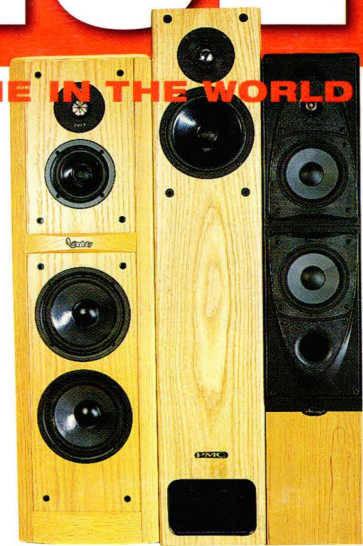


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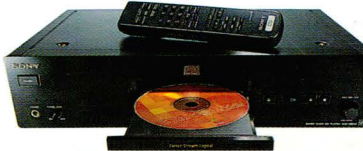
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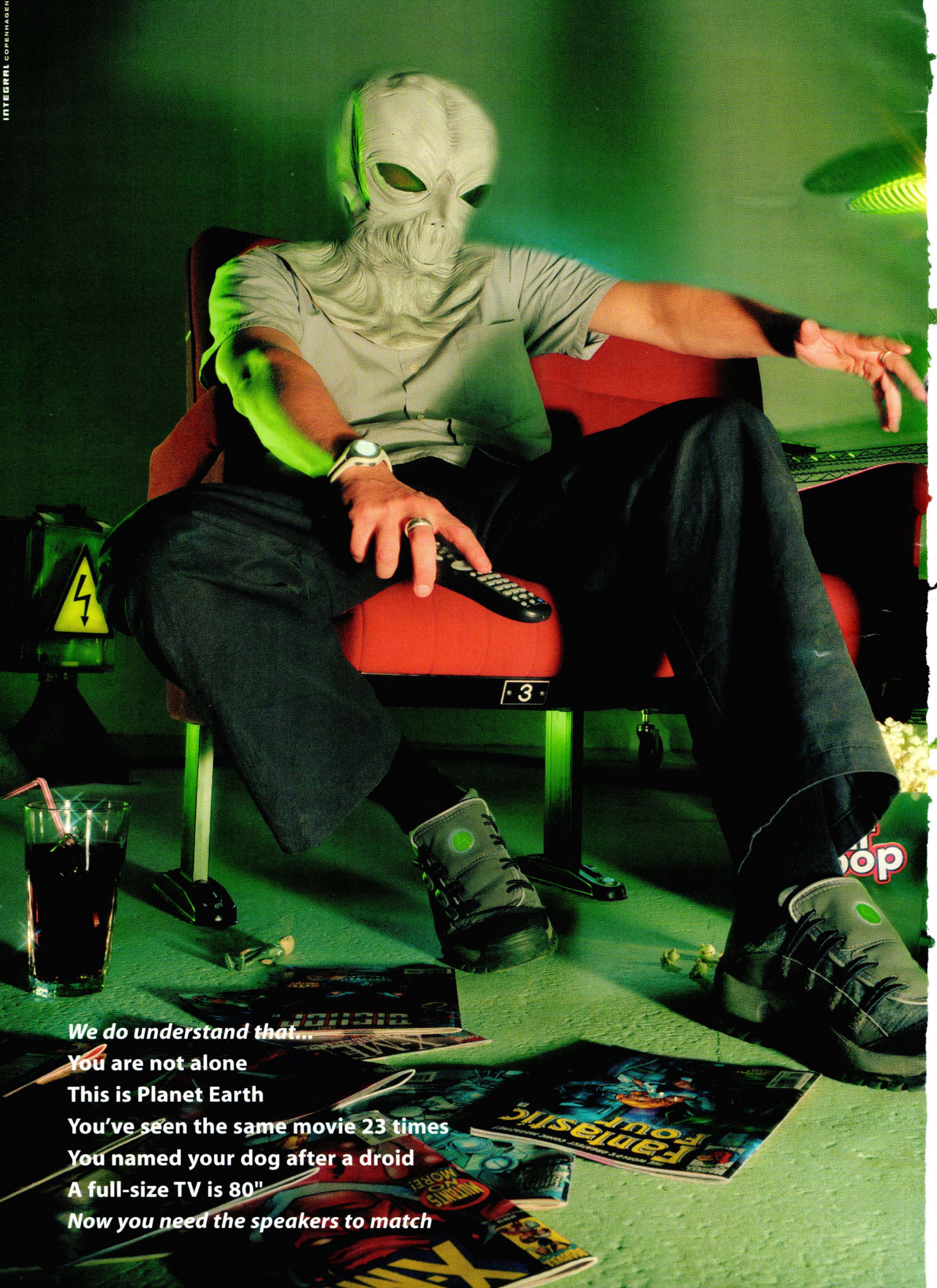
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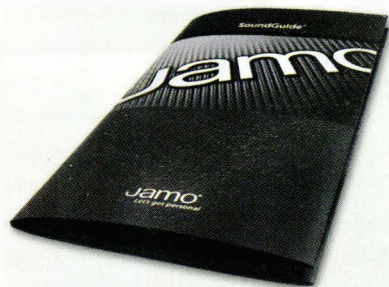
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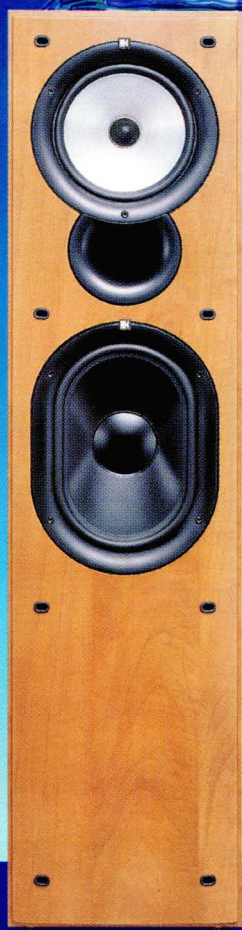
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Media with passion



Hi-Fi Choice is the UK hi-fi magazine representative of the European Imaging & Sound Association (EISA). Every year EISA honours the finest hi-fi and home cinema products throughout Europe.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



Jason Kennedy tries out some highly recommended speaker bases, and gets a certain Sink-ing feeling.

A recent EISA seminar has changed my view of the audio electronics industry. This event consisted of a highly concentrated series of press presentations from nine of the big players in Europe, with brands such as Samsung, Thomson, Pioneer and Philips among them. These companies depend on the mass market and as a result hi-fi only fits into their plans when it's packed in with complete systems, and complete home cinema systems at that. Of the myriad new products we were shown only one was dedicated to two channels, a Technics CD player, and two were primarily made for stereo operation, Mirage loudspeakers.

Given the state of the software market where the vast majority of material is in stereo, this would seem to be a bit of foolhardy move on the industry's behalf. But it is working on the premise that the growth rate of two channel is being overtaken by that of multi-channel, largely due to the tremendous success of DVD. The question is how will this affect the music and hi-fi lover? Will he/she have to shift to new media in order to be able to play the latest releases. I think not. Whatever the audio industry attempts to sell to the masses does not, it would seem, necessarily change our buying habits and tastes, otherwise the LP and cassette would have died out 10 years ago. This combined with the breadth of the CD catalogue, which is now quite staggering, suggests that there's no rush to change formats at all, and we should only do so if the sonic rewards represent a higher fidelity than we have at present.

There's an awful lot of change in audio electronics at present, so much so that even the experts find it hard to keep track, but what we need to know is whether it's going to enhance the music lover's enjoyment. Which is why there are two features in this issue that take in aspects of multi-media. Tim Bownern's personal stereo review (page 61) looks at four new MP3 players in the context of the other formats on the market – a total of four, which must make this the most format-diverse of all market sectors, bar computers. At the other end of the scale Richard Black is looking at ways that you can enhance or tweak your software to taste with computer based digital mastering systems (page 72).

NEW FOUNDATIONS

Back at chez Kennedy, two channel is still the order of the day with both hi-fi and AV systems. The hi-fi has been markedly improved by the introduction of the Townshend Seismic Sink speaker bases that we reviewed in the May issue. Sticking Living Voice Avatar OBX-R floorstanding speakers on these mini monoliths has had a

dramatic effect on the overall sound. When Richard Stevenson reviewed them he found that they didn't do a great deal in his large concrete floored room, but subsequently discovered their qualities on a suspended floor. I have a wooden suspended floor and have to place the speakers quite close to the rest of the system, so isolation between electronics and speakers has an effect. What I didn't expect was the magnitude of that effect.

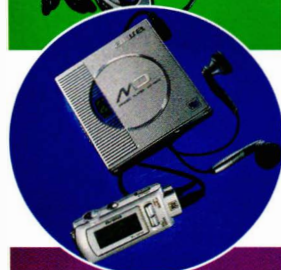
The first thing that struck was the improvement to image depth and spaciousness in general, this was not the de-focused expansiveness that some tube amps create but a precise increase in proportions. To the extent that the system's sensitivity to phase variations seems to have doubled. More expected was a change in the bass, where the decoupling from the floor has had a subjective curtailing effect on weight, this presumably because the speaker can no longer energise the floorboards. The midband, meanwhile, has been transformed from extremely good to superb: the resolve is extraordinary, to the extent that familiar recordings offer up new detail and subtlety on a daily basis. High frequencies have apparently been muted a little, the sound seems softer, but the detail doesn't seem diminished so that could be a case of reduced distortion giving a smoother overall result. A more transparent preamp is required, methinks.

On top of all this, the system will now go louder without discomfort, suggesting a reduction in compression at higher levels. While the Sinks' asking price of £495 may seem steep on perceived value grounds, the result more than warrants the cost in a serious system.

JKennedy



There's only one obvious winner this month, though the Martin-Logan Prodigy came very close. But the Sony ST-D777ES combines digital and analogue radio reception in an exceptionally well-endowed package with a rather nice box. Tune in, check it out.



77

CD/DVD MULTIPLAYERS

Alvin Gold tests seven of the best.



61

PERSONAL AUDIO

Tim Bower compares the latest tape, CD, MiniDisc and MP3 models.



54

MARTIN LOGAN

Alvin Gold checks out the stunning Prodigy electrostatic speakers.



56

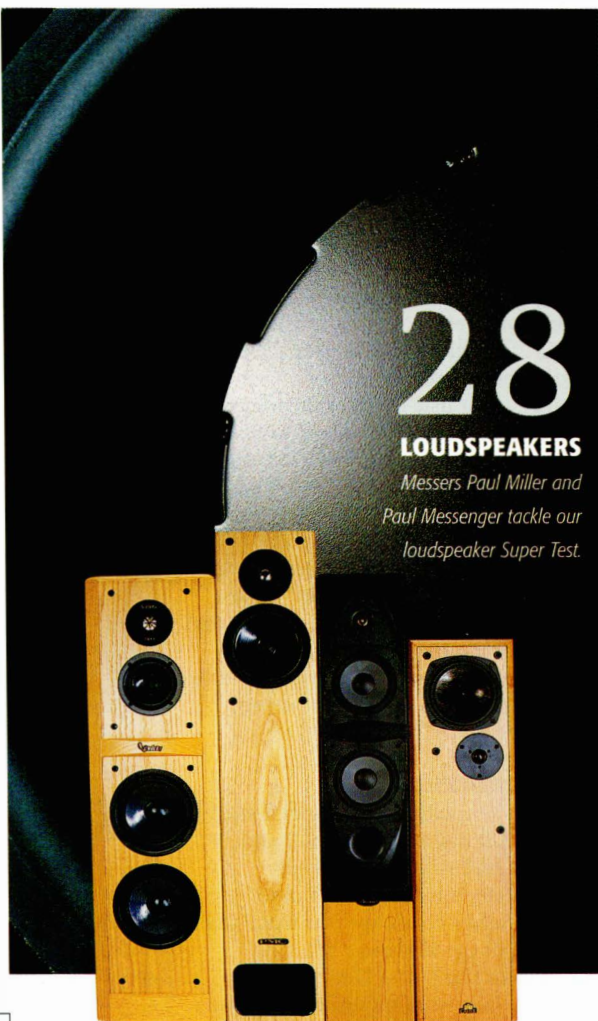
SONY SCD-XB940

Paul Miller investigates Sony's 'affordable' new SACD player.

28

LOUDSPEAKERS

Messrs Paul Miller and Paul Messenger tackle our loudspeaker Super Test.



Opinion

5

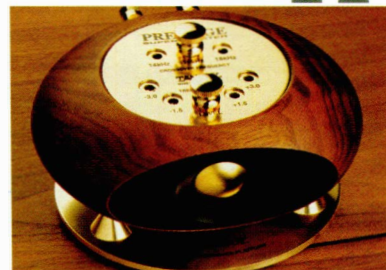
EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Jason Kennedy reports on this month's happenings and Editor's Choice.

PAUL MESSENGER

Paul dissects Tannoy's SuperTweeter.

11



12

PHIL STRONGMAN

More classic cuts from Phil's burgeoning collection on virgin vinyl and CD.

DAVID VIVIAN

Cura's £700 CA-10 speaker gets the once over.

15

52

PAUL MILLER'S OASIS OF SANITY

Paul explores data reduction and compression technologies.

JIMMY HUGHES

Jimmy reveals the merits of natural fibres!

138

Features

20 ASPIRATIONS
Phil Strongman meets a dream hi-fi at home.



72 REMASTERING SOFTWARE
Richard Black re-mixes his CDs.



8 NEWS & VIEWS
All the latest headlines, kit and new technology from the industry.



PRODUCTS IN THIS ISSUE

Digital Recorders		Nakamichi MB10	83
Hitachi DW1E	16	Sony DVP-CX850D	84
Loudspeakers		Technics SL-MC7	85
Audio Note ES	39	MP3 Players	
BC Acoustique Araxe	40	Aiwa MM-VX100	69
Castle Severn 2 SE	30	LG AHA-FD770	69
Dali Evidence 870	41	Pontis SP504	69
Dynaudio Audience 50	31	Vivanco Vmax	69
Heybrook HB2	16	Personal Cassette	
Infinity Kappa 70	34	Aiwa HS-PX307	62
JMLabs Electra 905	42	Panasonic RQ-FX71	62
Martin-Logan Prodigy	54	Panasonic RQ-FX91	62
Mirage FRX7	32	Sony WM-EX404	62
Mision 775e	35	Personal CD	
PMC FB1	43	JVC XL-PG7	63
ProAC Tablette 2000 Sig.	36	Philips ACT-7582	63
Ruark Prologue 1R	38	Sony DE-J815	65
CD Players		Sony DE-J915	65
Kenwood DPF-3030	17	Personal MiniDisc	
Sony SCD-XB940	56	Alwa AM-HX50	67
CD and DVD multi-players		Panasonic SJMR100	67
Denon DVM-3700	78	Sharp MD-MT831	68
Kenwood DPF-R6030	79	Sony MZ-R91	68
Marantz CC3000	81	Tuners	
NAD 523	82	Sony ST-D777ES	17

16 HEAT SEEKERS

This month's new entries are put through their paces.



WIN!

