynatron, Heathkit. Call (01202) 481386.

● Quadraphonic headphones, also Quadraphonic records, Technics SB30 speakers, Sony E55 speakers, hi-fi mags/brochures 1970-78. Call (0181) 281 0029.



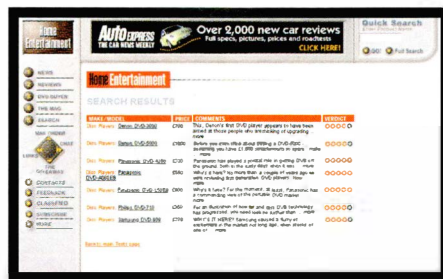
BUYING TIPS

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 second-hand 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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HOW TO USE THE BUYERS' GUIDE

Best Buys, Recommendations & Editor's Choices

B BEST BUYS: Awarded to group-tested products which display an unbeatable blend of performance and value for money.

R RECOMMENDED: Top performers in group tests: perhaps not the cheapest but possibly more sophisticated than Best Buys.

E EDITOR'S CHOICE: 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.

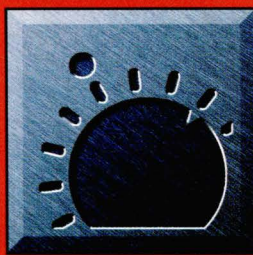
STEP 1 DISCOVER which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide, which starts on this page. The product listing is updated using manufacturers' data every other month, and aims to include every hi-fi component currently available in the UK. (But please fax us on 0171-917 5512 with any 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!

DIRECTORY INDEX

ITEM	PAGE NUMBER
PRICE GUIDE	118
REVIEWED PRODUCTS	
INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS	130
PREAMPLIFIERS	132
POWER AMPLIFIERS	132
CABLES	
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS	133
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS	134
LOUDSPEAKER CABLES	134
CARTRIDGES	135
CASSETTE DECKS	136
CD PLAYERS	137
CD TRANSPORTS	138
DACS	139
DVD PLAYERS	139
DIGITAL RECORDERS	139
HEADPHONES	140
LOUDSPEAKERS	141
SUBWOOFERS	143
STANDS & SUPPORTS	144
TONEARMS	145
TUNERS	145
TURNTABLES	146
FACTSBACK SERVICE	153



AMPLIFIERS INTEGRATED

KEY

⓪ - Number of line-level inputs.
'20W' - Rated RMS output power per channel into nominal load of 8 Ohms.

UP TO £250

Arcam Alpha One	⓪	35W	230
Ariston AX910	⓪	30W	60
Cambridge A1 Mk III	⓪	30W	100
Cambridge A1 MK3 SE	⓪	30W	120
Cambridge A100	⓪	40W	140
Cambridge A300	⓪	40W	150
Cambridge A3i	⓪	60W	200
Cambridge A500RC	⓪	75W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	⓪	30W	140
Denon PMA-350SE	⓪	50W	180
Denon PMA-535R	⓪	50W	230
Denon PMA-100M	⓪	80W	240
Goodmans Delta 900A	⓪	100W	130
H/K HK630	⓪	40W	200
H/K HK3270	⓪	65W	250
JVC AX-A372BK	⓪	40W	200
JVC AX-R5BK	⓪	45W	200
Kenwood KA-1080	⓪	60W	140
Kenwood KA-3080R	⓪	70W	170
Kenwood KAF-3010R	⓪	70W	180
Marantz PM-48	⓪	50W	150
Marantz PM-57	⓪	50W	200
Marantz SR-47	⓪	40W	200
Marantz PM6010 OSE	⓪	65W	230
Marantz PM-66SE	⓪	50W	230
Musical Fidelity E1	⓪	30W	199
NAD 310	⓪	20W	100
NAD C320	⓪	40W	200
NAD 312	⓪	25W	200
Pioneer A-105	⓪	30W	130
Pioneer A-204R	⓪	25W	160
Pioneer A-300R	⓪	50W	200
Pioneer A-305R	⓪	50W	200
Pioneer A-407R	⓪	45W	230
Pioneer A-405R	⓪	45W	250
Rotel RA921	⓪	20W	100
Rotel RA931	⓪	35W	150
Rotel RA971 Mk II	⓪	70W	250
Sansui AUX-410R	⓪	50W	150
Sansui AUX-510R	⓪	70W	230
Sherwood AX 4050R	⓪	50W	150
Sherwood AX-7030R	⓪	95W	230
Sony TA-FE230	⓪	40W	100
Sony TA-FE330R	⓪	60W	130
Sony TA-FB730R	⓪	40W	200
Teac AE-2000	⓪	50W	180
Teac A-R600	⓪	90W	200
Technics SU-V300	⓪	25W	130
Technics SU-V500	⓪	30W	160
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	⓪	37W	200
Technics SU-V620	⓪	70W	230
Technics SU-A707	⓪	70W	250
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	⓪	45W	250
Yamaha AX-392	⓪	60W	170
Yamaha AX-9	⓪	50W	200
Yamaha AX-492	⓪	85W	220

£251 TO £500

Arcam Alpha 7R	⓪	40W	300
Arcam Alpha 8R	⓪	50W	380
Arcam Alpha 9	⓪	70W	500
Audio Analogue Puccini	⓪	40W	475
Audioagram MB1	⓪	40W	493
Creek 4330	⓪	40W	279
Creek 4330R	⓪	40W	355
Creek 5250	⓪	50W	450
Cymbal CA1	⓪	40W	499
Denon PMA-735R	⓪	65W	300
Denon PMA-1500R	⓪	70W	500
Edmund Audio ES110	⓪	85W	400
EMF Audio Sequel	⓪	50W	450
H/K HK650	⓪	60W	330
Kenwood KA-5090R	⓪	65W	300
Magnum IA120	⓪	65W	265
Magnum IA170	⓪	96W	330
Magnum IA170SE	⓪	90W	430
Marantz PM-68	⓪	90W	300
Marantz PM-66 Kl Sig	⓪	50W	400
Monrio Asty	⓪	55W	400

Musical Fidelity E11	⓪	60W	300
Musical Fidelity X-A1	⓪	50W	480
Musical Fidelity A2	⓪	25W	500
Myryad T-40	⓪	50W	400
NAD 314	⓪	35W	260
NAD C340	⓪	50W	270
NAD 317	⓪	80W	470
Onkyo A9210	⓪	40W	260
Onkyo A921	⓪	50W	350
Onkyo A922	⓪	70W	400
Pioneer A-607R	⓪	60W	300
Pioneer A-400X	⓪	50W	300
Pioneer A-605R	⓪	80W	400
Pioneer A-300R Precision	⓪	35W	400
Rega Big Brio	⓪	35W	298
Rega Luna	⓪	40W	375
Rega Mira	⓪	60W	450
Roksan Kandy	⓪	40W	475
Shearpe 2.5	⓪	35W	499
Sony TA-FB920R	⓪	65W	300
Sony TA-FA30ES	⓪	70W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	⓪	40W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	⓪	50W	500
Teac AH-500	⓪	50W	280
Technics SU-A808	⓪	80W	300
Technics SU-A909	⓪	100W	400
Thule Audio Spirit IA60	⓪	60W	449
Token K50	⓪	55W	350
Yamaha AX-592	⓪	100W	280

£501 TO £700

Alchemist Kraken APD6A	⓪	55W	600
Alchemist Nemesis	⓪	80W	700
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	⓪	40W	635
Audio Note Kanji Line SE	⓪	9W	699
Audio Note First integrated	⓪	40W	699
Audioagram MB2	⓪	60W	599
CR Dev CR324se	⓪	150W	569
CR Dev Kalypos	⓪	15W	599
CR Dev CR325	⓪	175W	699
Creek 5250SE	⓪	60W	665
Cyrus IIIi	⓪	50W	598
Cyrus 7	⓪	130W	700
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	⓪	60W	650
Gamma Gemini	⓪	12W	699
H/K HK690	⓪	100W	530
Hi Q Sound MCI	⓪	30W	565
LFD Integrated 0	⓪	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	⓪	33W	650
Lynwood Opal	⓪	80W	685
Magnum IA200	⓪	100W	599
Magnum Class A	⓪	85W	690
Musical Fidelity A220	⓪	50W	700
Myryad MI 120	⓪	60W	700
Naim Nat 3	⓪	30W	590
Primare A20 Mk II	⓪	70W	600
Rose Sion	⓪	65W	615
Shearpe Phase 2	⓪	50W	689
Sugden Audition T	⓪	65W	549
Talk Electronics Cyclone 1	⓪	65W	550
Talk Electronics Storm 2	⓪	50W	650
Teac AB-X7R	⓪	50W	700
Thule Audio Spirit IA100	⓪	100W	600
Thule Audio Spirit IA60B	⓪	60W	699
YBA Complete Integre	⓪	50W	699

£701 TO £1,000

Alchemist Nexus	⓪		799
Alchemist Forseti Integrated	⓪	100W	1,000
Arcam Alpha 10	⓪	100W	800
Aria S2	⓪	12W	1,000
Audio Note Oto Line PP	⓪	12W	950
AVI S2000MI	⓪	100W	999
Copland CSA8	⓪	60W	899
Credo IMP702	⓪	70W	850
Credo IMP703	⓪	70W	1,000
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	⓪	50W	995
Exposure XX Super	⓪	60W	800
Exposure XV Super	⓪	60W	900
Exposure RCOV	⓪	60W	1,000
LFD 0 LE Integrated	⓪	60W	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	⓪	33W	800
Magnum Class A SE	⓪	80W	795
Marantz PM-17	⓪	60W	900
Meridian 551	⓪	55W	795
Musical Fidelity A3	⓪	85W	849
Musical Fidelity X-A100R	⓪	75W	999
Naim Nat 3 R	⓪	30W	780
Opera Aida	⓪	60W	795
Pioneer A-07	⓪	80W	999
Plinius 21 00i	⓪		995
Roksan Caspian	⓪	70W	795
Shearpe Phase 2 Reference	⓪	50W	799
Sonneteer Alabaster	⓪	50W	900
Sugden A21a Int	⓪	25W	799
Sugden Audition C	⓪	60W	799
TAG McLaren 60i	⓪	60W	800
TAG McLaren 60RV	⓪	60W	999
Thule Audio Spirit IA150B	⓪	150W	999

£1,001 TO £2,000

Aria Simply Four P	⓪	24W	1,595
Aria Simply Four T	⓪	11W	1,650
ATC SIA2-150	⓪	150W	1,984
Audio Note Soro Line PP	⓪	20W	1,200

Audio Note Oto Line SE	ⓐ	12W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Phono SE	ⓐ	12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE		18W	1,699
Audio Valve Assistant-S 20	ⓐ	20W	1,250
BB Audio BB 30-60	ⓐ	30W	1,495
Beam-Echo SA-50	ⓐ	50W	1,950
Bow Technologies Wazoo	ⓐ	50W	1,795
Bryston B-60	ⓐ	60W	1,281
Copland CSA14	ⓐ	60W	1,199
Copland CSA28	ⓐ	60W	1,249
Copland CTA402	ⓐ	35W	1,698
CR Dev Romulus V3	ⓐ	35W	1,198
CR Dev Athena	ⓐ	38W	1,499
CR Dev Remus V3	ⓐ	60W	1,989
Credo LIM 702			
Credo LIM 703			
Densen DM-I 0	ⓐ	75W	1,375
EAR 859	ⓐ	13W	1,999
EAR 834	ⓐ	40W	1,999
Golden Tube Audio SI-50 MkII	ⓐ	50W	1,100
Graaf Ventiquaque	ⓐ	20W	1,790
Jadis Orchestra	ⓐ		1,345
LFD Integrated 1	ⓐ	65W	1,099
Marantz PM-17K1 Sig	ⓐ	60W	1,300
Meracur Intrare	ⓐ	60W	1,095
NAD S300	ⓐ	100W	1,900
Papworth MIH-200	ⓐ	200W	1,200
Papworth MVH-200	ⓐ	200W	1,200
Plinius 8150	ⓐ		1,895
Practica Sonoro	ⓐ	100W	1,800
Primare AS0.1	ⓐ	100W	1,500
Restek Fantasy 2	ⓐ	100W	1,499
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	ⓐ	25W	1,299
T+A R1200R	ⓐ	90W	1,750
Thule Audio Space IA250B	ⓐ	250W	1,799
Woodside ISA230 Line	ⓐ	30W	1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	ⓐ	30W	1,249
YBA a Intégré Line	ⓐ	50W	1,095
YBA a Intégré DT Line	ⓐ	50W	1,395

OVER £2,000

Adyton Opera	ⓐ	50W	2,595
AMP Flux System 2	ⓐ	50W	3,000
Aria Simply 845	ⓐ	24W	3,195
Art Audio Integra		25W	2,400
Audio Note Meishu Line	ⓐ	9W	2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	ⓐ	26W	56,000
Audio Research CA50	ⓐ		3,399
Belcanto SET140		40W	4,450
Belcanto Orfeo 30SI		35W	5,450
Cary CAD-300SE1	ⓐ	15W	3,395
Conrad-Johnson CAV-50	ⓐ	50W	2,495
EAR V20	ⓐ	24W	2,495
Electrocompaniet EC1-1	ⓐ	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm	ⓐ	18W	2,499
Gamma Rhythm Ref	ⓐ	20W	3,499
Gamma Moment	ⓐ	40W	19,999
Jadis DA30	ⓐ	30W	2,690
Jadis DA60	ⓐ	60W	4,483
Krell KAV300i	ⓐ	150W	2,495
Krell KAV300r	ⓐ		3,333
Krell KAV500i	ⓐ	250W	5,000
McIntosh MA6400E	ⓐ	100W	3,999
McIntosh MA6800E	ⓐ	150W	5,999
Meracur Onesta	ⓐ	75W	2,595
Musical Fidelity A1001	ⓐ	200W	2,500
Pioneer A-09	ⓐ	45W	4,000
Rowland Concorata	ⓐ	100W	5,500
Sonus Faber Musica	ⓐ		2,295
T+A R1500R	ⓐ	135W	2,015
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Int.	ⓐ	30W	2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	ⓐ	150W	6,900
Wavac MD811	ⓐ	15W	2,995
Wavac MD300B-ST	ⓐ	10W	5,575
Wavac MD300B WE	ⓐ	10W	6,750

AMPLIFIERS PREAMPS

KEY

ⓐ (etc) - Number of line-level inputs.

Ph - Phono input fitted as standard

(may be an option on some other models).

UP TO £500

Arcam Alpha 9C	ⓐ		400
Aria Simply Phono		Ph	500
Audio Analogue Bellini	ⓐ	Ph	495
Audio Note M Zero	ⓐ		299
Beam-Echo PP-21	ⓐ	Ph	499
Bryston BP1	ⓐ	Ph	438
CR Dev Themis	ⓐ	Ph	349
Creek OBH-9			160
Creek P43/R	ⓐ	Ph	350
Creek P52	ⓐ	Ph	499
Crimson CS610C	ⓐ	Ph	450
Cyrus aEQ7	ⓐ	Ph	498
Densen DP-Drive/DP-02	ⓐ	Ph	350
DPA Enlightenment phono		Ph	275
EAR 834P	ⓐ	Ph	349
EAR 834L	ⓐ		449
EAR 834P/MC	ⓐ	Ph	499
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	ⓐ	Ph	495
Henley HMC50	ⓐ		150

Henley HMC100			350
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 Phono	ⓐ	Ph	249
Moth 30 Line stage	ⓐ		349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	ⓐ		120
Musical Fidelity X-LP	ⓐ	Ph	130
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	ⓐ		200
Musical Fidelity E20	ⓐ	Ph	400
NAD PP-1	ⓐ	Ph	40
NAD 114	ⓐ	Ph	470
NAD 116	ⓐ	Ph	230
Naim Prefix	ⓐ		360
Naim NAC92	ⓐ		485
NVA P50	ⓐ		350
Parasound P/HP-100	ⓐ	Ph	130
Parasound P/HP-850	ⓐ	Ph	400
Plinius Jarrah	ⓐ	Ph	450
QED Discsaver DS-1	ⓐ	Ph	35
Rega EOS	ⓐ	Ph	398
Rega Carta	ⓐ	Ph	450
Roksan Artaxerxes 10	ⓐ	Ph	395
Rose RV-23	ⓐ	Ph	450
Rotel RC970BX	ⓐ	Ph	130
Rotel RC971	ⓐ		150
Rotel RC972	ⓐ		225
Sunfire Phono	ⓐ	Ph	430
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	ⓐ		500
Technics SU-C1010	ⓐ	Ph	300
Thule Audio Spirit PR100	ⓐ		400
Trilogy 905	ⓐ		375
Trilogy 904	ⓐ	Ph	375
Trilogy 900	ⓐ	Ph	499

£501 TO £2,000

Adyton Chorus			1,995
Alchemist Kraken Pre	ⓐ		549
Alchemist Forseti Pre	ⓐ		999
Alchemist Signature Pre	ⓐ		1,499
Aria Feather One	ⓐ		795
Aria Mystery Two	ⓐ		1,750
Aria Mystery One	ⓐ		1,750
Art Audio Vinyl One MM		Ph	916
Art Audio VPS Line			963
Art Audio Vinyl One MM/MC	ⓐ	Ph	1,307
Art Audio VPS Phono	ⓐ	Ph	1,460
Art Audio Conductor Phono MC	ⓐ	Ph	2,000
Audio Note M1 RIAA	ⓐ		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 LS8	ⓐ		1,449
Audio Research PH3	ⓐ	Ph	1,490
Audio Research LS9	ⓐ		1,949
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	ⓐ		595
Audio Synthesis Passion	ⓐ		695
Audio Synthesis Passion 8S	ⓐ		1,295
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	ⓐ		1,695
Audio Valve Eclipse	ⓐ		1,650
AVI S2000MP	ⓐ		949
AVI S2000MP+P	ⓐ	Ph	1,199
Beam-Echo SP-21	ⓐ	Ph	1,116
Bryston BP20	ⓐ		1,126
Bryston BP-25	ⓐ		1,326
Bryston BP-25P	ⓐ	Ph	1,592
Canary Audio CA-606	ⓐ		1,295
Canary Audio CA-601	ⓐ		1,595
Cary SLP-50 Mk II	ⓐ		1,195
Cary PH-301	ⓐ	Ph	1,695
Chord Phono	ⓐ	Ph	1,898
Chord CPA 1800	ⓐ		1,905
Concordant Exhilarant	ⓐ		900
Concordant Exquisite	ⓐ		1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL	ⓐ		995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	ⓐ	Ph	1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL	ⓐ		1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	ⓐ	Ph	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	ⓐ	Ph	1,990
Copland CSA303	ⓐ	Ph	1,099
Copland CTA301 MkII	ⓐ	Ph	1,249
CR Dev Carmenta	ⓐ		659
CR Dev Argento	ⓐ	Ph	699
Credo CMP004	ⓐ		1,246
Credo CMP005	ⓐ		1,876
Cyrus aCA7	ⓐ		798
Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	ⓐ	Ph	826
Densen Beat B-200	ⓐ		1,000
Densen DM-20	ⓐ		1,200
DNM 3 Start	ⓐ	Ph	1,000
DNM 3A Start	ⓐ	Ph	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre	ⓐ		795
Dynavector L200	ⓐ		995
Dynavector P100	ⓐ	Ph	1,495
Dynavector L100	ⓐ		1,995
ECA Vista S	ⓐ		760
ECA Vista HD	ⓐ		880

ECA Prisma			880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5			1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6	ⓐ		1,750
Exposure XIII			800
Exposure XX	ⓐ		800
Exposure XVII	ⓐ	Ph	850
Exposure RC XXI	ⓐ		1,000
Gate PR101P	ⓐ		1,195
Golden Tube Audio SEP-2	ⓐ		990
Golden Tube Audio SEP-3	ⓐ		1,995
Graaf WFB Two	ⓐ	Ph	1,350
Graaf WFB One	ⓐ	Ph	1,750
Henley HMC200	ⓐ		600
Hi Q Sound MCB2	ⓐ	Ph	545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	ⓐ		645
Jadis DP12	ⓐ		1,590
Jadis DP12	ⓐ		1,999
Krell KAV250p	ⓐ		949
LFD MC1 Phono stage	ⓐ	Ph	949
LFD LS1 Linestage	ⓐ		999
LFD MC2 Phono stage	ⓐ	Ph	1,499
LFD LS2 Linestage	ⓐ		1,599
LFD LSB Linestage	ⓐ		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 Delphini	ⓐ	Ph	895
Michell Orca	ⓐ		1,650
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 99 Pre	ⓐ	Ph	800
Rega Hal	ⓐ	Ph	998
Roksan Artaxerxes X/DS1.5	ⓐ	Ph	1,150
Roksan ROK-L2.5	ⓐ		1,250
Rose RV-23S	ⓐ	Ph	525
Rotel RC995	ⓐ		525
Shearpe Phase 6 Pre	ⓐ		999
Shearpe Phase 1 Pre Ref	ⓐ		1,499
Siemel MC20	ⓐ	Ph	650
Siemel MM20	ⓐ	Ph	650
Siemel TU10	ⓐ		1,599
Siemel TR20	ⓐ		1,599
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre 1P	ⓐ	Ph	899
Sonic Frontiers Phono 1	ⓐ	Ph	1,999
Sonographe SC26	ⓐ		995
Sugden Audition Pre	ⓐ		549
Sugden Masterclass Pre	ⓐ		1,995
Sumo Athena II Line	ⓐ		767
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS	ⓐ		987
Sumo Athena III	ⓐ		987
Sumo Artemis uP	ⓐ		1,595
Sunfire The Classic	ⓐ		1,630
T+A P1200R	ⓐ		965
TAG McLaren PA10	ⓐ	Ph	849
TAG McLaren PPA20	ⓐ	Ph	1,499
TAG McLaren PA20R	ⓐ		1,499
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2	ⓐ		650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	ⓐ		900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4	ⓐ		1,550
Talk Electronics Hurricane 5	ⓐ		1,900
Thorens TTP-2000F	ⓐ	Ph	699
Thule Audio Spirit PR150B	ⓐ		699
Trilogy 901	ⓐ		750
Trilogy 906	ⓐ		995
Trilogy 902	ⓐ	Ph	1,595
Tron Retro	ⓐ		1,500
Tube Tech Seer Line	ⓐ		935
Tube Tech Mac Phono	ⓐ	Ph	1,150
Tube Tech Prophet	ⓐ		1,970
van den Hul Pre-amp	ⓐ		1,800
Wenrich benesch Stage One	ⓐ	Ph	995
Woodside SC27 Line	ⓐ		949
Woodside SC26 Line	ⓐ		1,350
XTC PRE-1	ⓐ		1,557
YBA 3a Line	ⓐ		995
YBA 2a Line	ⓐ		1,450

OVER £2,000

Adyton Temper	ⓐ		2,495
Adyton Modus	ⓐ		2,695
Art Audio VPS Dual Mono Line	ⓐ		2,350
ATC SCA2	ⓐ		2,599
Atma-Sphere MP-3	ⓐ	Ph	3,795
Atma-Sphere MP-1	ⓐ	Ph	7,600
Audio Note M3Line	ⓐ		2,650
Audio Prism Avanti	ⓐ		7,995
Audio Research LS15	ⓐ		3,399
Audio Research LS25	ⓐ		4,999
Audio Research REF 1	ⓐ		8,495
Audio Valve Fanfare	ⓐ		4,995
Audiolabor 511	ⓐ		6,775

Balanced VK-50	ⓐ		3,995
Boulder L3AE	ⓐ		2,100
Boulder L5AE			

HI-FI PRICE GUIDE

Musical Fidelity E30	100W	500
Musical Fidelity X-A50	50W	500
Myryad T-60	50W	300
Myryad MA 120	60W	500
NAD 912	30W	200
NAD 214	80 W	370
NAD 216THX	125W	470
Naim NAP90/3	30W	460
Parasound HCA-750A	75W	450
Quad 99 Stereo Power	85W	500
Rega Maia	85W	450
Rotel RB971	70W	200
Rotel RB981	130W	300
Rotel RB991	200W	500
Shearpe 3.5	35W	489
Talk Electronics Tornado 1	50W	450
Technics SE-A1010	100W	350

£501 TO £2,000

Alchemist Kraken Pwr	55W	549
Alchemist Forseti Pwr	150W	1,399
Alchemist Signature Power	100W	1,999
Arcam Alpha 10P	100W	600
Aria Power 35	35W	1,500
Art Audio Quartet	15W	1,753
Art Audio Concerto	25W	1,960
Audio Analogue Donizetti	60W	595
Audio Note The P	40W	550
Audio Note P Zero	8W	599
Audio Note P1	12W	750
Audio Note P1SE	12W	999
Audio Note P2	20W	1,000
Audio Note P2SE	18W	1,499
Audio Note Conqueror	8W	1,599
Audio Prism Antares	35W	1,695
Audio Research D130	130W	1,890
Audio Research VT60	100W	1,999
Audio Valve RKV	0.1W	595
Audio Valve PPP25	25W	1,095
Audio Valve PPP45	45W	1,395
AVI S2000MM	150W	1,399
Beauhorn Obligato	7W	1,175
Bryston 2B-LP	75W	750
Bryston 3B-ST PRO	150W	1,160
Bryston 3B-ST	150W	1,160
Bryston THX3B	150W	1,262
Bryston 4B-ST PRO	300W	1,756
Bryston 7B-ST	500W	1,815
Bryston 7B-ST PRO	500W	1,815
Bryston THX4B	300W	1,850
Bryston THX7B	500W	1,886
Canary Audio CA-706	40W	1,695
Canary Audio CA-708	50W	1,950
Chord SPM 400	100W	1,425
Chord SPM 600	130W	1,850
Conrad-Johnson MV-55	50W	1,995
Copland CSA515	150W	1,299
Copland CTA505	67W	1,899
CR Dev Amphion	12W	1,949
Credo PMP 804	100W	599
Creek AS25E	100W	800
Crimson CS630C	100W	800
Cyrus aPA7	150W	1,900
Densen B-300	100W	800
Densen DM-30	100W	1,200
DNM PA Start	45W	1,000
DNM PA1 Start	45W	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pwr	100W	995
Dynavector HX75	75W	1,995
ECA Lectern S	50W	880
ECA Lectern HD	50W	1,480
Electrocompanion AW60FTT	60W	1,095
Exposure XVIII Super	75W	900
Exposure XVIII Mono	60W	1,800
Golden Tube Audio SE-40	40W	1,100
Golden Tube Audio SE-300B MkII	8W	1,790
Graaf Venticinque P	25W	1,425
Hi Q Sound MCM	70W	715
Jadis DA5	40W	1,749
Krell KAV150a	150W	1,990
Lexicon 212	120W	1,850
LFD PA1 Powerstage	60W	999
LFD PA2 Powerstage	75W	1,599
LFD PA2M Powerstage	90W	1,999
Linn LK100	50W	650
Linn LK240	120W	750
Linn AV5105	100W	1,200
Lynwood Ruby	120W	985
Magnum MF330	150W	685
Magnum MF660	125W	825
Magnum AS00SE	200W	1,485
Magnum AS05E	200W	1,595
McIntosh MC7100	100W	1,999
Meracur Gere	60W	1,095
Meridian 555	60W	895
Meridian 556	200W	895
Meridian 557	200W	1,400
Meridian 505	160W	1,590
Mitchell Alecto Stereo	50W	1,150
Mitchell Alecto Mono	100W	1,950
Monrio Asty P	100W	950
Moth Stereo 60	60W	599
Moth 30 Mono/100	100W	879
Muse Model 100	100W	1,490
Musical Fidelity X-A200	200W	1,000
Myryad MA240	120W	1,000

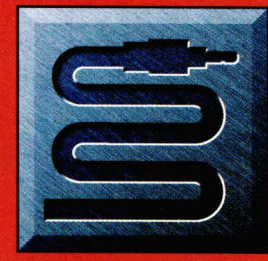
NAD 218THX	200W	850
Naim NAP140	45W	770
Naim NAP180	60W	1,090
Naim NAP135	75W	1,705
Naim NAP250	70W	1,705
NVA A60	43W	560
Papworth TVA50	50W	1,425
Parasound HCA-1000A	125W	600
Parasound HCA-1500A	205W	1,000
Quad 909	140W	900
Quad 99 Monoblock	150W	1,300
Rega Exon	125W	796
Roksan Caspian Power	70W	595
Roksan ROK-S1.5	100W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	75W	550
Shearpe Phase 3	50W	639
Shearpe Phase 3 Reference	50W	749
Shearpe Phase 5 Mono	100W	1,598
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Amp 1	40W	1,299
Sonographe SA250	125W	1,195
Sonographe SA400	220W	1,695
Sugden Audition Power	25W	549
Sugden A21a Power	25W	649
Sumo Polaris III	164W	950
Sumo Model Five	60W	1,975
Sumo Andromeda III	240W	1,975
T+A A1210	90W	875
T+A PA1220R	100W	1,445
T+A A1500	140W	1,535
T+A PA1500R	135W	1,665
TAG McLaren 60P	60W	849
TAG McLaren 100P	100W	1,099
Talk Electronics Tornado 2	65W	600
Talk Electronics Tornado 3	100W	750
Talk Electronics Tornado 4	110W	1,100
Thorens TTA-2000	30W	599
Thule Audio Spirit PA100	100W	600
Thule Audio Spirit PA150B	150W	699
Thule Audio Space PA250B	250W	1,699
Trilogy 948	50W	1,895
Trilogy 948T	22W	1,895
Tube Tech Syrinx	45W	1,150
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Pwr	30W	1,900
Woodside SA240	40W	1,199
Woodside MA100	100W	1,733
Woodside STA50	50W	1,880
XTC POW-2	150W	1,600
YBA 3a DT Stereo	45W	1,455