18 ONKYO THX AMPLIFIER AND JAMO MULTI-CHANNEL KIT WORTH A STAGGERING £2,800

Price Guide

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

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110 A complete listing of current hi-fi kit reviewed by us over the years with ECs, BBs and Recs.

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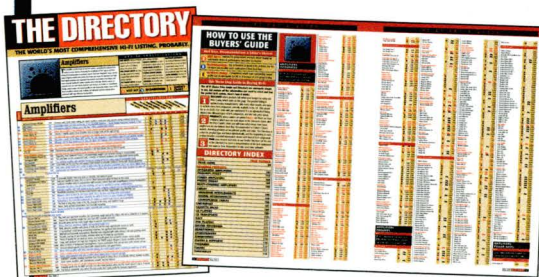
How to access our reviews and features via back issues, Factsback and photocopies.

Help 46

In need of hi-fi advice? Master Bowern is here to answer your hi-fi woes.

Letters

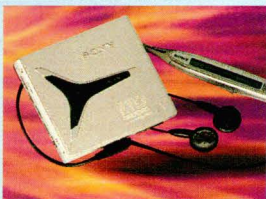
Send us your hi-fi points of view. The author of the best letter wins a TDK goodie bag. **25**



NEWS & VIEWS

Tim Bownern, Nick Gear and Jason Kennedy trawl the hi-fi ocean for the biggest news fish.

NEWS IN BRIEF



SONY claims its new MZ-R90 player is the smallest MD Walkman in the world. Weighing only 70g without batteries, it shares many of the facets of the MZ-R91 (see group test), the world's smallest MD recorder, including the same ESP anti-shock technology and back-lit LCD remote control. Sporting a champagne gold livery, the MZ-R90 uses both standard AA and rechargeable cells to generate up to 56 hours of playback, and comes supplied with the same accessories as its bigger brother. ☎ (0990) 111999

LIVE 2000, the UK home entertainment and technology show, will open its doors to punters from the 21st to the 24th September at Earls Court, London. Visitors will be able to experience a dedicated hi-fi and home entertainment zone; the Warner DVD Experience, a 200-seat theatre screening the latest in DVD movies, and an Online pavilion sponsored by The Net magazine and Freeserve. Tickets will cost £12 for adults and £7 for children under 16 on the door or £10 and £5 respectively via the advance booking hotline ☎ (0870 736 2000).



GRUNDIG'S RCD2000 system combines a CD, RDS tuner with a motorised display and four wireless active Apollo 2000 speakers with an integrated subwoofer. Each unit communicates with the base unit via 864MHz interference-free transmissions. Costing £1,600, it is capable of simulating 360-degree surround sound and 360 Watts of musical output. It also includes a 59-preset tuner, five pre-programmed sound settings and 30-title CD programming. ☎ (01788) 577155

PANASONIC has paraded a new range of micro and mini hi-fi systems. Comprising three models, the SCPM30MD, the SC-PM22 and the entry-level SC-PM03, the micro range boasts options for a MD recorder, CD player, tuner and cassette deck. In addition, consisting of the flagship SC-AK48, SC-AK28 and the entry-level SC-AK18, the AK-series of mini

Best SACD player yet?



Marantz has promised its first SACD player will be the best on the planet. The SA-1 is set for launch this September and will take its place in the brand's Premium Series at a cool £5,000.

Much attention has been paid to the player's digital-to-analogue conversion circuitry, featuring separate double differential DAC-7 converters per channel – claimed to virtually eliminate all crosstalk, noise and hum. A number of customised components are said to be incorporated, while the power supply circuitry features specially developed 'circuit conversion noise eliminators' to protect the purity of delicate audio signals. Pre-out circuitry incorporates Marantz's HDAM technology, giving better performance than regular op-amp ICs, and balanced audio output is provided. The whole thing weighs in at 17.7kg; expect a review soon.

To coincide with the increased resolution of its SACD



player, Marantz has announced upgrades to its three Premium Series stereo amps. The PM14mkII features a new current feed-back power section and increased HDAM current, while the PM17mkII boasts better gain distribution among its improvements. A KI-Signature version of the PM17mkII will follow, though prices have yet to be announced. Stay tuned for more Marantz news next month.

Marantz ☎ (01753) 680868

Three-Two fun



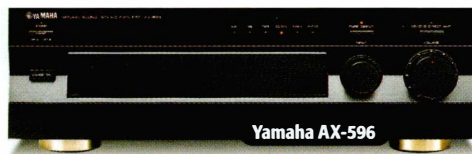
KEF has introduced the Three-Two to its line-up of Reference Series loudspeakers.

Graced with new finishes, crossover improvements and the company's Boundary Compensation device (BCD) for easy room placement, this floorstanding model partners a fourth generation 16cm Uni-Q driver array with a 16cm mineral filled polypropylene lower midrange unit and two 20cm pulp cone bass units. The speaker is fully bi-wireable, boasts a sensitivity of 91dB and an impedance of four ohms.

The Three-Two is priced at £2,250 per pair for black ash, cherry and rosenut veneers and £2,750 per pair in 'rosetta burr' and 'albina burr' finishes. KEF ☎ (01622) 672261



Still stereo



It is refreshing to see Yamaha hasn't forgotten two-channel separates in its race to consolidate its home cinema position. The company's new line-up counts three CD players and three stereo amps among its number, all at 'budget' price points.

Each of the CD players will play back both CD-R and CD-RW discs – a rarity in itself. The entry model is the CDX-396 (£129), featuring Yamaha's Intelligent Digital Servo System for superior error correction. The CDX-496 (£179) adds Digital Volume Control, while the range-topping CDX-596 (£229) sports PRO-Bit technology, which replicates 20-bit data from a 16-bit source.

Meanwhile, Yamaha claims its latest amps have been influenced by the new high definition SACD and DVD-Audio formats, featuring symmetrically-arranged ToP-ART architecture to give a pure signal path. The AX-396 (£169) is rated at 60 Watts per channel; the AX-496 (£229) increases power to 85 Watts x2 and the AX-596 (£289) pumps out 100 Watts x2.

Also new from Yamaha's hi-fi division is a £250 floor-standing speaker called the NS-120, sporting a 13cm mid/bass driver and a 3cm tweeter, and a budget FM/AM/LW tuner – the TX-396, priced at £100. The cassette deck line-up continues in its existing form, while a CD-RW recorder replacing the now discontinued CDR-S1000 is expected in November. We'll bring you news of Yamaha's new multi-channel models next month.

Yamaha (UK) ☎ (01923) 233166



Yamaha CDX-596

Big names join Internet revolution

TOP TIPS Panasonic is the latest big name audio brand to jump aboard the fast-expanding Internet music train. The company has been in cahoots with Toshiba and SanDisk to develop the Secure Digital (SD) Memory Card, a solid state storage device that can be used to record a variety of digital data – including music.

The card is a variation on the 'flash' memory cards used by existing MP3 portable players. Many current portables, like those reviewed on page 69, use MMC cards – one of the smallest types around. The SD card is equally compact and slim – just 32x24mm and barely 2mm thick – and is claimed to offer exceptionally fast access. It is also SDMI compliant, which means it incorporates the copy protection standard soon to be employed across the industry. In addition to making its own SD-based products, Panasonic will license out the technology in co-operation with Toshiba and SanDisk in the hope of securing SD as a worldwide standard. 71 companies are already said to have indicated a desire to join the SD Association.



The first Panasonic audio product to use the technology will be the SD Audio Player, a small solid state recording portable similar to existing MP3 hardware. Available by Christmas with a projected price of £350, it comes complete with its own 'jukebox' management software together with neck and wrist adapters so you can wear it like a watch or a pendant. It uses AAC data reduction, an application of MPEG2 technology touted to be a better quality alternative to MP3. You can either convert your own CDs into AAC files and download them to SD cards for portability, or download tracks from the Internet and use the player to take them wherever you go.

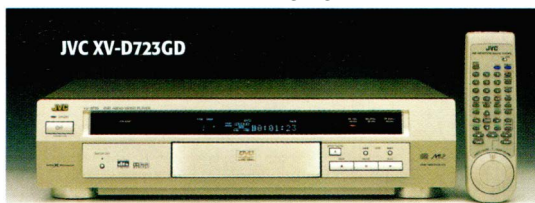
Meanwhile, Sony is poised to launch its rival Memory Stick solid state recording technology in the UK. It uses a version of the Atrac data reduction system used for MiniDisc called Atrac3; the first Walkman product – the NW-MS7 – could be in the shops by the time you read this.

Kenwood is among the other companies to sign up for Memory Stick, so let battle commence!

Panasonic UK ☎ (01344) 862444

DVD-Audio gains support from JVC

TOP TIPS JVC is the latest big name to confirm its commitment to the DVD-Audio format with the XV-D723GD player. Complete with Dolby Digital, DTS and Mpeg decoders, the player uses a new 1-bit DAC with 192kHz/24-bit audio resolution. It features an 8-times over-sampling digital filter at the input



and a recently developed fourth-order noise shaper to shift noise from the audio range into the ultra-high frequency realm.

Other highlights include a newly constructed AV decoder with 10-bit/54MHz video DAC and a RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computer) CPU to control the digital video circuitry at high speed. Among the handy user-functions included are a video fine processor (VFP) to manually control the quality of the picture, a 14-step zoom facility, a high-resolution on-screen menu and an airtight disc tray to reduce external vibrations. Connections includes gold-plated terminals, an RGB output and coaxial/optical digital outputs.

JVC ☎ (020) 8450 3282

Musical multi-channel

TOP TIPS Musical Fidelity is claiming true audiophile sound quality from its first foray into the world of multi-channel.

Boasting separate PCBs for audio, video and digital inputs, the HTP multi-channel processor has four band-pass filtered video inputs for either composite or S-Video with auto-detection between the two.

Compatible with Dolby Digital and dts, the unit is fitted with eight analogue inputs, eight audio inputs and five audio outputs. All audio inputs and outputs are buffered.

The primary power supply is a seventh generation multi-stage power supply with PTC protection. Additionally, the HTP has two individual trigger circuits



with two outputs. These can be linked to any input with full control of polarity of the switching and trigger voltage.

Attention to build quality has clearly been a key aspect during the design and construction stages. The front panel is fashioned from high-quality aluminium billet with all the inserts machined from brass then nickel and silver-plated and finally plated with 24-K gold. The HTP is available from July and costs £1,999. Musical Fidelity ☎ (020) 8900 2866

NEWS IN BRIEF

systems sports fixed five-disc CD changers, dual auto-reverse cassette decks and an AM/FM tuner. ☎ (01344) 862444

KENWOOD'S KAF-303R amplifier, as reviewed by Paul Miller in the June issue, should have been rewarded with five stars rather than the published four stars. We apologise for the unfortunate mistake and promise never to let it happen again, honest!

ADVANTAGE'S Statement S100 (£2,550) integrated amplifier includes separate amplification circuits for positive and negative phase signals, 2x100W at eight ohms output, WBT speaker terminals and a volume control of shunt to ground type. The S100 is fitted with one set of balanced, tape out and pre-out inputs coupled with five sets of unbalanced inputs. ☎ (01892) 539595



JVC has fused art with technology for its FS-SD9R compact hi-fi system. Featuring a slim, low profile centre unit and circular speaker enclosures finished in 'cherrywood', its properties include a top-loading CD player, an RDS tuner and 2x15 Watts output. Among its many attributes are a remote control, 1-bit D/A converter and a 20-track programme chart. ☎ (020) 8450 3282

DVD MUSIC UPDATE: while we await the first DVD-Audio software, music releases on the picture-oriented DVD-Video format continue apace. The latest from Sony includes the likes of Will Smith, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Manic Street Preachers and Jeff Buckley. Meanwhile, Sony has set up a Website for the purchase of SACD software. www.superaudio-cd.com

CETECH, the isolation platform manufacturer, has created an LP12 upgrade kit using carbon-fibre composite as a replacement for its standard sub-chassis. The upgrade will fit all models of LP12, Cirkus and pre-Cirkus platforms and has a price tag of £99. ☎ (01509) 561429

SONY has announced a major MiniDisc promotion – any consumer buying either an MDS-JE330, DHC-MD373 or DHC-MD373TC between 11 June and 30 September will be entitled to an MZ-E62 limited edition MD Walkman for only £19.99. ☎ (0990) 111999

IXOS has announced a silver-plated version of its 1051 digital interconnect. Designed for use with DVD players and top-line CD transports, the Argento has been plated for ultra low loss signal transmission, uses twin OFC braid screens and is fitted with low-loss solid-barrel RCA phono plugs. ☎ (01494) 441736

Once Upon A Time...



...Home Theatre systems used to be big, cumbersome and ugly. And, their performance was pretty ordinary too.

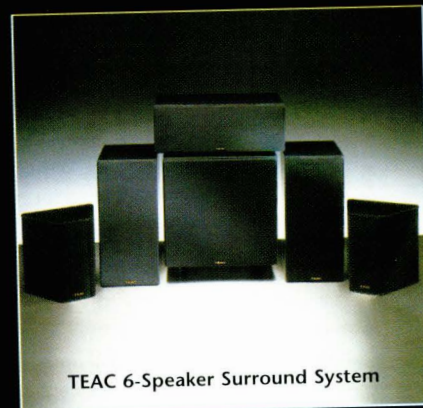
But, all that has now changed. Because TEAC have just introduced a Home Theatre System with stunning looks and a performance way beyond its compact size. It is light years beyond your imagination. It comes complete with a 5x 50W amplifier, Dolby Digital DVD Player and a 6 Speaker package that includes an active sub with variable crossover and gain, matched

voicing centre, left and right speakers, and bipolar rear speakers.

It's all ready to plug in and play, all you need is a television. It will change the way you watch movies and other programmes at home for good. And best of all, the system costs less than £1100.

For once, a movie story with a happy ending.

Visit your TEAC Stockist for a demonstration or call TEAC on 01923 819630 for information on this extraordinary system.



TEAC 6-Speaker Surround System

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The TEAC DVD Home Theatre System

Remix, re-master

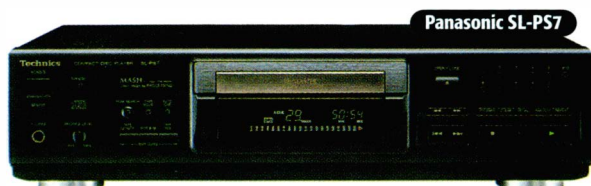


Technics has a replacement for its SL-PS770 CD player called the SL-PS7. As well as incorporating classic Technics technology such as a MASH 1-bit converter (now operating at 24-bits) and virtual battery operation, this new player takes advantage of the company's foray into DVD-Audio. This is in the form of a digital re-mastering process which, like Pioneer's Legato Link, claims to extend the frequency range of CDs with a spot of digital 'guestimating'.

Other features on this £199 player are the TUI-core transformer, which claims a 50 per cent reduction in flux leakage, alongside Ta-Keh II capacitors.

Functionally it offers 20 track programming, direct track access keys on both remote and player and a volume adjustable headphone output.

Panasonic UK ☎ (0990) 357357



Portable DAB

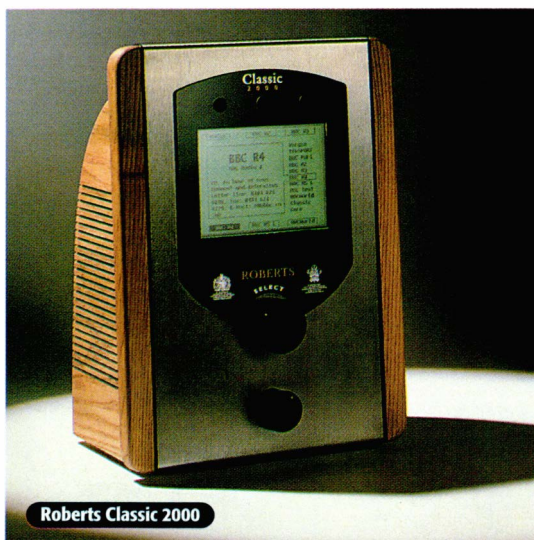


Proclaimed as the world's first portable DAB product, the Classic 2000 from Roberts Radio is the culmination of an intensive two-year development programme.

Roberts has adopted a minimalist and clean design that combines the subtleties of solid ash and stainless steel panels. It features just two controls for volume and tuning, and a large liquid crystal screen for displaying station information such as news, travel and weather updates.

Since digital radio only reaches 69% of the UK population, Roberts' is initially only committed to manufacturing the Classic 2000 in the hundreds rather than thousands. The Classic 2000 portable DAB radio is expected to sell for around £800.

Roberts Radio ☎ (01709) 571722



PAUL MESSENGER

Paul finds a new way to annoy the bats in your loft

The Marantz/Tannoy press seminar is always one of the most entertaining events of the hi-fi year, and this year's was no exception. The first tranche of new products are covered in the News pages, so I'll focus on two topics. Let's start off with Ken Ishiwata's overview of how the European hi-fi market has developed over the past year.

The overall picture is reasonably positive, reflecting the generally good economic climate, and at least confirming that demand for hi-fi remains solid despite competition from AV. However, it is perhaps significant that sales of tuners, amplifiers and CD players have all fallen, while receiver sales have grown significantly, and DVD player sales have soared (albeit from a small base). Speaker sales are strong too, all of which perhaps implies that Europe is finally undergoing the transition from stereo audio to multi-channel AV.

Although stereo hi-fi remains strong in Britain, the long term mass market trend is clearly towards combined audio-with-video. Marantz used the seminar to announce it was re-positioning itself as a "total solution AV brand", adding hi-tech video displays to its range. It has also developed new AV receivers, based on similar ingredients to their stereo models, and hopes these will bring greater credibility to multi-channel amplification.

One of the great hopes for retaining core hi-fi values in the future lies in the new 'high band' formats, DVD Audio and/or SACD, and as a Philips subsidiary, Marantz is helping get SACD (Super Audio CD) off the ground. Hampered somewhat by the limited software currently available, this is an ideal source for enjoying Tannoy's latest high end refinement, the SuperTweeter – Tannoy reckons ST technology has relevance to existing and historic sources too.

According to Tannoy, it's time to start looking at tweeters able to operate well up into the ultrasonic region. The company first introduced its SuperTweeter a couple of years ago as one of the ingredients in its top-of-the-line Kingdom model, a four-way design with 18-inch bass driver, 12-inch dual concentric mid and treble, plus a SuperTweeter coming in above a nominal 16kHz. The speaker has been so successful throughout the Far East, there are now smaller 15-inch and 12-inch Kingdoms.

Since sometime last year the SuperTweeter has also been produced as a standalone add-on "bandwidth extender" for the retro-style Prestige models, which are very popular throughout the Far East, and now a "Universal" model has just been released, with extra crossover flexibility.

But is there any point in spending a chunk of money on something which reproduces sound frequencies audible only to the family pets? A White Paper, entitled "The Need for Extended High Frequency Bandwidth – Or Why You Need a SuperTweeter", discusses various ultrasonic issues, pointing out that plenty of musical instruments have ultrasonic harmonics, and referring to experimental evidence that the human beings can respond to ultrasonics.

That's for the future, but a core contention of the White Paper is that a SuperTweeter is beneficial even with conventional CD sources, because it reduces phase errors below 20kHz, and therefore improves transient accuracy. And Tannoy at least had the bottle to put on a demonstration. Although the effect was quite subtle, it was sufficiently convincing for most present to provide a serious talking point thereafter. The SuperTweeter certainly seemed to open out the sound stage, putting more space and air around instruments.

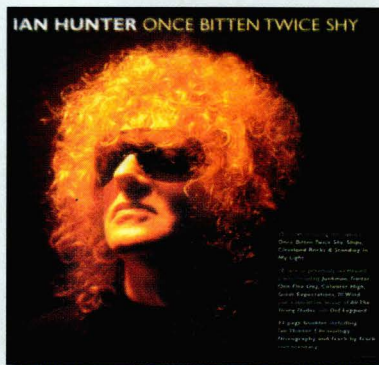
But it's harder to say whether this was purely a function of increased bandwidth and improved HF time alignment. The SuperTweeter, for example, clearly had much wider dispersion at high frequencies than the main (Turnberry) speaker used for this demo. While I feel it's right to approach the SuperTweeter concept with due scepticism, it might well be beneficial. Jimmy Hughes has been using his own variation on the SuperTweeter theme for some years, employing a much less costly Motorola piezo device (which he wrote about in *HFC* 196) and he's quite convinced of its long term benefits.

Tannoy's SuperTweeters are mounted in a carved block of American Walnut, not unlike an over-sized ice hockey puck, and currently cost £1,100/pair. They come with a special adjustable tripod support, silver connecting wires, and a built in crossover with a choice of three turnover frequencies, plus five level settings. The idea is to sit them on top of an existing speaker, and carefully position them to achieve time alignment with the midrange voice coil. The SuperTweeter itself uses a 1-inch titanium dome with a vapour deposited gold finish, and neodymium magnets. It has a 38kHz resonance compensated in the network. The upper limit is specified at 54kHz -6dB and -18dB at 100kHz.



PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD

Phil Strongman digs out rare and classic tracks appearing on CD or virgin vinyl for the first time. Turn on, tune in, bliss out....



IAN HUNTER *Once Bitten Twice Shy*
Those who think Hunter's post-Mott The Hoople career consisted of the title track will be surprised by the sheer breath of this offering. The ballads CD – which has the poignant *Ships* as well as epics like *Junkman* – shows our Ian at his diverse best. Contains a dozen previously unreleased efforts. Columbia double CD
Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

LITTLE ROY *More From A Little*
A fine rumbling slice of modern reggae complete with sweet harmonies from Marley-soundalike Roy and superb production from Ronnie Lion, On-U Sound's Adrian Sherwood and ex-Acid Jazz sound wizard Mike Pelanconi. This is much more than a little – go on, take your woofers for a walk. Lion CD
Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

J.J. BARNES
Baby Please Come Back Home
J.J. Barnes was the soul brother that Motown snapped up purely to put on the back-burner – they didn't want him crowding Marvin Gaye's singer-songwriter market, apparently. Which is a great shame, since Barnes powerful, pleading performances deserved a far bigger audience, as

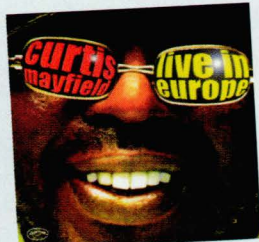
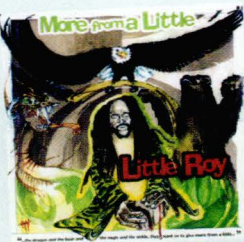
this dynamic 17-strong collection ably demonstrates. Connoisseur Collection CD
Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

CYPRESS HILL
Los Grandes Exitos En Espanol
Practice your Spanish and enjoy some heavy, heavy Latin hip hop from our Rizla-rolling friends. Urban disintegration never sounded so enticing. Ruffhouse CD
Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

CURTIS MAYFIELD *Live In Europe*
The late great Curtis Mayfield last toured Europe in 1987 and someone taped it all in order to bring us this golden hour of musical excitement. There are takes of *Freddie's Dead* and *Move On Up* but even the *Ice 9* instrumental intro is seriously good. Sequel/Curtom CD
Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

VARIOUS *Brazilian Jazz*
Another well-priced collection from ABM, showcasing the full post-war run of jazz from the land of the shrinking rain-forest. Eddie Daniel's soulful *Blue Bossa* and Buddy Greco's lively *So Danco Samba* are just two out of ten solid pieces. ABM CD
Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★

ELVIS PRESLEY
Best of Artist of The Century
Without the young hipster Presley – and the manic Ike Turner – this century wouldn't have sounded the same and this digitally remastered set has the songs everyone remembers. *Heartbreak Hotel*, *Jailhouse Rock*, *In The Ghetto*, etc... RCA/BMG CD
Music ★★★★★ Sound ★★★★★



Delights from Jamo



Jamo has added new multi-channel components to its audiophile D8 range of speakers, formally known as Concert.

Incorporating two six and half inch woofers tuned to a dome tweeter and a midrange unit, the centre speaker features efficient neodymium magnets and is finished in a cherry veneer with detachable, black fabric grill.

Compatible with the large setting on Dolby Digital and DTS processors, amplifiers and receivers, the surround speaker uses two five and quarter inch fibreglass diaphragm woofer and midrange units plus two one inch dome tweeters mounted in a non-resonant 16mm MDF cabinet. Aesthetics match the centre speaker.

Completing the D8 system is the closed-box subwoofer. Possessing a 400 Watt (RMS) class D amplifier, the bass-box uses a 12inch side firing woofer with a 12 inch slave unit.

Matching the surround and



centre, the Sub is produced in black with matching fabric grill, cherry veneer panels and a glass top. Jamo ☎ (01788) 556777

Cheers to Thomson!



Equipped with both a standard CD player and a CD-R/CD-RW deck, Thomson's £329

DAR2060 features two-speed digital dubbing so you can copy at double the normal rate.

The dubbing machine features a 32-program memory and a text, edit and titling function that allows users to locate titles and their corresponding CD.

The DAR2060 offers a selection of sound effects including a Live mode that simulates an applause, cheer or encore; a DJ mode to avoid blanks between two tracks and a fade option to reduce the sound between two musical pieces.

Furthermore, two micro (phone) sockets allow the incorporation of voice overdubs to give compilations the personal touch. One of the sockets also lets users adjust the micro's sound level via a special button.

The DAR2060 dubbing machine features three input and two output connectors located on the front and back panels respectively, comes supplied with a remote control and is available from June.

Thomson MultiMedia ☎ (01732) 520920



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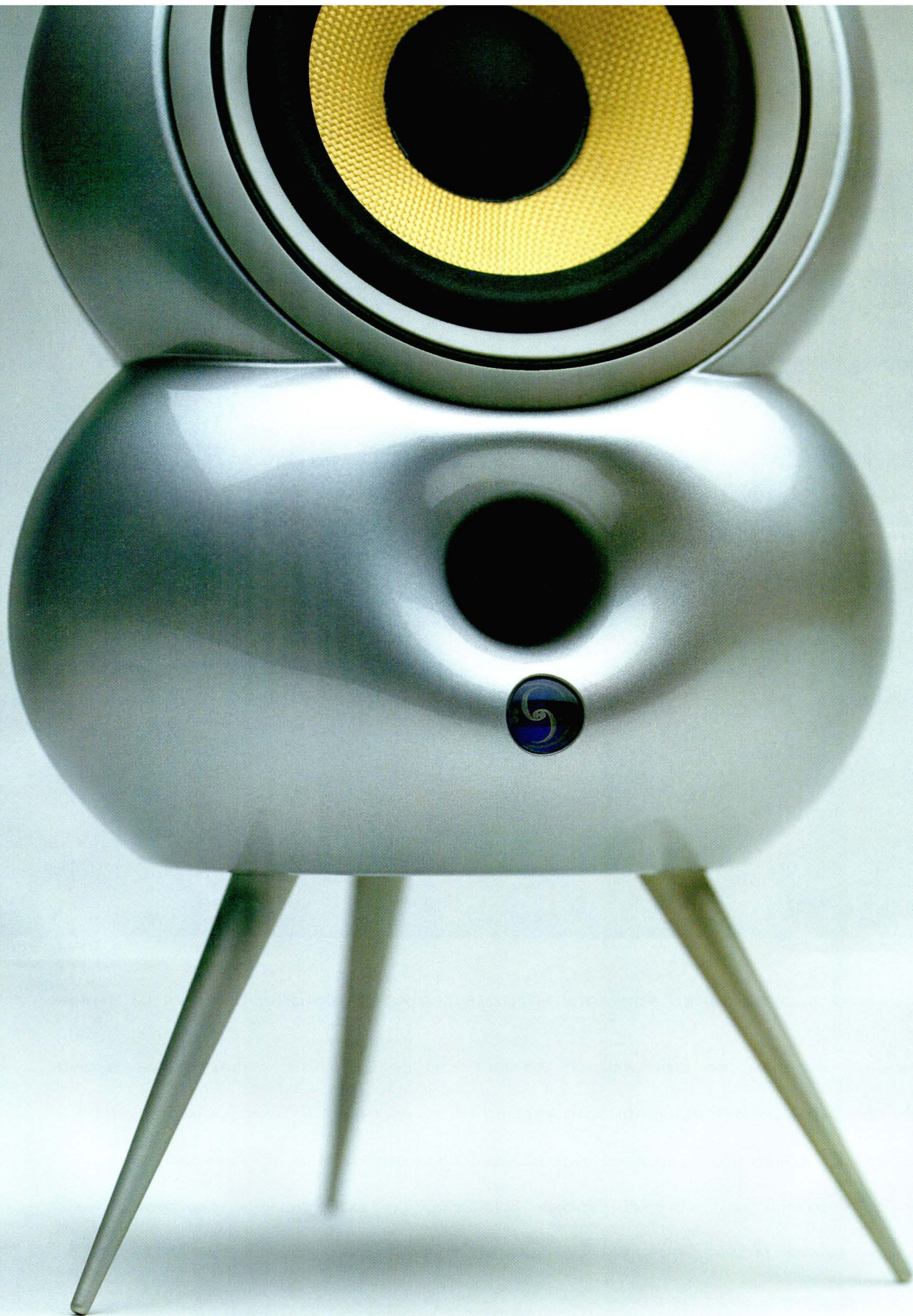
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DAVID VIVIAN

This new Cura speaker might look like the geek who is too scared to talk to girls, but yes sir, it can boogie.

Hi-fi is full of conventions manufacturers love to trash. Take loudspeakers. If you want to stick your neck out and generalise dangerously, you might just get away with the observation that cheap speakers are small and expensive ones are large. Now count those that rubbish the theory – there are far too many to mention.

Try to establish a role model for upper mid-range speakers, however, and you're in even deeper water. As hi-fi shoppers with a bit of cash to burn can attest, the £500-£2000 price bracket is a veritable free-for-all. Liberated from the most serious constraints of building down to a budget price, speaker designers have a chance to express themselves and, when they do, virtually anything goes: small cabinets with expensive real wood finishes and high quality drive units; medium-sized boxes of more modest aesthetic values but with more drive units; full-blown floor-standing designs which appear to offer walloping good value for money; even shiny aluminium spheres on stalks (see last month's column on the O'hEocha D2).