OVER £2,000

Adyton Cordis 1.6	120W	3,495
Adyton Cordis 3B	280W	12,995
Aria Smart 845	24W	3,500
Aria Smart 300B	24W	4,250
Art Audio Symphony	7W	2,500
Art Audio Tempo	30W	2,714
Art Audio Maestro	60W	3,884
Art Audio Diavolo	13W	4,000
Art Audio Jota	18W	6,000
Art Audio Ellesse	100W	8,500
Art Audio Chiara	25W	10,000
ATC SPA2-200PRO	200W	2,056
ATC SPA2-150	200W	2,699
Atma-Sphere S-30 Mk II	30W	2,450
Atma-Sphere M-60 Mk II	60W	4,195
Atma-Sphere MA-1 Mk II	150W	7,995
Audio Note P3	9W	2,150
Audio Note Quest	9W	2,750
Audio Note Yubi	18W	3,850
Audio Note Conquest	18W	4,450
Audio Note Tomei	30W	8,500
Audio Note Neiro	7W	11,360
Audio Note Ankoru	60W	14,500
Audio Prism Debut Mk II	35W	2,495
Audio Prism Mana	100W	12,995
Audio Research VT50	50W	2,950
Audio Research 100.2	100W	3,395
Audio Research VT100 MkII	100W	4,950
Audio Research VT200	200W	8,790
Audio Synthesis Desire Decade	200W	2,495
Audio Valve Avalon	60W	2,195
Audio Valve Challenger 115	115W	2,995
Audio Valve Challenger 140	140W	3,495
Audio Valve Challenger 300	300W	7,995
Audio Valve Baldur 200 Plus	149W	8,995
audiolabor 500	230W	5,998
Beam-Echo DL7-35	30W	3,525
Belcanto SET40	40W	3,450
Belcanto Orfeo 30S	35W	4,750
Belcanto SET80	80W	6,750
Border Patrol 300B SE	9W	3,995
Border Patrol 300B SE (WE)	10W	4,495
Boulder 102AE	100W	2,800
Boulder 102M	100W	3,100
Boulder 500AE	150W	4,995
Boulder 500M	150W	5,500
Boulder 2060	600W	25,000
Boulder 2050	999W	43,500
Bryston THX8B	150W	2,385
Canary Audio CA-304	40W	2,695
Canary Audio CA-301	22W	2,995
Canary Audio CA-303	24W	5,495
Canary CAD-572SE	20W	2,250
Cary CAD-2A3.SE	5W	3,150
Cary CAD-300SE	12W	4,495
Cary CAD-805C	50W	7,995
Chord SPM 1000B	200W	2,920

Chord SPM 1200B	250W	3,790
Chord SPM 1200C	350W	8,210
Chord SPM 1400B mono	350W	8,420
Chord SPM 5000	415W	14,570
Conrad-Johnson MF2250	130W	2,295
Conrad-Johnson MF-2500	250W	3,495
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	70W	3,500
Conrad-Johnson Premier 12	140W	6,900
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8XS	150W	17,000
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8A	275W	17,000
CAT JL1	100W	17,550
CR Dev Artemis	4,995	4,995
Credo LPO 804	2,456	2,456
Credo PMP 155	2,676	2,676
Credo LPO 455	4,975	4,975
Credo LPO 155	6,983	6,983
DNM PA3	2,500	2,500
DNM PA3S	3,750	3,750
Dynavector HX1.2	130W	3,995
EAR 861	32W	3,599
EAR 509 Mk II	100W	3,999
EAR 519	100W	4,699
EAR 549	200W	6,499
Electrocompanion AW120DMB	120W	2,695
Electrocompanion AW250R	250W	3,995
Electrocompanion AW180MB	180W	4,595
Exposure IV	90W	2,199
Exposure XVI	125W	4,000
Gamma Aeon	20W	4,999
Gamma Space Ref	70W	7,999
Gamma Aeon Ref	18W	49,999
Gate TR201A	22W	3,335
Golden Tube Audio SE-100	100W	2,495
Graaf 5050	50W	2,100
Graaf GM20	60W	2,850
Graaf GM100	100W	4,250
Graaf GM200	200W	7,500
Jadis DA8	80W	2,990
Jadis DA7	100W	4,790
Jadis JA30	30W	5,180
Jadis SE300B	10W	7,980
Jadis JA80	60W	9,580
Jadis JA100	100W	10,298
Jadis JA200	160W	13,980
Jadis JA500	400W	19,990
Krell KAV250a	250W	3,145
Krell KAV500/2	100W	3,195
Krell FPB200	200W	5,998
Krell FPB250m	250W	8,994
Krell FPB300	300W	9,500
Krell FPB600	600W	12,900
Krell FPB350m	350W	15,994
Krell FPB650m	650W	23,800
Lexicon 225	250W	2,500
Lexicon 501	500W	5,000
Linn Klout	80W	2,400
Linn Klimax 500	500W	11,200
Lumley M125	120W	3,750
Lumley M250	250W	7,500
Magnum Class A mono	180W	2,450
Magnum A200SE	275W	3,750
Mana Stealth	300W	4,500
Madnagol 334	125W	5,495
Madnagol 335	250W	7,495
Madnagol 336	350W	8,995
Madnagol 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
Plinius SA50/3	2,750	2,750
Plinius SA100/3	3,450	3,450
Plinius SA250/3	5,850	5,850
Roksan ROK-M1.5	160W	2,250
Rowland Model 2	75W	4,999
Rowland Model 6	150W	10,999
Rowland Model 8T	250W	12,499
Rowland Model 9T	350W	27,999
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,399
Siemel TA20	50W	2,350
Sonic Frontiers Power 1	55W	2,499
Sonic Frontiers Power 2	110W	4,999
Sonic Frontiers Power 3	220W	8,599
Sony TA-N1	200W	4,500
Sugden Masterclass Power	75W	2,995
Sumo Model Ten/M	240W	4,200
Sunfire Load Invariant	300W	2,280
Sunfire Signature	600W	2,600
T+A A3000	190W	2,850
TACT Millennium II	7,000	7,000
TAG McLaren 125M	145W	2,399
Talk Electronics Tornado 5	200W	2,100
Trilogy 958T	45W	3,395
Trilogy 958	100W	3,395
Tron Type PX25	5W	6,150
Tron Type KR300B	18W	6,400

Tron Type WE300B	8W	6,550
Tron Type PX25 Mono	5W	9,500
Tron Type WE300B Mono	8W	9,700
Tron Type KR 300B Mono	18W	9,700
Tube Tech Genesis Sig.	100W	4,700
Tube Tech Synergy DMA	150W	6,400
van den Hul Power amp	65W	2,500
Wavac MD572	50W	6,250
Wavac EC300B	10W	16,500
Wavac EC838	35W	21,750
Wavac HE 4304	15W	24,750
Wavac HE 833	100W	27,500
Wavac HE 805	45W	27,500
XTC POW-1	200W	2,500
YBA 2a HC Stereo	70W	2,350
YBA 3a Mono	45W	2,425
YBA 2a HCDT Stereo	70W	3,050
YBA 1a HC Stereo	85W	4,400
YBA 2a HCDT Mono	70W	5,000
YBA 1a HC Mono	85W	6,650
YBA Sig. Stereo	100W	6,995
YBA Passion Mono	250W	8,775
YBA Sig. Mono	100W	9,995
YBA Sig. HC Mono	100W	16,650



CABLES

Analogue Interconnects

KEY

- ⊕ - Stranded construction.
- ⊙ - Solid-core construction.

Prices of interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Acoustic Precision Eikos	⊕	89.00
Apertura Model B	⊕	260

Connections UK Midas
 Connections UK HD
 DBF Acoustics Black Velvet
 DBF Acoustics Black Velvet SE
 DBF Acoustics Azure SE
 DNM-Reson TCC75
 DPA Slink
 DPA White Slink
 DPA Black Slink
 Ecosse Ref CA1
 Ecosse Ref CS1
 Ecosse Ref MA2
 Ecosse Ref MS2
 Ecosse Ref US1
 Expressive Tech IC-1
 Gamma Wow Balance
 Goertz M1 Interconnect
 GT Audio Intercon
 Harmonix HS-102
 Harmonix HS-101
 Henley HSP10
 Henley HSP50
 Henley HSP100
 Henley HSP200
 Henley HSP250
 Heybrook Black Flash
 Insert Audio Focus 1.2
 Insert Audio IC100 Mk II
 Insert Audio Image 5.1
 Insert Audio Status 3.4
 Ixos 104
 Ixos 1003
 Ixos Gamma 1002
 Ixos 103
 Ixos 102
 Ixos 101
 Ixos 100.XO3
 Kimber PBJ/Ultraplate
 Kimber KC1
 Kimber Hero
 Kimber Silver Streak
 Kimber KCA9
 Kimber KCTG
 LAT International IC-50
 LAT International IC-80 MkII
 LAT International IC-100 MkII
 LAT International IC-200 Mk II
 Lieder Chanson
 Lieder Lek
 Lieder Het Lied
 Lieder Song
 Lieder Maas
 Lieder Rijn
 Lieder Waal
 Lumley Silver 12/2
 Lumley Silver 14/4
 Monster Interlink 100
 Monster Interlink 200
 Monster Interlink 300 MkII
 Monster Interlink 400 MkII
 Moth Leyline Black
 Moth Leyline Grey
 Nordost Magic
 Nordost Black Knight
 Nordost Solar Wind
 Nordost Blue Angel
 Nordost Blue Heaven I/C
 Nordost Red Dawn
 Nordost SPM
 Nordost Quattrofil
 Ortofon 7N interconnect
 Precious Metals S550
 Precious Metals S552
 Precious Metals S553
 Precious Metals S555
 Precious Metals S5100
 Precious Metals S5102
 Precious Metals S5103
 Precious Metals S5104

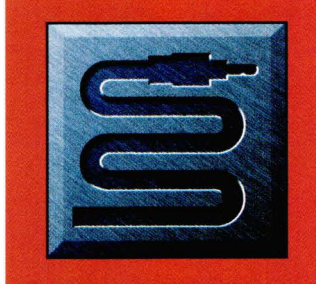
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 825.00
 1,250.00
 250.00
 50.00
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 70.00
 90.00
 100.00
 130.00
 160.00
 190.00

Precious Metals SS200
 Precious Metals SS202
 Precious Metals SS203
 Precious Metals SS204
 Prowire Silver
 PAD Elementa
 QED Qnect 2
 QED Qnect 4S
 Roksan ROK-Intercon
 Shinpy Red Devil
 Shinpy Red Star 2
 Shinpy Black Star 2
 Shinpy Pulsar 2
 Shinpy Quasar 2
 Siltech MC2-12
 Siltech MC4-24S
 Siltech FTM-3S
 Silver Sounds SS2
 Silver Sounds SS1
 Silver Tone Ex-Static
 Silver Tone Sci-Fi
 SME S2LB-4
 SME S3LB-4
 SME 4900A
 SME 5900A
 SonicLink Red
 SonicLink Silver pink
 SonicLink Black
 SonicLink Lilac
 SonicLink Violet
 SonicLink Maroon
 SonicLink Blue Nickel
 SonicLink Vermilion
 SonicLink Red earth
 SonicLink Black earth
 SonicLink Blue earth
 SonicLink Black Rhodium
 Straight Wire Chorus
 Straight Wire Sonata
 Supra DAC-X
 Supra EFF-ISL
 Supra EFF-XLR
 Tara Prism 5
 Tara Prism 5Si
 Tara RSC Axiom
 Tara RSC-Prime Geny/2
 Tara RSC-Ref Gen. 2
 Tara RSC Air 3
 Tara RSC Air 2
 Tara RSC Air 1
 Tara ISM The Three
 Tara ISM The 2
 Tara ISM The One
 Transparent Cable Musichord
 Transparent Cable The Link
 Transparent Cable Music Link
 Trichord Pulsewire 75
 Vampire Wire CC
 Vampire Wire CCC/II
 Vampire Wire SC/II
 Vampire Wire SC/IV
 Vampire Wire AI/2
 Vampire Wire SL
 van den Hul Storm II
 van den Hul PBS HB
 van den Hul Source HB
 van den Hul D102 III
 van den Hul Thunderline HB
 van den Hul First Classic
 van den Hul Second
 van den Hul First Ultimate
 van den Hul MC Gold
 van den Hul MC Silver IT
 van den Hul MC Silver IT Bal
 Wireworld Orbit
 Wireworld Solstice II
 XLO Type ER-6
 XLO Type ER-2
 XLO Pro 125

220.00
 290.00
 360.00
 430.00
 60.00
 145.00
 30.00
 70.00
 75.00
 80.00
 120.00
 240.00
 495.00
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 48.00
 92.00
 119.00
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 58.00
 98.00
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 412.00
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 80.00
 145.00
 240.00
 275.00
 320.00
 550.00
 1,400.00
 1,750.00
 30.00
 40.00
 30.00
 30.00
 40.00

XLO Type ER-1
 XLO Type ER-5
 XLO Pro 150
 XLO Type ER-4
 XLO Pro 100
 XLO Pro 102
 XLO Ultra 1
 XLO Ultra 2
 XLO Ref 2
 XLO Signature 1.1
 XLO Sig 2.1
 XLO Sig 3.1
 XLO Limited Ed'n

40.00
 50.00
 70.00
 99.00
 119.00
 129.00
 169.00
 199.00
 330.00
 625.00
 675.00
 750.00
 2,200.00



CABLES Digital Interconnects

KEY
 ● - Stranded construction.
 ○ - Solid-core construction.

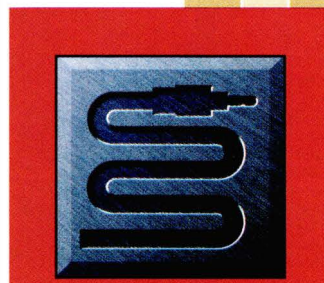
Prices of interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B
 Apertura Model A
 Art Yam Church 5000
 Audioquest Digital/video 1
 Audioquest Digital/video 2
 Audioquest Optlink X
 Audioquest Digital PRO
 Audioquest Optlink Pro
 Audioquest Optlink Z
 Audiosource Petros Blue Plus S
 Audiosource Stratos Ser. 2
 Cable Talk Digital 2
 Cardas Audio Lightning
 ChordCo Codac
 ChordCo Optichord
 ChordCo Prodac
 DNM-Reson DIG100
 DPA Opt-link
 DPA Digi-link
 Ecosse Ref MD2
 Harmonix HS-101DIG
 Insert Audio Dataline 500
 Insert Audio Optic 2.1
 Insert Audio Dataline 700
 Insert Audio Image 5.1
 Ixos 105
 Ixos 106
 Kimber Opt-link
 Kimber Illuminati DV-30
 Kimber Illuminati D-60
 Kimber Illuminati DX-50
 Kimber Illuminati Orchid
 LAT International DI-20-D
 Monster Datalink 100
 Monster Lightspeed 100
 Moth Leyline Datalink
 Nordost Moonglo

139.00
 255.00
 275.00
 30.00
 60.00
 90.00
 100.00
 150.00
 180.00
 35.00
 59.00
 78.00
 190.00
 38.00
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 20.00
 2750
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 240.00
 24.95
 29.95
 39.95
 44.95
 25.00
 30.00
 50.00
 70.00
 325.00
 350.00
 750.00
 79.00
 4700
 4700
 140.00
 155.00

Nordost Silver Shadow
 Precious Metals SD35
 Precious Metals SD100
 Precious Metals SD200
 Precious Metals SD202
 QED DigiFlex
 QED Optiflex
 QED Qnect OT
 Roksan ROK-Intercon
 Shinpy Digital
 Siltech HF-6
 SonicLink Green
 Supra ZAC
 Supra EFF-ID
 Supra DAC-XLR
 Tara Prism D-1
 Tara Prism D-2
 Tara RSC Air Dig. 75
 Tara RSC Air Dig. 110
 Tara ISM The One Dig.
 Theta Digital AT8
 Transparent Cable PDL
 Trichord Pulsewire 75D
 Vampire Wire DI/1
 van den Hul Source HB
 van den Hul Videolink
 van den Hul AES-EBU 110
 van den Hul First
 van den Hul Second
 van den Hul First Ultimate
 XLO Pro 104
 XLO Ultra 4
 XLO Ref 2
 XLO Sig 4.1
 XLO Limited Ed'n

335.00
 20.00
 50.00
 110.00
 145.00
 20.00
 25.00
 30.00
 45.00
 265.00
 145.00
 60.00
 44.95
 45.00
 45.00
 59.99
 119.99
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 450.00
 995.00
 550.00
 199.00
 75.00
 150.00
 35.00
 70.00
 75.00
 140.00
 150.00
 180.00
 60.00
 89.00
 180.00
 325.00
 1,100.00



Speaker Cables

KEY
 ● - Stranded construction.
 ○ - Solid-core construction.

Price per mono metre, unterminated.

Acoustic Energy AESC-C3
 ALR/Jordan QMM
 Apertura Silver
 Argento Copper
 Argento Copper Ref
 Argento Silver
 Argento Silver Ref
 Art Yam Church M2000
 Art Yam Church 5000
 Audio Note AN-D
 Audio Note AN-B
 Audio Note AN-L
 Audio Note AN-SP
 Audio Note AN-SPx
 Audioquest Type 2
 Audioquest F-18
 Audioquest Type 6+
 Audioquest Indigo +

11.95
 5.00
 82.50
 35.00
 65.00
 125.00
 380.00
 470.00
 795.00
 4.50
 16.50
 29.50
 150.00
 450.00
 3.50
 3.60
 9.00
 15.00

GAMUT AUDIO – the new name in hi-fi*



Hi-Fi Choice
 Editor's choice

GAMUT D200

UK distributor: RT Services 01235 810455
 Made by AmpSpeaker: www.gamutaudio.com
 Tel: int.+45 561 48585/ Fax: int.+45 561 48583

"This amplifier combines Naim-style timing with Levinson-style power and resolution. It may not look much for the money but it sounds like a bargain."
 HI-FI

Say no more. We improved the looks. Now the Gamut D200 is available with silver or black fronts, with or without handles. Gorgeous. Even better it's still £2995, no "improvement" there. 250 watt monoblocks available in February 2000. Now there's sound quality and looks – a real bargain.

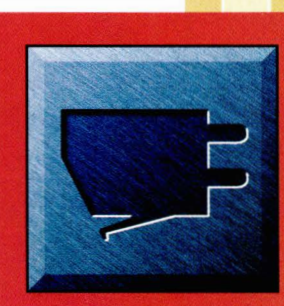
GAMUT: "the entire range of musical notes" (Webster's Unabridged Dictionary)

HI-FI PRICE GUIDE

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	●	8.00
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 Golden5 SC	●	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	●	789.00
ChordCo Carnival	●	3.00
ChordCo Myth	●	6.00
ChordCo Legend	●	15.00
ChordCo Odyssey	●	17.00
DNM-Reson LSC	●	6.95
DNM-Reson LSCB	●	13.95
Ecosse Ref FS2.16	●	1.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.3	●	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
Harmonix Harmonic-Strings	●	30.00
Harmonix HS-101T-1	●	50.00
Harmonix HS-101SC	●	88.00
Ixos 607	●	2.00
Ixos 6004	●	3.00
Ixos 6003	●	3.00
Ixos 605	●	3.00
Ixos Gamma 6006	●	5.00
Kimber 4PR	●	5.00
Kimber 4VS	●	9.00
Kimber 4TC	●	19.60
Kimber 8TC	●	32.70
Kimber 4AG	●	394.00
Kimber 8AG	●	656.00
LAT International SS 800	●	16.00
LAT International BIWIWE	●	23.00
LAT International SS 1000	●	36.00
Lieder Pad	●	133.00
Lieder Bel Canto	●	188.00
Lieder Spoor	●	253.00
Lieder Straat	●	463.00
Lieder Weg	●	663.00
Linn K20	●	4.00
Linn K400	●	10.00
Linn K600	●	15.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	●	35.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	●	40.00
Monster XP Clear	●	2.20
Monster XP Navajo	●	2.40
Monster Superflat Mini	●	2.75
Monster XP HP	●	3.70
Monster Original	●	4.40
Monster New Monster	●	5.50
Naim NAC A5	●	5.70
Nordost Octava	●	3.00
Nordost 4-Flat	●	9.95
Nordost Solar Wind Bi-wire	●	27.95
Nordost Blue Heaven Spkr	●	58.95
Nordost Red Dawn	●	110.00
Nordost SPM	●	325.00
Ortofon SPK100	●	3.00
Ortofon SPK200	●	5.00
Ortofon SPK300	●	8.00
Precious Metals SL32	●	7.50
Precious Metals SL102	●	10.00
Precious Metals SL34	●	15.00
Precious Metals SL104	●	20.00
Precious Metals SL106	●	30.00

Precious Metals SL108	●	40.00
Puresonic OFC 7892	●	1.20
Puresonic OFC 7844	●	1.65
Puresonic OFC 7845	●	1.95
Puresonic OFC 7891	●	2.85
Puresonic OFC 7816	●	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7832	●	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7812	●	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7825	●	6.95
Puresonic PSOCC 7801	●	9.50
Puresonic PSOCC 7802	●	18.00
Puresonic PSOCC 7803	●	27.00
QED Qudos Micro	●	1.25
QED Qudos micro 4 core	●	2.00
QED Qudos 4 core	●	4.00
QED Qudos Bi-Wire	●	4.50
QED Qudos Silver	●	5.00
QED Profile 4x4	●	9.00
QED Profile Silver 12	●	15.00
Rega Speaker	●	1.58
Rega SC42	●	19.98
Roksan ROK-Speaker	●	6.00
Shinpy Red Devil	●	30.00
Shinpy Red Star 2	●	39.00
Shinpy Black Star 2	●	62.00
Shinpy Pulsar 2	●	104.00
Shinpy Quasar 2	●	208.00
Siltech LS2-45	●	109.00
Siltech FT-12 Mkl	●	240.00
Siltech LS4-120	●	549.00
Silver Sounds 12 Gauge	●	15.00
Silver Sounds 10 Gauge	●	35.00
Silver Sounds 8 Gauge	●	75.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic	●	10.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic HC	●	15.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice	●	55.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice Ultra	●	85.00
SonicLink ASI50	●	1.95
SonicLink AST60	●	2.50
SonicLink AST75	●	2.95
SonicLink AST200	●	5.95
SonicLink AST200x2	●	9.95
SonicLink S300	●	18.00
SonicLink S130x2	●	20.00
SonicLink S300x2	●	40.00
SonicLink S900	●	60.00
SonicLink S600x2	●	80.00
SonicLink Black Rhodium 4	●	1,000.00
Straight Wire Rhythm	●	6.00
Straight Wire Quartet	●	8.00
Supra Classic 2.5	●	2.49
Supra Linc 2.5 Flex	●	3.49
Supra Classic 4.0	●	3.95
Supra Classic 6	●	4.95
Supra Ply 2.0	●	4.95
Supra Linc 4.0 Flex	●	4.95
Supra Ply 3.4	●	6.95
Supra Quattro 4x4	●	8.95
Tara Klara	●	2.95
Tara Prism 2+2	●	7.95
Tara Prism Nexa	●	9.95
Tara Prism Bi-Wire	●	18.00
Tara RSC Prime 500	●	43.00
Tara RSC Prime 1000	●	73.00
Tara RSC Ref Gen/2	●	118.00
Tara RSC Prime 1800	●	150.00
Tara RSC Digital 75	●	230.00
Tara RSC Air 2	●	291.00
Tara RSC Air 1	●	466.00
Tara ISM The Two	●	708.00
Tara ISM The One	●	941.00
Tech + Link SPC 79	●	1.20
Transparent Cable Musichord	●	11.00
Transparent Cable The Wave	●	23.00
Transparent Cable Music Wave	●	25.00
Vampire Wire SC-384	●	11.00
Vampire Wire SC-554	●	15.00
Vampire Wire ST-I	●	30.00
Vampire Wire SC-1108	●	30.00
Vampire Wire ST-II	●	48.00
Vampire Wire ST-III	●	73.00
van den Hul Skyline HB	●	3.99
van den Hul Snowline HB	●	5.49
van den Hul Skytrack HB	●	5.99
van den Hul Clearwater	●	7.99
van den Hul Snowtrack	●	10.99
van den Hul Royal Jade	●	10.99
van den Hul CS122 HB	●	13.49
van den Hul Cleartrack	●	14.99
van den Hul D352 HB	●	21.00
van den Hul Teatrack HB	●	23.99
van den Hul SCS12	●	36.00
van den Hul Magnum HB	●	40.00
van den Hul The Wind HB	●	44.00
van den Hul Revolution HB	●	80.00
van den Hul Revelation HB	●	120.00
van den Hul The Third	●	1,000.00
XLO CDA 16/2	●	4.45
XLO CDA ER-14 THX	●	5.81
XLO CDA 16/4	●	8.60
XLO CDA ER-11 THX	●	11.62
XLO Pro 600	●	16.60
XLO CDA ER-12 THX	●	23.24
XLO Pro 1200	●	33.20
XLO Ultra 6	●	41.50
XLO Ultra 12	●	83.00
XLO Ref 2	●	216.00

XLO Sig 5.1	●	398.00
XLO Limited Ed'n	●	1,660.00



CARRIDGES

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 1012CX	MM	79
Goldring 1022CX	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 ZFI+	MM	83
Grado Prestige Red	MM	99
N'ham Tracer I	MM	98
Ortofon OM 3E	MM	16
Ortofon OM 5E	MM	20
Ortofon OM 10	MM	30
Ortofon 510	MM	40
Ortofon OM DJ	MM	50
Ortofon OM 20	MM	70
Ortofon 520	MM	70
Ortofon MCI Turbo	MC	75
Ortofon Concorde DJ	MM	80
Ortofon OM 30	MM	90
Ortofon 530	MM	100
Pickering TE-15	MM	20
Pickering VE-15	MM	25
Pickering T-E	MM	25
Pickering V15-DJ	MM	28
Pickering TL-E	MM	35
Pickering TL-2E	MM	45
Pickering XV15-625E	MM	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	MM	50
Pickering TL-2-S	MM	55
Pickering XV15-7575	MM	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	MM	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	MM	70
Pickering TL3S	MM	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	MM	95
Pickering XL2-3500	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
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	MM	100

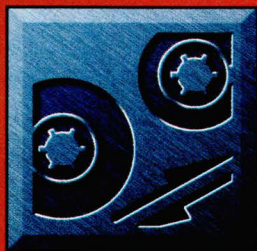
OVER £100

Allaerts MCI Eco	MC	850
Allaerts MCI B	MC	1,250
Allaerts MCI B MkII	MC	2,200
Allaerts MC2 Finish	MC	2,995
Audio Note IO2	MM	139
Audio Note Soara	MC	795
Audio Note IO1V	MC	1,095

Audio Note IO1L	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9ML	MC	350
Audio Technica AT-33PTG	MC	489
Benz-Micro The Glider	MC	600
Benz-Micro Reference	MC	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	MC	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	MC	1,600
Clearaudio Alpha Mk 2	MM	135
Clearaudio Beta Mk 2	MM	190
Clearaudio Beta-S Mk 2	MM	250
Clearaudio Virtuoso	MM	295
Clearaudio Sigma	MM	590
Clearaudio Gamma-S	MC	810
Clearaudio Victory	MC	960
Clearaudio Signature	MC	1,540
Clearaudio Accurate	MC	2,515
Clearaudio Insider	MC	5,165
Clearaudio Insider Ref.	MC	6,810
Denon DL304	MC	200
Dynavector 10X4II	MC	189
Dynavector DV20XII	MC	299
Dynavector DV-20XL	MC	299
Dynavector DV20XL	MC	299
Dynavector 17D2	MC	450
Dynavector XX-1L	MC	998
Dynavector XX-1	MC	998
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	MC	1,698
Goldring Eroica LX	MC	110
Goldring Eroica	MC	110
Goldring 1042	MM	120
Goldring Elite	MC	220
Goldring Excel VX	MC	525
Grado Prestige Silver	MM	119
Grado Prestige Gold	MM	149
Grado Signature Junior	MM	150
Grado Signature 8M2	MM	250
Grado Signature MCZ	MM	375
Grado Signature TLZ	MM	650
Grado Signature XTZ	MM	975
Grado Reference	MM	995
Koetsu Red T	MC	1,359
Koetsu Red K Sig	MC	1,899
Koetsu Urushi	MC	1,999
Koetsu Signature	MC	2,999
Koetsu Gold PR	MC	5,498
Linn K9	MM	125
Linn Klyde	MC	500
Linn Arkiv	MC	1,000
London Decca Maroon	MM	299
London Decca Gold	MM	359
London Decca Maroon Dp	MM	379
London Decca S Gold	MM	439
London Decca Gold Dp	MM	519
London Decca S Gold Dp	MM	999
London Decca Jubilee	MM	999
Lyra Lydian Beta	MC	599
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	MC	995
Lyra Parnassus 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 MC Jubilee	MC	1,250
Ortofon MC7500	MC	2,000
Pickering TLZ-3003	MM	145
Pickering XIZ-4500	MM	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering XIZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Rega Super Elys	MM	150
Rega Exact	MM	248
Reson Mica	MM	185
Reson Reca	MM	250
Reson Aciore	MC	299
Reson Etile	MC	455
Reson Lexe	MC	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	MM	150
Roksan Shiraz	MC	990
Shure V15XMR	MM	295
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	120
Sumiko Blue Point Special	MC	250
Transfiguration Esprit	MC	950
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	950
Transfiguration Temper Supreme	MC	2,250
van den Hul DDT-II	MC	600
van den Hul MC-10	MC	750
van den Hul MC-One	MC	900
van den Hul MC-ONE Super	MC	1,050
van den Hul MC-Two	MC	1,200
van den Hul The Frog Low o/p	MC	1,500
van den Hul The Frog HO	MC	1,700
van den Hul Grasshopper IISLN	MC	2,000
van den Hul Grasshopper IISLA	MC	2,000
van den Hul White Beauty S-X	MC	2,500
van den Hul White Beauty HO	MC	2,500
van den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLN	MC	2,800

van den Hul Grasshopper III GLA
van den Hul Grasshopper III CMN
van den Hul Grasshopper III CHN
van den Hul Grasshopper IV GLA
van den Hul Black Beauty
Wilson Benesch Matrix
Wilson Benesch Analog
Wilson Benesch Carbon

MC 2,800
MC 2,800
MC 2,900
MC 3,000
MC 3,000
MC 786
MC 1,572
MC 1,573



CASSETTE DECKS

KEY

↔ - Autoreverse - no need to remove and turn around the tape.
3-H - 3 heads, i.e. separate record and replay heads.

UP TO £200

Ariston WX-510		70
Denon DRM-550		160
Denon DRW-585	↔	200
Goodmans Delta 801		130
H/K DC520	↔	200
JVC TD-X372BK		170
JVC TD-R472BK	↔	200
Kenwood KX-W4080	↔	160
Kenwood KX-3080	↔	160
Kenwood KX-W6080	↔	200
Kenwood KX-5080S	↔	200
Marantz SD-455		170
Marantz SD-57		199
Onkyo K 185		150
Pioneer CT-5250		150
Pioneer CT-W205R	↔	160
Pioneer CT-W505R	↔	180
Pioneer CT-5450S	↔	200
Pioneer CT-W606DR	↔	200
Sony TC-WE435		130
Sony TC-KE230		130
Sony TC-WE635		150
Sony TC-KB820S		180
Sony TC-WE835		200
Teac W-416		100
Teac V-615		130
Teac RH-300		160
Teac W-790R	↔	170
Teac V-1050		180
Teac RH-500	↔	200
Technics RS-BX501	↔	170
Technics RS-TR373	↔	180
Technics RS-TR474	↔	200
Technics RS-A26	↔	200
Yamaha KX-393		130
Yamaha KX-W321	↔	170
Yamaha KX-493	↔	180

OVER £200

Denon DRM-650S		230
Denon DRM-740	↔	270
Denon DRS-810	↔	310
H/K TD420		250
JVC TD-V662BK	↔	270
JVC TD-W178BK	↔	300
NAD 613		230
NAD 614		270
NAD 616	↔	300
Nakamichi DR-10	↔	200
Onkyo TA 6210		830
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-5550S	↔	250
Pioneer CT-W806DR	↔	300
Pioneer CT-5550S Precision	↔	340
Pioneer CT-5830S	↔	500
Pioneer CT-95	↔	1,000
Rotel RC960BX		250
Sony TC-KA6ES	↔	600
T+A CC1200R	↔	1,180
Teac W-860R		230
Teac W-6000R		450
Teac V-6030S		550
Teac V-8030S		650
Technics RS-AZ7	↔	270
Technics RS-TR575	↔	280
Yamaha KX-580SE	↔	250



CD PLAYERS

KEY

⇒ - Multiplayer: can be loaded with more than one disc.
Ⓜ - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
Ⓜ - Optical (Toslink) output.
Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

UP TO £250

Ariston CDX700		50
Ariston CDX710		70
Ariston CDX720		80
Cambridge CD5		100
Cambridge D100		120
Cambridge CD4	Ⓜ	150
Cambridge CD4SE	Ⓜ	200
Denon DCD-435		130
Denon DCD-635		180
Denon DCD-735		230
Eclipse CD101a		40
H/K HD720	Ⓜ	200
H/K FL8350	Ⓜ	200
JVC XL-V120BK		110
JVC XL-V130BK		120
JVC XL-V230BK		140
JVC XL-F116BK	Ⓜ	180
JVC XL-F216BK	Ⓜ	200
JVC XL-Z574BK		250
Kenwood DP-1080		110
Kenwood DP-2080		130
Kenwood DP-R3090	Ⓜ	140
Kenwood DP-R4090	Ⓜ	160
Kenwood DP-3080		170
Kenwood DPF-3010		180
Kenwood DP-R6090	Ⓜ	200
Kenwood DP-4090	Ⓜ	250
Marantz CD-38		130
Marantz CC-38		200
Marantz CD-48	Ⓜ	200
Marantz CD-57	Ⓜ	230
Marantz CD-67II	Ⓜ	250
NAD 522		170
NAD 510		200
NAD 524	Ⓜ	250
NAD 523	Ⓜ	250
NAD 512	Ⓜ	250
Pioneer PD-106		130
Pioneer PD-206		150
Pioneer PD-5507		190
Pioneer PD-F606	Ⓜ	200
Pioneer PD-M603	Ⓜ	200
Pioneer PD-F706	Ⓜ	250
Rotel RCD-950AX		180
Sansui CD220		120
Sherwood CD-4030R		180
Sherwood CDC680	Ⓜ	180
Sherwood CDC6050R	Ⓜ	180
Sony CDP-XE220		90
Sony CDP-XE330		100
Sony CDP-M305		120
Sony CDP-XE530		130
Sony CDP-CE335	Ⓜ	160
Sony CDP-XB720E	Ⓜ	200
Sony CDP-CX57	Ⓜ	250
Synergy CDJ1210		120
Teac CDP-1120		100
Teac CD-P1820		130
Teac CD-P1440		200
Teac CD-P3450SE		200
Teac PD-D2400	Ⓜ	200
Teac PD-H500i	Ⓜ	240
Technics SL-PC390A	Ⓜ	90
Technics SL-PC490A	Ⓜ	100
Technics SL-PC590A	Ⓜ	120
Technics SL-PD6	Ⓜ	140
Technics SL-PD8	Ⓜ	160
Technics SL-PS670D	Ⓜ	200
Technics SL-PS770D	Ⓜ	250
Yamaha CDX-393 II	Ⓜ	130
Yamaha CDC-575	Ⓜ	180
Yamaha CDX-493		180
Yamaha CDX-9		200
Yamaha CDX-593	Ⓜ	230
Yamaha CDC-675	Ⓜ	230

£251 TO £500

Arcam Alpha MCD	⇒	Ⓜ	350
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Arcam Alpha 7 SE	Ⓜ	350
Arcam Alpha 8	Ⓜ	450
Arcam Alpha 8SE	Ⓜ	500
Cambridge CD6	Ⓜ	300
Cyrus dAD1.5	Ⓜ	399
Denon DCD-835	Ⓜ	280
Denon DCM-260	Ⓜ	300
Denon DCD-1550AR	Ⓜ	350
H/K HD740	Ⓜ	300
H/K FL8550	Ⓜ	300
H/K HD760	Ⓜ	300
JVC XL-Z674BK	Ⓜ	300
Kenwood DP-R7080	Ⓜ	300
Kenwood DP-9090	Ⓜ	300
Kenwood DP-5090	Ⓜ	300
Kenwood DP-7090	Ⓜ	400
Marantz CD-67SE MkII	Ⓜ	300
Marantz CD6000 OSE	Ⓜ	300
Marantz CC-870	Ⓜ	400
Marantz CD-63IIK1	Ⓜ	400
Musical Fidelity E60	Ⓜ	300
Musical Fidelity A2 CD	Ⓜ	500
Musical Fidelity E624	Ⓜ	500
Myriad T-10	Ⓜ	400
NAD 513	⇒	290
NAD 515	⇒	350
NAD 514	⇒	370
NAD 517	⇒	400
Nakamichi MB10	⇒	399
Onkyo DX 7210	Ⓜ	260
Onkyo C721	Ⓜ	290
Onkyo DXC 320	Ⓜ	380
Onkyo DX 7510	Ⓜ	400
Onkyo CM 716	Ⓜ	450
Parasound C/DP-1000	Ⓜ	499
Pioneer PD-5707	Ⓜ	300
Pioneer PD-F805	Ⓜ	300
Pioneer PD-5705	Ⓜ	300
Pioneer PD-F906	Ⓜ	350
Pioneer PD-S904	Ⓜ	400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	Ⓜ	460
Roksan Kandy	Ⓜ	475
Rotel RCD-951	Ⓜ	300
Rotel RCD-971	Ⓜ	350
Sony CDP-XB950E	Ⓜ	300
Sony CDP-CX350	Ⓜ	350
Sony CDP-XA20ES	Ⓜ	450
Sony CDP-X3000ES	Ⓜ	500
Sony CDP-CX260	Ⓜ	500
Synergy CDJ210	Ⓜ	300
Technics SL-MC7	Ⓜ	300
Yamaha CDX-993	Ⓜ	400

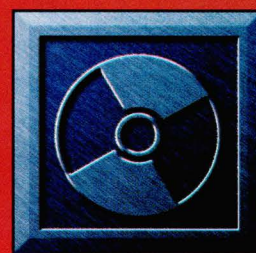
£501 TO £1,000

Acurus ACD 11	Ⓜ	899
Alchemist Nexus	Ⓜ	600
Arcam Alpha 9	Ⓜ	800
Audio Analogue Paganini	Ⓜ	750
Audio Note CD1	Ⓜ	599
Audio Note AN-CD2	Ⓜ	999
Audiomeca Obsession	Ⓜ	999
AVI S2000MC 24 Ref	Ⓜ	999
Creek CD43	Ⓜ	599
Cyrus dAD3Q	Ⓜ	598
Cyrus dAD3Q	Ⓜ	898
Denon DCD-1650AR	Ⓜ	700
DPA Renaissance int CD	Ⓜ	950
Helios Model 3	Ⓜ	700
Helios Model 2	Ⓜ	950
Linn Mimik	Ⓜ	875
Linn Genki	Ⓜ	995
Magnum CD2020	Ⓜ	595
Marantz CD-17	Ⓜ	800
Monrio Asty PL	Ⓜ	675
Monrio Privilege	Ⓜ	995
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	Ⓜ	799
Musical Fidelity A3 CD	Ⓜ	799
Myriad T-20	Ⓜ	600
Myriad MC100	Ⓜ	800
Pioneer PDS-06	Ⓜ	550
Primare D20	Ⓜ	700
Quad 99	Ⓜ	600
Roksan Caspian	Ⓜ	895
Rotel RCD991	Ⓜ	750
Sony CDP-XA555ES	Ⓜ	1,000
Syden Audition	Ⓜ	649
Talk Electronics Thunder 2	Ⓜ	700
Talk Electronics Thunder 3	Ⓜ	1,000
Teac VRDS-8	Ⓜ	600
Teac VRDS-9	Ⓜ	700
Teac VRDS-25X	Ⓜ	1,000
Thule Audio Spirit CD100	Ⓜ	600
Thule Audio Spirit CD150B	Ⓜ	699
Trichord Genesis	Ⓜ	569
Trichord Digital Jukebox 25	Ⓜ	619
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50	Ⓜ	669
Trichord Digital J'box 100	Ⓜ	719
Trichord Revelation	Ⓜ	819
YBA Complete	Ⓜ	649
YBA Special	Ⓜ	695

OVER £1,000

Acoustic Precision Eikos	Ⓜ	1,850
Advantage CD15	Ⓜ	3,995
Alchemist Kraken CD	Ⓜ	1,249

Alchemist Forseti Int.	Ⓜ	1,249
Alchemist Forseti	Ⓜ	1,995
Audio Research CD2	Ⓜ	3,399
Audiolabor 531	Ⓜ	7,550
Audiomeca Keops	Ⓜ	1,500
Audiomeca Talisman	Ⓜ	2,150
Audiomeca Talisman SE	Ⓜ	2,300
Balanced VK-D5	Ⓜ	3,995
Cary CD-301	Ⓜ	2,350
Classe CDP-3	Ⓜ	1,395
Conrad-Johnson DF-2	Ⓜ	1,695
Conrad-Johnson DV-2b	Ⓜ	2,495
Copland CDA-266	Ⓜ	1,199
Copland CDA277	Ⓜ	1,649
Copland CDA289	Ⓜ	1,899
Copland CDA288	Ⓜ	1,999
Cymbol CDP12	Ⓜ	1,299
Exposure CD Player	Ⓜ	1,050
Helios Model 1	Ⓜ	1,250
Helios Stargate	Ⓜ	2,250
Jadis Orchestra	Ⓜ	1,345
Krell KAV250cd	Ⓜ	2,490
Krell KAV300cd	Ⓜ	3,599
Krell KP255s	Ⓜ	19,995
Linn Ikemi	Ⓜ	1,950
Linn Sondeck CD12	Ⓜ	12,000
Marantz CD-17KIS	Ⓜ	1,100
Marantz CD-7	Ⓜ	3,500
Madrigal 39	Ⓜ	4,995
Mcintosh MCD7009	Ⓜ	3,699
Mercus Tanto	Ⓜ	1,395
Mercus Imago Player	Ⓜ	4,495
Mendian 506	Ⓜ	1,100
Mendian 508	Ⓜ	1,995
Myriad MCD500	Ⓜ	1,500
NAD S500	Ⓜ	1,100
Naim CD3.5	Ⓜ	1,050
Naim CDX	Ⓜ	2,200
Naim NACDSII/XPS	Ⓜ	5,625
Oracle CD Player	Ⓜ	9,499
Pink Triangle Numeral	Ⓜ	1,049
Pink Triangle Litaural	Ⓜ	2,200
Primare D302	Ⓜ	1,500
Procede CDP	Ⓜ	3,395
Resolution CD50	Ⓜ	2,995
Roksan Atessa-DP3P	Ⓜ	1,495
Shearne Phase 7	Ⓜ	1,499
Synergy CD1	Ⓜ	1,100
Sonic Frontiers Anthem CD1	⇒	1,699
Sonic Frontiers SFCD-1	Ⓜ	3,799
Sony SCD-1	Ⓜ	2,700
T+A CD1210R	Ⓜ	1,485
T+A CD1220R	Ⓜ	1,540
TAG McLaren CD20R	Ⓜ	1,250
Theta Digital Miles SE	Ⓜ	2,390
Tube Tech Fusion	Ⓜ	1,100
Tube Tech Fulcrum	Ⓜ	2,800
Wadia 860	Ⓜ	7,450
XTC CDP-1	Ⓜ	1,350
YBA Integré a	Ⓜ	1,095
YBA CD3a	Ⓜ	1,850
YBA CD2a	Ⓜ	2,950
YBA CD1a	Ⓜ	3,895



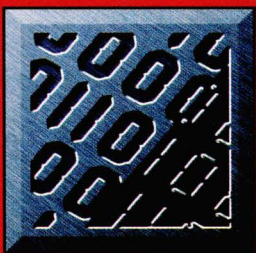
CD TRANSPORTS

KEY

Ⓜ - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Alchemist Forseti Drive	Ⓜ	1,100
Altis CDT III	Ⓜ	4,995
Audio Note CDT Zero	Ⓜ	399
Audio Synthesis Transcend Decade	Ⓜ	3,295
Audiomeca Damnation	Ⓜ	999
Audiomeca Damnation SE	Ⓜ	1,100
Audiomeca Talisman	Ⓜ	1,850
Audiomeca Talisman SE	Ⓜ	1,999
Audiomeca Talisman SB	Ⓜ	2,250
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	Ⓜ	1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	Ⓜ	775
Jadis J13	Ⓜ	1,999
Jadis JDI	Ⓜ	9,190
Linn Kank	Ⓜ	1,850
Madrigal 37	Ⓜ	3,995
Madrigal 31.5	Ⓜ	9,295
Mercus Imago	Ⓜ	3,995
Monnio Bitmatch	Ⓜ	950

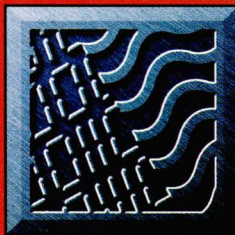
Muse Model 5	1,800
Muse Model 8	3,500
Oracle CD Drive	7,399
Pink Triangle Cardinal II	909
Resolution VT960	3,500
Roksan Atessa-DP3	1,295
Sonic Frontiers Transport 3	5,999
T+A CM1200R	875
TAG McLaren CDT20R	1,499
Teac VRDS-T1	550
Teac P-30	2,500
Theta Digital Pearl	1,349
Theta Digital Jade	2,650
Thorens TCD-2000	999
Trichord Digital Turntable	719
Wadia 8	3,195
Wadia 20	4,370



DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)

KEY
4 - Number of digital inputs.

Alchemist TS-D-1	300
Alchemist Forseti DAC	1,100
Altis Reference	4,995
Audio Note DAC Zero	369
Audio Note DAC1	675
Audio Note DAC2	1,099
Audio Note DAC3	1,750
Audio Research DACs	2,335
Audio Research DACs MkII	3,999
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade	2,795
Audiomeca Elixir	799
Audiomeca Ambrosia	1,850
Boulder 2020	21,000
Chord DSC900	1,850
Chord DSC1100	2,765
Chord DSC1500	4,800
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	1,990
dCS Elgar	8,500
DPA Little Bit 3	325
DPA Renaissance DAC	595
DPA Enlightenment DAC	850
DPA SX128	2,000
DPA SX256	4,000
DPA SX512	8,000
Harmonix Reimyo DAP-77	2,790
Jadis JS2	2,499
Jadis JS1	6,990
LFD DAC2	1,950
LFD DAC3	3,000
Linn Numerik	1,500
Madrigal 360	4,395
Madrigal 360S	6,895
Madrigal 30.6	16,495
Meracus Auriga	1,295
Meracus Flagrare	2,495
Meridian 566	1,095
Monrio 18B2	795
Muse Model 2	2,190
Muse Model 2 Plus	2,500
Muse Model 2/96	3,000
Musical Fidelity X-ACT	200
Musical Fidelity X-24K	300
Musical Fidelity X-DAC	300
Onkyo DX 7310	330
Resolution D92	1,500
Roksan Atessa-DA2	595
Sonic Frontiers Processor 3	5,999
Sumo Theorem II	945
Sumo Theorem IIB	1,155
TAG McLaren DAC20	1,249
Teac D-T1	500
Theta Digital Chroma 396 Std	799
Theta Digital Pro Geny	1,099
Theta Digital Pro Basic IIIa	1,699
Theta Digital Pro Basic IIIa	2,990
Theta Digital Casablanca LS	6,158
Thorens TDA-2000	700
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	1,395
Wadia 12	1,530
Wadia 15	3,790
Wadia 64.4	4,750
Wadia 16	7,395
Wadia 7	9,995
Wadia 9	12,790
Woodside DVAC-18	1,499



DIGITAL RECORDERS

KEY
MD - MiniDisc
DAT - Digital Audio Tape
P - Portable

Denon DMD-1000	MD	300
Kenwood DMF-9020	MD	499
Kenwood DM-7090	MD	500
Kenwood DM-9090	MD	550
Marantz CM635	MD	500
Marantz DR700	MD	600
Onkyo MD-121	MD	450
Onkyo MD 122	MD	700
Philips CDR770		1
Philips CDR775		1
Philips CDR570		1
Philips CDR951		1
Pioneer MJ-D707	MD	199
Pioneer PDR-555RW		480
Pioneer PDR-04		700
Pioneer D-05	DAT	900
Pioneer PDR-05	DAT	1,000
Pioneer D-C88	DAT	2,000
Sharp MD-R1 MkII	MD	180
Sharp MD-R3H	MD	300
Sharp MD-R2	MD	300
Sharp MD-MS200H	MD	350
Sharp MDXV300H	MD	1,000
Sony MZ-R55	MD	1
Sony MDS-S40	MD	1
Sony MZ-R37	MD	1
Sony MZ-R5ST	MD	1
Sony MDS-JE530	MD	200
Sony MDS-JB950	MD	300
Sony MDS-JA20ES	MD	500
Sony MDS-JA55ES	MD	650
Teac MDH300	MD	300
Teac MD-H500i	MD	350
Teac MD-8	MD	600
Teac MD-5	MD	600
Teac MD-10	MD	900
Traxdata Traxaudio 900		399
Yamaha MDX-595	MD	230
Yamaha MDX-793	MD	300
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.
O - Open-back construction.
C - Closed-back construction.

UP TO £40

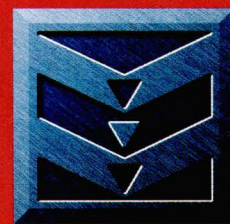
AKG Rox	D	30
Aural Envelope DX200	D	20
Aural Envelope DX220	D	30
Beyer DT111	D	15
Beyer DT211	D	31
Beyer DT211TV	D	35
Hama SL273	D	20
Hama SL275	D	25
JVC HA-CD88	D	18
JVC HA-DS25	D	20
JVC HA-F65	D	20
JVC HA-D626	D	25
Kenwood KPM-310	D	18
Kenwood KPM-410	D	25
Maxell HP-2000	D	20

Pioneer SE-A40	D	20
Pioneer SE-A20V	D	23
Pioneer SE-M250	D	25
Pioneer SE-M350	D	30
Sennheiser HD56	D	18
Sennheiser HD433	D	20
Sennheiser HD400	D	25
Sennheiser HD470	D	35
Sennheiser HD60TV	D	40
Sony MDR-250V	D	18
Sony MDR-A34L	D	18
Sony MDR-ED228LP	D	18
Sony MDR-G52LP	D	20
Sony MDR-E848LP/MP	D	20
Sony MDR-ED238ML	D	22
Sony MDR-C56V	D	25
Sony MDR-C62LP	D	25
Sony MDR-C59G	D	30
Sony MDR-G72LP	D	30
Sony MDR-V300	D	30
Sony MDR-IF130K	D	30
Sony MDR-EX70LP	D	35
Sony MDR-ED268LP	D	35
Stanton ST Pro	D	25
Technics RP-HT355	D	20
Technics RP-F200	D	25
Technics RP-F400	D	30
Technics RP-HT550	D	35
Technics RP-F500	D	40
Vivanco SR200	D	20
Vivanco SR150	D	20
Vivanco SR250	D	20
Vivanco IR5700	D	30
Vivanco IR5800	D	40

OVER £41

AKG K301	D	70
AKG K240DF	D	100
AKG K222R	D	100
AKG K401	D	120
AKG K501	D	150
AKG K333JR	D	150
AKG K444R	D	180
AKG K2905	D	250
AKG K1000	D	700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	D	80
Audio Technica ATHD40 S	D	100
Audio Technica ATH-M40	D	120
Audio Technica ATH911	D	120
Beyer DT311	D	50
Beyer DT411	D	63
Beyer DT351	D	65
Beyer DT431	D	81
Beyer DT511	D	106
Beyer DT801	D	125
Beyer DT831	D	140
Beyer DT811	D	145
Beyer DT100	D	160
Beyer DT901	D	160
Beyer DT911	D	170
Denon AH-D210	D	45
Denon AH-D350	D	65
Denon AH-D550	D	80
Denon AH-D650	D	95
Denon AH-D750	D	130
Denon AH-D950	D	150
Grado SR40	D	45
Grado SR60	D	79
Grado SR80	D	100
Grado SR125	D	150
Grado SR225	D	200
Grado SR325	D	300
Grado RS2	D	495
Grado RS1	D	695
Hama SL276	D	50
Hama IR Cordless	D	60
Jecklin Float Model 1	D	79
Jecklin Float Model 2	D	99
Jecklin Float ELS	E	399
JVC HA-D727	D	43
JVC HA-D50	D	45
JVC HA-W60	D	49
JVC HA-D910	D	65
JVC HA-W200RF	D	75
JVC HA-DX1	D	200
JVC HA-DX3	D	250
JVC HA-D1000	D	250
JVC HA-F25	D	699
Koss TD/80	D	50
Koss R/100	D	100
Philips SBC 3396	D	70
Philips SBC HP9000	D	90
Pioneer SE-M550	D	50
Pioneer SE-M750	D	60
Precide Ergo Model 1	D	120
Precide Ergo Model 2	D	140
Sennheiser HD200	D	50
Sennheiser IS 380	D	50
Sennheiser HD490	D	50
Sennheiser HD495	D	60
Sennheiser HD500	D	70
Sennheiser RS400	D	80
Sennheiser HD270	D	80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	D	90
Sennheiser HD570 Symphony	D	90
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	D	100
Sennheiser IS450	D	110

Sennheiser HD265 Linear	D	125
Sennheiser HDC 451-1	D	130
Sennheiser HD250II	D	150
Sennheiser HD590	D	150
Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	D	150
Sennheiser HD25-13	D	160
Sennheiser HD25	D	160
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	D	200
Sennheiser HD600	D	250
Sennheiser IS850	D	859
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	E	998
Sennheiser Orpheus	E	9,652
Sony MDR-V500DJ	D	50
Sony MDR-RF830RK	D	60
Sony MDR-V700DJ	D	100
Sony MDR-D77	D	130
Sony MDR-F1	D	200
Sony MDR-CD1700	D	200
Sony MDR-DS5000	D	400
Stanton DJ Pro 101/101/101/101/101	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 Lambda Nova Basic	E	449
Stax SR-Lambda Nova S	E	450
Stax Omega	E	1,896
Technics RP-F800	D	50
Technics RP-HC100	D	55
Technics RP-DJ1200	D	130
Vivanco SR650	D	45
Vivanco FMH 3000	D	50
Vivanco SR750	D	50
Vivanco SR850	D	50
Vivanco FM7980	D	60
Vivanco SR950	D	80
Vivanco FM8180	D	99
Vivanco SR2000IFL	D	100



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Hi-Fi Tables

KEY
4 - Number of shelves.

Avik Furniture A4	4	350
Alphason SM17	1	49
Alphason VSM17	1	85
Alphason CSM17	1	85
Alphason GMV1P	1	110
Alphason R17/17	3	120
Alphason GMH1P	1	150
Alphason VR17/17	3	190
Alphason GR17/17-AS	4	275
Apollo Soprano	4	275
Arcigi Air Head 1	1	275
Arcigi Air Head TNT	1	725
Arcigi Suspense 5	5	1,895
Atacama Europa	4	240
Audiophile Base 01	1	79
Audiophile S4T120	4	280
Audiophile S4T120P	4	560
Audiophile Furniture Base	4	615
Avid Isochelf	5	1,100
BCD Model 1006/8	1	795
BCD Model 1000	3	1,250
Custom Design Aspect 650	4	250
Custom Design Aspect 850	5	280
Custom Design e'lite E5	5	280
Custom Design Aspect 500AV	3	290
Custom Design e'lite XES	5	300
Custom Design e'lite AVE	8	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 B5	1	199
Elemental Isotube TS	1	209
Elemental Isotube IS	1	209
Elemental Reference B1	1	329
Elemental Isotube X2	2	379
Elemental Isotube X3	3	489
Elemental Reference B5	1	499
Elemental Reference X1	1	499
Elemental Reference TS	1	549
Elemental Reference IS	1	549
Elemental Reference X2	2	799
Elemental Reference X4	4	849
Elemental Isotube X4/Ref	4	1,199

Elemental Reference X3	3	1,199
Elemental Isotube X4Rse	4	1,349
Elemental Reference X4	4	1,599
Fi-Rax R4	6	399
Finite Elemente A03 pagode	4	479
Finite Elemente E03 pagode	4	649
Finite Elemente HD03	4	1,995
Frameworks H175	1	139
Frameworks FS1	1	150
Frameworks H500	3	265
Frameworks FT2	2	285
Frameworks FT3	3	350
Frameworks H700	3	355
Frameworks H900	3	389
Impulse Iso-plate	3	190
JPW 3 Tier	3	80
JPW 5 Tier	5	100
Linn K3000		85
Mana Sound Frame		125
Mana Mini Table		150
Mana Power supply table		150
Mana Reference flat top		150
Mana Sound Shelf		175
Mana Sound Stage		200
Mana Sound Table		235
Mana Ref Shelf		325
Mana Reference Table		350
Mana 2 Tier Stand		375
Mana 3 Tier Stand		450
Mana 4 Tier Stand		500
Mana 5 Tier Stand		600
Mana 6 Tier Stand		700
Mana 7 Tier Stand	7	800
Mana 8 Tier Stand	8	900
Mission Stance		100
Optimum C4/Pedestal	5	150
Optimum OPT 3406	3	149
Optimum C5/Pedestal	6	150
Optimum OPT 4906	4	199
Optimum OPT 3000	3	200
Optimum OPT 6606	5	249
Optimum OPT 340	3	249
Optimum OPT 5000	5	280
Optimum OPT 490	4	299
Optimum OPT 440	4	299
Optimum OPT 10206	6	299
Optimum AV 300	3	329
Optimum OPT 700	5	349
Optimum OPT 610	5	349
Optimum OPT 660	4	349
Optimum OPT 1020	6	399
Optimum OPT 8000	8	400
Optimum OPT 1190	7	450
Projekt A3	3	145
Projekt A4	4	215
Projekt A5	5	235
Projekt B3	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
Solid Steel Model B	1	141
Solid Steel Model A	1	152
Solid Steel Series 3	4	220
Solid Steel Series 5	4	310
Solid Steel H.3	5	372
Solid Steel H.5	5	517
Sound Org Z022	1	65
Sound Org Z021	2	78
Sound Org Z030	3	100
Sound Org Z060	4	120
Sound Org Z038	5	135
Sound Org Z540	4	140
Sound Org Z560	5	160
Sound Org Z545	4	160
Sound Org Z530	3	170
Soundstyle X300	3	180
Soundstyle X305	3	210
Soundstyle X053	4	210
Soundstyle X050	4	210
Soundstyle X6300	3	215
Soundstyle X100	4	230

Soundstyle X6110	4	230
Soundstyle X058	5	240
Soundstyle X310	3	250
Soundstyle X105	5	250
Soundstyle X6053	4	265
Soundstyle X6100	4	265
Soundstyle X6310	3	275
Soundstyle Radius SR100	4	280
Soundstyle X6058	5	290
Soundstyle X6105	5	300
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	5	320
Standesign Design 4	4	190
Stands Unique Isolation Platform	1	55
Stands Unique Sound Support	4	260
Stands Unique Sound Tower	5	299
Stands Unique Compact Sound Supp 4	4	329
Stands Unique Sound Support 10	4	329
Stands Unique Sound Twr Cabinet	5	389
Stands Unique Ref Wall Support	1	560
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	10	720
Stands Unique Ref Floor Support	6	840
Target B5	5	175
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-CD		110
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-3D		400
Townshend S/Sink Stand 1-4	4	999
Townshend Seismic Sink Stand	4	1,245
Vibraplane Passive	1	1,895
Vibraplane Active	1	3,600
Wilson 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



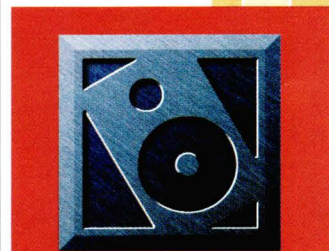
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Speaker Stands

KEY

60 – Height of stand in cm.

Acoustic Solutions Platform Eight		180
Aliante Base		425
Aliante Vela		750
Alphason NCI	60	47
Alphason Akros I	60	49
Alphason RS1	120	49
Alphason NCI	60	84
Alphason HDS	60	85
Alphason Titan S	60	125
Apollo Olympus	60	75
Apollo AZ6	66	80
Atacama BD21	56	55
Atacama BD17		55
Atacama BD25		60
Atacama SE16		65
Atacama SE12		65
Atacama SX500		67
Atacama F2		70
Atacama F1		70
Atacama SX600		70
Atacama SL200		70
Atacama SE24	61	70
Atacama SE20		70
Atacama SX700		73
Atacama SL300		73
Atacama TP600		75
Atacama TP500		75
Atacama SE615		75
Atacama SE515		75
Atacama SE415		75
Atacama SL400		76
Atacama SE1000S		80
Atacama R724	60	150
AVF Tower P6144BP	60	35
BCD Model 1010	60	595
Black Box Speaker Stand	100	797
Credo STD 001		284
Custom Design R/S 300	60	75
Custom Design M Range	56	85
Custom Design Ref. stands	60	200
Deadrock 903	60	60
Deadrock 902	47	60
Deadrock 901	39	60
Elemental Reference SB1	8	399
Elemental Isotube SZ	49	499
Elemental Isotube SZse	61	599
Elemental Isotube SCZ	49	699
Elemental Isotube SCZse	49	799
Elemental Reference SZ	42	999
Elemental Reference SCZ	52	1,499
Harbeth HL-Stands	21	249

Heybrook Stand-S6	63	69
JPW MS2	45	45
JPW MS3	61	55
JPW MS1	46	80
JPW HSI	61	120
JPW HS2	45	120
Mana Sound Base		175
Opera WS1/E	60	235
Opera S1	60	295
Opera S2	60	345
Partington A-4	60	119
Pioneer CP-7		50
Pioneer CP-8		80
Projekt Signature	55	80
Royd Royd	55	99
Russ Andrews Torlyte	61	599
Silverado Silverado 1 Stand	60	350
Solid Steel SL	63	186
Solid Steel SS	63	333
Solid Steel SS801	25	366
Sonus Faber Ironwood		475
Sonus Faber Stonewood		497
Sound Org Z037		55
Sound Org Z027		55
Sound Org Z026		55
Sound Org Z518	45	65
Sound Org Z524	61	69
Soundstyle X6118	42	100
Stands Unique Speaker support	59	165
Stands Unique Tuned Spkr Support	59	230
Stands Unique Tuned Carbon Fibre	59	299
Stands Unique Vivas CF Spkr Supp	60	349
Target TR60	60	68
Target R1	53	280



LOUDSPEAKERS

KEY

⊥ – Floorstander; larger models requiring no separate stand.