Brit speaker newcomer Cura, though, is into what I can only describe as the "charmingly unfunky verging on snooty" school of design. With publicity shots featuring stands that look like Greek columns (Cura is Latin for care and precision) the image is more Brian Sewell than Melvyn Bragg, more Delia Smith than Jamie Oliver, more Russell Harty than Jerry Springer.

Of course, there's nothing too unusual about the application of real wood veneers to speaker cabinets, even at the 'affordable' end of the market. But the obvious tender

loving care and skill with which Cura plies its craft, on the other hand, goes well beyond the merely proficient.

The compactly dimensioned but superbly engineered £700 CA-10 I've been listening



"Cura is into what I can only describe as the 'charmingly unfunky verging on snooty' school of design. More Brian Sewell than Melvyn Bragg, more Delia Smith than Jamie Oliver."

to over the past few weeks is the larger of the two stand mounters in the current four strong range and a modest work of art finished in bird's-eye maple. As indeed it is in Cura's other 'deluxe' finish, Sapele Pommele. But maple is an almost perfect shade match for the birch-coloured IKEA tables that support most of my system, so it gets my vote.

Cura doesn't intend to build a reputation solely on looking good at a distance, though. That attention to detail is important and it becomes obvious when you nose up close.

Front edges carefully rounded to reduce front baffle edge reflection is one example you can see. The angled inner floor, designed to break up standing waves within the cabinet, is one you can't.

The bass-mid driver is, perhaps, a bit larger than you'd expect to find in a 10-litre box with a 6.5-inch doped paper cone in a die-cast magnesium chassis. The offset 25mm coated fabric dome tweeter sits below. Sensitivity is nothing special at 87dB but the claimed in room bass response down to 50Hz is the payback, no doubt aided by the generously-sized rearward-firing reflex port.

The CA-10s may not look funky, but they sound great. Their eagerness to present music in a positive, involving way is immediately engaging and likeable. The approach works with classical music, too. I slapped on some Dvorak and it was handled with great finesse and an almost tangible sense of 'performance'. String tone had a particularly natural and unforced quality – smooth and nicely integrated, full-bodied without sounding thickened.

More generally, the Curas are clear and detailed without being obvious or attention-seeking. A very fine showing from the tweeter helped here, blending with rare adroitness the usually conflicting interests of crisply etched definition and tonal smoothness.

It makes the CA-10s sound very classy and controlled, even with brightly recorded material – like David Sanborn's jazzy and emotionally charged sax on the CD *Songs From The Night Before*.

The Curas are good at sounding assured and unruffled, good at balancing difficult elements, making stuff sing and tug at the emotions while sounding explicit and highly detailed at the same time. Background vocals are beautifully separated yet nicely rounded; there was no sign of artificial harshness or edge to Sanborn's alto.

The Curas pack plenty of bass weight or extension, too. Low notes are taut, articulate and rhythmically coherent – essential if you're a jazz nut like me. Stick on a Prince track and the CA-10s track the pulse convincingly and, yes, ever so funkily. This is a very straight-laced looking speaker. That loves to boogie. Another convention trashed.



Cura's range of 'straight-laced' speakers, left to right: CA-10, CA-21 and CA-30.

HEYBROOK HB2 £240

Nick Gear enjoys the angelic tones of Heybrook's latest book-shelf speaker.

Joining the highly acclaimed Heylios book-shelf comes the first of four new additions from loudspeaker stalwart Heybrook, the HB2. This 20-litre model is the first of a number of introductions as the company bolsters its portfolio of competitively priced floor-standing and stand-mount loudspeakers. Furthermore, to accommodate the growing demand for AV speaker systems, the HB2 will soon be assisted by a matching centre speaker and an active subwoofer.

Positioned in the sub £250 category, the HB2 represents serious value-for-money. Incorporating a 25mm soft dome tweeter partnered by a 165mm Kevlar bass unit, the HB2 has a rated sensitivity of 90dB at 6 Ohms.

The drivers are housed in an attractively crafted (simulated) black ash and beech cabinet that's made up of 15mm vinyl covered high-density particle board with a 30mm MDF baffle and a 9mm sub baffle. The bass is reflex loaded with two front firing ports. Unusually, Heybrook has chosen to use first order crossovers in the HB series, the theory being that having less components between amp and drive unit allows the former to better control the speaker.

SOUND QUALITY

It would seem that the first order crossover is certainly doing the HB2 no harm, as the end result is a loudspeaker that possesses an enjoyably precise and rich mid- and high-frequency response. Disappointingly, the bass suffers from a lack of dynamic punch and clarity, particularly with contemporary dance and pop genres. At times it became almost distorted, muffled and lost among the crystal clear higher tones.

However, the HB2 excels in its angelic and sassy treatment of classical, jazz and rock arrangements. Embellished with a rich tonal palette and a midrange that is blessed with a high level of aplomb, the HB2 is able to create a balanced and natural mix. Listening to the screaming guitar of Mr Hendrix and the grandeur of Elgar's Nimrod, the Heybrook breezed through the examination with flying colours.

Considering that it is some £50 cheaper than B&W's similar size and driver equipped 601 Series 2, the HB2 is a great all-round performer for the money. Okay, the bass is perhaps not as well suited to today's bass-heavy music, but for traditional material you will find it hard to beat.



JPW Speakers Ltd ☎ (01752) 333800



Sound and vision integration care of Hitachi.

HITACHI DW1E £580

Nick Gear kills two birds with one stone and a combined DVD/CD-RW player.

Hitachi's DV-W1E is an inspired amalgamation of the two of the most prolific formats currently on the market. Combining a DVD player, CD player and CD-RW deck, the DV-W1E is the first of a new breed of hybrid machines due out this year. If you are entertaining the idea of purchasing both a DVD player and CD recorder, then this machine will undoubtedly be of interest as it handles all the requirements of both camps with consummate ease.

Finished in an eye-catching, sleek silver livery, the design principles are based on practicality and functionality that evoke the qualities of a Mercedes. Hitachi has taken great care to ensure picture quality is sharp and finely detailed and it has succeeded on both counts. The player features some interesting facilities such as zoom, Hitachi's proprietary disc navigation system and a colour adjustment option for older movies.

Using a mixture of on-screen display, front-mounted buttons and a beautifully conceived remote control to operate all the fundamental functions, recording is joyfully simple and remarkably user friendly compared to separate CD-R(W) decks. All the on-screen commands are accompanied by a step-by-step menu and basic icons that allow you to programme specific tracks, or an entire album with a single touch of a button.

The only drawback to the plethora of features is a reduction in the software response time. At times, the CD-RW deck is frustratingly laboured and sluggish even when reacting to simple requests such as search and skip.

SOUND QUALITY

As you would expect, the player generates a perfectly clean and defined performance in all surround modes. Even when used as a standard CD player or recorder, the DV-W1E competes with well regarded examples of dedicated players from both camps. Whoever is responsible for creating this gem should be applauded for their ingenuity! You cannot fault the DV-W1E for sheer versatility and innovation. This machine should appeal to both serious DVD enthusiasts and compilers of music alike.



Hitachi ☎ (020) 8848 8787

Heybrook goes Kevlar with HB2.



KENWOOD DPF-3030 £170

Paul Miller penny-pinches as he checks out Kenwood's new budget CD player.

Launched to partner its new budget amplifier (see *Heatseekers*, HFC 203), Kenwood's £170 DPF-3030 CD player is also available in both matt black or champagne silver livery. After a decade of "any colour you want, sir, provided it's black", this new influx of silver-grey products makes a refreshing change. And the silver version of the DPF-3030 is particularly attractive, making the most of its soft lines, centrally-positioned mechanism and underslung blue display.

Everyday facilities like direct track access, repeat and random play are separated from advanced functions such as program mode, edit and peak search, ensuring the player is neither daunting or untidy. These are duplicated on the RC-P0305 remote control along with an up/down digital volume control that offers around 7-bits of attenuation (42dB) from the player's peak 2V output. For critical listening, it's always best to use your amplifier's volume control unless, of course, the DPF-3030 is hooked directly into a separate power amplifier.

Otherwise, do check you've set the remote volume to its default '0dB' position. This guarantees the player's low 0.002 per cent distortion and wide 102dB S/N ratio – though this, in itself, is no guarantee that the player will sound halfway decent.

SOUND QUALITY

Thankfully, in practice, the DPF-3030 sounds rather better than halfway decent and readily exceeds the expectations of its highly integrated 8x oversampling filter/DAC technology. In many respects it shares the same smooth, unperturbed and generally very self-effacing sound heard with the KAF-3030R last month, reflecting both powerful rhythm lines and the subtle inflections of different vocal performers with surprising agility.

Kenwood makes no special claims for component quality, copper screws or other paraphernalia. Instead, and within the constraints of the production/manufacturing budget for a £170 player, every resource available to the DPF-3030 has been optimized to yield the sort of richly detailed, transparent and involving sound that typically goes down well in the UK. To this end the DPF-3030 looks likely to be judged a success and, along with the KAF-3030R, is a welcome sign of Kenwood's future commitment to affordable, specialist hi-fi.

★★★★☆

Kenwood ☎ (01923) 816444



Planet Rock – not 'alf mate.

SONY ST-D777ES £550

Jason Kennedy finds a receiver that's a DAB-hand at digital and analogue radio.

The new, feature-rich tuner in Sony's upmarket ES range represents the brand's first foray into the world of Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), the radio network that offers noise-free reception from the most insignificant of antennas. In this case the supplied DAB aerial consists of a two metre or so piece of wire with a basic plug at one end. The socket it connects to is clearly designed for something more elaborate but the wire does the job, so long as you're within the coverage area – which is said to extend to around 70 per cent of the population.

The ST-D777ES keeps its options open by including both FM and AM tuners as well – which means that it will be of use if you have to wait for DAB broadcasting in your area – and it covers the full gamut of stations. The array of DAB stations received a boost when Digital One joined the game late last year, bringing several DAB exclusives including Planet Rock and Oneworld, which seems to be a competitor to Radio 4.

The Sony takes a bit of getting used to at first. It feels a little like a computer to operate, but with a bit of practice and familiarisation with the myriad features you can soon track down your favourite stations on any band. It's DAB operation differs quite markedly from the Arcam I'm familiar with: it's possible to scroll through as yet inactive service ensembles and store up to 99 presets across all bands. One surprise was that it displayed the (correct) station name Oneworld where the Arcam showed PB&C, another was its ability to pick up a station called Primetime that the Arcam didn't 'see'.

SOUND QUALITY

Sonically the Sony is pretty impressive with both DAB and FM, reflecting the quality of broadcast and the diversity of compression used by various stations. With DAB it's not quite as transparent or powerful in the bass as the Arcam; and via FM, my old Audiolab 8000T had slightly more life. But taken on its own the quality is extremely high, with solid imaging and fine timbre from the better (largely Radio 3) broadcasts.

Given its price, build quality and plethora of features this Sony makes a very convincing argument for a tuner upgrade, and if you're within DAB coverage it'll save you the price of a 'real' aerial.

★★★★☆

Sony ☎ (01932) 816000



DPF-3030: full of surprises.



COMPETITION

WIN A £2,800 SURROUND SOUND SET-UP!

Win an ear-popping, jaw-dropping THX Surround sound system worth £2,800.

Answer two simple questions and you could be walking away with a superb Jamo surround sound kit and Onkyo THX amplifier.

These two brands are teaming up for a full frontal assault on the home cinema market worldwide, and this combination is just one of many carefully selected partnerships leading the main strike.

The Jamo System Two is a stylish hi-fi and multi-channel surround loudspeaker package. Ideal for both music and cinematic sources, it includes a full LCR speaker kit consisting of six speakers, including a subwoofer and a pair of surround speakers. This package alone is worth a staggering £2,000.

In addition, the winner will also receive an Onkyo TX-DS777 amplifier to partner the speakers. Worth £800, this Dolby Digital and DTS compatible amp features 96kHz/24-bit decoding onboard plus the

THX Select certification of surround sound quality.

Producing 5x140 Watts of ultra-wide bandwidth power into six ohms, this black-livery beauty is fitted with an abundance of handy features including a comprehensive assortment of multi-channel preamp outputs, an input for DVD-Audio or SACD and four assignable digital inputs.

In addition to a full complement of S-Video inputs for the highest quality picture transfer from DVD and digital satellite, the amp also boasts an optical output for digital dubbing to MiniDisc, main-in jacks and a 40-preset equipped AM/FM tuner.

So if you fancy cinema quality in the comfort of your living room then turn on, tune in and answer these following questions. Just circle the correct answer, then fill in your name, address and daytime telephone number in the appropriate spaces.

HOW TO ENTER

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

THX IS THE BRAIN CHILD OF WHICH FAMOUS FILM DIRECTOR?

- A Steven Spielberg
- B George Lucas
- C Oliver Stone

IN TOTAL, HOW MANY SPEAKERS ARE INCLUDED IN THE JAMO SYSTEM TWO KIT?

- A Five
- B Six
- C Seven

Post this entry form to:

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC 0007A)
Kirsty Husband, Database Direct, PO Box 9, Dunoon, Argyll
PA23 8QQ

All entries must arrive by First Post, Thursday, 27 July 2000.