⊞ – Stand mount; smaller models designed to be raised above the floor.

⊞ – Wall mount; designed to be sited on or near the wall.

⊞ – Box type, including infinite baffle, reflex and transmission line types.

⊞ – Horn type; mostly large and very efficient.

⊞ – Panel type, including electrostatic and planar magnetic types.

UP TO £130

Allison Micro Monitors	⊞	⊞	⊞	95
Allison Mini References	⊞	⊞	⊞	120
Ariston MSX 03	⊞	⊞	⊞	30
Ariston MSX 05	⊞	⊞	⊞	50
Celestion 121	⊞	⊞	⊞	119
Denon SC-M2	⊞	⊞	⊞	80
Denon SC-E313SE	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
Gale Mini Monitors	⊞	⊞	⊞	70
Gale Gold Monitors	⊞	⊞	⊞	90
Gale 2i	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
Genexa GX300	⊞	⊞	⊞	80
Genexa GX330	⊞	⊞	⊞	80
GLL Arena	⊞	⊞	⊞	90
GLL Imagio IC208	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
Goodmans Active 75	⊞	⊞	⊞	65
Heybrook Pnma 2	⊞	⊞	⊞	129
Interaudio XL1000	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
Jamo Studio-80	⊞	⊞	⊞	70
Jamo D-110	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
Jamo SAT-170	⊞	⊞	⊞	110
Jamo Studio-110	⊞	⊞	⊞	110
Jamo Artina	⊞	⊞	⊞	120
Jamo D-115	⊞	⊞	⊞	120
Jamo 28	⊞	⊞	⊞	125
Jamo Cornet 145	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
JBL CM40	⊞	⊞	⊞	90
JBL CM400	⊞	⊞	⊞	90
JBL Control 1X	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
JBL CM42	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
JPW ML110i	⊞	⊞	⊞	90
JPW ML210i	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
JPW ML310i	⊞	⊞	⊞	120
JPW ML410i	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	⊞	⊞	⊞	60
JVC SP-V50	⊞	⊞	⊞	80
⊞ JVC SP-X220TBK	⊞	⊞	⊞	100

JVC SP-X550BK	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
KEF Coda 7	⊞	⊞	⊞	129
Kenwood LS-90UK	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
Mission 700	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
NAD 801	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
Paradigm Micro v2	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
Paradigm Atom v2	⊞	⊞	⊞	120
Pioneer CS-3030	⊞	⊞	⊞	120
Polk AB410	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
Realistic Minimus 26	⊞	⊞	⊞	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
Sony SS-86E	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
Tangent Monitor 3	⊞	⊞	⊞	60
Tangent Monitor 5	⊞	⊞	⊞	80
Tannoy Mercury M1	⊞	⊞	⊞	120
TDL Nucleus 1	⊞	⊞	⊞	75
TDL Nucleus 2	⊞	⊞	⊞	130
Teac LS-X8 Mk II	⊞	⊞	⊞	80
Technics SB-CS65	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
W'dale Valduis 100	⊞	⊞	⊞	80
W'dale Diamond 7.1	⊞	⊞	⊞	100
W'dale Valduis 200	⊞	⊞	⊞	110
W'dale Modus Music	⊞	⊞	⊞	110

£131 TO £200

Acoustic Energy Aegis One	⊞	⊞	⊞	150
Acoustic Energy AE100i	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Allison Model 4A	⊞	⊞	⊞	170
B&W DM302 Ser II	⊞	⊞	⊞	150
B&W DM601 Ser II	⊞	⊞	⊞	199
Bose 201 IV	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Boston CR6	⊞	⊞	⊞	149
Boston 325	⊞	⊞	⊞	149
Boston Micro 80 Sat	⊞	⊞	⊞	169
Boston Runabout	⊞	⊞	⊞	169
Boston 335	⊞	⊞	⊞	179
Boston 351	⊞	⊞	⊞	189
Boston CR7	⊞	⊞	⊞	199
Boston Runabout II	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Celestion 15i	⊞	⊞	⊞	199
Cerwin-Vega CT-165	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Elax Liberty 3+	⊞	⊞	⊞	149
Genexa GX650	⊞	⊞	⊞	140
Genexa Pro	⊞	⊞	⊞	160
GLL Imagio IC218	⊞	⊞	⊞	140
GLL Imagio IC318	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Heybrook HB1/2000	⊞	⊞	⊞	150
Heybrook Heylette B	⊞	⊞	⊞	199
Heybrook HB2/2000	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Interaudio XL2000	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Jamo Cornet 165	⊞	⊞	⊞	150
Jamo 38	⊞	⊞	⊞	150
Jamo 525	⊞	⊞	⊞	150
Jamo 560	⊞	⊞	⊞	150
Jamo 660	⊞	⊞	⊞	170
Jamo Studio 180	⊞	⊞	⊞	180
Jamo D165	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Jamo 68	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
Jamo 892	⊞	⊞	⊞	200
JBL CM52	⊞	⊞	⊞	150
JBL MX1000				

HI-FI PRICE GUIDE

B&W DM602 Ser II	300
Blueroom Minipod	250
Bose 151	220
Bose 301 IV	300
Boston 361	219
Boston CR8	239
Boston 381	259
Boston CR9	279
Boston Voyager	299
Castle Isis	250
Celestion C1	299
Celestion 231	299
Cerwin-Vega VS-8	250
Cerwin-Vega CT-330	300
Chario Syntar 100	249
Chario Ref 100	299
Chario Hiper 1000	300
Dali 102B	260
Dali 150	300
Eltax Linear Response	249
GLL Imagio IC238TL	250
Heybrook Optima	269
Heybrook Heylios	259
Heybrook HB3/2000	300
Interaudio XL3000	230
Interaudio XL4000	260
Jamo Cornet 175	230
Jamo Classic 4	250
Jamo Art	300
Jamo D265	300
JBL CM62	250
JM Lab Tantal 507	299
JPW ML710i	250
JPW ML810i	300
JVC SX-SW10	300
KEF Coda 9	299
KEF Model 70S	299
Linn Kan	295
Mission 750	248
Mission 772	250
Mission 703	300
M-A Monitor 2	250
M-A Silver 3	300
Mus Tec Kestrel SE	300
NAD 802	280
Paradigm Monitor 5	250
Paradigm Monitor 7	300
Pioneer CS-7030	230
Pioneer CS-9030	280
Pioneer S-LC1	300
Polk AB505	220
Polk M3 II	220
Polk RT5	250
Polk RT7	300
Polk M5	300
Promenade SP1	299
Rega Aria	250
Royd The Envoy	249
Royd Minstrel	275
Ruark Eplogue	239
Sequence 300	249
Sony SS-176EB	250
Tannoy Mercury M3	230
TDL Nucleus 4	300

TLC Maestro 130S	289
TLC Voyager 350	289
W'dale Modus Music Four	230
W'dale Valdus 500	300
Yamaha NS10M	300
Yamaha NS-200	300
ZYP A1	229
ZYP A2S	299

£301 TO £500	
Acoustic Energy AE105SE	350
Acoustic Energy AE109	350
Acoustic Energy Aegis Three	350
Acoustic Energy AE120	500
Allison Model 2A	420
Arcaydis Baby 2	399
Arcaydis ASC	399
Arcaydis AK1	449
Audiovector C1	399
AVI Neutron	499
AVI NuNeutron	500
B&O Beovox CX50	325
B&O Beovox CX100	425
B&W DM305	350
B&W CDM2SE	400
Bandor Pictures	352
Boston Micro 90 Sat	369
Boston Micro 80 Sys	369
Boston VR20	380
Castle Kendal	400
Castle Inversion 15	425
Castle Eden	500
Celestion 25i	399
Celestion 30i	449
Celestion 35i	499
Cerwin-Vega VS-10	350
Chario Syntar 100T	399
Chario Ref 1000	499
Dali 104B	370
Dali Royal Menuet MkII	400
Dali 606	400
Dali Royal	500
Def Tech Celsius	395
Dynaudio Audience 40	399
Epos ES12	499
GLL Imagio IC248TL	350
GLL Imagio IC258TL	450
GLL Imagio IC348TL	500
Heybrook Heylo	359
Heybrook Ultima	399
Heybrook HB4/2000	500
Jamo Classic 6	330
Jamo Cornet 195	350
Jamo BX-100A	350
Jamo 98	350
Jamo D365	400
Jamo Classic 8	400
Jamo Graphic	400
Jamo 12B	450
Jamo BX-150A	450
Jamo Atmosphere	500
JBL LX60	350
JBL Ti 200	400
JM Lab Tantal 515	499

Jordan Watts JHFLG	380
Jordan Watts JH200	420
JPW ML910i	350
JPW ML1010i	450
KEF Q35	349
KEF Q55	499
KEF RDM One	499
Linn Sekrit	395
Magnat Vector 55	349
Magnat Vector 77	449
Mission 751f	348
Mission 775e	400
Mission 704	450
Mission 774	500
Mission 705	500
M-A Monitor 3	350
M-A Silver 5	400
M-A Studio 2SE	500
M-A Monitor 4	500
M-A 700 PMC	500
Mordaunt-Short MS207	400
Mordaunt-Short MS208	500
Mordaunt-Short MS817	500
Mus Tec Harner	400
Mus Tec PM15	475
NAD 804	400
Neat Critique	445
Opera Duetto	395
Opera Prima	495
Origin Live OL-1AS	399
Origin Live Monarch	399
Paradigm Studio/20	350
Paradigm Monitor 9	400
Pioneer S-LC2	450
Polk AB705	330
Polk RT8	400
Polk RT10	500
Polk AB805	500
Prof Monitor Co TB15	400
Promenade SP2	399
Promenade SP3	499
Rega Alya	350
Rega Jura	450
Rega ELA	498
Royd The Squire	350
Royd Minstrel SE	399
Royd Doublet	485
Ruark Icon	399
Sequence 400	329
Sony SS-X7	400
S Coast Odette	325
Spendor S3/5	499
System 1130	500
Tannoy Revolution R2	350
TDL G20	380
TDL Chiltern CF100	450
TDL G30	500
Technics SB-M300	350
Technics SB-M500	450
TLC Altus 300	366
Triangle Cometes	359
W'dale Modus Music Six	330
W'dale Modus Music Eight	430
W'dale Modus Music 1/6	500
Yamaha NS-300	400

Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799
Heybrook Duet	799
Infinity Kappa 60	595
Infinity Kappa 70	795
Jamo BX-200A	530
Jamo Classic 10	600
JBL LX80	550
JBL Ti 400	550
JBL SVA1500	650
JBL Ti 600	650
JM Lab Cobalt 807	599
JM Lab Tantal 520	599
JM Lab Cobalt 810	799
Jordan Watts JH400	615
KEF LS3/5a	549
KEF RDM Two	699
KEF Q65	799
Kelly KT2	700
Linn Tukan Passive	550
Linn Kelidh Passive	750
Magnat Vintage 710	799
Meridian A500	750
M&K S-85	700
Mission 752f	578
Mission 753f	798
M-A Silver 7	600
M-A 702PMC	600
M-A 703PMC	800
Mus Tec Falcon	680
Naim Intro	680
Neat Mystique 2	575
Neat Petite II	745
Opera Seconda	595
Opera Platea	795
Origin Live Resolution	732
Paradigm Studio/60	650
Paradigm Studio/80	750
Polk RT12	600
Polk RT16	799
Polk LS50	800
ProAc Tablette 2000	649
ProAc Studio 100	749
Prof Monitor Co TB15M	517
Prof Monitor Co TB1	529
Prof Monitor Co TB1M	576
Prof Monitor Co XB1	640
Promenade SP4	650
Roksan ROKone 1	595
Roksan Ojan 3	795
Royd The Sorcerer	595
Royd Abbot	695
Ruark Templar II	559
Ruark Sceptre	599
Ruark Talisman II	799
Ruark Prologue One	799
Shippy Polarys	595
Silverado Raider	695
Snell K5	795
Soniloquy 5.0	795
Sonus Faber Concertino	599
S Coast Hades	695
S Coast Lancelot	795
Spendor S1	549
System 1150	750
T+A TB 100	700
Tannoy Definition D100	689
TDL Cotswold CF200	650
Titan Logic T/2B	600
Titan Logic T/2	699
Titan Orbital	790
TLC Classic 2	535
TLC Classic 1	800
Totem Mite	599
Totem Rokk	765
Triangle Zephyr II	599

£801 TO £1,500	
Acoustic Energy AE509	850
Acoustic Energy AE520	1,000
Acoustic Energy AE2-II	1,245
Acoustic Solutions Eight	1,375
Aliante Moda	1,200
Apertura Prima	1,095
Apertura Nova	1,395
Arcaydis AC1	1,099
Arcaydis AK5	1,399
ATC SCM10	1,000
Audio Note AN-I/D	930
Audio Note AN-K/SpX	1,060
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299
Audio Note AN-I/SpX	1,415
Audio Physic Step	1,299
Audiovector M1 Super	999
Audiovector M2	1,399
Audiovector M1 Sig	1,449
AVI Positron	899
B&O Beolab 4000	1,100
B&W DM604 Ser II	849
B&W CDM75E	1,000
B&W N805	1,400
Bandor Trident	846
BKS Audio Hybrid 107	1,500
Bose A'mass AM5	900
Bose 701	1,000
Boston VR40	1,000
Carlsson OA-52.2	1,500

Blue Room Minipod.

Castle Harlech	900	Veritas 7	1,000	Spendor SP100	2,234	Meridian DSP5500	5,950
Celestion A1	899	Veritas 15	1,300	T+A TB 140	1,760	Meridian DSP6000	9,400
Celestion C3	999	Veritas 20	1,400	Tannoy Definition D500	1,999	M-A Studio 50	3,300
Celestion A2	1,499			Tannoy Stirling TW	2,200	M-A Studio 60	5,000
Cerwin-Vega AL-1000	1,100	£1501 TO £3,000		Tannoy Definition D700	2,500	Naim DBL Active	8,050
Cerwin-Vega 1515	1,300	Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,995	TDL Studio Monitor-m	2,750	Neolith NEO 2	3,499
Chario Ref 1000T	999	Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,995	Totem Tabu	2,299	Neolith NEO 3	4,999
Chano Academy 1	1,299	Aliante Zeta	1,850	Totem The Forest	2,675	ProAc Response 3.8	3,990
Cura CA-20	1,199	Aliante Linea	2,060	Veritas 25	1,750	ProAc Future 1	5,875
Dali 850	1,100	Aliante One	2,700	Veritas H1	2,995	ProAc Response 5	9,000
Def Tech BP8B	1,000	Alon I Mk II	1,795	Wilson benesch Orator	2,900	ProAc Future 2	10,575
Def Tech BP10B	1,500	Alon II Mk II	2,495	Zingali Overture 2S	1,975	ProAc Response 4	12,000
Diapason Prelude II	875	ALR/Jordan Note 7	2,500	OVER £3,000		Prof Monitor Co MB1P	5,135
Diapason Karis	1,275	Apertura Agora Signature	2,295	Acoustic Energy AE5	7,995	Prof Monitor Co BBS-P	8,841
Dynaudio Contour 1.1	879	Apertura Tanagra	2,395	Alon Lotus SE	3,500	Prof Monitor Co MB1-A	14,805
Dynaudio Audience 70	1,100	Apertura Tanagra Sig.	2,795	Alon V Mk II	5,495	Prof Monitor Co BBS A	19,799
Dynaudio Contour 1.3	1,198	ATC SCM20SL	1,750	Alon Adriana	8,500	Prof Monitor Co MB1/XBD-A	22,266
Dynaudio Audience 80	1,460	ATC SCM20 Tower SL	2,400	Alon Circe	12,000	Prof Monitor Co BBS/XBD-A	32,606
Electrocompaniet EC-M1	995	Audio Note AN-E/D	1,520	Alon Phalanx	19,000	Rehdeko RK125	3,200
Electrocompaniet EC-Qube	1,195	Audio Note AN-E/SPx	2,250	Apertura Athena	6,995	Rehdeko RK145	4,800
Electrocompaniet EC-Qube SE	1,495	Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749	Apertura Atlante	8,995	Rehdeko RK175	8,800
Epos ES15	890	Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	ATC SCM20A PRO	3,049	Revel Gem	5,295
Epos ES22	1,185	Audio Wk'p Cyclone 34	2,000	ATC SCM20TASL	3,995	Rockport Merak	13,995
Harbeth HL-K6	1,049	Audiostatic DCI	2,495	ATC SCM50PSL	4,250	Rockport Szyzyg	15,000
Harbeth HL-Compact 7	1,499	Audiovector M3	1,899	ATC SCM100PSL	4,950	Rockport Procyon	32,500
Harbeth BBC LSS/12A	1,499	Audiovector M3 Sig	2,499	ATC SCM50ASL	4,950	Ruark Solstice	4,000
Impulse Kora	1,250	B&O Beolab 6000	1,550	ATC SCM100ASL	5,775	Ruark Excalibur	7,000
Infinity Overture 1	900	B&O Beolab 8000	2,100	ATC SCM70PSL	6,475	Shahinian Hawk	5,495
Infinity Kappa 80	995	B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,650	ATC SCM70ASL	8,000	Shahinian Diapason	9,495
Infinity Kappa 90	1,295	Bandor Bandora/Mora	2,350	ATC SCM200ASL	10,000	Shinpy Enigma	3,995
Infinity Overture 2	1,500	Bandor Siren	2,800	ATC SCM300ASL	15,995	Shinpy Euphonia	5,995
Jadis Orchestra	999	BKS Audio Hybrid 128	2,549	Audio Note AN-JSE Silver	17,731	Shinpy Magnifica Suprema	14,500
Jamo Concert 8	1,365	Bose 901 VI	1,650	Audio Note AN-ESE Silver	7,900	Shun Mook Bella Voce	6,000
JBL SVA 1600	850	Boston Lyrfield 300L	2,000	Audio Physic Virgo 2	9,600	Snell XA-75ps	4,500
JBL 4312 MkII-WX	1,000	Castle Inversion 100	1,975	Audio Physic Avanti 2	3,399	Sonus Faber Guarneri Homage	5,795
JBL SVA 1800	1,000	Celestion A3	2,399	Audio Physic Caldera	6,699	Sonus Faber Amati Homage	11,450
JBL SVA 2100	1,250	Celestion Kingston	2,500	Audio Physic Medea	10,599	Sony SS-M9ED	10,000
JM Lab Cobalt 815	999	Chario Academy 2	1,649	Audiostatic DCI Plus	24,999	Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790
JM Lab Electra 905	1,199	Chano Academy Mill'm 2	2,100	Audiovector 5X	3,750	Sound-Lab Aura	6,490
JM Lab Cobalt 820	1,199	Credo SPB 003	1,820	Audiovector 6X	3,999	Sound-Lab Pristine III+	7,990
Jordan Watts JH1+1	1,150	Credo SPB 009	2,453	Avalon Avatar	5,699	Sound-Lab A-3	11,990
KEF Q75	999	Cura CA-30	1,799	Avalon Arcus	5,995	Sound-Lab Ultimate II	13,950
KEF Ref. Model One	1,199	Dali Grand Coupe	2,500	Avalon Eclipse Classic	6,995	Sound-Lab A-1	13,990
KEF RDM Three	1,500	Def Tech BP2002	2,400	Avalon Radian HC	8,995	Sound-Lab Ultimate III	18,950
Kelly KT3	1,200	Diapason Adamantes III	1,995	Avalon Eidolon	13,995	Sound-Lab Ultimate I	23,950
Linn Tukan Aktiv	1,050	Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,894	Avalon Sentinel	20,495	S Coast King Arthur	3,095
Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,250	Dynaudio Craft	2,598	Avantgarde Uno	79,995	S Coast Excalibur Ref.	12,400
L Voice Auditorium	1,500	Dynaudio Contour 3.0	2,930	Avantgarde Duo	5,300	Spendor FL10	3,475
Lowther Accolade 2	1,199	ECA Servo A.2	2,450	Avantgarde Trio	7,500	T+A A4D	3,850
Lumley L/M3.5	1,050	ELS Res'ch Vision	2,800	Avantgarde Trio Compact	16,500	T+A A3D	4,550
Magnat Vintage 720	1,199	Epos ES30	2,385	Avantgarde Trio Classic	19,708	T+A A2D	8,400
Magneplanar SMG-C SE	990	Eurostatic Model 1	2,250	AVI Gravitron	4,250	Tannoy Edinburgh TW	3,250
Magneplanar MG-0.6 SE	1,370	Gamma Epoch Ref Five	2,999	B&W Silver Signature	5,500	Tannoy Definition D900	3,999
Meridian Argent 1	995	Harbeth HL-58	1,999	B&W Nautilus 801	8,500	Tannoy GRF Memory TW	4,000
M&K S-125	1,150	Helius Syrius II	2,395	B&W Nautilus	35,000	Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600
Mission 705a	900	Helius Syrius I	2,850	Bandor Bandoline	3,290	Tannoy Canterbury 15 TW	7,720
Mission 754f	1,298	Heybrook Octet	1,799	Beahorn Virtuoso Bronze	3,325	Tannoy Westminster Royal	14,920
M-A Studio 6	900	Hi Q Sound SM108	2,000	Beahorn Virtuoso Gold	3,395	TDL Ref Standard-m	6,000
M-A Silver 9	1,000	Impulse Lali	1,850	Beahorn Virtuoso Reference	3,799	Titan Goliath T/4	4,112
M-A 705PMC	1,150	Infinity Overture 3	1,750	Beahorn Accelerando	6,600	Totem Mani-2	3,100
Mus Tec Condor	1,000	Infinity Kappa 100	1,895	BKS Audio Hybrid 175	3,995	Totem Shaman	9,999
Mus Tec Hawk	1,250	Inner Sound Isis	2,375	Boston Lyrfield 500L	4,449	Veritas 45	3,750
Mus Tec Eagle	1,500	Jamo Concert 11	2,250	Carfrae Little Big Horn	6,795	Veritas H2	4,495
Naim Credo	1,090	JM Lab Electra 915	1,899	Carfrae Carfraehorn	18,000	Veritas H3	5,995
Neat Elite	1,195	JM Lab Electra 920	2,399	Chario Academy 5j	5,999	Wilson Audio Cub	5,495
Opera Terza	995	Jordan Watts JH2K	2,400	Credo SPB 012	3,147	Wilson Audio WATT 5	8,390
Opera Callas Gold	1,095	Jordan Watts JH5K	3,000	Credo SDL 001	5,677	Wilson Audio WITT II	10,995
Opera Divina II	1,495	KEF Ref. Model Two	1,599	Dali Grand	4,000	Wilson Audio Maxx	34,995
Orelle Swing	1,200	KEF Ref. Model Three	1,999	Def Tech BP2000	3,600	Wilson benesch Actor	3,900
Origin Live Sovereign	1,130	Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Diapason Adamantes Ltd	3,995	Wilson benesch ACT1	6,900
Paradigm Studio/100	950	Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,640	Dynaudio Contour 3.3	4,815	Wilson benesch Act 2	8,900
Polk LS70	1,200	L Voice Aud'm Avatar	2,100	Dynaudio Confidence 3	4,846	Wilson benesch The Bishop	20,000
Polk RT20p	1,500	Lowther Fidelio	1,999	Dynaudio Confidence 5	5,924		
ProAc Tablette 2000 Sig	899	Lowther Academy	2,399	Dynaudio Confidence 5	5,924		
ProAc Studio 125	999	Lowther Bel Canto	2,699	Dynaudio Evidence	14,566		
ProAc Response 1 SB	1,199	Lumley L/M2 Mk3	2,995	Dynaudio Evidence	50,909		
Prof Monitor Co LC1	999	Magnat Vintage 760	1,999	Eggleston Rosa	8,500		
Rega XEL	1,040	Magneplanar MG-10 SE	1,650	Electrofluidics Sonolith 2.2xi	5,999		
RMS Revelation S 1	1,299	Magneplanar MG-1.5 SE	1,780	ELS Res'ch Vista	3,900		
Roksan Ojan 3X	995	Magneplanar MG-2.7 SE	2,650	ELS Res'ch Illusion MkII	9,000		
Royd The Albion	985	Martin-Logan Aeries I	2,199	Eurostatic Model 2	3,650		
Ruark Solus	1,200	Meridian M60	2,150	Impulse Ta'us	3,100		
Shahinian Super Elf	875	M-A Studio 20SE	2,500	Inner Sound Eros	3,995		
Shahinian Starter	1,195	Naim SBL Active	1,885	Jadis 2	5,900		
Shahinian Compass	1,495	Naim SBL Passive	2,030	Jadis 1	18,900		
Shinpy Micraphonica	1,099	Neolith NEO 1	2,999	Jamo Oriel	9,000		
Silverado Ryder	1,395	Opera Caruso II	2,495	JM Lab Mini Utopia	4,500		
Soliloquy SM 2A3	1,095	Origin Live Conqueror	1,750	JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	7,300		
Sonus Faber Concerto	945	Polk LS90	1,700	JM Lab Utopia	18,300		
Sonus Faber Concerto GP	999	Possett Albatross	2,500	JM Lab Grande Utopia	35,000		
Sonus Faber Signum	1,200	ProAc Response 1.5	1,790	Jordan Watts JH10K	7,570		
S Coast Merlin Monitor	849	ProAc Response 2.5	2,700	KEF Ref. Model Four	3,299		
S Coast Classic	1,495	Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,758	Kochel K-300S	10,000		
Spendor SP3/1P	825	Prof Monitor Co IB1S	2,697	Linn Keltik Aktiv	6,000		
Spendor FL6	1,099	Rehdeko RK115	1,700	L Voice Avatar OBX	4,000		
Spendor SP2/3	1,187	Ruark Crusader II	1,649	L Voice Air Scout	19,500		
Spendor FL8	1,355	Ruark Equinox	1,900	L Voice Air Partner S	37,200		
T+A TAS 1200E	1,050	Shahinian Arc	2,000	Lowther Delphic	3,099		
T+A TB 120	1,060	Shahinian Obelisk	2,850	Lowther Opus One	4,999		
Tannoy Definition D300	999	Shahinian Aurbitica	1,995	Lumley L/M 2 Sig. Mk3	4,500		
TDL Cheviot CF300	850	Shinpy Eurtmica	2,895	Magnat Vintage 770	3,500		
Technics SB-M1000	1,500	Shinpy Altair	2,895	Magneplanar MG-3.5SE	3,800		
Titan Enigma T/3	825	Silverado Silverado 1	1,995	Magneplanar MG-20 SE P	10,300		
Titan Sovereign T/4	1,175	Soliloquy 5.3	1,750	Magneplanar MG-20 SE A	11,000		
Totem The Arno	959	Sonus Faber Electa Amator 2	2,849	Martin-Logan SL3	3,399		
Totem The Staaf	1,249	Sound-Lab Quantum	2,150	Martin-Logan CLS Iiz	4,555		
Totem Model One	1,249	S Coast Excalibur	2,750	Martin-Logan Re-Quest Z	5,875		
		Spendor SP1/2	1,674	Meridian DSP5000	3,295		



SUBWOOFERS
KEY
Ⓐ - Active; includes a dedicated power amplifier.
THX - THX-approved by LucasFilm for use in Home THX installations.

Acoustic Energy AE108S	300
Allison Mini Ref Sub	210
Alon Poseidon	12,000
ATC SCM 0.1/15	3,810
Audio Physic Terra	3,999
B&W ASW1000	500
B&W ASW2000	800
B&W ASW3000	1,000
Boston CR400	300
Boston VR500	450
Boston VR2000	800
Celestion CS135	139

Celestion CSW MkII	Ⓐ	329
Celestion S11	Ⓐ	349
Celestion A6s	Ⓐ	800
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D	Ⓐ	200
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D	Ⓐ	250
Chario Syntar Bass	Ⓐ	299
Chario Hipar Bass	Ⓐ	499
Credo SDC 001	Ⓐ	3,054
GLL Le Bass	Ⓐ	350
Jamo SW30SE	Ⓐ	200
Jamo SW40E	Ⓐ	250
Jamo SW410e	Ⓐ	300
Jamo SW50SE	Ⓐ	300
Jamo Sub One	Ⓐ	400
JBL Control Sub 6	Ⓐ	200
JBL Control Sub 10	Ⓐ	300
JM Lab Tantal SW20	Ⓐ	349
JM Lab Cobalt SW27A	Ⓐ	599
JM Lab Electra SW33A	Ⓐ	899
JM Lab Sub Utopia	Ⓐ	2,200
JPW Subwoofer	Ⓐ	130
JPW SW40	Ⓐ	240
JPW SW60	Ⓐ	350
JPW SW-120	Ⓐ	500
KEF Model 20B	Ⓐ	349
KEF Model 30B	Ⓐ	499
KEF Model AV1	Ⓐ THX	2,499
Kenwood SW500	Ⓐ	250
Kenwood SW501	Ⓐ	349
Linn AV5150	Ⓐ	2,850
L. Voice RW24	Ⓐ	11,500
Magnat Vector Sub 30P	Ⓐ	149
Magnat Vector Sub 30A	Ⓐ	299
Meridian M2500	Ⓐ	1,595
M&K VX-7MkII	Ⓐ	450
M&K V-7S MkII	Ⓐ	650
M&K V-12S	Ⓐ	800
M&K V-12S (THX)	Ⓐ THX	800
M&K MX-70	Ⓐ	900
M&K MX-150 (THX)	Ⓐ THX	1,500
M&K MX-700	Ⓐ	1,595
M&K MX-200	Ⓐ	1,800
M&K MX-350THX	Ⓐ THX	1,995
M&K MX-5000 (THX)	Ⓐ THX	2,900
Mission 75as	Ⓐ	548
M-A ASW110	Ⓐ	500
M-A ASW210	Ⓐ	700
Mus. Tec. PMS 45	Ⓐ	500
Mus. Tec. Tercel	Ⓐ	700
Muse Model 22	Ⓐ	1,890
Muse Model 18	Ⓐ	3,790
Neat Gravitats	Ⓐ	1,095
Paradigm PDR10	Ⓐ	250
Paradigm Servo 15A	Ⓐ	800
Polk PSW50	Ⓐ	350
Polk PSW150	Ⓐ	500
Polk PSW300	Ⓐ	750
REL Q50	Ⓐ	375
REL Q-100E	Ⓐ	495
REL Strata III	Ⓐ	600
REL Storm III	Ⓐ	800
REL Stadium II	Ⓐ	995
REL Stentor II	Ⓐ	1,800
REL Studio II	Ⓐ	4,000
Revel Sub-15	Ⓐ	2,195
Roksan Ojan 3S	Ⓐ	795
Ruark Log-Rhythm	Ⓐ	750
Sequence FW120	Ⓐ	249
Solloiloqy S10	Ⓐ	1,050
Sony SA-W30S	Ⓐ	130
Sunfire Sub Junior	Ⓐ	1,099
Sunfire True Sub	Ⓐ	1,499
Sunfire Trus Sub Sig.	Ⓐ	1,699
TDL Nucleus SBR	Ⓐ	200
Tsunami TS300	Ⓐ	300
Tsunami TS200	Ⓐ	300
Tsunami TS210	Ⓐ	399
W'dale Modus Sub Bass	Ⓐ	180
Wilson Audio Puppy 5.1	Ⓐ	8,450
Wilson Audio Whow III	Ⓐ	10,999
Wilson Audio XS	Ⓐ	17,000
Yamaha YST-SW45	Ⓐ	140
Yamaha YST-SW60	Ⓐ	180
Yamaha YST-SW190	Ⓐ	280
Yamaha YST-SW300	Ⓐ	350

Air Tangent IC	#	4,600
Air Tangent 10B	#	8,600
Air Tangent Reference	#	14,000
Audio Note AN-ARM 1	Ⓢ	169
Audio Note AN-0s	Ⓢ	795
Audio Note AN-1s	Ⓢ	995
Audiomeca SL5	#	2,500
Clearaudio Souther TQ-1	#	1,670
Clearaudio Master TQ-1	#	3,620
Dynavector 507	Ⓢ	1,995
Graham MK 2.0 Basic	Ⓢ	1,810
Graham MK 2.0 Deluxe	Ⓢ	2,650
Helius Orion 4 Copper	Ⓢ	549
Helius Cyalene 2	Ⓢ	1,495
Kuzma Stogi S	Ⓢ	399
Kuzma Stogi	Ⓢ	750
Kuzma Stogi Ref	Ⓢ	1,250
Linn Akito	Ⓢ	500
Linn Ekos	Ⓢ	1,500
Moth Mk I	Ⓢ	109
Moth MkIII Stainless	Ⓢ	146
Moth Mk III Tungsten	Ⓢ	174
Moth Moth 900	Ⓢ	598
Naim ARO	Ⓢ	1,070
N'h'am Interspace Arm	Ⓢ	370
N'h'am Space	Ⓢ	450
N'h'am Mentor	Ⓢ	800
N'h'am Foot	Ⓢ	1,100
N'h'am Anna Log Arm	Ⓢ	1,500
Pro-Ject 9	Ⓢ	350
Rega RB250	Ⓢ	109
Rega RB300	Ⓢ	174
Rega RB900	Ⓢ	598
Rockport Series 7000	#	6,000
Roksan Tabriz	Ⓢ	350
Roksan Tabriz Zi	Ⓢ	450
Roksan Artemiz	Ⓢ	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	Ⓢ	309
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	Ⓢ	338
SME Series II 3009-R	Ⓢ	514
SME Series II 3010-R	Ⓢ	526
SME Series II 3012-R	Ⓢ	565
SME 309	Ⓢ	689
SME 310	Ⓢ	705
SME 312	Ⓢ	802
SME Series IV	Ⓢ	983
SME Series V	Ⓢ	1,461
Triplanar V1A	Ⓢ	3,500
Triplanar ViB	Ⓢ	3,750
Wilson benches Act 0.5	Ⓢ	795
Wilson benches ACT2	Ⓢ	1,350
Zeta AS	Ⓢ	469
Zeta VDH	Ⓢ	549

Marantz ST-17	P60	RDS	600
McIntosh MR7084	P50		2,499
McIntosh MX118	P50		4,999
McIntosh MX130	P50		6,999
Meridian 504	P30		695
Musical Fidelity E50	P20		300
Myryad T-30	P29		400
Myryad MT100	P39		600
NAD 412	P24		190
NAD C440	P30	RDS	200
NAD 414RDS	P30	RDS	250
NAD 710	P30		270
NAD 712	P30		330
Naim NAT03	P24		615
Naim NAT02			1,130
Naim NAT01			1,780
Onkyo T 421ORDS	P30	RDS	180
Onkyo T 409	P30		230
Onkyo T 411RDS	P30	RDS	260
Pioneer F-204RDS	P30	RDS	140
Pioneer F-504RDS	P40	RDS	250
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	P40	RDS	300
Quad 99	P25		700
Quad 77FM	P25	RDS	700
Rega Radio	P24		298
Roksan Kandy	P50	RDS	375
Roksan Caspian	P50		695
Rotel RT-935AX	P20		160
Rotel RT940AX	P20		200
Sony ST-SE200	P30		100
Sony ST-SE300	P30	RDS	110
Sony ST-SE500	P30	RDS	140
Sony ST-SB920	P30	RDS	180
Sony ST-SA3ES	P30	RDS	250
Sony ST-S3000	P30	RDS	250
T+A T1200R	P60	RDS	790
TAG McLaren T20	P39		1,099
Teac T-R400	P40		100
Teac T-R460	P40	RDS	120
Teac T-H500	P30	RDS	170
Technics ST-GT350L	P30		130
Technics ST-GT550L	P39	RDS	180
Technics ST-GT650L	P39	RDS	230
Thorens TRT-2000	P59	RDS	499
Thule Audio Spirit TU100	P40	RDS	499
Yamaha TX-480L	P40		100
Yamaha TX-10 II	P40	RDS	130
Yamaha TX-492RDS	P40	RDS	180
Yamaha TX-59 2RDS	P40	RDS	180
Yamaha RX-396RDS	P40	RDS	250
YBA Complete	P14		490



HI-FI HELP

Let our experts help with your hi-fi problems. Send your query to 'Help' at the usual address.

Technics SL-1200MkII	Ⓢ	400
Thorens TD-180 AT91	Ⓢ	210
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	Ⓢ	230
Thorens TD166 VI AT95E	Ⓢ	370
Thorens TD-166 VI UK/RB	Ⓢ	400

OVER £500

Audio Note AN-TT 2	Ⓢ	995
Audio Note AN-TT 3	Ⓢ	1,995
Audiomeca Romance	Ⓢ	1,895
Audiomeca J1	Ⓢ	3,500
Avid Volvere	Ⓢ	1,399
Avid Acutus	Ⓢ	3,995
Basis 2000	Ⓢ	1,995
Basis 2001	Ⓢ	2,995
Basis Ovation II	Ⓢ	5,400
Basis 2500	Ⓢ	7,495
Basis Debut Gold Std III	Ⓢ	8,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	Ⓢ	10,300
Chantry QT Level 2	Ⓢ	705
Clearaudio Solution	Ⓢ	925
Clearaudio Evolution	Ⓢ	1,095
Clearaudio Revolution	Ⓢ	2,500
Clearaudio Reference	Ⓢ	3,835
Clearaudio Master Ref.	Ⓢ	8,510
DNM-Reson Rota 1	Ⓢ	3,900
DNM-Reson Rota 2	Ⓢ	5,600
Garrard 501	Ⓢ	5,278
Impulse Moskito	Ⓢ	695
Kuzma Stabi S	Ⓢ	695
Kuzma Stabi	Ⓢ	1,990
Kuzma Stabi Reference	Ⓢ	3,750
Linn LP12 Basic	Ⓢ	1,100
Linn LP12 Lingo	Ⓢ	1,750
Micell Gyro Spider Ed'n	Ⓢ	775
Micell Gyrodeck	Ⓢ	875
Micell Orbe SE	Ⓢ	1,725
Micell Orbe	Ⓢ	1,995
N'h'am Spacedeck	Ⓢ	750
N'h'am HyperSpacedeck	Ⓢ	1,500
N'h'am Mentor	Ⓢ	2,600
N'h'am Anna Log	Ⓢ	5,500
Orade Delphi	Ⓢ	3,370
Orade Delphi 15th Anniv	Ⓢ	3,800
Pink Triangle Tarantella II	Ⓢ	850
Pro-Ject Perspective	Ⓢ	750
Rega P25	Ⓢ	598
Rega Planar 9	Ⓢ	1,598
Reson RS1M	Ⓢ	695
Reson Rota 1	Ⓢ	3,900
Rockport Capella II	Ⓢ	7,500
Rockport Sirius III	Ⓢ	90,000
Roksan Xerxes 10	Ⓢ	1,295
Roksan TMS	Ⓢ	2,750
SME Model 10A	Ⓢ	3,333
SME Model 20/2	Ⓢ	3,403
SME Model 20/2A	Ⓢ	4,863
SME Model 30/2	Ⓢ	10,675
SME Model 30/2A	Ⓢ	12,135
SOTA Comet	Ⓢ	995
SOTA Millenia	Ⓢ	5,795
Stratosphere ST1	Ⓢ	6,500
Technics SL-1200LTD	Ⓢ	700
Thorens TD-146 VI TP50	Ⓢ	550
Thorens TD-2001 TP90	Ⓢ	700
Thorens TD-520 SME	Ⓢ	1,050
Verdier Nouvelle Platine	Ⓢ	2,250
Verdier Platine Verdier	Ⓢ	4,350
Well Tempered Record Player	Ⓢ	1,995
Well Tempered Classic V	Ⓢ	3,500
Well Tempered Reference	Ⓢ	5,500
Wilson benches Circle	Ⓢ	795
Wilson benches WB Turntable	Ⓢ	1,775
Wilson benches Full Circle	Ⓢ	1,995

PRODUCTS TESTED & RATED

Turn over for a full round-up of all reviewed products!



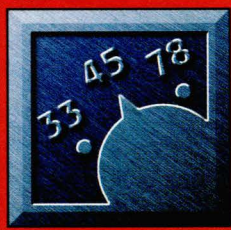
TUNERS

KEY

'P20' (etc.) - Number of presets.

RDS - Radio Data System; receives text information on station, programme type etc.

Arcam Alpha 7	P24	230
Arcam Alpha 8	P24	280
Arcam Alpha 10 DRT	P07	800
Ariston TX-510	P20	50
AVI S2000MT	P16	599
AVI S2000MT2	P99	RDS 899
Cambridge T500	P64	180
Creek T43	P64	399
Cymbal Digital Radio	P08	899
Cyrus FM7.5	P29	398
Davidson-Roth FM Ref Classic		5,590
Denon TU-260L MkII	P40	RDS 130
Denon TU-215RD	P40	RDS 150
Denon TU-425RD	P40	RDS 200
Denon TU-1500RD	P40	RDS 250
Fanfare FT1	P08	1,395
H/K TU930	P30	150
H/K TU950	P30	RDS 200
Kenwood KT-2080	P20	130
Kenwood KT-3080	P30	180
Linn Kudos	P50	775
Linn Kremlin	P80	2,600
Magnum Dynalab FT11		499
Magnum Dynalab FT-101A		795
Magnum Dynalab Etude		1,250
Magnum Dynalab MD108		4,990
Marantz ST-48	P60	RDS 120



TURNTABLES

KEY

Ⓢ - Arm included.

Ⓢ - Cartridge included.

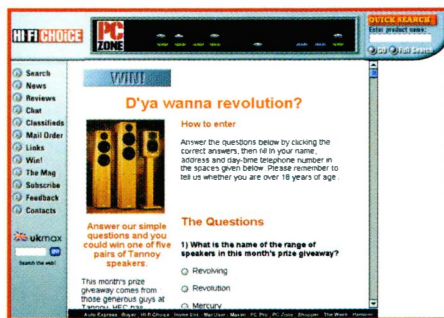
UP TO £500

Audio Note AN-TT 1	Ⓢ	349
Dual CS435-1	Ⓢ	140
Dual 505-4 UK	Ⓢ	220
Dual CS-750-1	Ⓢ	330
Genexa Lab-710	Ⓢ	60
Genexa Lab-810	Ⓢ	70
Kenwood KD-492F	Ⓢ	100
Micell Mycro	Ⓢ	455
Moth Alamo	Ⓢ	199
Moth Kanoot MkI Arm	Ⓢ	279
Moth Kanoot Mk3 Arm	Ⓢ	329
NAD 533	Ⓢ	220
N'h'am Interspace	Ⓢ	500
Pioneer PL-J2500-C	Ⓢ	80
Pioneer PL-990	Ⓢ	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	Ⓢ	170
Pro-Ject 1/510	Ⓢ	200
Pro-Ject 2/510	Ⓢ	250
Pro-Ject Classic/510	Ⓢ	360
Pro-Ject 6/510	Ⓢ	400
Pro-Ject 6.9	Ⓢ	500
Rega Planar 7B	Ⓢ	214
Rega Planar 2	Ⓢ	214
Rega Planar 3	Ⓢ	274
Roksan Radius	Ⓢ	470
Sherwood PM85 50	Ⓢ	160
Sony PS-LX150H	Ⓢ	90
Sony PS-LX300H	Ⓢ	150
Technics SL-J110D	Ⓢ	120
Technics SL-BD20	Ⓢ	160
Technics SL-BD22	Ⓢ	180
Technics SL-1210MkII	Ⓢ	400



NEWS

Information on the hottest hi-fi kit you can buy



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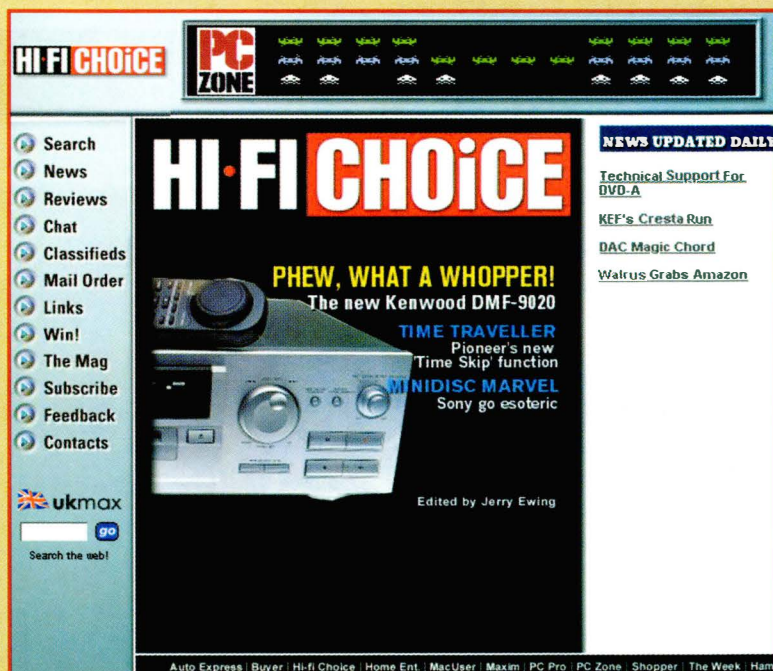
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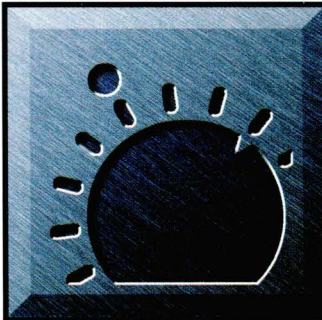


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THE DIRECTORY

THE WORLD'S MOST COMPREHENSIVE HI-FI LISTING. PROBABLY.



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.
FACTSBACK REFERENCE: The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R RECOMMENDED** **E EDITOR'S CHOICE**

Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

LINE INPUTS
MM PHONO INPUTS
MC PHONO INPUTS
REMOTE CONTROL
HEADPHONE SOCKET
POWER OUTPUT (W)
RECEIVER
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Kraken APD6A	599	Compact, with Darth Vader styling, yet sound quality is meek and mild, despite strong midband dynamics	5	●				55		2150	175
R AMC 3025a	140	Surprisingly potent and easy on the ear, if not especially analytical – classic bargain-basement material, in fact	4	●	●	●	●	30		2045	171
R AMC 3050a	170	Tremendous value for money, and a full, big, if rather uninformative sound	4	●	●	●	●	45		1970	167
B Arcam Alpha One	230	Rather like an Alpha 7 but without the remote control and what appears to be better sound quality still	6					35			186
Arcam Alpha 7R	300	Decent, if slightly system fussy amplifier that no longer pulls all the right strings	5	●		●	●	45			196
B Arcam Alpha 8R	380	The Alpha 8R sets a high level of resolution and stability, and has some useful features for home cinema users	5	●		●	●	50			192
R 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
R 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
E ATC SIA2-150	1,984	An impressive sounding integrated amp with a dynamic, open and detailed sound	4				●	150			192
Aria S2	1,000	Glamorously packaged valve amp produces a real eyes closed, feet up kind of sound	4					12			190
B 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
R 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
R Cambridge Audio A500RC	200	Solid value, decent build and a surfeit of watts make this an attractive proposition, but it can sound slightly loose	6				●	50			196
R 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
R Copland CSA 28	1,249	Elegant Scandinavian cool, abundantly detailed if somewhat system dependent	5	●			●	60			189
Copland CTA 402	1,698	A unusually flexible valve amp with an attractive and textured sound	5	●			●	35			193
CR Developments CR324	569	Solid and capable on paper, this is a bit of a blunt instrument when let loose on the music	5					150			181
Symbol CA1	499	Lacklustre amplifier tends to underperform with complex material. Best with straightforward compact loudspeakers	6					40		2236	178
R Creek 4330	279	Diminutive but classy amp will drive anything, and can be specified in various configurations	4	●				40			192
R Cyrus SL	398	Articulate amplifier with build quality to die for, superb, outgoing midband and lean but well-extended bass	6					50			168
Cyrus IIII	598	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance was not liked. Upgradeable using PSX PSU unit				●		50		1854	162
R Cyrus 7	700	Welcome return to form for the Cyrus stable: this is the best sounding audio brick around	6				●	60			196
R Denon PMA-250SE	140	This amp can sound rough when extended, but within its limits it is open, detailed and likeable	5				●	30		2046	171
R Denon PMA-350SE	180	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, this SE model is a control freak, but can sound wonderful	5				●	50		1856	162
Denon PMA-535R	230	The kind of amp they made in the 70s, dressed to the nines, and nowhere to go	5	●			●	50			192
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation, but musically unexciting	5	●	●		●	97		1802	157
R Denon PMA-1500R	500	Recommended for its outrageous power, especially with problem speakers	5	●			●	70			181
B 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
Densen DM-10	1,375	Big, bold and expressive amplifier, but sometimes rough around the edges, and not as powerful as it appears	6					75			189
Edmund Audio ESI10	400	Honest but unexciting straight line amp from REL associate company	6					85			192
Exposure XX Super	700	Rather transistorised, unexciting sound. Good coherence and rhythm. Best played loud	6					55		1743	154
Exposure RCXV	1,000	Unaccountably rather underwhelming top of the line integrated sounds a little soft and detached	6				●	60			189
R Electrocompaniet EC1-2	995	A 50 Watt amplifier which sounds more powerful, and makes 'real-sounding' music	4					50		2158	175
B Harman/Kardon HK610	180	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●			●	30		1465	149
R Harman/Kardon HK630	200	Sharp, clean but sometimes slightly raw-sounding budget amp	4	●			●	40			192
B 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
Harman/Kardon HK690	530	Bold, dynamic amplifier with plenty of balls, but not the most sophisticated sound on earth	6	●			●	100			196
Hofli Audis Signature	750	A 'no-feedback' circuit giving outstanding resolution, but significant load dependency	4	●				65			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 KAF-3010R	180	Plenty of twiddly bits yet weak on inputs, and basically good, but somewhat uneven sound quality	4	●			●	70			186
Kenwood KA-5090R	300	Large, well equipped and high tech integrated, but TRAITR output still gives a harsh, unsubtle performance	5	●	●		●	65		2053	171
Krell KAV-5001	5,000	More at home in background listening/home cinema applications than out-and-out audio maniac set-ups	5				●	250			192
Lundahl Mag Amp	1,735	Unusual valve/magnetic amp hybrid with relaxed balance and good timbre	5					23			196
R Magnum IA120	265	Mirror finish amplifier with bold, colourful delivery, but needs careful system matching to avoid loss of clarity	6					65		2054	171
B Magnum IA170	330	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic; preserves colour and dynamics	6				●	96		1260	142
R Magnum IA200	599	Sweet, valve-flavoured solid state amplifier which flatters where it doesn't cast light	7					160		1860	162
Magnum Class A SE	795	A MOSFET amplifier drawing inspiration from the world of valves, this is an erratically refined, detailed amplifier	5	●				80		2159	175

CONTINUED

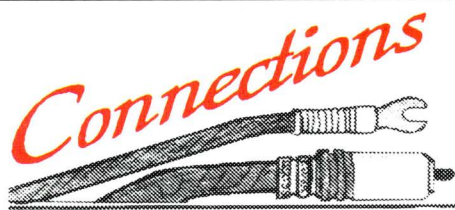
Amplifiers

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS
MC PHONO INPUTS
REMOTE CONTROL
HEADPHONE SOCKET
POWER OUTPUT (W)
RECEIVER
FACTS/BACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTS/BACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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
Marantz PM-68	300	Rather matter-of-fact delivery, lacks transparency and detail	6	●	●	●	90			192
Marantz PM-6010SE	229	Good starter amplifier, with characteristic smooth, low key delivery	5	●	●	●	50			196
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
Marantz PM-17 KI-Signature	1,300	Full feature audiophile amp where the end results don't quite justify the fantastic ingredients	6	●	●	●	60			189
Monrio ASTY	400	Engaging, but ill-disciplined, even OTT amplifier with unpredictable system compatibility	5				55		2237	178
Musical Fidelity E1	199	Richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special	6				30		2050	171
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 A3	849	Similar to the XA-100R internally, and a little too relaxed for some	5	●	●	●	85			196
Musical Fidelity X-A100R	999	Sings like a thoroughbred, but better with Mozart than Mötörhead	6				75			189
Myryad T-40	400	The T-40 is a well built and sensible, but needs more dynamics and finesse	6	●	●	●	50			192
Myryad MI120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, although 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 maker of the seminal 3020 offers better clarity and neutrality and good build</i>	6				40			186
NAD C340	270	A classic NAD amplifier copes with any speaker, delivers plenty of power, and does so with calm decorum	6	●	●	●	50			192
NAD 317	470	Build quality aside, the current improved version is a real powerhouse, but smooth and detailed too	6				80			196
NAD S300	1,900	Substantial integrated with loads of power and no shortage of finesse, slightly bass-strong	5				100			189
Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5				30		1748	154
Naim Nait 3R	780	Remote control variant of the basic Nait has a similarly dynamic credible sound but ultimately lacks power	5				30			189
Pioneer A-300R	200	Its bright and breezy sound is a natural tonic to those of us worn down by the ongoing stress of life	5	●	●	●	50		1469	149
Pioneer A-407R	230	Clean, consistent, finely detailed sound, good finish and (mainly) good build	5	●	●	●	45			186
Pioneer A-607R	300	Lively, articulate amp with plenty of drive and a hint of brightness	5	●	●	●	60			192
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-07	999	Curious blend of high-end attributes and inconsistent, though undeniably detailed sound	5	●	●	●	80		2160	175
Præisa Acustica Sonoro	1,800	It is not often that transistor amplifiers are made to sound so palpably valve-like	5				100			189
Primare A-20 Mk II	799	Everything except packaging has changed in Mk II version: but balsier model has lost none of its refinement	5				70			181
Primare A30.1	1,499	<i>Superb build and aesthetics, and undemonstrably musical down to its smallest screw</i>	6				100			189
Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier, derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, although at least it is well behaved	4	●	●	●	50		1865	162
Restek Fantasy II	1499	Muscular, but ultimately rather strident amplifier which needs careful system matching	6				100			189
Roks n C spian	695	<i>Well-built, open and articulate amplifier, which is also consistent from system to system</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 MKII	225	<i>Improved AR971 is a chip off the old block: bags of power, but with added precision and clarity</i>	6				60			196
Sony TA-FB730R	200	Brilliantly sharp and realistic sound is offset by some obvious sonic flaws – and maxi feature set doesn't help	5	●	●	●	40			196
Sony TA-F448BE	250	Minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit with satisfactory effect – but keep the volume in check	5	●	●	●	55		2055	171
Sony TA-F3000ES	500	<i>Champagne 'shoebbox amp' may lack power reserves, but is quick and articulate. In every sense a knockout</i>	5	●	●	●	35		2239	178
T+A PA-1220R	1,445	Unique presentation and feature set, but sometimes rather relentless sound quality	7				100			189
Tact Millennium Mk II	7,000	This digital class D amplifier represents a bold declaration on the future expansion of digital audio in the home	n/a				150			194
TAG McLaren 60i	800	Clean, slightly antisepic sound from this beautifully turned out entry level Audiolab 8000LX replacement	6				60			189
TAG McLaren 60iRv	999	Looks, feels and sounds better than the Audiolab it supersedes. Smooth, open, refined but lacks body and drive	6				60			184
Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model	6				50		1868	162
Talk Electronics Cyclone 1	550	Much improved build quality and silver finish, but the sound lacks physicality and can sound strained	6				65			196
Talk Electronics Storm 2	650	<i>Crisp, clean, well defined sound, arguably lacking warmth, but a good midrange purchase overall</i>	6				50		2154	175
TEAC A-E2000	180	Has the potential to cause significant damage in the budget amp sector once the wrinkles are ironed out	6				50			195
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-A660 Mk 3	200	Plenty of wellie for the price, but the sound can be a tad coarse and lacking in fine detail	5	●	●	●	37			186
Technics SU-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-A808	300	Intriguing amplifier, with abundant detail but dynamically rather flat	6	●	●	●	55			196
Technics SU-A800D Mk 2	300	Two-box amplifier looks great, has plenty of gadgets, and makes good, if slightly 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
Yamaha AX-392	170	Standard budget fare, and it's easy to pick holes, but in undemanding surroundings it works creditably	6	●	●	●	60			192
Yamaha AX-492	220	Powerful, well equipped amplifier at an attractive price, offers powerful and engaging music-making	5	●	●	●	85		2231	178
Yamaha AX-592	280	Fine, middle ranking amplifier, with a detailed midband but performance declines at frequency extremes	5	●	●	●	100		2056	171



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CONNECTIONS

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CONTINUED

Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS
MC PHONO INPUTS
REMOTE CONTROL
HEADPHONE INPUTS
POWER OUTPUT (W)
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT (€) COMMENTS

PREAMPLIFIERS

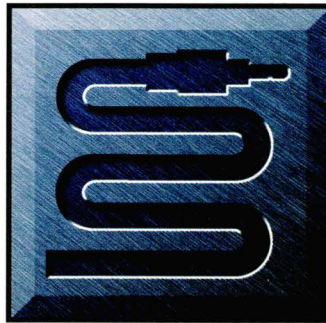
	Amp Flux System 2	3,000	Three-box affair with a clean, spacious sound and plenty of slam. A touch steely, but undeniably potent	5			●	●	50		187
	Alchemist Kraken APD7A MkII	549	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	6							187
R	Arcam Alpha 9C	400	Well specified and flexible preamp with sound only just lacking in greatness	6			●	●			187
	Audio Note M Zero	299	Neat shoe box-size preamp. Able to impart music with real life and soul when partnered with P Zero power amps	5							191
R	Copland CTA-301MkII	1,249	Sweet sounding, but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●					1630	151
R	Creek P43R	350	Excellent sound, remote control operation and upgrade options from this fine value preamp	6			●	●			187
R	Crimson CS610	450	Good, clear sound, including a decent phono stage, but flexibility is limited	3	●	●					187
	Cyrus aCA7	798	A decent enough unit at the price but not as good as the Cyrus aPA7 power amp it was tested with	5			●	●			190
	Densen Beat B-200	1,000	A versatile preamp with a high 'air-guitar' factor and Densen's characteristic styling	6	●	●					191
R	ECA Vista	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system. (Tested with Lectern power amp)	5						1302	145
	Exposure XVII	850	Superbly rhythmical; maybe a bit overpowering in the midband. (Tested in sessions with XVII Super)	5	●	●					142
E	Levinson 380	3,995	True high end preamplifier combines precision and warmth with unusual configurability	6			●				195
	LFD Mistral Linestage	449	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6							1930 165
	Meridian 501	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. (Tested with 555 power amp)	5	●			●			1303 145
	Meridian 502	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation	7			●				162
	Michell Orca	1,650	Line-level design with a gorgeous remote and focused, spacious sound. (Tested with Alecto power amps)	6			●				187
	Moth 30 Active Line Stage	349	Excellent-sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp	4							1931 165
	Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp	5			●				166
R	Musical Fidelity X-PRE	200	Cleverly configured preamp with many upgrade options, and open, lively and engaging sound	4						2152	175
	Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista	1295	Fully remote, nuvistor tube equipped, with fine coherence and musicality	5	●		●				182
R	NAD 114	270	Beer-budget preamp which sounds focused, detailed and consistent	6	●	●		●			1932 165
	Naim NAC92R	630	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry. (Tested with NAP90 power amp)	5			●				1936 165
	NVA P50	350	Passive preamp that's more likely than most to cause treble loss	4							187
R	Quad 77 Pre	850	Sophisticated design with 2-way remote control console; open colourful sound and very flexible	4	●	●	●				1941 165
R	Rega Hal	998	Passive line stages dedicated to Exon power amps	6	●	●	●				1942 165
	Rotel RC-971	150	Low price is offset by rather coarse sound quality with certain types of music. (Tested with RB-971 power amp)	5				●			178
	TAG McLaren PA20R	1,500	Refinement of Audiolab original with clean, detailed sound but limited thrill power. (T/w 125M monoblocks)	6			●	●			184
	Talk Hurricane 2L	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6							1937 165
	Technics SU-C3000	2,997	Price includes SE-A3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	5	●						188
	Thule Spirit PR100	400	High-tech preamp slightly marred by tendency to veil the sound	5			●				187