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

Name _____

Address (inc. postcode) _____

Day-time Telephone Number _____

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

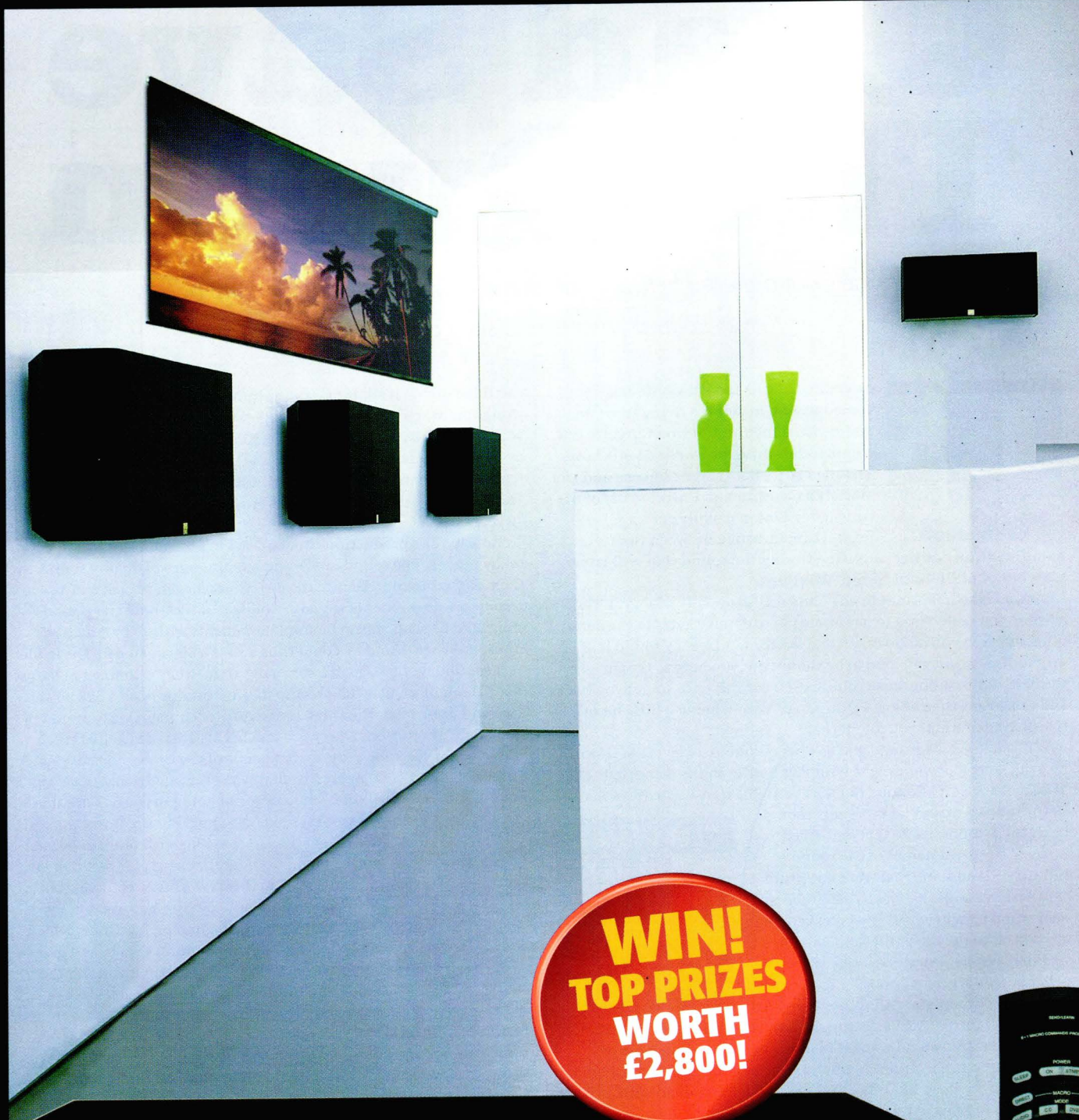
Please tick one only of the following:

- Are you a current subscriber? OR
- Are you a regular reader? OR
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COMPETITION RULES

- 1) The closing date for the Jamo/Onkyo competition is First Post, Thursday, 27 July 2000.
- 2) Winners of the Jamo/Onkyo Competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, and drawn at random after the Closing Date given in 1) above.
- 3) All winners will be notified by post.
- 4) The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- 5) The Jamo/Onkyo Competition is not open to employees of Future Publishing Ltd, Jamo, Onkyo, their suppliers, agents or associates.
- 6) We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- 7) No cash alternatives will be offered.
- 8) We reserve the right to substitute alternative prizes with equal value to these shown, in the unlikely event of stock being temporarily unavailable.
- 9) By entering the competition, you agree to be bound by the rules.
- 10) No purchase necessary, send the details requested on the left on a postcard to the address given. Please note: only one entry per household.

CHFC 0007A



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Quad Save The Queen

Everyone's got a dream hi-fi, but only some of us are lucky enough to own it.

Phil Strongman meets one such charmed man.

The creator of this month's system is someone who makes his living from the audio-visual medium: Simon Gargette is a commercials director whose clients have included Ford, Boots, Age Concern and Her Majesty's Government. Unlike many of his colleagues, Simon usually ends a production hunched between the monitors in an editing suite, fine-tuning the sound that will later blast out of millions of Nicam AV set-ups.

"Sound is so important in ads," he says, "especially when you're editing. You really need to pay attention to detail, God is in the detail. I often intervene on audio mixes and ask for remixes. TV sound is different in that it can tend to be sludgy, but you have to try and get the best audio compromise you can. You consult with sound engineers and musicians then adjust EQ and spicals and being a little bit of a hi-fi buff kind of trains you for all that."

With such a background you'd expect Gargette to own a hi-fi worth hearing, and you wouldn't be wrong. It nestles in the converted attic of Gargette's North London house (a veritable treasure trove of Art Deco) and was arrived at by a long, though fairly untortuous, route that embraced many of the great names of the sound industry – and some that were not so great.

"My first music device was a dreadful Boots aberration complete with two speakers that clipped on to the top of the amp. But once I had that system, I started to take notice of other people's 'gramophones' – so then I got a Rotel amp complete with those funny little Rotel speakers. They sounded a thousand times better than the Boots hi-fi I'd owned before, but it still wasn't what I wanted in terms of sheer sound mass or definition. So in the mid-70s, when I was about fifteen, I paid £50 – a small fortune – for a B&O Beo 3003 deck which I coupled with an Akai 2010 amp. The Akai gave it a bit more oomph, I think. I'd started off playing singles by Bowie and T. Rex, but I quickly got into more esoteric things like Chick Corea, Milt Jackson, Frank Zappa, Billy Cobham, Roland Kirk, Sonny Rollins and Stevie Wonder. I think that a lot of people who got into hi-fi in those days were drawn into it via the technical and creative explosion in the music industry of the time. Different effects were coming into sound studios, tracks were getting longer, the three minute song barrier was getting broken and the number of recording tracks increased to 8 then 16 then 24. As a big music fan, you weren't really into being too technical but you did want to reproduce the melodies as perfectly as possible as, I suppose, some kind of homage to those master musicians."

A flirtation with an Akai turntable with plinth strobe – "it was the total gimmickry that attracted me, I can confess it all now" – was encouraged by the dawn of the punk era. "I was listening to the Pistols, Iggy Pop and The Damned. The latter were, thinking about it now, like the last gasp of English music-hall. Punk was great fun but it was usually played on some nicked Decca portable, often the same one which you saw at squat after squat with a 10p piece blue-tacked to the

cartridge to stop it slipping. It was strange hearing those New Wave things on my current system. You pick up lots of stuff you missed: you can actually hear, for instance, John Lydon moaning 'stop, stop' as his voice starts to go during *Doncha Gimme No Lip Child*. You also realize how many guitars there are surging around in the final mix. The detail was all on the vinyl but I just didn't get to hear it for some 10 years."

But a job at a production company led to Bose monitors – "they really squeeze the sound out" – and a rediscovery of quality sound. By then, as the 70s blurred into the 80s, Simon began to pick up work as a serious photographer of car ads – "budget of five thousand pounds and you'd be shooting on Sinar plate cameras with 10 by 8 inch transparencies" – and he could thus afford a bigger step up the ladder.

"I couldn't get the Quad I was really after – they'd stopped making it – but I bought a Quad 405 preamp in combination with a 303 power amp and then, later, the FM44 tuner. And, of course, I was amazed by their sonic resolution. They were also in this great drab olive green which was perfect for the greycoat bands of the time – all those Fall, Throbbing Gristle, DOA, Joy Division type groups. Anyway, once you've bought into the Quad, that's it, you're not going to go back to some

cheapo mini-system. The Quad Pre isn't even supposed

to be seen, it's just like a big grill but it gives such purity. I tend to think that a lot of hi-fi is just last

year's stuff in this year's boxes complete with new knobs or whatever, but you don't get that with Quad. This one has filters which let you slope the sound 12 ways, and give it bias manually – it's useful if you want to

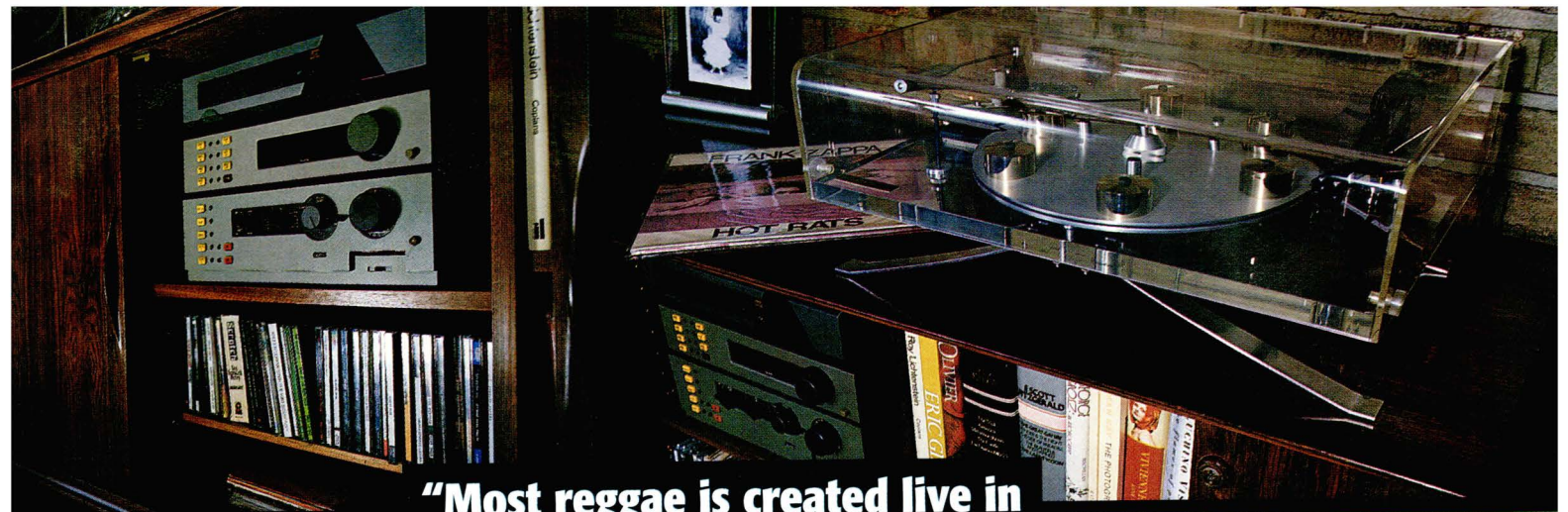
fine-tune things to your room and, let's face it, how

many of us really do have rooms in magic proportions with floorboards resting on six feet of layered sand? Most hi-fi's need a bit of room tuning."

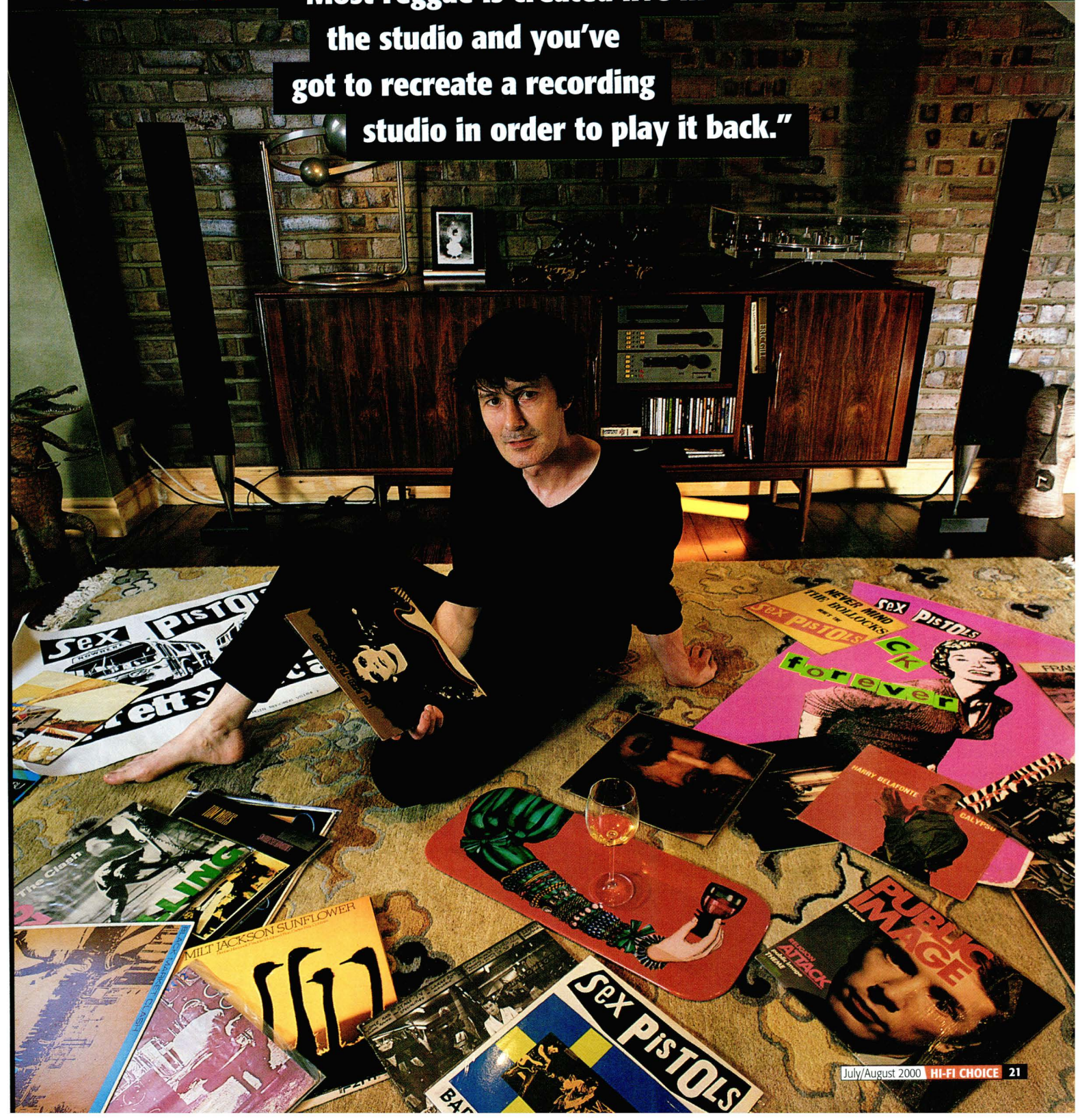
But to play certain recordings, no matter how angular your room is, larger speakers tend to work better than their smaller brethren – for Simon at least. "I began to realize, listening to stuff in demo rooms, that you really do need to move air to convey bass. You need a woofer with some guts to it. So then I got hold of some Altec Monitors, huge grey boxes with Manta Rays in 'em. They looked very utilitarian, again perfect for the post-industrial look, but they were also boxes which did have some muscular clarity to them. I had some Speedframes to support the speakers, nothing fantastic but they did the job. That was because I was told to raise them high because of the bass, but we now know that bass is effectively non-directional – info that we punters weren't privy to a few years ago (unless you were reading *HFC* - Ed) – and so then I played them closer to the floor and they sounded virtually as good. Strong without bullying you."

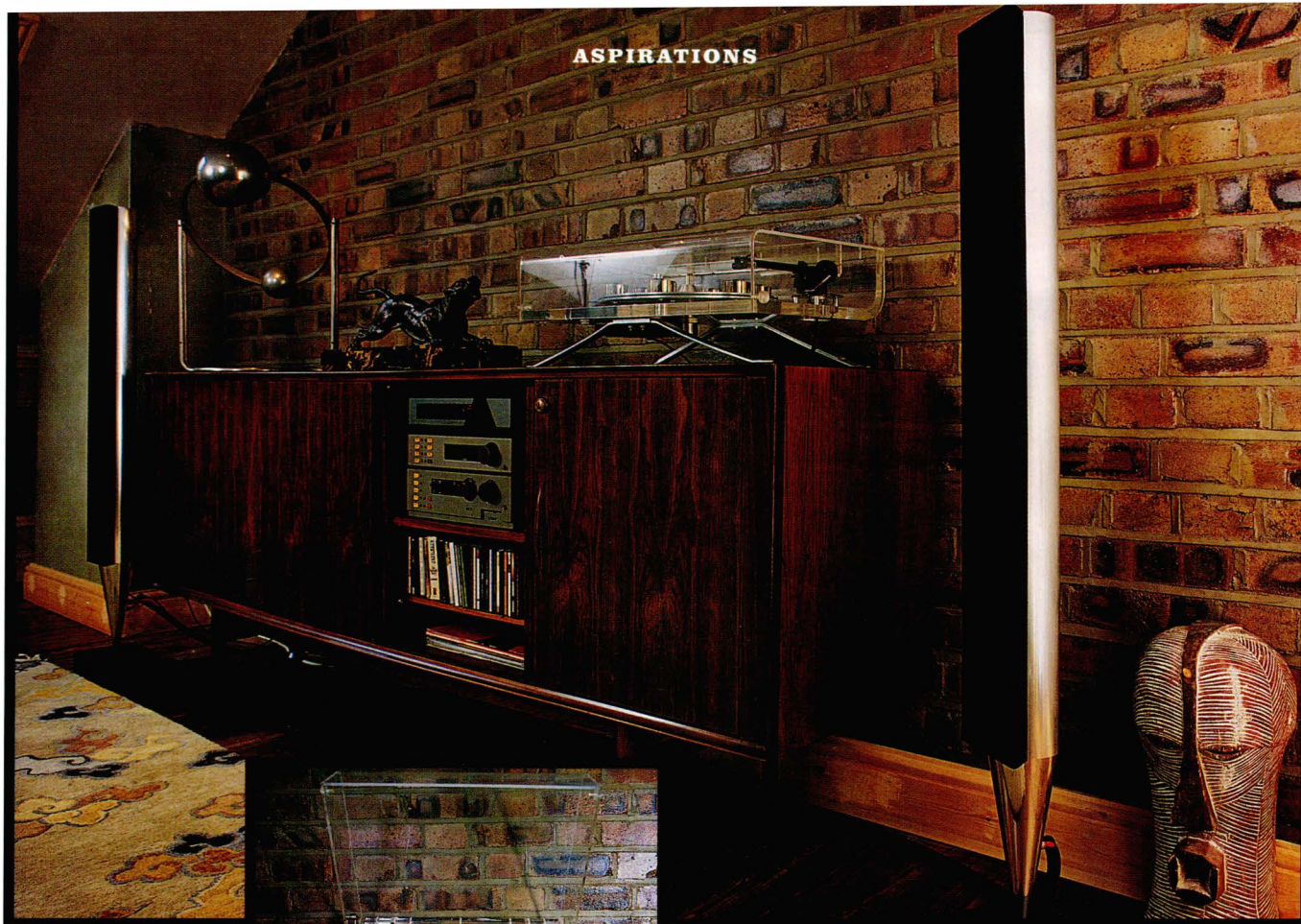
All of which meant that the B&O front-end was rather letting things down. Enter, at a cost of a mere £350, a Michell turntable. And not just any old Michell but the Prisma, a classic see-through slab of a deck that is late-60s chic incarnate, what with its wide transparent base and gold-plated orbs. Fans of Michell (including, it's said, one Stanley Kubrick who featured the beast in his recently re-released *Clockwork Orange* film) will not need convincing, but Simon remains a persistent

"Let's face it, how many of us really do have rooms in magic proportions with floorboards resting on six feet of layered sand?"



"Most reggae is created live in the studio and you've got to recreate a recording studio in order to play it back."





advocate. "The Michell just sounds so clean, completely straight-forward and rumble-free, although some boffin will probably pull me up on that, but

things that aren't audible to the human ear don't worry me. It's basically a work of art that also plays records. It's so fabulous to watch it work, there's all this wonderful movement lit by a warm orange glow. It's also very quaint and British, the way the cartridge – an Ortofon in this case – is symmetrically balanced by a neat little badger-hair cleaning brush that floats in from the other side. It's all engineering, you can feel the lathe lines on the buttons. And it comes with a Michell Handbook where the man himself explains why they use the specific steel pins that they use. Marvellous."

But the delivery end of the line-up begun to lose some of its undoubted allure after Simon clocked the sound being projected by a pair of Neat Acoustics' Mystique speakers. "I did like the Neats I'd heard, but I also wanted something that sounded smoother as well as something that looked, well, neater." He found his ideal in the latest B&O speakers, the 8000s, two grand's worth of super-slim style speaker that also happen to put out a big, big sound. The new combination is also perfect for reggae, a genre that Simon, a big dub fan, discovered long ago. "Reggae's got such an obviously huge sound spectrum from the lowest bass to the highest treble and a Michell going through a good Quad and the 8000s is, funnily enough, perfect for that. Punchy but deep. Most reggae is created live in the studio and you've almost got to recreate a recording studio live room in order to play it all back. You need solid reliable amp power and, at the other end, a fair-sized speaker that can really hold its own at both ends – like the 8000s. They make all the difference to the signal that you want to deliver."

It's a proposition that's hard to deny once you've heard a dub gem like Dr. Alimantado's *Best Dressed Chicken In Town* throbbing out of Gargette's system. Reggae recordings of this era are famed for their formidable yet tuneful bottom end. And the bass sound does saturate

everything within the sloping sides of Gargette's listening room, a saturation which, ironically enough, seems to liberate a mass of subtle rhythm guitars and keyboard overdubs that have lost prominence during mix-down. Captain Beefheart's *Safe As Milk* was also cut live in the studio while The Clash's *From Here To Eternity* is a live

onstage collection – both have been reissued on 180 gramme albums by Simply Vinyl and both sing out of Gargette's system with surprising intensity. Applause and reverb ripple out around you, close you eyes and you're there, essentially, right in the middle of the audience – an effect that can't be matched by many more high end set-ups.

"CDs, nice though they are, can't quite do it in my view, not one hundred per cent. It is a somewhat pre-ordained, clinical medium."

Not that Gargette is a complete vinyl-loving Luddite since, as he'll admit, a CD has entered the ad-man's audio arena – several times over. "I had the first Sony Discman portable CD and I thought it would sound awful through this but it was great with headphones, really fantastic. Then I got a more serious player, which I still have, the Quad 66 which obviously gives a bit more detail than the Discman. Ultimately though, CDs, nice though they are, can't quite do it in my view, not one hundred per cent. It is a somewhat pre-ordained, clinical medium. Non-spontaneous is one way of describing it... which is maybe why you're now getting Portishead and various hip hop acts deliberating degrading mixes and even adding scratches to get that 'vinyl effect'. I don't think analogue's going to go away; like 35mm camera film, it's still the standard digital tries to copy. Sometimes they can work together, I know of studios that try to warm digital things up with valve amps or limit them with a Joe Meek valve compressor."

Which is where Simon actually came in. "That's what originally started me on Quads. I saw a second-hand valve-driven one in a shop window, an amp on a plinth with these big visible valves – it looked really beautiful. That's why I got into Quad. Of course, it had long gone by the time I went back so I ended up auditioning the 405-303 combo instead but I'll track one of those old valve Quads down one of these days and give it a good listen, if only for curiosity's sake." In the meantime, Simon isn't missing out on too much with his current line-up, a combination that's an ode to all things live, extreme and esoteric.



Another world-first: digital and analog preamplifier with Digital Radio option

Digital or Analog? Both!

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

Plenty of connectivity

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No-compromise premium grade audio components are used throughout for maximum transparency.

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



Upgrade to Digital Radio (DAB)

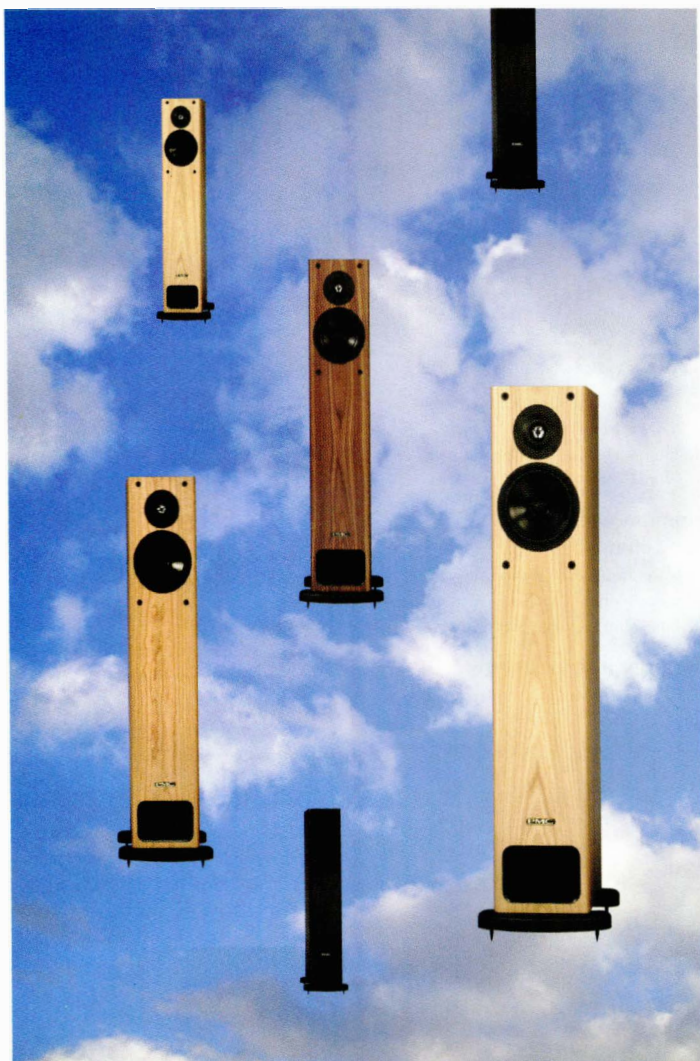
Digital Radio (DAB) is the most significant advance in radio technology since the introduction of FM Stereo. DAB brings the benefit of high-quality, interference-free reception of a wide range of exciting programmes. The DPA32R^{dash} can, at any time, be upgraded to Digital Radio by simply adding our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

the power supply, da-converter and preamplifier sections of the DPA32R^{dash} results in the same Digital Radio performance as our highly acclaimed stand-alone tuner T32R but at a fraction of the cost.

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





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LETTERS

Hi-Fi Choice's very own 'points of view' page, where you, the reader, can express your opinions!

LETTER OF THE MONTH



Denon's well-connected DCD-825.

REVERSE THE POLES

We all strive to get the best sound quality from our equipment. Yet it amazes me how many manufacturers who supply their equipment with detachable figure-8 mains leads fail to mention in the instruction manual that connecting this the wrong way round has an adverse effect on sound quality (a pat on the back for Denon who did mention the correct position in the DCD-825 manual).

If the manufacturers fail to inform purchasers of this, then surely it would be better to supply the equipment with a captive mains lead?

I feel sorry for casual listeners who are listening to their equipment with it connected the wrong way, causing inferior results.

Brian Gibb, Scottish Borders



SEEING STARS

As a subscriber to your valued magazine, I would like to bring the following item to your attention.

I suffer from a mild form of colour blindness. As a result I have difficulty in seeing the distinction between the red and grey stars you assign to your test results for sound, build and value.

I strongly suspect that I am not the only person to struggle with

this difficulty; I hope you may find a solution in the near future.

Herman ten Tije, Netherlands

JAZZ STANDARDS

After reading your March issue, I must amend several of my previous preconceptions. It seems you do use a lot of good jazz and classical music, in addition to outstanding performers like Kissin, to evaluate equipment. I

felt this was important in view of the fact that pop changes rapidly in an industry where names appear and disappear, whereas the classics and mainstream jazz are standards known by millions world-wide, and therefore a more reliable reference. I was also pleased to read the articles about CD players, and interconnect cables, both of which helped me understand technical terms, aspects of construction and factors to consider before purchase.

Thank you all for your sterling efforts in producing such a fine magazine.

Richard Palmer, Switzerland

SURPRISE RESULTS

I am writing to express my surprise at the results of the amplifier *Super Test* (HFC 201) with regards to the MVL amplifier.

I had been seeking a suitable amplifier for months, an amplifier which would not only cater for my wide taste in music but would also drive my Dali 909s to their ear bending limit. I was about to give up when I stumbled across MVL after a friend's recommendation and have been blown away ever since. Vocals have never sounded so rich and rounded, and the sound staging promotes the feeling of an actual live performance in your own living room.

If I had not heard the MVL for myself, your review might have discouraged me and I feel I would have missed an opportunity to purchase an amplifier that has breathed fresh life into my music collection.

Thank you for a most enjoyable and informative publication, sorry to disagree with you on the MVL amplifier.

Mike Keenan, Bristol

BASE MATTERS

A couple of weeks ago, I read the review of the new Sound Base and a few things puzzle me. The Mana, obviously, collected top marks for sound: "improved everything we tried on it" they said, "once tried there's no living without them." Sounds like the Mana I know and love but... only four stars for build?

Which bit is not well built? Was it perhaps marked down on style not build? If this is the case then it seems rather unfair as Mana build things to do the job, not to look pretty. The thing that really ripped my knitting, though, was the review of the Townshend Seismic Sinks.

Why do the Seismic Sinks, which can't be used with heavy cable, nor work so well on concrete floors and cost more than twice the price of the Sound Base, get the same four stars for value? Considering how obviously biased this test seems to have been, I find it hard to take your word for it that they worked at all!

Colin Sim, via e-mail

The Editor replies... I have been using the Townshend bases myself and am mighty impressed with them. Yes, I have a wooden floor and my speakers are close to the system, so there's a lot of energy to control, but I feel that in a top notch system these devices are well worth their four stars.

As for the Mana's 4/5 for build, this also reflects the finish and appearance of the stands, not just their structural integrity, which no one would doubt.

WRITE TO US

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



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Sony Super Audio CD. You want to hear every single detail?



SUPERAUDIO CD

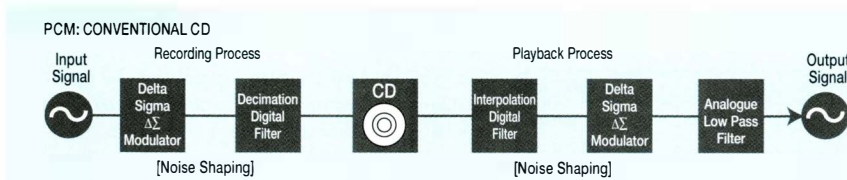
OK, here goes.

The beginning.

As good a place to start as any. In the beginning, there was CD.

Co-developed by Sony in the early 1980's, it revolutionised the way we listen to music.

CD used, and still uses, a multi-bit Pulse Code Modulation or PCM recording format that was the most advanced technology available at the time.