POWER AMPLIFIERS

	Alch. Kraken APD8A Mk II	549	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	1					55		187
R	Arcam Alpha 9P	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1					60	1929	165
R	Arcam Alpha 10P	600	Well made and flexible: upgradeable to 3 channels. Good sound lacking the last degree of detail	1					100		187
	Audio Note P Zero	599	Neat shoe box size valve monoblocks, priced per pair. Impart music with life and soul. (Tested with P Zero preamp)	1					8		191
E	Border Patrol 300B SE	3,995	Single ended valve power amp with passion, grace and fire, and plenty of grunt to boot	1					8.5		186
	Cary CAD 2A3SE	1,575	Monoblock valve power amp. Low power but gives delightful speed, coherence and transparency	1					5		196
	Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1					67	1630	151
R	Creek A52SE	599	Well designed and built amplifier with plenty of power, detail and refinement	6					100		187
R	Crimson CS630	800	Space-saving slimline monoblocks with both grunt and finesse	1					100		187
	Crimson 620C	875	Not entirely satisfactory power amp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	1					50		181
	Cyrus Power	498	Detail and midband clarity and stand-out qualities. Smooth and refined with most types of music but bass-soft	1					50		183
	Cyrus aPA7	1,896	Low feedback design that's a positive departure from the transistorised norm. (Tested with Cyrus aCA7 pre)	1					150		190
R	Densen B-300	800	Expensive but highly musical. Colourful and warm sound with strong timing and listener involvement	1					100		183
R	ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1					50	1302	145
E	Levinson 334	5,495	A mailed fist in a velvet glove; refined, authoritative and transparent	1					125		195
	LFD Mistral Power	449	Infectious upper band vitality, but LF dynamics lacking – likewise 'grip' and transparency	1					60	1930	165
	Meridian 555	750	By providing an open window on the music, this amp is wide open to RF and low level IM distortions	1					60	1303	145
	Michell Alecto Monoblocks	1,950	Hefty beasts offering real power and striking imaging. Not the last word in timing. (Tested with Orca preamp)	1					100		187
	Moth 60 Watt Stereo	599	Miniature power amp lacks control and finesse – not comfortable with difficult speaker loads	1					60	1931	165
R	Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. Demonstrated solid balance and proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1					100		155
R	Musical Fidelity X-A50	500	Cleverly configured and attractively packaged, open, lively and engaging sound. Reviewed with X-PRE	1					50		175
	Myriad MA120	450	Based on MI120 integrated – see latter for comments, but sounds significantly better when bi-amped with MI120	1					60	1935	165
R	NAD 214	370	A little lightweight, but detailed, consistent sound quality, and excellent value for money	1					80	1932	165
	Naim NAP90	450	Power amp from a Nait integrated with some improvements	1					30	1936	165
	NVA A60	560	Rather coarse and uninviting sound	1					60		187
	Technics SE-A3000	2,997	Price includes SU-C3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	1				●	100		188
	Thule Spirit PA100	600	More successful than matching preamp: sound is gutsy and lively, and generally clean	1					100		187
R	Rega Exon	1,196	Monoblock, priced each, dedicated for Hal preamp. Bold, outgoing, in-command kind of sound	1					125		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					70		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
E	Sirius D200	2,995	Single MOSFET pair per side gives tremendous resolution and timing (balanced only)	1					200		183
	TAG McLaren 125M	2,400	Refined Audiolab replacement monoblocks with clean sound but limited thrill power. (T/w PA20R preamp)	1					145		184
	Talk Tornado 2	600	Good, but slightly retiring sound which lacks the authority to stand out in a crowd	1					65	1937	165

PHONO STAGES

R	Creek OBH-9	160	A neat little unit with an essentially neutral and listenable character	0			●				189
	Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	826	Very hi-tech product which tends too much towards smoothness except at climaxes, which can be rough	0	●		●				189
	Densen DP-Drive/DP-02	350	Quite unusual design in many ways: sound is mostly good but never quite shakes off a 'synthetic' quality	0			●				189
R	Electrocompaniet ECP-1	495	An excellent phono amp that combines well-rounded balance with detail and low noise	0	●		●				189
R	Michell Iso/Lithos	599	With the Lithos power supply upgrade, the Iso is a very capable phono stage with just a hint of bass fullness	0	●		●				189
R	Moth 30 Series Phono	249	Fine sound all round, in any kind of music, from this bargain phono stage	0	●	●					189
R	Musical Fidelity X-LP	130	A little bass lightness does not seriously mar the performance of this fine value unit	0	●		●				189
	NAD PP-1	40	A basic phono stage that does its job rather coarsely: a bit bass-shy too	0	●						189
R	QED Discsaver DS-1	35	It's cheap, it's cheerful, it's OK – perfectly adequate for use with a phono-less integrated, though not very refined	0	●						189
	Roksan Artaxerxes X/DS1.5	1,150	Delicate and well balanced, slightly congested at climaxes. Power supply expensive, but runs two Roksan components	0	●	●					189
	TAG McLaren PPA20	1,549	One of the best-equipped phono stages available. Resolution is excellent, but timing is marginally behind the best	0	●	●					187



Cables

Cables are an integral part of a hi-fi system, required to connect source components to amplifiers, and the latter to speakers.

- Analogue Interconnects connect source components and amplifiers, and run between pre and power amps. They are priced for one-metre terminated pairs.
- Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs or digital recorders. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.
- Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SYMMETRICAL:** A twisted pair of conductors.
- **COAXIAL:** A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.
- **STRANDED:** Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.
- **SOLID CORE:** Single or multiple, individually insulated strands.
- **COPPER:** Material used for conductor.
- **SILVER:** Material used for conductor.
- **DIG CABLE TYPE:** O - optical digital; E - electrical digital for CD Players, DACs and digital recorders.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Cables

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT (€) COMMENTS

ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED METRE PAIR)

PRODUCT	(€)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Acoustic Precision Eikos	89	Not entirely neutral: probably best suited to upbeat music. Very stiff construction								188
Audio Note AN-A	18	Not especially impressive: warm but well-rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is quite clear								108
Audio Note AN-C	35	Neutral but lacking in subtle texture and unable to distinguish fine detail							1687	131
R Audio Note AN-S	99	<i>Up-beat and enthusiastic sound with satisfyingly deep and grumbly bass</i>							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 X2	60	Well made but let down by a pervading sense of muddle and congestion in the sound								188
R CableTalk Advanced 2	35	<i>Slight roughness in loud music barely detracts from a well-balanced performance with good imaging</i>							2166	176
R Cable Talk Studio 2	65	<i>A first-class performer from tonal, dynamic and rhythmic standpoints</i>								160
Cambridge Pacific	30	Lacks subtlety and bass impact but is otherwise quite serviceable for the price							2167	176
R Cambridge Audio Studio Ref	40	<i>Dynamic cable with strong soundstaging and only a slight lack of detail</i>								160
Cambridge Silver Spirit 60	100	Good bass but a lack of detail and differentiation of instruments								188
Chord Cobra 2	50	Good, strong sound with full-bodied music, less happy with smaller forces							2167	176
Chord Chameleon 2	90	Deep bass is fine but despite that the sound can be a bit hard and lacking body and resonance								188
R Connections Midas HD	39	<i>Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare</i>								160
R DNM TCC75	34	<i>Price for 0.75m.. High resolution cable, but best in short runs due to higher than average series impedance</i>							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
R DPA Black Slink	245	<i>Initially dark and meaty but after running in, it's lucid and transparent. Quad geometry, Gore-Tex dielectric</i>							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
R Ixos 104	20	<i>Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble</i>							1692	131
Ixos Gamma 1002	39	Lumpy bass, grainy treble, and poor integration. Nice colour, though							2169	176
R Ixos 103	45	<i>Even-handed and generous sound, bass has a well-rounded, bouncy quality</i>							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	60	A cable with personality: its veiled and shut in quality bring an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike							1693	131
R Kimber PBJ	108	<i>Assured sound, solid and natural bass and clear treble – excellent performance all round</i>								188
R Kimber Hero	110	<i>Slight roughness detracts from some music; seems well suited to rock and jazz. Lively and detailed</i>							2170	176
R Moth Ley Line Black	100	<i>Offers a full sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy</i>								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
R Nordost Solar Wind	85	<i>Good tone and dynamics, with just occasionally a touch of bass-lightness in busy music</i>								188
R Nordost Blue Heaven	145	<i>Very good bass and only slightly grainy treble add up to a well integrated, natural-sounding cable</i>								176
Precious Metals SS35	50	Extended bass, but dry character suits electronic music better than acoustic								188
R Prowire Silver	60	<i>A good cable in every way, with just the occasional hint of coloration and coarseness</i>							2171	176
PAD Elementa	145	A fat, heavy and frankly rather lazy-sounding cable; best with music for small forces							2171	176
R QED Qnet 2	30	<i>Very well balanced, refined and detailed, this is everything a good cable should be, and excellent value</i>							2172	176

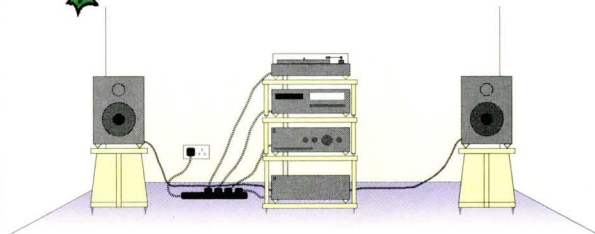


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CONTINUED

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		
R QED Qnect 4S	70	Some coloration and roughness in the midrange and treble, but bass is gratifyingly solid					●	●			188		
Reference CS1	75	A moderate performer, with a little coloration and a tendency to lose bass at climaxes	●				●	●			188		
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight					●	●			160		
B SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. We're unsure about the flesh-coloured finish though...	●				●	●	●		160		
R SonicLink Black	49	Nickel-plated copper with a slight dryness in the bass and a hint of treble roll-off don't compromise integration	●				●	●		2172	176		
SonicLink Lilac	65	Some dryness can affect transient sounds, though tone is generally good, especially in the bass	●				●	●			188		
R Straight Wire Chorus	40	A very confident cable with good bass, though perhaps a shade of treble loss					●	●	●	2173	176		
R Straight Wire Sonata	80	Tonal balance favours lower frequencies but despite this it's a very listenable cable					●	●			188		
B Supra EFF-ISL	80	Excellent sound in all areas – nothing to criticise	●				●	●	●		188		
R Tara Labs Prism 22	64	Mild tendency to plumminess offsets some hardness in complex music with mixed results					●	●			188		
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		
R van den Hul Source HB	50	Price for 0.8m. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness					●	●	●		160		
B van den Hul PB5	50	A highly neutral cable with fine dynamic and rhythmic performance too – excellent					●	●	●		188		
B van den Hul D102 MkIII	70	A cable with everything, good bass, treble, imaging and naturalness					●	●	●	2173	176		
R van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of information					●	●		1702	131		
R 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	
R XLO Type 0.1	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals					●	●		1703	131		
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED LINEAR METRE)													
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear-cut transparency					●	●			E	108	
Chord Codac	36	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration					●	●			E	108	
R 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	
B DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound					●	●	●		E	108	
R Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft-edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colorations; plenty of weight, smooth					●	●	●		E	1707	131
R 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	
B 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
R SonicLink Green	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a bit over-crisp at times – very compelling, however					●	●	●		E	1709	131
B van den Hul The First	125	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly cautious compared to some. Plenty of subtle information and integration					●	●			E	1710	131
LOUDSPEAKER CABLES (PRICES PER METRE LENGTH)													
ALR Jordan QMM	5	Generally neutral, if sometimes bass-shy, but not very communicative					●	●				183	
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that are twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward						●	●			109	
R Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical						●	●		1711	133	
R 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	
R 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	
R Audioquest F-14	2.2	Ideal for laying under carpets. F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound						●	●			109	
Audioquest F-18	3.60	Slightly lumpy bass and lack of midrange detail: can also be a bit dry					●	●	●			192	
Audioquest Type 4	5	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains 'bite'	●				●	●	●			109	
Audioquest Type 6	9	A very inflexible cable in which the sonic ends don't quite justify the means	●					●	●			183	
Audioquest Crystal	25	Neutral balance is spoiled by some graininess and smearing					●	●	●			168	
R Bandridge LC7409	4	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings						●	●		1800	157	
R Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25	Quite well-balanced but tends to lose bass lines in complex music	●				●	●	●			168	
Cable Talk Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained						●	●		1800	157	
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	8	Can make stereo images recede, and favours the upper bass	●				●	●	●			192	
DNM LSC350	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension						●	●			168	
R Chord Company Odyssey	17	Relatively vice-free cable with good detail throughout the range and generally neutral bass	●				●	●	●			192	
B DNM LSCB500	12	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire						●	●		1716	133	
R DPA Black Sixteen	100	Unflappable resolution of musical details. No dampening of dynamics, simply oodles of taut information	●				●	●	●		1717	133	
B Gale XL189	1	Slightly bright and not too subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system	●				●	●	●			168	
B Gale XL315	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value						●	●		1800	157	
R Gale XL160-2	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy-sounding bi-wire cable. Can be slightly manipulative						●	●		1800	157	
R 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	
R Hitachi LC-OFc	7	Very crisp, very clear and very confident. In the right system would be very expensive to better	●				●	●	●			109	
R Ixos Gamma 6006	5	Bass is better than treble, which can become spitty and sibilant – though only slightly	●				●	●	●			192	
B Kimber 4PR	90 (5m)	Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right						●	●			192	
R Kimber 4TC	19.6	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas	●				●	●	●			168	
R 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 NAC A5	5.5	A 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems, where it works a treat						●	●			109	
Nordost Octava	3	Fair bass but confused treble and some coloration						●	●			168	
Nordost Flatline Gold II	9.50	Exciting sound but a bit too 'in-her-face', and bass is not always even	●					●	●			192	
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey-sounding – strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance. A bit bass-shy, too						●	●			133	
R Ortofon SPK200	4.99	Good strong bass and fair detail, only slightly marred by a little dryness	●				●	●	●			183	
R 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

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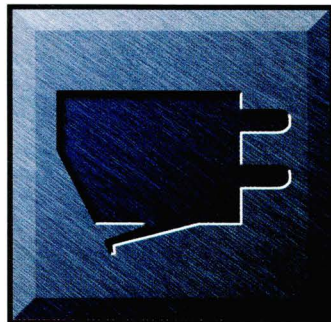
Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
QED Profile 4x4	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding									168
QED Qudos Silver	5	A few minor flaws but overall performance is very assured for this price	●								192
Silver Sounds 12 gauge	15	Basic 'homemade' construction gives fairly neutral sound. Price not outstandingly competitive	●								168
SonicLink S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●								168
SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced					●	●		1800	157
SonicLink AST150	3.95	Slightly plummy bass and a useful way of holding musical strands together					●	●		1800	157
Sonic Link AST200x2	5.95	At its best with exciting music, this cable seems shy of subtler details	●				●	●			192
Straight Wire Rhythm	6	Its major flaw seems to be woolly and indistinct bass, which pervades most types of music	●				●	●			192
Straight Wire Quartet	8	A good all-rounder with full tone, clear detail and natural ambience	●				●	●			183
Supra Ply 3.4	6.95	Clean sound which stays together well at high levels, with full bass – perhaps a touch of treble restriction	●				●	●			183
Tara Labs Klara	2.95	A good budget cable with an even spread of virtues – and very minor vices – across the board	●				●	●			183
van den Gold Water	7	Bass becomes shy when there's a lot happening, and detail could be clearer	●				●	●			183
van den Hul The Clearwater	7	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky-sounding cable					●	●	●		109
van den Hul CS122	12	Good dynamics can make for exciting sound, but fine detail suffers and the treble is often dry	●				●	●			192
van den Hul The Magnum	38	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twin-lead cable, The Magnum sounds soft and old-fashioned					●	●	●		109
van den Hul The Wind	40	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass					●	●	●		109
van den Hul Revolution	76	Silver-plated OFC combined with carbon fibre prompts a sombre character with an easy and relaxed treble					●	●	●	1726	133
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.
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B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS

MM MC REPLACEABLE STYLUS OUTPUT (mV) MASS (g) FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
Audio Technica AT-95E	20	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced		●			2.8		48	
Audio Technica AT-OC9ML	330	A well-finished cartridge with a sound that's smoothly detailed, but also rather unexciting		●			0.4	8	192	
Clearaudio Signature	1,495	A great all-round performer with fine dynamic vitality and a seductive midband intimacy		●			0.55	11.5	2142	175
Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well		●			1.0	6	48	
Denon DL160	90	Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'		●			0.1	6	43	
Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life'. Is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail		●			0.1	6	103	
Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether, and a bargain at the price		●					103	
Dynavector DV-20X L	299	Articulate-sounding, with impressive treble resolve, though lightweight at times. Needs a high quality turntable and arm		●			0.25	8.6	192	
Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	450	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent		●			0.15	5.3	158	
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	1,698	A real smoothie, but pricey. Worth checking out for its delicate laid-back transparency and low needle-talk		●			0.25	8.5	2142	175
Dynavector XX-1L	998	Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm		●			0.25	12	84	
Dynavector XX-1	998	Good, but not immensely competitive at the price, and not helped by comparison with the low output version		●			2.0	12	84	
Goldring Elan	19	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●				5.0	7	67	
Goldring 1012GX	79	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency coloration apparent	●				6.5	7	85	
Goldring 1022GX	99	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●				6.5	7	85	
Goldring Eroica LX	110	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative	●				0.5	8	84	
Goldring 1042	120	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively, though	●				6.5	6	91	
Goldring Elite	220	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound is not the cleanest	●				0.5	8	103	
Goldring Excel VX	525	Good bass drive but dull and imprecise higher up. An old-fashioned sound that falls short of the true high end	●				0.45	8	2143	175
Grado Prestige Gold	149	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●				4	6	158	
Grado Reference	995	Loads of tracking headroom but treble is limited. A prospect for mid-oriented valve amp users	●				1.7	6.5	2143	175
Linn K9	125	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus	●				4.5	5	Col	
London Decca Maroon	259	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever	●				5.0	6	67	
London Decca S Gold	399	Immediate and detailed, but coloured and nonlinear, with a questionable effect on records	●				5.0	6	84	
Lyra Lydian Beta	599	A thoroughly enjoyable cartridge – smooth, agile and dynamic in character		●			0.5	8	192	
Lyra Lydian	649	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed		●			0.3	7	158	
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	995	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard		●			0.1	7	143	
Lyra Parnassus D.Ct	1,895	A real little jewel of a cartridge, with many good qualities, but handicapped by a rather too obvious treble peak		●			0.22	10.5	2144	175
Ortofon 51Q/P	38	For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality	●				3.0	5	85	
Ortofon 520/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, but the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound	●				3.0	5	67	

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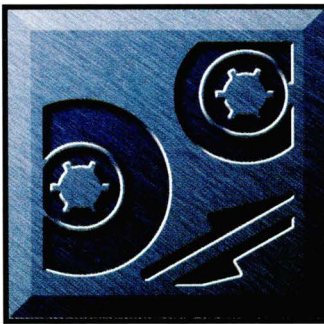
Cartridges

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

REPLACEABLE STYLUS
MM MC
OUTPUT (mV)
MASS (g)
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	MM	MC	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
R Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle – take it as it comes!	●			3.3	4	103	
B Ortofon MC15 Super II	130	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and close up	●			0.35	7	103	
Ortofon MC25E	180	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable	●			0.5	11	139	
Ortofon MC25FL	250	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP	●			0.5	11	139	
B Ortofon MC 10 Supreme	300	A full and cultured-sounding cartridge, with collective attributes far outweighing its shortcomings	●			0.5	10.7	192	
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	525	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings	●			0.5	10.7	158	
B Ortofon Rohmann	1,000	A class act in nearly every respect, with fine groove security and a very smooth and even-handed sound	●			0.25	8.5	2144	175
R Ortofon MC3000II	1,100	A real ear-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere – one of the very best	●			0.12	10	84	
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo	●			0.12	10	91	
Rega Bias	39	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow body, but the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound	●	●		5	4	67	
R Rega Elys	85	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is more detailed, accurate and convincing	●	●		5.0	5	67	
R Reson Recca	250	If you're after a high quality moving magnet cartridge, they don't get much better than this	●	●		6.5	6.3	192	
R Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but smoother and more civilised	●	●		6.5	5	91	
B Sumiko Blue Point Special	250	A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties – one of the best around for less than £300	●	●		2.5	9	192	
R van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●	●		5.5	6	103	
van den Hul DDT-II	600	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing, but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy	●			0.35	7.6	158	
R van den Hul MC-10	750	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●			0.4	6	60	
R van den Hul MC-One	900	This extends all the positive qualities of the 10, but adds greater authority and scale – worth all the extra money	●			0.4	6	60	
R van den Hul MC-Two	1,200	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal	●			0.4	6	72	
R van den Hul Frog	1,500	Seems to control/suppress surface noise better than its rivals. This delicate and subtle performer has great charm	●			0.65	7	2145	175
R van den Hul 'G' hopper III GLA	2,800	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available. It has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse	●			0.4	6	122	
R Wilson benesch Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive	●			0.58	6	158	
R Wilson benesch Carbon	1,573	Carbon fibre body contributes to a delightfully clean and open midrange, and a quick, lively and coherent sound	●			0.45	7	2145	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 recording 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.

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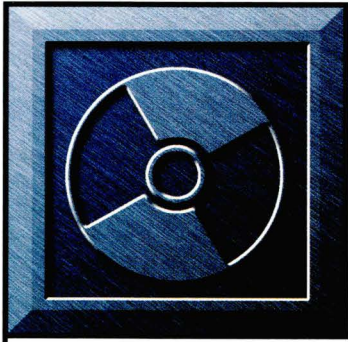
Cassette Decks

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

DOLBY C
DOLBY S
DOLBY HX PRO
3-HEAD
TWIN DECK
AUTO REVERSE
ADJUSTABLE BIAS
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
B Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed deck. Astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●							1513	136
B Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin for those who want bells, whistles – and music	●							1377	146
B Denon DRM-550	160	There are some technical limitations, but this remains a fine-sounding deck, and excellent value	●								158
Denon DRW-580	200	Twin deck: OK for casual use, but will quickly pall with more quality critical applications	●								171
B Denon DRS-640	200	Draw-loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well-adjusted sound	●							1591	140
R Denon DRM-650S	230	An improvement on predecessors, it offers a wide-ranging, sound. Dolby S is not the best feature	●	●						1920	164
Denon DRM-740	270	Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment, offers good, if somewhat detached sonics	●							1514	136
Denon DRS-810	310	Draw-loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition	●								127
Harman/Kardon TD420	250	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well-conceived, minimum features design	●							1592	140
Harman/Kardon TD450	350	Draw loader with poor tape navigation features; good midband but shallow bass	●							1920	164
B JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●								158
B JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile-sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class	●							1380	146
JVC TD-W718	300	Twin deck. Good for creative live recording, but no timer standby. Respectable performance	●							2039	171
R Kenwood KX-W6080	200	Modestly decent-sounding twin deck, with some transport instability and ragged bass	●							2040	171
Marantz SD455	170	Works well as a single deck, especially on replay, but dubbing at high/low speed compromises sound	●								184
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●								158
NAD 616	300	Twin deck with basic features. No Dolby setting memory, transport is too unstable for audiophile use	●							2041	171
Nakamichi DR-10	800	An ergonomic oddity, but one of the last of the great cassette decks. Worth considering against MD	●								195
R Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer-loading mini-size component with 3 heads and dual capstan transport	●							1384	146
R Pioneer CT-S550S	250	Great features, good with cheap low bias tapes, but slightly synthetic sound quality	●	●						1920	164
Pioneer CT-W806DR	300	Had it not been for the iffy transport quality, this sophisticated twin would have been Recommended	●							2042	171
R Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High-class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound	●	●						1385	146
R Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open sound	●	●							158
Teac V01050	180	One of the cheapest 3-head machines around, but it shows in very 'thick' sound	●								184
B Technics RS-AZ6	200	For those who can't afford the RS-AZ7; clarity over the widest bandwidth thanks to AZ thin-film head	●							1920	164
B Technics RS-AZ7	270	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in state-of-the-art	●								158
R Yamaha KX-490	200	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●								158
R Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent deck, with a lightweight tonality, but stability and strong detail	●	●						2043	171



CD/DVD Players

All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see p129). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical type. The former is preferable for the ultimate sound. A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which converts the disc's digital bitstream into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue convertor, or DAC. Although most players are contained within a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs. The first new DVD players have not excelled with CD software.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.
- **AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT:** Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- **OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For optical connection to an outboard DAC.
- **ST OPT DIG OUTPUT:** High-speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- **BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:** Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.
- **HEADPHONE SOCKET:** For 'can' users.
- **VARIABLE OUTPUT:** Remotely adjustable output level (usually non-audiophile).
- **MULTI-DISC:** Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
- **DAC TYPE:** BS – Philips Bitstream; MB – multibit; Hyb – hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies; 1bit – single bit types eg MASH, bitstream, PWM, etc; CC – constant calibration.
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B BEST BUY

R RECOMMENDED

E EDITOR'S CHOICE

CD/DVD Players

SPECIFICATIONS

- ▲ 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

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
B Acurus ACD11	899	First-rate if costly player, which combines a delightful transparency with an uncontrived naturalness	●	●						1bit	1962	166
Acoustic Precision Eikos	1,850	Seriously customised Pioneer with extraordinary resolution and world beating imaging and bass	●	●						1bit		165
Advantage CD1S	3,995	A CD player of some stature – what it lacks in dynamics it makes up for in subtlety and flow	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	20bit		193
Alchemist Kraken	1,249	Distinctive looking player likely to suit a Alchemist system, but will result in variable results elsewhere	●	●						24/96		190
R Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation	●	●						Hyb		169
AMC CD8A	150	Has balanced output, but is otherwise rather grey and unremarkable	●	●		●	●	●	●	BS	2071	172
B AMC CD9/DAC8	200	Beer-budget two-box system (player plus DAC) is smooth, attractive and easy on the ear	●	●						CC	2261	179
Anthem CD1	1,595	Unusual combination of high-end player, complete with HDCD, and changer. Good, but noisy	●	●						MB	2219	178
B Arcam Alpha 7SE	350	Revamped starter model is a clear improvement on very likeable predecessor	●	●		●				MB		195
R Arcam Alpha MCD	450	Excellent bass and natural midband, but just a touch of treble dryness, from this very listenable changer	●	●						MB	2220	178
R Arcam Alpha 8	520	Refined, intricately detailed but a little cautious. Should be broadly compatible with a variety of amps	●	●						BS	1873	163
B Arcam Alpha 8SE	600	Excellent (and very reasonably priced) HDCD-compatible player is a strong all-rounder	●	●		●				1bit		176
B Arcam Alpha 9	800	Refined, articulate player which employs new DAC technology to great effect	●	●						Ring		188
Audio Analogue Paganini	750	Basically good, but sometimes heavy-handed player	●	●						24bit		191
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●	●			BS	1875	163
Audio Note AN-CD1	600	Easy on the ear, and for a valve player, easy on the pocket, but a bit Radio 2-flavoured	●	●						Hyb		188
Audio Note AN-CD2	999	High output impedance makes performance unduly system fussy	●	●						MB		195
AVI S2000MC2	899	A chip off the old block. This model's in-ner-face balance obstructs an otherwise finely detailed sound	●	●						MB	2179	176
R AVI S2000MC Reference	1,399	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us. A fine performer in a sympathetic system	●	●						MB		169
Balanced Audio Tech VK-D5	3,995	A valve-infused player with a big and engaging sound. Lacks a little subtlety	●	●			●			18bit		194
R Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up-and-at-'em sound quality	●	●					●	Hyb	1268	147
B Cambridge Audio CD4SE	200	Among the best encountered at the price, considerably more refined and convincing than the CD4	●	●						BS	1877	163
B Cambridge Audio CD6	250	A sharp, articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●	●			●			BS		159
R Copland CDA-266	1,199	Simple yet elegant design is unexpectedly sophisticated under the skin, and effective in execution	●	●						MB	2183	176
Copland CDA 289	1,898	Beautifully built and musically enjoyable. Lacks some precision, but still among the best below £2,000	●	●						20bit		194
Copland CDA-288	2,199	A gentle giant of a player that errs in favour of pastel shades rather than bold daubs of colour	●	●		●				MB	1880	163
R Cymbol CDP12	1,299	Clean, detailed and airy HDCD-equipped player with minimalist trappings	●	●					●	Hyb	2184	176
R Cyrus dAD1.5	395	Improved dAD1 variant has improved digital filter for a more natural, easy on the ear quality	●	●						Hyb		191
R Cyrus dAD3	598	A relaxed style of delivery that convinces with guile and subtlety rather than orchestral ordnance	●	●						BS	1887	163
B Cyrus dAD3Q	898	Lucid, transparent and uncontrived sound quality, superb build, and readily upgradeable	●	●			●			MB	1887	169
R Denon DCD-435	130	Good low cost player, and a step up from the DCD-425, its predecessor	●	●					●	DS		191
B Denon DCD-635	180	Modest presentation gives little clue 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 forbear	●	●						MB	1269	147
R 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-1650AR	700	Powerful, authoritative, and well equipped too, but this player sometimes lacks subtlety	●	●					●	MB		195
R Denon DCD-3000	1,000	Sings with the temperament of a huge orchestra under the baton of a timid conductor	●	●						MB	1881	163
Exposure CD player	1,049	Slightly weak sounding, but otherwise well optimised, if costly player	●	●						MB		188
Harman/Kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is amplifier fussy	●	●					●	1bit		159
R Harman/Kardon HD740	300	Powerful but subtle and involving player: welcome back, harman/kardon!	●	●					●	DS		191
R Harman/Kardon FL8300	300	Generally capable changer with relaxed sound and firm bass. Just a hint of roughness on occasion	●	●					●	MB	2220	178
Harman/Kardon HD760	500	Sophisticated internally, but mildly disappointing when treading the boards in anger	●	●					●	MB		195
R Helios Model 2	950	This player may not be to everyone's taste, but it is an individual, with some interesting things to say	●	●						1bit	2180	176
Helios Model 3	650	Disappointing entry level model from Helios lacks verve and transparency	●	●						DS		188
R JVC XL-V184BK	120	Excellent budget player, well presented, a little opaque, but its heart is in the right place	●	●						1bit	2072	172
R JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined sound	●	●						1bit	1270	147
R JVC XL-Z574	250	Strong resolving power, good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin	●	●						1bit		159
R JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even-handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●	●						1bit	1637	151
B Kenwood DP-3080	170	Bold, dynamic and outgoing sound, although somewhat aggressive. Poor build quality and finish	●	●						1bit		159
Kenwood DPF-3010	180	Grey, somewhat mechanical sounding player	●	●						Hyb		191
B Kenwood DP-4090	250	Focuses a clear, wide aperture lens on the music – and has CD Text too!	●	●					●	1bit	2076	172
Kenwood DP-5090	300	Disappointing senior brother to the excellent DP-4090, but surface interface is good	●	●					●	1bit	2267	179
B Kenwood DP-7090	400	A lively and compelling performer with an even-handed and coherent disposition	●	●						MB	1885	163
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multi-room features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●	●						Hyb	1762	155
Marantz CD-48	200	Somewhat inconsistent, middle ranking player which hints at better things	●	●						1bit	2077	172
Marantz CD6000 OSE	300	A genuine evolution on the older CD63/67 series with a very energetic, foot-tapping performance	●	●						BS		196
R Marantz CD-63 MkII KI Sig	400	It's the quintessential sound of Marantz – warm, open, and smooth almost to a fault	●	●						Hyb		169
R Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●	●						BS	1763	155
R Marantz CD-17KI Sig	1,100	Minor QC problems aside, this is a superbly turned-out machine, but ultimately a little bland	●	●						BS	2181	176
R Marantz CD-7	3,500	A superbly designed CD player, both inside and out. Precise and dramatic in equal measure	●	●				●		16bit		194

CONTINUED

CD/DVD Players

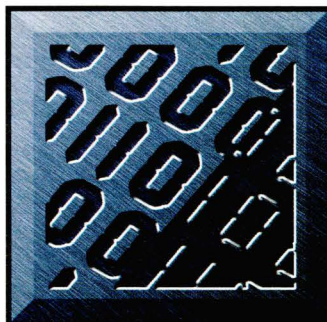
SPECIFICATIONS

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

STATUS

PRODUCT (€) COMMENTS

PRODUCT	(€)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
DACS												
Alchemist TS-D-1	300	24/96-equipped DAC sounds tidy but a little shut-in with both 16-bit CDs and 24-bit, 96kHz DVDs									BS	187
Audio Note DAC Zero	369	Neat valve-equipped DAC sounds smooth and fluid in the right system. (Tested with CDT Zero transport)									Hyb	191
Linn Numerik	1,500	A new 20-bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up, but sounds a bit dry and humourless									MB 1323	144
Musical Fidelity X-24K	300	24/96 ready with a warm, natural sound and good soundstaging (tested with Pioneer DV-717)									MB	187
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590	The sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail. (Tested with Lambda transport)									MB 1106	133
PS Audio Reference Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics									MB 1069	132
Roksan Attessa ATT-DA2/DS5	1,145	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material									1bit 1867	162
Teac D-T1	500	Teamed with VRDS-T1 for test, this superb quality unit is tidy and composed									BS 1325	144
Thorens TDA2000	700	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble									BS 1867	162
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer. Switchable phase, dither etc									Hyb 1867	162
DVD PLAYERS												
Denon DVD-5000	1,600	The first DVD-V player that ain't bad as a CD player. A fine musical device	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	187
Denon DVD-3000	700	Enjoyable rather than analytical, includes 24/96 and AC-3/MPEG-2 Audio	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Hitachi DV-P2E	400	DVD player, based on last generation Pioneer, is good but uninspiring	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
JVC XV-S2000	475	DVD player with excellent picture but flat sound in most modes	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	PEM	190
Kenwood DVF-9010	1000	DVD player with brilliant picture and clean, lively sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
Micromega Premium DVD	1,500	Unique lack of regional coding constrictions but both DVD and CD replay are compromised	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	183
Panasonic DVD-A150	400	Simple, mid-market DVD player is vice-free but limited for the audiophile	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
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-515	400	Unusually well equipped (CD-R compatible etc) DVD with more than fair sound and picture quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	190
Pioneer DV-717	550	Superb DVD player with good picture quality and which really knows how to play 24/96 discs	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	190
Pioneer DVL-909	900	DVD and LD player: self-recommending to AV nuts; musically detailed but occasionally seems disjointed	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Samsung DVD-907	500	DVD player with below average picture, and lacklustre sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
Sony DVP-S715	600	24/96 converter for DAD compatibility, sharp, forward, but slightly unsubtle sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Theta DaViD	4,650	A top-notch CD transport, that also plays DVD-Video discs well. Pricy for a DVD transport, but worth it	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	191
Thomson DTH2000	380	This DVD player's main attributes are reasonable pricing and fair to good all round performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190
Toshiba SD3107B	550	Dynamic sound and good stereo which lacks lowest stratum of detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	180
Yamaha DVD-S700	600	DVD player, similar to Panasonic DVD-A350 but cheaper – an excellent buy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	24/96	190



Digital Recorders

Domestic digital recording has been possible since the launch of digital audio tape (DAT) in the '80s. Since then DAT has remained expensive and largely esoteric, favoured only by well-heeled or professional users. Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc (MD) were launched in the early '90s but only MD has stayed the course. A little later came domestic CD-Recorders using CD-R discs, while the latest twist is the arrival of re-recordable CDs known as CD-RW discs. The recording quality hierarchy is as follows: DAT, CD-R/CD-RW, MD. MD is probably the most convenient to use, and offers sophisticated editing facilities, while CD-R is ideal for making digital 'clones' of prerecorded CDs. DAT is the medium of choice for high-quality location recording.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **FORMAT:** Type of recorder – see left for descriptions.
- **DAC TYPE:** Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream; MB - multibit; Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream; 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc.
- **ADC TYPE:** The analogue to digital convertor (ADC) converts sound into digits during live recording. Types of ADC are as per DACs (qv).
- **PORTABLE:** Battery operable, but not necessarily personal-stereo-sized.
- **OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for optical cable.
- **ELEC IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for electrical cable.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *HI-FI CHOICE* in which an original review appeared.

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STATUS

Digital Recorders

SPECIFICATIONS

FORMAT
DAC TYPE
ADC TYPE
PORTABLE
OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS
ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT (€) COMMENTS

PRODUCT	(€)	COMMENTS	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
MINIDISCS										
Denon DMD-1000	300	A good machine, but it still doesn't manage to shake off the MiniDisc plague of losing the listener's interest	MB	BS	N	●	●	●		184
Denon DMD-1300	500	Sound sometimes lacks integration but tonal balance is good and it handles loud music with panache	MD	BS	BS		●	●	2193	177
Kenwood DMF-9020	500	One of the best MD decks yet for sound quality, and the first to make titling a practical proposition	MD	BS	BS		●	●		191
Kenwood DM-9090	550	Slight sibilance and image vagueness do not detract from excellent balance and solid bass	MD	BS	BS		●	●	2194	177
Marantz CM635	500	CD player and MD recorder in one box: a practical idea but sound and features don't really match the asking price	MD	BS	BS		●	●		191
Onkyo MD-121	450	Midi-sized deck that sounds slightly coloured at times, though immediate and lively	MD	BS	BS		●	●	2195	177
Pioneer MJ-D707	250	A handy set of features for the price, though sound is not outstanding	MD	BS	BS		●	●		191
Sharp MD-R1 MkII	200	It's cheap: sound is not outrageously bettered by rather pricier competition. A bit thin on features though	MD	BS	BS		●	●		191
Sharp MDR3H	300	Nifty machine combining a 3-disc CD changer with a MD recorder. Sound on both is rather below par, though	BS	BS	N		●	●		184
Sharp MD-R2	300	Budget recorder that loses little or nothing in comparisons with much more expensive models – highly capable	MD	BS	BS		●	●	2196	177
Sony MDS-JB920	300	One of the better MD decks, its sound is neutral and dynamic. European Audio Recorder of the Year '98-'99	BS	BS	N	●	●	●		184
Sony MDS-JA20ES	500	Sound quality about as good as it gets with MD to date, and a very comprehensive features set too	MD	BS	BS		●	●		191
Sony MDS-JA555ES	650	Probably the best MD deck to date, with consistently less quality loss over a wide range of programme. Lots of features	MD	BS	BS		●	●		194
Yamaha MDX-793	300	Nice machine to use and has some useful features, but sound quality a little wanting	MD	BS	BS		●	●		191
CD RECORDERS										
Marantz DR700	600	Dearer than Philips and Traxdata equivalents, with apparently only a smarter front panel to show for it	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●		191
Philips CDR-880	499	Capable of making perfect copies of CD digital, and very acceptable copies of anything analogue too	BS	BS	N		●	●		184
Pioneer PDR-555RW	480	Competitor to Philips' CDR-880; can't make perfect copies but has the edge in replay and analogue record sound	BS	BS	N	●	●	●		184
Pioneer PDR-04	700	Scaled down version of the PDR-05 with auto level setting but all the socketry and features you need to make CDs	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●		171
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000	The first domestic CD-R deck – excellent sound quality	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●	1652	152
Traxdata Traxaudio 900	499	Identical to Philips and Marantz models: it makes bit-perfect copies of CDs and has perfectly acceptable replay	CD-R	BS	BS		●	●		191



Headphones

There are several different ways of making a headphone. The most expensive models employ electrostatically-driven diaphragms within an open-backed earcup. Most mid-price designs feature dynamic, moving-coil-driven diaphragms in open, semi-open or closed-back designs. An open-backed headphone can sound remarkably transparent, but also permits the ingress of external noise. Closed-back designs keep out unwanted sound, but may be less comfortable to wear and more coloured. The latest development is the cordless headphone using either infrared light or, more recently, radio waves. Quality is improving, but has yet to match the best corded designs.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

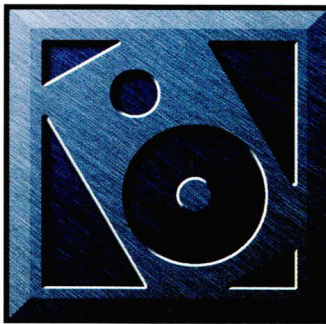
- **TYPE:** Operating principle: D - dynamic; E - electrostatic
- **SUPRA-AURAL:** Where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.
- **CIRCUMAURAL:** Where the earcup encloses the ear.
- **OPEN BACK:** Offers an open sound but lets in noise.
- **CLOSED BACK:** Keeps out external noise.
- **MASS (g):** Mass in grams
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Load offered to the headphone amplifier. Many headphones offer a significantly higher value than loudspeakers, for example, but this does not mean they will be incompatible with the majority of amplifiers.
- **3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR:** Compatible with mini-jacked components, eg personal stereos.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our favoured 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.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Headphones

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS										
			TYPE	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	MASS (g)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	
AKG 301	70	Big 'phones with even and detailed sound but lacks sufficient bass weight	D						230	100			194
AKG K 240 DF	100	Inoffensive 'phones that are very laid back, if lacking in grunt	D						240	600			186
R AKG K1000	700	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs	D						270	120			99
R Audio Technica ATH910PRO	80	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found	D						280	40			55
R Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	100	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal	D						250	66			194
R Audio Technica ATH-M40	120	Incredible detail and honesty from these classically designed studio 'phone	D						250	60			186
Beyer DT311	50	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone	D						124	40		1098	133
Beyer DT411	63	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price	D						120	250			111
Beyer DT331	65	Clear and extremely detailed sound with rather thin bass	D						210	40			194
Beyer DT431	81	Nice looking 'phones that may not be the best players on the field, but will always give 100 per cent	D						210	40			186
R Beyer DT511	106	Superb midband clarity and speed slightly at odds with soft bass. Even so, high tingle factor	D						200	250		2063	172
R Beyer DT531	135	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D						245	250			144
R Beyer DT831	140	These provide silky, smooth textures in abundance and we're not just talking about the velvet ear pads	D					1/2	295	250			186
Beyer DT100	160	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	D						350	600			157
R Beyer DT911	170	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps: these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans	D						275	250			111
Denon AH-D550	80	A competent 'phone with integrity, but little panache or charisma. Hard headband causes brain strain	D						200	35		1801	157
Denon AH-D750	130	Loud and gutsy, meaty bass, good with rock and dance. Can sound thick and clumsy	D						250	30		2063	172
Grado SR-40	45	Cheap and nasty appearance largely redeemed by cheerful, up-beat sound. Very comfortable	D						120	32		2064	172
R Grado SR60	79	For sheer musical enjoyment these 'phones are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste	D						200	32			194
Grado SR-80	100	Open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes	D						60	8		1801	157
R Grado SR125	150	What these 'phones lack in style they make up for ten-fold in musical quality	D						200	32			186
R Grado SR-225	200	Warm, darkly-coloured tonally and ultimately lacking in clarity, but true to the spirit of the music	D						200	32		1883	163
R Jeklin Float Model 1	79	While very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness	D						400	200			55
JVC HA-D50	45	Detailed but with a characteristic mid-band all of their own and a modest amount of lower bass	D						290	56			194
JVC HA-W60	49	Remarkable lack of interference and hiss ameliorates adequate sound of this cordless design	D						165	I/R			172
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colorations	D						220	32			121
R JVC HA-W200RF	75	Distinct lack of hiss from these FM cordless 'phones ensures that detail and depth are easily heard	D						280	20,000			186
Koss TD/80	50	Oodles of bass but with a recessed midband; tiresome on the head with prolonged wearing	D						250	60			194
Koss R/100	100	Rather cheap looking 'phones that supply good detail but are severely lacking in midrange excitement	D						215	60			186
Precede 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
R Philips SBC 3396	70	Remarkably airy for closed-back designs. Fine tonal balance, punchy delivery. Amazing value for money	D						255	32		2064	172
Philips SBC HP900	90	Sharper, snappier midrange than 3396: initially impressive but blows it on balance and listenability	D						200	32		2065	172
Sennheiser IS 380	55	As close as you'll get to real hi-fi with infra-red phones at this price. Inevitable hiss spoils the illusion	D						192	I/R			172
R Sennheiser HD 455	55	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound; modular, but can become dislodged from head	D						185	60		1801	157
Sennheiser HD 500	70	A disappointing pair that offer good stereo-imaging, but little else	D						210	32			186
Sennheiser HD 475	80	Elegant, uncluttered sound and very comfortable but lean bass saps satisfaction	D						120	60		2065	172
Sennheiser RS 400	80	FM cordless 'phones that are very wearable, but slightly woolly sounding with interference problems	D						160	N/A			186
R Sennheiser HD 570 SympH	90	Comfortable, light-weight 'phones with a detailed and open sound but lacks bass depth on weightier music	D						210	64			194
R Sennheiser HD 545	125	Fine all-rounder that takes all styles of music in its stride. Ear-clamping headband	D						255	150		2066	172
R Sennheiser HD 565 Ovation	150	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable	D						255	150		1801	157
Sennheiser HE 60/HEV70/UK	998	Very nearly a superb electrostatic, with a pure midband, but top end is sibilant and edgy	E						260	N/A		1898	163
Sony MDR-605LP	50	Funky looking headphones that have a very bold, but tiring sound, with coloured bass	D						145	40			186
Sony MDR-CD770	100	Neutrality and comfort make the Sony easy to live with. Correct-sounding too, yet musically unrewarding	D									1801	157
Sony MDR-V700DJ	100	Great looking fold-away 'phones with exceptional build quality. Kickin' bass	D						300	24			194
R Sony MDR-CD1700	200	Astonishingly detailed, uncoloured and free of the usual artefacts from a sealed back headphone	D						325	32		1901	163
Sony MDR-F1	100	Natural, easy-going sound teamed with great looks and comfort. Shame about the lightweight bass	D						300	12		2066	172
Technics RP-DJ1200	130	Functional design with head-pulping bass and muggy tonal balance. Good job they're sweat-proof	D						230	32		2067	172
R Stax Lambda Nova Basic	449	Refined, articulate, yet with real presence - and a notable bargain by electrostatic standards	E						347	N/A		1902	163
Vivanco Cyberwave FMH3000	40	The only cordless 'phone to offer genuine walkabout freedom, but sounds like a cheap FM tuner	D						210	FM			172
Vivanco IR5800	50	Consistently musical infra-red design. Doesn't reach for sonic heights so hiss can be forgiven	D					1/2	226	I/R			172
R Vivanco SR650	50	Unusually comfortable 'phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive	D						175			1801	157
R Vivanco SR750	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics	D						188			1801	157
R Vivanco SR 950	80	Cuddly feel and sound make these an enjoyable pair of 'phones	D						252	32			194
Vivanco FM7980	80	A fair amount of whine and crackle detracts from 'phones which are otherwise very listenable	D						280	9,000			186
Vivanco FM8180	99	Well thought-out features and a better than average sound are, at times, marred by intrusive hiss	D						240	9,000			186



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 tend to be the most obvious. Inside the average loudspeaker is a simple electrical circuit (the crossover) which splits the incoming, full-frequency-range signal for the specific drive units to handle: highs to the 'tweeter', lows to the 'woofer'. For any speaker, designers must balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against bass extension (how low it goes). Subwoofers augment bass and are either passive (unamplified) or, preferably, active (self-amplified). Our 'bass from' figures are based on measurements in a particular room therefore results will vary in different environments.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SIZE WxHxD (cm):** Width by height by depth in centimetres.
- **FLOORSTANDER:** Requires no stand support.
- **SENSITIVITY (dB/W):** How much sound results for a given electrical input – the higher the figure, the louder the speaker.
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Impedance, measured in Ohms, indicates how much resistance the speaker presents to an amplifier. As impedance decreases, demands on an amplifier increase.
- **BASS FROM (Hz):** The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce effectively.
- **FREE SPACE:** Speakers which should not sit close to walls.
- **CLOSE TO WALL:** Speakers which should sit between 3 and 12cm from the rear wall.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of this issue.
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B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

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	
F	Acoustic Energy Aegis One	150	At a new low price, this has a very natural and transparent midband, erring a little on the dull side	19,36,5,24		87	6	40					
F	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	
F	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	
F	Acoustic Energy AE120	500	Attractive presentation and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance	18,98,28		89	4	25			1904	170	
F	Acoustic Energy AE520	1,000	Could be more neutral, but high-class build is reflected in a high-class sound. Very elegant too	21,98,30		91	3	25				190	
F	ALR Jordan Note 7	2,500	A beguiling Anglo-German collaboration delivers metal-cone precision with fine dynamic range	25,107,32		92	4	25				196	
F	ATC SCM10	1,000	A compact speaker with good transparency but light-weight bass	18,38,25,5		80	8	65				192	
F	ATC SCM20	1,599	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable	24,44,31		83	8	28				86	
F	Audio Gem Emerald	540	Pretty compact floorstander with lively if lightweight sound	18,94,21		87	6	40			1905	164	
F	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	
F	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	
F	Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually-styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47		88	8	28			1344	143	
F	Audiovector C2	799	Elegant two-and-a-half-way has a big, full bandwidth sound, but midband seemed a little under-developed	19,106,27		90	4	20				190	
F	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	
F	AVI NuNeutron	500	A smooth and subtle though pricey sub-miniature, albeit with the inevitable limitations of the breed	14,27,23		86	4	50				190	
F	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	
F	B&W DM302	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45			1778	156	
F	B&W DM305	350	Ridged paper cone gives lively sound, clever box, but a little uneven	22,87,31		89	4	40			1908	164	
F	B&W CDM2SE	400	Beautifully styled and finished, respectable midband. Lacks definition towards frequency extremes	22,32,25		87	6	40				183	
F	B&W 603 S2	550	Capable of being driven seriously loud, but the cautious balance seems less happy playing at low levels	23,5,87,29		91	4	22				193	
F	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	
F	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	
F	B&W Nautilus 805	1,400	A great looking and extremely capable design with excellent timing and real communications skills	24,41,5,34,5		88	8	22				191	
F	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	
F	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	
F	Blueroom MINIPOD	249	The MINIPOD can show its competitors a thing or two about freedom from boxiness and looks fab	18,34,17		91	4	50				193	
F	Cabasse Farella 400	950	Exciting but very upfront-and-in-very-face sound. High sensitivity, fine build and good dynamic drive	26,92,32		92	5	28				180	
F	Carlsson OA52.2	1,500	Ultra-discreet design integrates cleverly with the listening room. Impressively unboxy, but sounds a bit thin	41,54,37		90	8	20				195	
F	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	
F	Castle Inversion 15	425	This striking looking stand-mount is a good allrounder, commendably free from boxiness	19-22,42,25		91	4	30				193	
F	Castle Kendal	500	A beautifully finished compact floorstander with a decidedly forward but communicative sound	17,76,20		86	6	45			2204	177	
F	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	
F	Castle Avon	730	Lovely box and lovely voices from carbon-fibre composite cone	22,91,28		85	8	22			1909	164	
F	Castle Harlech	880	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33		88	8	28			1820	160	
F	Castle Inversion 100	1,975	Large semi-omni design with gorgeous Art Deco styling, sounds open but bass alignment is ill-tuned	26,5,111,45		91	8	20				195	
F	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	
F	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	
F	Celestion A Compact	600	Provided the room isn't too large, and your tastes not too heavy, this is a charming little number	17,24,21		90	3	45				193	
F	Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35		88	6	25			1910	164	
F	Celestion A2	1,500	Full scale, big sound from ultra-elegant floorstander. Smooth and slightly laid back presentation	24,93,39		89	6	22				180	
F	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	
F	Chario Hiper 1000	300	Classy looking stand mount has a sweet, easygoing sound with fine midband voicing	18,35,28		87	4	45				187	
F	Chario Constellation Lynx	550	Beautiful near-miniature is let down by a midband too laid back for its own good	20,36,26		87	3	40				190	
F	Chario Academy Millennium 2	2,100	Price includes stands. A showy speaker that lives up to its own hype	22,53,35		90	4	55				190	
F	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	
F	Dali Royal Menuet MkII	400	Classy sub-miniature with a beautiful box and fine ingredients, but a little lacking in subtlety and excitement	16,26,18		87	3	50				190	
F	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	
F	Dynaudio Audience 40	400	Classy engineering content creates a winning combination of neutrality, dynamic range and involvement	17,28,25		87	4	40				190	
F	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	
F	Dynaudio Contour 1.8 MkII	1,842	Wonderful voice-band delicacy and loads of deep bass from a very elegant and compact box	21,95,29		85	4	20			1986	167	
F	Elac CL 310i Jet	800	It's pricey, and you can buy better performance for the money. Small speaker, good sound	12,3,20,8,28,2		86	4	42				191	
F	Eltax Liberty 3+	150	Bright, bassy, laid back and attractively evenhanded, but dynamically challenged. Big box for your dosh	20,5,38,34		86	4	25				187	
F	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	
F	Epos ES12	499	High quality luxury stand-mount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25		85	8	45			1823	160	
F	Epos ES25	1,655	Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance	24,90,35		88	6	22			1346	143	
F	Gale 2i	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this slightly little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27		88	7	40				2021	170
F	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	
F	Heybrook Heylette B	200	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature with classy main driver now has fine overall balance to match	19,5,30,22		88	4	45				187	
F	Heybrook Optima	259	A dumpy ugly duckling with a heart of gold. Deserves a better tweeter, but communicates well	22,88,29		94	4	30				193	
F	Heybrook Heylios	389	Great all-round performance in a pretty package at a sharp price	24,36,27		87	6	25			1912	164	
F	Heybrook Heylo	439	Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought	23,73,19		88	8	30			1658	152	
F	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	
F	Heybrook Octet	1,800	Good-looking but pricey floorstander with novel drivers and a fine ceramic-enclosure midband	24,97,31		90	6	25				180	

CONTINUED

Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

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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	
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	
B JBL LX2	250	Invigorating, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with considerable enthusiasm	22,40,27	● 87	8 40	●			2022	170	
JBL Ti200	400	Very substantial stand-mount knows how to rock and roll, but can sound uncouth on more delicate material	21,41,30	● 92	5 40	●				193	
F JBL L20	700	Pricy, 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	17,51,31	● 86	8 40	●			2127	174	
F 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	
R JBL 4312 II	1,000	Crude but startlingly effective dynamics. The original party animal knows just how to rock'n'roll	36,60,30	● 94	4 25	●				190	
R JBL SVA 2100	1,250	Monstrously large and british styling, goes very loud as well as deep. Fine focus but some boxiness	37,114,52	● 91	8 <20	●				180	
B JBL L90	1,500	A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a bit crude	24,94,35	● 91	6 23	●			1348	143	
JBL LX70	550	Bassmeister supreme, shame the rest doesn't match up. Fine sensitivity but an itchy scratchy treble	26,5,94,30	● 91	4 33	●				183	
JMLab Tantal 507	295	Competent all rounder, this compact stand-mount has a good heart and sweet treble, but sounds a bit small	21,38,27	● 93	4 40	●				193	
B JMLab Tantal 515	495	Lively and open if bright. Sound is entertaining and informative, but presentation is nondescript	20,94,26	● 92	5 32	●				183	
JMLab Spectral 909.1	1,375	Multi-driver array in a large and very substantial enclosure. Good scale but lacks delicacy and sweetness	27,107,35	● 90	4 20	●				180	
JMLab Electra 915	1,795	Fine headroom and bass, and classy engineering too, but also a tricky amp load which lacks delicacy	26,5,106,36	● 92	4 20	●				195	
R JMLab Mezzo Utopia	7,250	Looks good and sounds even better. A genuinely big speaker with fantastic coherence	35,115,47	● 92	4 30	●				186	
R Jordan Watts JH400	565	Piano-finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid	28,38,21	● 86	8 50	●				106	
R JPW Mini Monitor	60	Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way	18,27,175	● 86	8 50	●			1781	156	
B JPW Gold Monitor	80	More informative than Mini Monitor – but fiercer, too	18,27,175	● 86	8 50	●			1782	156	
B JPW ML510	130	Lots of good-quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components	20,34,22	● 88	5 50	●				169	
JPW 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	
R 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	
R 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	
R KEF Coda 7	129	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be tauter, build tougher	18,30,23	● 88	6 50	●				1783	156
KEF Cresta 2	149	A good looking/value package but sonically disappointing, and no match for the Q15	20,5,37,24	● 91	4 40	●				195	
R KEF Coda 8	189	Outstandingly well-balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29	● 86	6 28	●			1784	156	
R KEF Q15	200	Beautifully balanced and voiced stand-mount, but a potentially tricky amplifier load at high frequencies	20,5,31,27	● 90	2.5 30	●				187	
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 Q65	799	Dumpy-looking three-way has loads of bass and a laid-back midband; goes loud but lacks poise and impact	23,95,31	● 92	2.5 25	●				190	
KEF RDM Three	1,500	Definitely a speaker aimed at long-term satisfaction rather than immediate impressiveness. Nice	24,100,27	● 90	4 40	●				189	
KEF Reference Model 2	1,599	Classy, large floorstander that has massive headroom and clean mid-to-treble, but limited deep bass	23,103,34	● 89	4 30	●			1987	167	
B Keswick Audio Aria II	379	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24	● 89	8 20	●			1405	148	
R 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	
R Linn Kan	295	Great bass discrimination from size, ensuring a very informative, if slightly shut in experience	19,31,19	● 86	4 45	●				187	
R Linn Keilidh Passive	750	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive	20,83,28	● 87	4 22	●			1552	138	
R Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving	20,90,28	● 87	4 25	●				118	
B Living Voice Auditorium	1,500	Pretty, compact floorstander has wonderful coherence, high sensitivity and fine dynamic integrity	21,5,98,29	● 91	4 25	●				180	
E Living Voice Avatar OBX-R	4,000	Discreet but extremely fine design with external x-over and an affinity to valves	21,5,104,27	● 94	6 45	●				196	
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	
R Magnat Vintage 720	1,200	Slightly crude in some respects but lots of heart, fine scale, decent dynamic coherence and integrity	29,113,32	● 88	4 20	●				180	
R 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	
B Mission 771	170	Beautiful stand-mount miniature has a delightfully well balanced and voiced sound, and real wood finish	17,31,22	● 86	7 45	●				187	
R 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	
R Mission 773e	400	Beautifully designed slim floorstander could be more neutral but still delivers an all round entertaining sound	17,5,88,26	● 92	4 30	●				193	
R Mission 774	500	Gorgeous floorstander is an entertaining communicator, despite some balance oddities (bright treble)	18,95,31	● 90	4 40	●				183	
B Mission 752 Freedom	578	A beautifully judged compromise in the art of combining presentation with a decent sound	20,90,25	● 89	8 45	●			2123	174	
B Mission 753 Freedom	798	Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics	21,90,31	● 89	4 40	●			1914	164	
Mission 754 Freedom 5	1,298	Tall but exceptionally elegant floorstander gives fine midband projection; goes loud but limited deep bass	22,111,31	● 88	4 40	●			1981	167	
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	400	An exceptionally discreet floorstander; sonically uneven, but capable of fine results	16,91,21	● 88	5 30	●			2032	170	
R 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	
R 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	
R Monitor Audio 702PMC	700	A good all-round stand-mount with intimate midband focus	20,40,25	● 87	8 30	●			2128	174	
R 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	1,400	Beautifully finished compact floorstander with fine midband coherence, but limited bass and top end	20,94,28	● 89	4 25	●				180	
Mordaunt-Short MS812	100	Quirky styling and a very laid back presence, but great musical integrity and solid value for money	20,5, 42, 25	● 88	5 44	●				187	
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	
R 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	
B Musical Technology PM15	450	A subtle, understated but very involving example of the 'classic' luxury-finish compact standmount	20,41,27	● 88	5 38	●				183	
R 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	
B Musical Technology Falcon	680	Big speaker has a big but also surprisingly smooth and civilised sound. Fine material value too	33,117,30	● 89	4 22	●				190	
R Naim Intro	660	Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth	24,89,27	● 89	6 30	●			1916	164	
R 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	
R Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy – smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	● 88	6 25	●			1352	143	
R Neat Critique 2	445	Contemporary standmount has a clean, crisp sound with lovely natural midband voicing	22,32,24	● 86	6 50	●				183	
B Neat Mystique Mk2	575	This elegant package delivers a fine overall sound quality; some might find the top end too insistent	20,86,18	● 85	6 23	●			2211	177	
R Neat Elite	1,195	A highly entertaining all rounder, has a planar tweeter that sounds sweet, if not particularly smooth	20,88,18	● 88.5	6 25	●				195	
Neat Petite II/Gravitas	2,000	Beautifully presented miniature/subwoofer combo with ribbon tweeter gives smooth, laid-back sound	23,105,40	● 85	6 25	●			1988	167	
Opera Prima	495	Good-looking hardwood enclosure, plus fine mid and treble, but less satisfactory bass	19,34,31	● 90	4 40	●				190	