Notice the tense.

It *was* the most technologically advanced format available.

Skip forwards almost 20 years however and it's a different matter.

For just as music has progressed since the early 1980's, so has the technology for reproducing it.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

This continuous progress in digital technology has allowed the original team responsible for developing the CD to create a new format.

Super Audio CD.

A format that is fully compatible with conventional CDs.

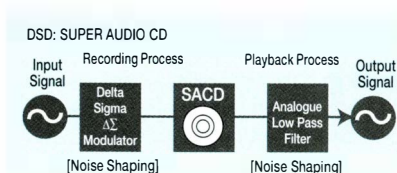
But one that acknowledges the fact that too much sound quality is lost during the recording of a CD.

One that acknowledges that we've reached the end of CDs quality development cycle, so any innovations in PCM technology may no longer lead to dramatic improvements in quality.

One that ditches PCM technology in favour of the very latest in Direct Stream Digital technology.

One that leaves you searching for adequate superlatives.

DSD technology is a one-bit system and is fundamentally different to PCM.



Firstly, it simplifies the recording process, sampling the audio signal at a much higher rate than PCM. 2.8224 MHz as opposed to a mere 44.1 kHz.

This creates a dynamic range of over

120dB across the entire audible frequency range at an unprecedented bandwidth of over 100kHz. It allows the direct recording of a Super Audio CD.

No quantisation or decimation process. And don't worry fellow music lovers, we'll come on to what all this means for you in a moment.

But while we're on the subject of what this new DSD format doesn't do, we should talk about digital filtering. Because it doesn't need to do any of that either.

While CD technology relies on PCM's complex digital filtering process (decimation and interpolation causing distortion and limiting the frequency response to around 20kHz and dynamic range to below 98dB), Super Audio CD data retains all its freshness and purity.

Just high fidelity pure audio.

The closest possible representation of the artist's work.

And that means the atmosphere. The mood. Even the ambience of the room.

And unfortunately for any recording artists who happen to be reading, it also means every wrong note.

If it happens in the studio, your audience is going to hear it.

There really is so much more that we can tell you about Super Audio CD.

So we will.

As touched upon earlier, all Super Audio CD players also make great conventional CD players.

There is no need for any of that infuriating rebuilding of music collections. (Remember how long it took to replace all those old LPs?)

Your only reason for throwing away your existing music library will be shame.

Let's face it, some things will never come back into fashion and that probably includes some of your earlier tastes in CDs.

COMPATIBILITY

This compatibility means a special kind of disc is available.

The 'hybrid'.

It's compatible with CD players *and* Super Audio CD players, as it features both a CD layer and a Super Audio CD high-density layer of information.

But while a Super Audio CD disc is exactly the same size as a current CD disc, its data capacity is in a different

league altogether. Even the basic single layer disc can store 4.7 GBytes rather than the 780 MBytes we've become used to with conventional CDs.

There is a third disc type as well.

The dual-layer disc. This is essentially two Super Audio CDs combined in one, with a maximum capacity of some 8.5 GBytes. Which means that as well as being able to hear more of everything, you can now hear *more* of everything.

All this capacity for information. But we haven't finished yet.

On each Super Audio CD disc, space is reserved for surround-sound recordings, conventional stereo recordings and for extra, non-audio data.

Perfect for text, such as song lyrics, as well as video or still images.

This system of allocating disc space should ensure that Super Audio CD is ready to handle all future applications.

See, when we say you'll never miss a thing, we mean you will never, *ever* miss a thing.

When you've gone to this much trouble producing something this detailed, obviously you want to protect it.

That's why Super Audio CD incorporates copyright protection technology not only on the hardware side, but on the disc itself.

Anti-piracy measures in the form of digital Watermarking are also present. Pit Signal Processing, to give it its full name, protects both you and artists alike against illegal copying.

No Watermark. No playback.

PURE SOUND

So, let's have a brief resumé. (Obviously you took all this in the first time, but this is great news and as you know, great pieces of anything will always bear some repetition.)

Music recorded like never before.

Far richer playback quality.

Every nuance.

Every acoustic detail.

And a much greater capacity for recording. Super Audio CD really is the quantum leap forward in musical reproduction that you would expect from Sony.

You want more? Sorry, but this really isn't the right venue.

For no amount of words can describe just how good Super Audio CD sounds.

You'll have to hear it for yourself.

For a demonstration, visit your local Sony hi-fi specialist showroom.

Just one last detail you may wish to hear. Go with someone proficient in mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

You're going to have your breath taken away.

Speakers

Paul Messenger gets his lugholes around a dozen pairs of speakers, and emerges, ears ringing, with the results...

As ever, and almost irrespective of their specific retail pricetags, speakers come in many shapes and sizes. Which is maybe slightly paradoxical, as they're all supposed to be trying to achieve the same aim – reproducing music accurately. But loudspeaker design itself is full of compromises and paradoxes, which is what makes it such an interesting realm, and also makes it important for the end user to choose carefully.

Comparative reviews such as this are carried out with all due diligence and honesty, and our listening test and measurement findings consequently provide a useful basis for choosing between rival models. But in the real world, a customer's choice will be strongly affected by a number of other factors, such as which brands are stocked by the dealers within easy reach.

Loudspeakers are very visible objects, so in the vast majority of cases the aesthetic impact a pair of speakers will make on the loungescape is a prime – often the prime – consideration determining a purchase. Real wood veneers naturally command a premium over vinyl imitations, especially the better quality and more interestingly patterned examples. Vinyl, though, is becoming ever more convincing: it's very difficult to tell that the Audio Note AN-E/D isn't actually a real wood veneer model.

Physical placement not only affects the visual impact of a speaker, it also has a considerable impact on the sound. Placing a speaker close to a wall will significantly boost its mid-bass output, usually at the expense of some extra midband coloration. Designers ought to take this into account, aligning a speaker for a specific proximity (though often they opt for some sort of

THE CAST LIST	
Audio Note AN-E/D	£1,520.00
BC Acoustique Araxe	£1,140.00
Castle Severn 2 SE	£699.90
Dali Evidence 870	£1,299.95
Dynaudio Audience 50	£577.00
Infinity Kappa 70	£795.00
JMLab Electra 905	£1,199.00
Mirage FRX7	£549.90
Mission 775e	£799.90
PMC FB1	£1,275.00
ProAC Tablette 2000 Sig	£899.00
Ruark Prologue 1R	£949.00

compromise). Our tests try to establish the optimum conditions but rooms vary dramatically, so it always pays to experiment in situ for best results.

Size is the most obvious distinguishing factor between speakers, though the size of the bass/main driver is just as important as the size of the enclosure. While it's broadly true to say that small speakers tend to suit to smallish rooms best, and that large speakers will tend to be louder and have more bass output, it's very difficult to lay down hard and fast universal rules.

Today's larger loudspeakers tend to be floorstanders, but their current popularity owes much more to their all-of-a-piece appearance than any performance advantage. Indeed, an equivalent stand-mount is likely to offer rather better performance, as a dedicated stand will provide superior support, while the box is a better shape acoustically and mechanically. Ultimately, there's a wealth of variety available in loudspeakerland, but it's down to the customer to work out the priorities to best suit their lifestyle.



HINTS & TIPS

The rules for getting the best out of a pair of speakers are much the same whichever models are involved. Stand-mounts require proper stands to ensure stable, predictable support and to place the drive units the same distance from the floor as your ears. (Choice of stand can have a big influence on the sound, if you feel like experimenting.) Floorstanders should have spikes fitted carefully – this is a potential weak spot in some models.

Finding the right place to put the loudspeakers (with respect to the room walls) is just as important acoustically. Our reviews include suggestions, but every room is different, so do take time and trouble experimenting. And don't forget to use decent speaker cable, if you want your system to perform at its best.

How the tests were done

The unsighted listening tests were carried out in a room which is a little larger than average – 5.5x4.2x2.6m (LxWxH) – but not excessively so. The speakers were installed one pair at a time behind an acoustically transparent curtain, and positioned according to the results obtained from a series of sinewave sweeps taken in the room itself across the listening arc. Each presentation took roughly half an hour, covering as broad a range of music as possible, split evenly between vinyl and CD sources.

Care is taken to try and match the relative volume of each speaker, though differences in frequency balance, bass extension and room drive unavoidably get in the way; grilles are removed if possible to take account of the mild influence of the black net curtaining.

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

The main reference system used for the blind and hands-on work consisted of the usual collection of Mana-supported Naim and Linn components: Linn LP12 turntable, Naim ARO tonearm, Linn Arkiv B cartridge, Naim CDS CD player, NAT01 tuner, NAC52 preamp and NAP135 power amps. The Audio Note CDT-Zero/DAC5 CD combo and Mana Stealth MA-1 monoblock power amps were also used. Speaker cables were NACA5 and Nordost SPM, and speaker stands were primarily Kudos S100s.

Our thanks go to the participating panelists: Russell Kauffman (Densen/Morel) Guy Sergeant (AGI), Richard Titcombe (B&W)

THE MUSIC WE USED

Elvis Costello – *Imperial Bedroom* (Demon)
Joan Armatrading – *Joan Armatrading* (A&M)
Grateful Dead – *Reckoning* (BMG)
Mari Boine Persen – *Eallin* (Antilles)
Cambridge Singers/Rutter – *There is Sweet Music* (Collegium)
Villa-Lobos/Stokowski/Stadium Symphony Orchestra New York – *Uirapuru* (Everest/DCC)
BBC Radios 3 and 4 were also used during the hands-on work.

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NETWORK: see *Crossover*.

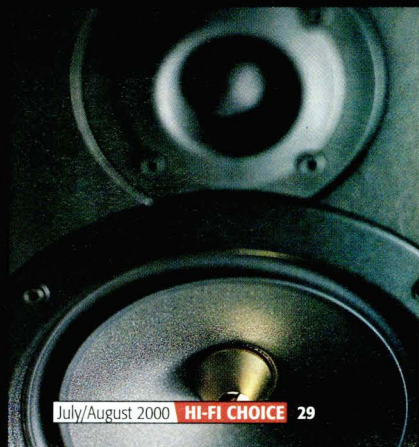
PRESENCE: Critical section of the band between midrange and treble.

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

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

TWEETER: Treble driver.

WOOFER: Bass driver.



CASTLE Severn 2 SE

Castle's Severn 2 originally carried a £580 price tag when we reviewed it some two and a half years ago. Now it's back, this time in SE form, featuring changes to the drive units, crossover and port – and a £700 price tag. Even though it didn't receive a flag in HFC 174, the original Severn 2 was apparently Castle's most successful model ever, a fact which I suspect owes much to its exceptionally lounge-friendly size, shape and appearance.

Essentially a simple port-loaded two-way, the Severn 2 SE looked notably compact amongst the floorstanders assembled here, partly because it was the shortest (standing just 84cm tall) but also because of the nicely radiused edges which soften the lines, the neat matching plinth, and the classy real wood veneer. (There are seven to choose from at the standard price, with rosewood and yew costing £840.) Flush-mounted drivers, and the mounting of the tweeter below the main driver, contribute to the good looks; the only flies in the aesthetic ointment are the black sockets for mounting the grille, the asymmetry of which looks odd if the grille is not used.

The Severn 2 was one of the first speakers to use a carbon fibre composite (CFC) main driver cone. In this SE development, the

150mm cast chassis driver now incorporates a phase plug protruding from the middle of the 115mm cone. A new 19mm soft plastic dome tweeter is also used, and the twin terminal crossover network uses improved wire and capacitors.

Like its predecessor, the Severn 2 SE loads the main driver with a damped reflex arrangement using 'hidden port', which fires down through the base of the box and out through a precisely dimensioned slot between the cabinet base and the separate plinth. The latter wasn't the easiest to fit, because the double spacers are tricky to line up. It accommodates a set of 6mm spikes and usefully extends the fore-and-aft stability footprint of this very compact design, though regrettably the sockets were poorly secured.

The in-room measurements revealed the great differences between this Severn 2 SE and its predecessor, an observation confirmed by big changes in the impedance characteristic. The bass end alignment is now drier and much smoother, indicating that some wall reinforcement is likely to be beneficial.



SOUND QUALITY

The listening test findings were a little disappointing – although when placed alongside the others in this group, and taking price into account, the 2 SE didn't fare too badly. The sound is crisp, clean and impressively literate dynamically, with good coherence and lively dynamic expression, right down through the bass region.

At the same time, the voicing is a little coarse and crude. The complex bass lines of Basement Jaxx were handled with considerable competence, but the cast of *The Archers* seemed to suffer from a collective head cold!

CONCLUSION

Substantially different from its predecessor, the Severn 2 SE is a more engaging and involving proposition – even if it is rather less neutral through the voice band. This speaker remains one of the best looking compact floorstanders around at the price, so a cautious Recommendation.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£699.90

Sounding quite different from its predecessor, this pretty little floorstander is lively and communicative, if a little coloured in the voice band.

■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Castle Acoustics Ltd, Shortbank Road, Skipton, N. Yorks BD23 2TT.
☎ (01756) 795333

“The voicing is a little coarse and crude. The cast of *The Archers* seemed to suffer from a collective head cold.”

There's more treble here too, which is good, but the midband is much less even than before, and there's an obvious suckout in the lower treble, 3-5kHz.

THE LAB REPORT

With the Severn 2SEs mounted on the floor, the likely listening axis will be on a line with the top of the cabinet where the perturbed output from 1-2kHz, depressed presence band and peaky treble will be most obvious. Only by raising the speaker 20cm or so from the floor and listening on an axis midway between the bass/mid and treble drivers will its genuinely flat and even response be appreciated. The sensitivity also picks-up from 88.2dB to the rated 89.0dB at this idealised position, provided you do not stray too far from the horizontal axis.

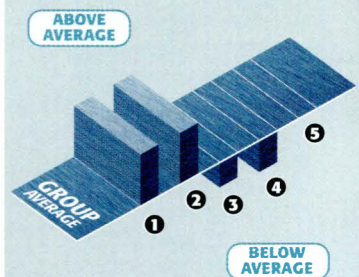
magnet assembly and phase plug in place of dust dome. This reduces midband distortion to 0.5-0.6 per cent (from 1.5 per cent) but the driver and the downward-firing, resistively-loaded port still yield a relatively high bass distortion at typically 1.7 per cent (re. 96dBA). The port is tuned to 63Hz (squeezed to 45Hz with the plinth in place) though there's an additional cabinet resonance emerging at 210Hz. There's a big cone/surround misterrmination visible on both impedance and phase plots at 745Hz. The latter breaches +60 degrees at 3.2kHz though the former is not especially tough with its average 12.6 Ohm loading. **PMi**



HOW IT COMPARES

This latest Severn benefits from lower midband distortion and a little extra sensitivity, but bass distortion is still high.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	35%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	35%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-15%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-20%
5 BASS EXTENSION	0%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	89dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohm	12.6 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	45Hz	40Hz

DYNAUDIO Audience 50

Dynaudio is a long-established Danish company better known for unusual main drive units than complete speaker systems, though the latter seem to be getting plenty of attention these days too. The Audience series is Dynaudio's 'budget' range of complete speakers, though the £577 asking price for this Audience 50 is hardly what the marketplace as a whole regards as a 'budget' price for a vinyl-finished compact two-way stand-mount like this.