CONTINUED

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Origin Live Conqueror	1,650	Chunky floorstanding three-way has lovely cabinetwork and lively sound, but limited deep bass	24,94,27	●	88	8	30	●	●	1989	167	
Orelle Swing	1,200	A superb example of what an essentially small loudspeaker can do, with bags of brio and enthusiasm	18,101,28	●	87	8	45	●	●		195	
PMC TB1S	430	Pro-audio version of TB1, cheaper because of black paint finish	20,41,30	●	87	6	40	●	●	2207	177	
PMC TB1	482	A classy, laid-back performer that likes going loud and loves the bass guitar	20,40,31	●	87	8	45	●	●	1830	160	
PMC LB1	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	
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	
Proac Studio 125	1,000	Pretty if pricey compact floorstander with a beautifully natural and neutral midband, and some bass thump	20,94,28	●	87	8	28	●	●		192	
QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal stand-mount with heavy, laid-back balance but remarkably unboxy sound	27,37,36	●	83	4	25	●	●		167	
Rega KYTE	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative	19,31,19	●	87	8	50	●	●		114	
Rega EL8	298	KYTE drivers in compact floorstander give more bass but less coherence	17,72,20	●	86	8	55	●	●		122	
Rega Jura	450	Beefy sounding, chunky floorstander sounds very 'direct coupled' to the music, if a touch 'boom'n'tizz'	22,5,92,5,26	●	90	5	25	●	●		193	
Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20	●	87	8	40	●	●		1578	139
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing	20,82,30	●	89	6	40	●	●	1083	132	
Rehdeko RK 115a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic coherence	34,42,27	●	95	8	55	●	●	1982	167	
RMS Revelation Series 1	1,299	Innovative metal-box compact with integral port/stand - clean with good timing but very laid-back balance	20,99,24	●	81	8	22	●	●	1983	167	
Roksan ROKone	595	Large 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 dassy veneer and shiny gilt fixings, hampered by rather wayward sound balance	21,58,31	●	87	8	40	●	●	2129	174	
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence	23,84,32	●	88	8	30	●	●		118	
Ruark Crusader	1,599	Elegant luxury three-way with wonderfully even-handed, if rather laid-back balance	24,94,31	●	85	6	22	●	●	1990	167	
Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to vanish behind the music	25,88,34	●	88	6	45	●	●	1227	140	
Ruark Excalibur	7,000	A big handsome speaker with a big, laid-back, but open sound, rocking bass and loads of headroom	30,125,53	●	90	4	30	●	●		186	
Sequence 400	329	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great	25,100,7	●	86	8	45	●	●	1917	164	
Shahinian Arc	1,875	Occasionally wonderful, small, floorstanding omni directional design: bright but coherent and revealing	35,69,25	●	88	6	24	●	●		110	
Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact: neutral if bright, tough work for amps	20,40,25	●	83	3	30	●	●	1918	164	
Snell K.5	795	Classy AV-ready stand mount is very solidly engineered. Sound is neutral but lacks excitement	22,46,30	●	87	6	25	●	●		190	
Snell XA75ps	4,500	Active-bass floorstander with marvellous mid coherence, slightly suspect bass integration.	28,117,50	●	91	6	25	●	●		194	
Soliloquy SM 2A3	1,095	Fine match in balance, coherence, transparency and speed. Intended for use with Cary CAD 2A3SE	35,5,19,30	●	91	8	45	●	●		196	
Sonus Faber Concertino	599	A beautifully neutral loudspeaker in a beautiful Italian suit of clothes. Classy, if quite pricey	21,52,29	●	87	5	30	●	●		193	
Spendor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound	18,89,27	●	87	8	30	●	●	1836	160	
System Audio 1130	499	Super-slim, super smooth, involving experience, but not ideal if you like your bass deep and loud	3,100,21	●	89	4	43	●	●		183	
System Audio 1150	749	Pricey but persuasive, sonic subtleties sneak up to confound a dodgy first impression. Super-slim	16,105,26	●	90	4	30	●	●		190	
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 R1	200	Pretty little mini-monitor is smooth, well mannered, and polite to a fault, lacks dynamic expression	17,30,22	●	86	4	30	●	●		187	
Tannoy 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 Revolution R2	350	Bargain price real wood floorstander is beautifully voiced and very even-handed, if a tad laid back	17,94,24	●	90	4	20	●	●		193	
Tannoy 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 Nucleus 2	130	A very competent miniature. Could be smoother, but no serious flaws, and hence good basic value	20,29,22	●	88	4	45	●	●		187	
TDL Nucleus 4	299	Handsome and very inexpensive floorstander with fine bass alignment but a pronounced lack of presence	20,5,92,31	●	92	6	22	●	●		193	
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	20,52,25	●	70	8	50	●	●	1413	148	
Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass, heavy balance and low sensitivity	25,78,37	●	85	8	25	●	●	1666	152	
Triangle Cometes	359	Communicative stand-mount has great midband dynamics, but the very bright top end might be intrusive	22,40,29	●	91	4	42	●	●		193	
Triangle Zephyr II	599	Loads of fun. Dramatic dynamics and righteous timing will give any hi-fi system a wake-up call	22,94,29	●	91	4	25	●	●		190	
Totem Model One	1,195	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size	17,31,23	●	87	4	28	●	●		122	
Veritas H3	6,000	Loads of fun with wonderful dynamic and temporal integrity from horn-loaded Lowther drivers	30,110,47	●	104	4	50	●	●		191	
Wilson benesch Bishop	20,000	Deep and even bass sets new standards for cleanliness and clarity; lovely open midband too	23,161,561	●	89	4	S20	●	●		189	
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140	A good-hearted, lively and up-front performer that's a little lacking in subtlety and smoothness	19,29,5,23	●	88	4	45	●	●		169	
Wdale Diamond 72 Anniversary	200	Lively and exuberant, but a tad untidy with it; can sound a bit cold and hard	19,29,5,24	●	88	4	40	●	●		187	
Wharfedale Valdis 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 Valdis 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	
Zingali Overture 2S	1,975	Gorgeous, pricey, imposing stand-mount has a horn tweeter of great delicacy. Impressively weighty	30,57,38	●	90	8	25	●	●		195	
SUBWOOFERS												
Acoustic Energy AE108S	299	Lots of loud subwoofer for your money, though ultimately more film than music oriented	50,42,43	●			20	●	●	2247	179	
B&W ASW1000	499	(Active) Very competently engineered all round, and goes (unnecessarily) very loud	54,47,48	●			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	

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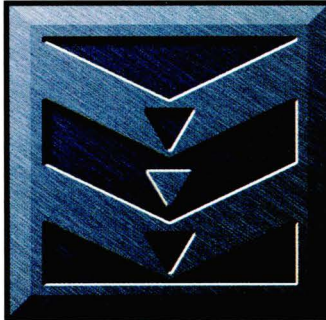
Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (db/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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



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.
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B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stands & Supports

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

TOP PLATE SIZE (cm) FILLABLE WELDED SHELF TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)	FILLABLE	WELDED	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS								
Avik Furniture A4	350	Good sound and stylish Scandinavian looks at an affordable price	80.5	47		4	Wood	193
Alphason GR 17/17-AS	275	Great looks but sound can be bettered for the money	36	60,39		4	Glass	181
Apollo Soprano	275	Uninspiring looks and sonic performance that can be beaten at this price	68.5	45.5		4	Glass	193
Atacama Europa	240	Stylish, expandable modular design with agreeable full-bodied sound – great value	67	48.6		4	Wood	193
Audiophile Furniture Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43		4	MDF	193
Avid Isoschelf	1,100	An enthusiasts equipment support stand free from coloration if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48		5	MDF	193
Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1,199	Blockbusting size and build. Super sound quality	92	45,49		4	Marb	181
Elemental Audio Isotube X4	849	A hefty stand that demonstrates just how much difference a good support can make	90	49		4	Glass	193
Fi-Rax R4	399	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass				5	Glass	1633 151
Frameworks H500/H175	404	Two-shelf stand and isolation platform combo in tubular steel – made a spectacular impression on audition	70	52,34		3	Glass	1952 166
Ixos Deadrock 704	250	Looks unassuming but sound is full and inviting		46,39		4	Resin	181
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
Projekt Furniture A4	215	An elegant support stand that blends in to any home environment with a laid-back sound	56	48		4	Wood	193
Quadraspire Q4	250	Easy to live with, tonally neutral	54	40,49		4	MDF	1633 151
Sound Organisation Z560	160	Welded and bolted members give structural integrity. While performance is not up with the best, it's great value	90	46,36		5	Wood	1954 166
Sound Organisation Z545	160	Budget price and great looks make this a great value stand	73	46		4	Glass	193
Soundstyle X100	230	Looks lovely, sounds lively but slightly bright	64	49,28		4	Glass	181
Soundstyle Radius SR100	280	Stylish looks and a smooth sound	63.5	49.5		4	Glass	193
Soundstyle Select 6105	290	Respectable sonics: structurally solid and smart	78	43,36		5	Glass	1633 151
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320	Veneered shelves clamped between tubular uprights. Delivers with classical material	82	48,27		4	Wood	1955 166
Stands Unique Sound Tower	289	Wooden uprights combine with glass shelves to provide a fresh, forward sound, but bass could be quicker	81	72,42		5	Glass	1633 151
Standesign Design 4	190	An all-in-one support at a budget price with good sonic performance	88.5	50.8		4	Glass	193
Target B5	175	Free of colorations, fine grip and good value	81	49,36		5	Wood	1633 151
Townshend Seismic Stand	1,245	It's big, it wobbles and it's pricey. But this is the ultimate equipment support	72	58,45		3	Wood	181
Wilson benesch Asside	590	Sounds even better than it looks. And it looks wonderful	72	37,50		4	Wood	181
SPEAKER STANDS								
Alphason 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	85	Tall, slim and elegant, though sound and value are unexceptional	40-60	17,17	●			159
Alphason HDS	85	A reasonable stand with a smooth but rather bland sound balance. Good finish options	45-60	15,15,15	●			189
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 Olympus	75	A popular stand and a decent performer, but unremarkable by today's standards	40-60	15,12,5	●			189
Apollo AZ6	80	Fine engineering value, but sound is unexceptional and top-plate small	66	15,13	●	●		159
Atacama BD21	55	Good-looking and good value, but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17	●			159
Atacama R724	150	Atacama uses its market strength to deliver a superbly appointed product at a very reasonable price	60	15,17	●	●		189
Atacama SE24	70	Stands out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of its performance	61	19,5,17	●	●		1373 146
Black Box Speaker Stand	797	A strange and costly beast. Bass is a touch thick, but performance with synthetic music types is worthy of the price	92-112	40				189
Custom Design R/S 300	70	Combining strong aesthetic and sonic appeal at a popular price point, this is a good stand all-round	40.6-60.9	15,15	●			189
Elemental Isotube SZse	599	Stands of distinction, able to free the speaker's sound from its box in a way budget stands simply can't	61	23,27	●	●		189
JPW HS1	120	A purposeful stand, a touch dry-sounding but particularly strong with bass. Great for rock and dance music	61	19,21	●			189
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
Parlington A-4	119	An odd-ball stand with a sound that's sheer class. More open and focused than almost anything below £150	50-100	19,22	●	●		189

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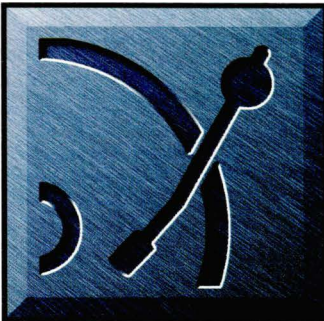
Stands & Supports

SPECIFICATIONS



STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)	HEIGHT	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	349	Pricey carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A						159
Russ Andrews Torlyte	599	Subtle and musical-sounding stands, though a touch more 'pizazz' is need for Recommendation at this price	61	33,5,24						189
Sound Organisation Z524	69	A coherent-sounding stand with particular strengths in the midband, though quality drops at the frequency extremes	61	16,17						189
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
Target TR60	68	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less-than-audiophile-oriented, twin-column design	60	15,15	●					1373



Tonearms

Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). However, hard-core vinyl fans should invest in a more expensive separate motor unit with specialist tone-arm – the only way to make the most of vinyl LPs. It is essential to achieve operational synergy between such components, so this is one area of hi-fi where the skills of a knowledgeable dealer are invaluable. The quality of a tonearm's construction and design affect sound quality significantly. There are three basic arm designs listed in the key, and each has strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, being usually the most practical and affordable.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **EFFECTIVE MASS:** This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.
- **PARALLEL TRACKING:** An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
- **PIVOTED:** Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.
- **UNI-PIVOT:** Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
- **EFFECTIVE LENGTH (CM):** Length of the arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.
- **ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT:** Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
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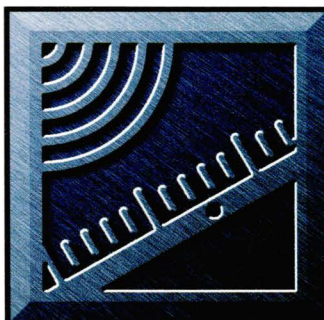
Tonearms

SPECIFICATIONS



STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	EFFECTIVE MASS	PARALLEL TRACKING	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,250	Large, solid and well-made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High		●					79
Linn Ekos	1,500	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Medium		●		229			67
Moth/RB250	109	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low		●		237			60
Rega RB300	174	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low		●		237			60
Roksan Tabriz Basic	350	Targeted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases – a touch bright though	Low		●		240			91
SME Series IV	983	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low		●		233			60
SME Series V	1,461	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price	Low		●		233			60



Tuners

TV has stolen radio's status as the foremost broadcast entertainment medium, but with its Radio Four plays and Radio Three music, the BBC still makes a potent case for audiophile reception equipment. For how much longer, under the cost-conscious Birtist régime, remains to be seen. Another new impendable 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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B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Tuners

SPECIFICATIONS



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
Cambridge T500	180	Very capable tuner suited to good and less good reception conditions	FM, M, L	64						193
Creek T43	399	Quality UK-made tuner offering classy sound in all areas at a very fair price	FM, M, L	64		●				193
Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM, M, L	40						193
Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40					1947	166
Denon TU-1500RD	250	A well-balanced and clean sound with good bass and treble extension	FM, M	40		●				184
Magnum Dynalab FT11	499	All-analogue tuner: receives weak or tightly packed stations but loses out on noise and sonic neutrality	FM	3						184
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
Marantz ST-48	120	A classic budget model which manages a performance only just behind much more expensive models	FM, M	60						184
Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and with a subjectively larger-than-life presentation	FM	20					1810	157
Myryad T-30	400	Attractive product that produces attractive sounds too: capable of very musical performance with a good aerial	FM	29		●				193
Myryad T-10	530	A very smart unit which works well and offers good rhythmic drive and vitality, albeit at a price	FM	20						184
NAD C440	200	Rather polite sound, a little vague at times, that seldom offends but never excites	FM, M	30		●				193
Naim NATO1	1,730	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM						1254	142
Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance; slightly disappointing sound	FM, M	40					1949	166
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	300	Lots of features, plus a sound that's low on noise and high on communication, adds up to a good value package	FM, M	40		●				184
Roksan Caspian	595	Neat fascia with great ergonomics, but sound is not really any better than models at half the price	FM	50						184
Sony ST-SE500	140	A lot of features for the money, but sound lacks detail and has some coloration	FM, M, L	30						193

CONTINUED

Tuners

SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS PRESETS RDS REMOTE CONTROL SIG. STRENGTH METER ROT. TUNING METER FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING METER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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
R Sony STS-B920S	180	A little hiss and image compression don't detract from the clean performance of this feature-packed tuner	FM,M,L	30	●			●		184
Technics ST-GT350L	130	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM,M,L	30			●		1254	142
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.
- **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 this issue.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Turntables

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUAL AUTO SEMI-AUTO SPEEDS SUSP. SUBCHASSIS EXTERNAL PSU SUPPLIED WITH ARM SUPPLIED WITH CART. FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE No.

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSP. SUBCHASSIS	EXTERNAL PSU	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART.	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE No.
Avid Acutus	4,995	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings, don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!				33/45	●					194
Clearaudio Reference	3,990	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail, but can sound bold	●			33/45					1328	144
R DNМ Rota 2	5,600	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on its own table	●			33/45	●			●	1328	144
R Dual 505-4 UK	250	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph				33/45	●			●		103
R Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,950	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●			33/45	●			●		91
R Linn LP12 Basic	1,100	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●			33	●			●		103
R Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains	●			33/45	●			●		91
R Michell Gyrodec	875	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●			33/45	●			●		55
E Michell Gyro SE	775	A stunningly desirable combination of looks, solidity and sound make this a tempting turntable	●			33/45	●			●		190
R Michell Orbe 'SE'	1,725	A Superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price	●			33/45	●			●		192
Moth Kanoot	329	Rather coarse-sounding deck that requires decent isolation and comes with a Rega RB300 arm	●			33/45				●	1907	164
R Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	750	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●			33/45				●		159
R Pink Triangle Tarantella II	850	A turntable that looks unlike any other, with rare ability too. Quirky, but sound is immensely likeable	●			33/45	●			●		192
R Pro-ject 2	300	Remarkably effective at the price, with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●			33/45				●	1907	164
Pro-ject Perspective	750	Flexible facilities and competitive package, but performance of turntable alone is behind the best	●			33/45	●			●		192
R Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	850	Don't think of this as a deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Oracle Delphi – it's that good	●			33/45	●			●		138
R Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●			33/45				●		48
R Rega Planar 3	274	Sounds musical in a balanced manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●			33/45				●	1907	164
R Reson RS1	600	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●			33/45				●		159
R Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant-looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight	●			33/45	●			●		159
E SME Model 10A	3,333	Elegant and extremely capable design with Series V/309 hybrid arm, superbly built	●			33/45	●			●		195
E SME Model 20.2A	4,863	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	●			33/45/78	●			●		186
R Thorens TD166 V/UK/RB	400	Refined, solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM/MC budget cartridges	●			33/45	●			●		103
Thorens TD2001	700	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled				33/45	●			●		159
R 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
R Wilson benesch The Circle	795	A beautiful turntable with a sumptuous sound, all at a very reasonable price – a clear Best Buy	●			33/45	●			●		192

OPERA MINI

Opera Mini may be the baby of the range but don't be fooled by the size. Standing a mere ten inches tall, this is a classy loudspeaker, made for people who love their music. And it sounds great – virtually anywhere; on a bookshelf, or wall mounted, next to a TV screen, on stands, in fact wherever space allows.

The cabinet is solid hardwood – mahogany or cherry – built by Opera's craftsmen in the traditional manner. Top quality drive units and cabling are fitted, and even the terminals are Opera's own 24kt gold plated connectors, the same used on the most expensive models in the range.

If you're looking for a top class speaker that takes the minimum of space, you'll love the *Opera Mini*. The price will be a pleasant surprise too – at £325 the pair this is a real bargain.

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1992	102-113	All except Mar	Very limited
1993	114-125	All except Feb and Dec	Very limited
1994	126-137	Jun, Aug, Nov	Very limited
1995	138-149	All sold out	None
1996	150-161	All ex. Jan, Apr, Jul, Sep & Special	Very limited
1997	162-173	All ex. May, Nov, Dec & BB	Very limited
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1999	186-	None sold out	Good

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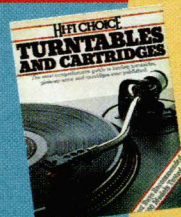
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CHOICE CUTS

HI-FI PHILOSOPHY...

MUSIC MATTERS

Hi-fi, believe it or not, is about enjoying music. By creating a decent system you can open up a direct channel to your musical pleasure centres, bypassing any intellectual barriers that might want to dissect and analyse, and allowing yourself to be emotionally transported to wherever the music's creator intended.

Jason Kennedy, January 1999

THAT SHRINKING FEELING

The future may be orange, but will it be bigger or smaller? Both. Bigger performance, smaller package. It's technology's preferred modus operandi. Examples are everywhere: palm-held computers packing the power of yesterday's laptops, city cars that squeeze in family saloon-sized interiors and safety features, miniature mobile phones with massive memory capacity and battery life. And, of course, hi-fi.

David Vivian, April 1999



Would you swap your Bishops...?

LIFE'S PURPOSE

Recently I had the tough job of telling someone to stop buying hi-fi mags and start reading music journals instead. He was an extreme case, but don't forget about music – it's the point of the whole exercise and without it this stuff would be worthless. So don't just read – listen and enjoy.

Jason Kennedy, May 1999

RULES TO LIVE BY

Mechanical things come from a world of certainty. A world that's ordered and predictable. The rules are clear and simple. You can see how something mechanical works. Even with something very sophisticated there's usually an underlying simplicity about the principle on which it operates. Anyone can see how a record player works. But a CD player?

Jimmy Hughes, May 1999

HOME SUPPORTERS

Over a three-week period I became such a regular customer at my local branch of Ikea that the staff started saying hello. Having assimilated an entire month's output of the country's home decor writers, I knew exactly the look I wanted for the listening room in my new home: nothing. Well, next to nothing, anyway. Clean and minimal. Certainly no hulking great black tubular metal hi-fi supports. A few simple wooden tables at most.

David Vivian, July/August 1999



Vinyl is cool dude!

that the more effort that goes into the production values, the worse the music that's being produced. Think of all the endlessly meaningless displays of 12-string acoustic guitar virtuosity so highly regarded by the specialist audiophile labels. Stunning stereo, dynamite dynamics, ballistic bass, crap content.

David Vivian, September 1999

MANIFESTO CORNER

True hi-fi is about involvement. It's about reproducing the energy of the recording session in the comfort of your own front room, involving the listener and heightening the musical experience. Entertainment is the bottom line – lose sight of that and passion means nothing.

Tim Bower, October 1999

BRING BACK NATIONAL SERVICE

The harder I think about this brave new world, the greater the urge to put an LP on the turntable and relax with the sleeve artwork and notes. In principle, greater convenience and choice are Good Things. But they aren't everything. Few of us ever see the money we use to buy things. But, just once in a while, it's good to hold a crisp £20 note. One day, like CDs, they won't be common currency. Until then, enjoy. Because, as Bart Simpson might say, the future sucks.

David Vivian, June 1999

STYLE OVER CONTENT

It's an interesting paradox – but by no means a reliable rule of thumb –

HUFF AND BUFF

Definition of a hi-fi buff: a person who has a record collection worth roughly twice the national debt but plays just one track over and over again. What could it be? Beethoven's 9th? Mahler's 5th? *Bridge Over Troubled Water*? No. *Walking Tambourine* from *How To Set Up Your Hi-Fi – The Ultimate Test Disc*. The lyrics go like this: "Ahem. I'm now standing three feet back and two feet to the left of the microphone and my friend, standing next to me, is going to shake a tambourine. Bash. I'm now standing eight feet back..."

David Vivian, October 1999

ON HI-FI SHOWS...

TINKERING IN TOKYO

At the [Tokyo] show the battlements were being erected for what will be the format war of 1999 – SACD versus DVD-A – two different formats vying to lure the public with a higher quality music medium. Presumably for amusement value, the group HQs for each camp were placed opposite one another at Big Site, the SACD stand featuring suited representatives and static displays of prototype hardware while the DVD-A stand featured platform-booted space babes encouraging visitors to watch a demonstration. I wonder how that approach will affect the future of each?

Jason Kennedy, January 1999

YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS

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.

David Vivian, February 1999

FEAR AND LOAFING IN LAS VEGAS

As an irregular visitor to the American Consumer Electronics Show, I usually find the scale of the event overwhelming. Spread over three major convention centres and a sprawling, low-rise hotel, there's just too much to take in and a form of show blindness sets in where

only the shiniest of objects distract from the general melée. But all was not lost. I tripped off three rolls of film and brought back ten pounds of literature, and between the two managed to extract my report...

Jason Kennedy, March 1999

BIG IN BRISTOL

Once ensconced in my seat, it's time to exhale and reflect on the day gone by – a fascinating mix of technologies old and new. The show was buzzing with energy, exhausting yet rewarding, with a pleasing proportion of 'real world' music instead of the tinkly 'dem' stuff that alienates many people. As a Bristol claim to fame, it may not

match Brunel's suspension bridge or Massive Attack's *Blue Lines*, but it ranks a resounding third.

Tim Bower, April 1999

LOITERING IN LONDON

Transplanting The Hi-Fi Show closer to central London has probably strengthened its role as a public show, perhaps at the expense of the trade side. While that might ultimately result in fewer weird and wonderful products, the show itself is now so large and varied, there's already much more than the visitor can absorb... I reckon we'll all be returning to Hammersmith next September.

Paul Messenger, December 1999

CHOICE CUTS

ON THE INDUSTRY...

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 names like Rogers and Mordaunt-Short are involved. *Paul Messenger, February 1999*

THE ECONOMISTS

The budget speaker builders have been having a particularly torrid time. Price points have changed remarkably little over the past ten years. Back in 1989, Tannoy's budget speakers were the £120 Eclipse

and £160 Mercury S; more or less equivalent today to the £120 Mercury M1 and the £140 Mercury M2. Plus ça change.

Manufacturers have therefore been faced with the task of trying to find cost savings equivalent to the going inflation rate for every one of those past ten years. So it was no great surprise when one very experienced speaker designer commented that he was never asked to design a better loudspeaker – only one which could

be made much more economically. *Paul Messenger, March 1999*

ZUCKER PUNCH

Say what you will about TAG McLaren Audio – and most people have – but Dr Udo Zucker, the man in charge, is both hi-fi evangelist and big hitter. He knows engineering, he knows electronics, he knows business, he knows what good sound is and he knows how to win. *David Vivian, March 1999*



ON TWEAKING...

ALONE AGAIN OR?

I've noticed how the sound of my system seems to vary according to who's there in the room with me. And it's 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 other people visit, the system suddenly and inexplicably has one of its off-nights. *Jimmy Hughes, February 1999*

TWEAK-WILLED

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 sound good, it's tempting fate... *Jimmy Hughes, February 1999*

MARITAL BLISS

The music had a rhythmic snap and liveliness that made you want to

dance. Indeed, my wife got up and did just that, although, in the interests of science, I stayed in my chair taking notes. Taking the Ringmat Support System off (but keeping the Ringmat on), the sound lost much of its depth and transparency. Bass lines lost their independence, and the voices didn't project as well. Overall, the three-dimensional holographic soundstaging collapsed. Unbelievable! *Jimmy Hughes, March 1999*

FOR THE BYRDS

The difference between a great system and one that's merely average is that the former is always equal to the music's demands. Listening to *Mr Tambourine Man* with the [tuning] feet in place, I could differentiate Roger McGuinn's double-tracked vocals as never before. The pitches of the notes were clearer; and it was possible to hear both vocal parts clearly all the time. *Jimmy Hughes, July/August 1999*

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING...

CARDCORE ACTION

It's easy to cowl your speakers! *Blue Peter* style, all you need is thick card, scissors and sticky tape. Extend the outer boundaries of the speaker cabinet so the drive units are slightly enclosed. The aim is to narrow the dispersion of the sound and thus focus it more. Cowling seems to strengthen the low frequencies, making the bottom end fuller and more powerful. *Jimmy Hughes, Sept 1999*



24 BITS OF WHAT YOU FANCY

There seems to be some confusion over the merits – or otherwise – of '24-bit' CD players. In the Far East, for example, many manufacturers are discovering their players will not sell *unless* they've got '24-bit' on their facias. Sadly, this is just a triumph of marketing over reality because – in practice – there's *no such thing as a 24-bit CD player!* The moral is: close your eyes and judge your next CD player on the basis of its sound... *Paul Miller, February 1999*

ON DVD-AUDIO AND SACD

SWITCHING CHANNELS

It's the multi-channel aspect that makes the [DVD-A] format more interesting. Two channels – no matter how good – can't compete with five-and-a-bit. DVD-A's potential might just invigorate the middle and high end of the hi-fi business. *Jason Kennedy, March 1999*

MILLENNIUM MUSIC

DVD-A could be a saviour for genuine hi-fi; it may even be the last great 'hard' medium in as much as it's an artefact rather than a data-stream coming into your computer. And high quality multi-channel, if it's taken up by the record business,

could revolutionise the way that even the audiophile listens. In fact, given that it's not likely to really happen until next year, DVD-A will be the medium of the millennium. *Jason Kennedy, April 1999*

SLIPPED DISCS

What will make or break either medium is the support provided by the software industry, and SACD appears to have the edge over DVD-A with its potential for CDP-friendly hybrid discs. Sony even claims such discs will sound better than conventional CDs because of the DSD encoding process. *Jason Kennedy, June 1999*

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE ...

MULTI-CHANNEL MAYHEM!

Next month we've got something very special lined up for your amusement. We're dedicating the entire issue to the world of multi-channel sound. Why? Because more and more of you are looking to add a multi-channel element to your existing two-channel systems, spurred on by the DVD phenomenon and the emergence of surround-encoded music software in addition to movie releases. Inside you'll find comprehensive group tests of DVD players, multi-channel amps and complete speaker packages, with an emphasis on gear from 'quality' hi-fi brands. Whether you're listening to a two-channel CD or a



Chord's ground-breaking new DAC – reviewed next month!

multi-channel, it's all you need to help build a system for the best of both worlds.

SURROUNDED BY MUSIC

As part of this special issue, we'll have a listen to the very best multi-channel music currently available on both CD and DVD. Is it really worth buying?

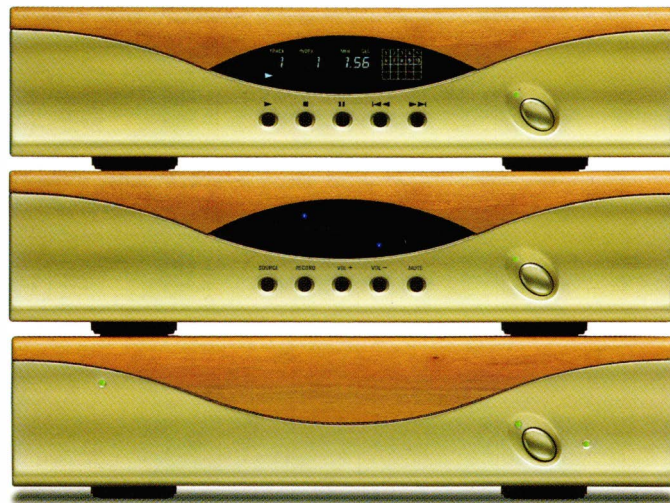
SACD AND MORE!

Sony is about to unleash its most affordable SACD player yet, priced at £1,700. We've got one and its fab! Plus, the sexiest new kit from Chord, Lexicon, Meridian and TAG McLaren. Miss it, miss out!

■ The January issue will be on sale on Thursday 23 December 1999.



20th century icon...



...21st century icon



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