That's because Dynaudio has no intention of mixing it at the box-stuffing end of the market. Its drive units are expensive, high quality devices, and it applies the same standards to the enclosures, putting the money into the basic build rather than the surface finish.

This Audience 50 was originally reviewed by *Choice* more than two years ago, earning itself a Best Buy back in *HFC* 174, while its smaller Audience 40 sibling repeated the BB trick in *HFC* 190. Since our original review, however, the Audience 50 has undergone a number of changes, mostly of a minor and largely cosmetic nature. More significantly, however, the front baffle has been re-jigged to move the tweeter much closer to the main driver, in order to improve the acoustic integration through the crossover transition.

From a superficial inspection this is a simple, understated, vinyl-finished two-way stand-mount, so the £577 price tag is bound to come as a bit of a surprise. However, the box feels reassuringly solid, and its chunky shape is



sensibly arranged to provide excellent stiffness while also usefully 'spreading' both internal standing waves and the box panel modes.

The main driver is a notably tasty device, using an over-size (75mm, or roughly 3 inches) aluminium voice coil to drive a combination cone/dome plastic diaphragm some 115mm in diameter. The driven area inside the coil is therefore nearly as big as that outside, while the magnets are actually mounted on the inside of the coil here. A solid cast frame ensures fine overall mechanical integrity. Dynaudio makes its own in-house tweeter with 28mm fabric dome

diaphragm, and here its front plate has been cut away so that it can be mounted close to the main driver. The company doesn't believe in bi-wiring, so just a single pair of terminals are fitted.

Room measurements indicate free space siting, though foam bungs are provided for blocking the ports, useful if the speakers are placed close to a wall.

SOUND QUALITY

That original Audience 50 did startlingly well in the blind listening tests, not only outclassing its price rivals but also proving quite capable of slugging it out with significantly

more expensive speakers. The interesting question posed by this review was whether this new version would repeat the same trick.

Gratifyingly, it did precisely that. It doesn't have the scale or weight of some of the bigger floorstanders in this test, but it doesn't give a whole lot away, and does manage just about everything else rather well, sounding impressively clean and with a wide dynamic range. Although the bass could be smoother and deeper, it's lively and agile, while the balance and voicing, with just a touch of mid forwardness, are just about ideal.

CONCLUSION

Given the 30-month interval between tests, it's impossible to say whether the sound quality of this new version has been significantly improved. What is clear, though, is that this speaker remains a stand out performer in its price class, at least on pure sound quality grounds, and deserves to retain its Best Buy accolade.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£577.00

Understated in looks and finish, this compact stand-mount can mix it with floorstanders at more than twice the price.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Dynaudio UK, 29 Robyns Way, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3EB.
☎ (01732) 451938

"Although the bass could be smoother, it's lively and agile, while the balance and voicing are just about ideal."

THE LAB REPORT

Two and a half years ago in issue 174, the 'original' Dynaudio Audience 50 returned a set of figures that included a sensitivity of 87.8dB, a port tuned to 54Hz and an average impedance of 6.6 Ohm with a tricky 3.5 Ohm minimum at 195Hz. Its response, meanwhile, showed a slightly downturned midrange with some slight peakiness in the far bass and treble. Because all my speaker measurements are logged, it's possible to overlay curves and compare values. To which end, Dynaudio's re-design now returns a set of figures that includes a sensitivity of 87.6dB, a port tuned to 55Hz and an



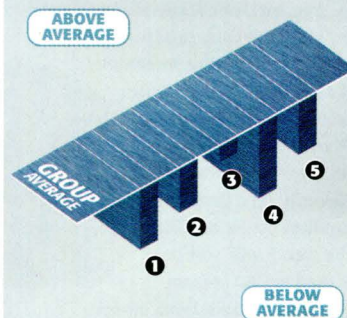
average impedance of 6.6 Ohm with a tricky 3.6 Ohm minimum at 195Hz. Sound familiar?

Ok, so where's the upgrade? Principally, better component quality has yielded a worthwhile reduction in distortion, particularly through the bass where figures of 1.3 per cent are now squeezed to below 0.5 per cent for the same 96dB output level. Together with the good alignment of the bass driver and port, this suggests a lower-coloration (though not low coloration) bass should be possible from the latest Audience 50. The speaker is still pretty current-hungry, however, so expect some variation in performance with different amplifiers. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

No more sensitive or any easier to drive than before, but high levels of bass distortion have now been successfully tackled.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	-40%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-30%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-10%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-50%
5 BASS EXTENSION	-35%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	86dB	87.6dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	4 Ohm	6.6 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	46Hz	45Hz

MIRAGE FRx-7

Hi-Fi Choice has only reviewed one other Mirage speaker, way back in 1995, since when this Canadian brand's parent company has set up its own UK distribution company – alongside its sibling brand Energy, whose e:XL 25 was featured in our last loudspeaker Mega Test. There's some obvious common ground between the two brands, but Mirage is best known as the pioneer of so-called 'bi-polar' loudspeakers, which have enjoyed some success on the other side of the Atlantic.

That said, this £550 FRx-7 has no bi-pole pretensions. The FRx-series are 'Forward Firing', and the FRx-7 conventionally mounts its two main drivers and one tweeter on the front panel. Given the driver layout, it presumably operates in a 'two-and-a-half-way' mode, using the lower of the two cone drivers merely to augment the bass region – a sensible arrangement which provides a decent total cone area for the bass, a relatively small driver for the midrange, and a fashionably slim enclosure.

A neat floorstander it may be, but it's not a particularly pretty one in my opinion, as the vinyl wood-print finish neither looks nor feels that convincing. The MDF wrap has nicely radiused edges to soften the line somewhat, but not on the front baffle edge itself.

The first giveaway about the close relationship between Mirage and Energy comes in the little plastic feet, very similar to those which came with the Energy e:XL 25. These widen the

footprint and considerably enhance the overall stability of the speaker – often a potential problem with slim floor-standers, which can be vulnerable to high speed children or pets.

And although I didn't have the two sibling models available for side-by-side comparison, there's some evidence that they may share the same drivers too. Certainly the FRx-7's 100mm plastic cone main drivers and 19mm tweeter look very similar to those fitted to the e:XL 25, and a similar technique of securing the drivers under plastic mouldings has been utilised, aiding dispersion control and keeping the front of the speaker neat and tidy.

Although the ingredients may look similar, our far-field in-room measurements show that the larger FRx-7 has significantly more output through the bass region. It's much smoother too, and rather more laid back through the midband, partly as a result of the 'warm' bass balance which would seem to indicate free space siting.



little enthusiasm, proving something of a disappointment overall.

The laid back voice band certainly didn't help its case, sounding a little squashed and smeared. The bottom end sounds powerful, but not particularly subtle or agile, tending to thicken textures and mask the direction of the music. There's little in the way of dynamic literacy or leading edge definition, while turning up the wick only served to reveal some potential top end harshness.

CONCLUSION

I'm tempted to describe the Mirage FRx-7 as an Energy e:XL 25 in a larger box and with £150 slapped on to the price. There's some truth in that, but, as ever, a loudspeaker is rather more than the sum of its parts, and the two have been engineered to give quite different tonal balances. Indeed, of the two the Energy seems the better compromise for stereo music replay, whereas this Mirage is more obviously balanced towards home cinema requirements.

SOUND QUALITY

An even-handed and essentially neutral balance is a good start for any loudspeaker, and the presence of these ensured respectable enough ratings in the listening tests. However, in most other respects the FRx-7 attracted

"An even-handed and essentially neutral balance is a good start for any loudspeaker."

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £549.90

Neat slim floorstander has a heavy, laid back balance, probably better suited to movie than music reproduction.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

API (UK) Ltd, Fairfax House, Goddard Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 5NP.

(01473) 240205

THE LAB REPORT

Perhaps something is lost in the translation, but I find the idea of a 'pure' metal 'hybrid' treble dome to be paradoxical. The 91dB sensitivity rating, meanwhile, is derived from Mirage's 'room efficiency', though the slim FRx-7 clocks-up a figure of 88.1dB in practice. Nevertheless, with its excellent power handling, the FRx-7 will still peak around 106dB in-room.

Toe the speakers slightly inward for a response excellently combining a smooth upper bass, midrange and treble. Otherwise, its axial response shows an exposed bass and high treble and what would otherwise have been a very smooth mid/presence if it were not for the loss in

output at 3kHz following the relatively low 2kHz crossover frequency. Incidentally, the moderate +/-40 degree swing in phase through the crossover region shouldn't prove troublesome as the impedance exceeds 20 Ohm at this point.

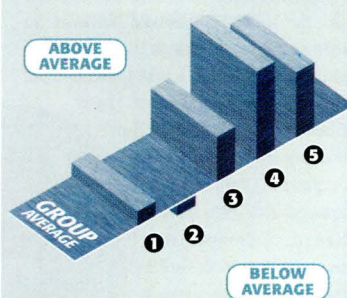
Nevertheless, the weaker midrange is revealed by the distortion measurements which show an increase from the very low 0.3 per cent achieved through bass and treble to 0.7 per cent at the crossover point. Bass tuning is fairly broad and heavy-looking with the (dual) port tuned to a low 38Hz and extending to 100Hz (-6dB) where the output of the bass/mid drivers is just below its maximum (140Hz). **PMi**



HOW IT COMPARES

An easy enough drive with low bass/treble distortion. Let down by a heavy-handed bass and proportionally high midrange coloration.

1	EASE OF DRIVE	10%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-5%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	30%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	60%
5	BASS EXTENSION	45%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	91dB	88.1dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohm	9.6 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	35Hz	35Hz



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INFINITY Kappa 70

I have vague memories of reviewing a Kappa, but it must have been more than a decade ago, in the days before computers had hard disks to back up the fallibility of my own memory. Like Infinity itself, the Kappa name stretches way back into the mists of time, but this £795 Kappa 70 is a new and modern revival of the original concept.

The Kappa I remember was a large, wide stand-mount three-way, in a real wood veneer. And this new one is a logical updating of that earlier concept, still a three-way but very much slimmer now, through using twin bass drivers where one was employed before. There's no need for a stand now, as this enclosure sits straight on the floor, while the split-grille styling and real wood finish are classy as ever.

The front is wider than the back, adding some interest to the shape as well as avoiding focusing internal standing waves. Reflecting the shape, the base is fitted with three rubber feet, which may be replaced with the spikes supplied. While I can see some logic in using a tripod arrangement here, it does rather reduce the overall stability margins. Happily, it is very solidly built, turning the scales to a generous 21kg.

There's no getting away from it: the Kappa 70 might be a quite compact affair, but you're actually getting a lot of speaker for your



£795. Three-ways not only use more drivers, they have

much bigger crossovers and more complicated boxes too. This one has several internal braces and a separate midrange enclosure.

The drive units are interesting

too. The port-loaded bass is delivered by two identical drivers, each with 120mm cones made from a complex mix of polymer, mineral and fibres. The midrange is delivered from an 80mm cone, while the treble is handled by one of Infinity's 'area drive' devices, known as EMIT-R, in which a spiral 'voice coil' is printed directly onto the surface of the 25mm transparent plastic disc diaphragm.

Contrary to the lab results the in-room responses show a balance which is quite full through the bass region, even with the speakers well clear of walls. Elsewhere, the mid-band seems mildly recessed, and the treble slightly strong.

SOUND QUALITY

Good in parts, with a powerful bottom end and a pleasing overall smoothness and neutrality, the Kappa 70 nevertheless failed to stir either the soul or the enthusiasm of our panelists.

"Tonally very accomplished... but more drama and dynamics would not go amiss," was the reaction of one panelist, who wondered whether the "lack of dynamic freedom might render

this boring in the long term". Another praised the powerful bass, but summed up by criticising the sound for being "muddled and soft, without the dynamic ease or sense of timing to make the music enjoyable".

Such thumbnail sketches were only confirmed by the hands-on work, which found the Kappa 70 big in bandwidth terms but small dynamically, despite the ample headroom. The balance is smooth and even, and stereo perspectives are well portrayed, but the bottom end is a bit directionless and ponderous, and the midband lacks expression. The top end is strong, but sweet and clean with it.

CONCLUSION

A very good-looking speaker which seems good basic value for money, the Kappa 70 proved a little disappointing. It sounds big and smooth and even, but lacks the temporal coherence and dynamic expression to bring the music to life.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £795.00

Good looking and fine material value, but sonically a little disappointing: big and smooth and even, but lacking coherence and dynamics

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Gamepath Ltd, 25 Heathfields, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK12 6HR.
(01908) 317707

"The Kappa 70 might be a quite compact affair, but you're actually getting a lot of speaker for your money."

THE LAB REPORT

Compared to many in this test, the Kappa 70 has a lean bass with a slightly upturned mid and presence that turns into a strong treble beyond the 4kHz crossover point. The large rear-facing port is tuned to 40Hz while the two 175mm bass units operate over a tight 65-460Hz band (-3dB) with no sign of 'peakiness' to give a false punch to the bass. Again, though, this is another speaker that really benefits from toeing-in by 20 degrees or so, if only to avoid the axial 'beaming' of the powerful EMIT-R treble unit.

It's also rather more sensitive than claimed (which makes a very pleasant change) at some 87.7dB, though distortion

does increase to >2 per cent through the midband once the level reaches 96dB. The practical maximum loudness of a pair of Kappa 70 speakers in the average room will be some 105-106dB, but you'll need a very powerful amplifier (200W+) to achieve this. Impedance compensation yields some complex twists and turns to the speaker's phase angle, but all are well within manageable limits (just +30 to -6 degrees) even if the load

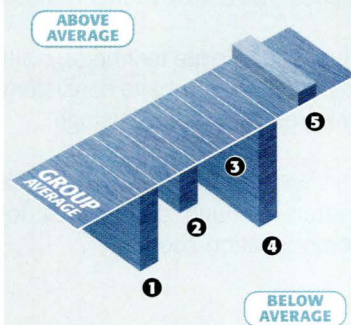
itself is more arduous. An average of just 6 Ohm and high frequency minimum of 3.5 Ohm suggests that treble quality could depend on your choice of both amplifier and speaker cable. **PMi**



HOW IT COMPARES

Bass tuning is good but the speaker load is pretty tough for what is only a moderate system sensitivity. Midrange distortion is unexpectedly high.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|------|
| 1 | EASE OF DRIVE | -50% |
| 2 | RELATIVE LOUDNESS | -25% |
| 3 | MAXIMUM LOUDNESS | 0% |
| 4 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION | -65% |
| 5 | BASS EXTENSION | 10% |



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	86dB	87.7dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	4 Ohm	6.0 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	55Hz	35Hz

MISSION 775e

In the last two loudspeaker Mega Tests, we've looked at two examples from Mission's new 78-series range, both featuring an unusual ceramic main drive cone. However, the 78s are not seen as replacements for the earlier aerogel-coned 77-series, which will continue to run in parallel. And since the anticipated 783 isn't quite finalised yet, Mission sent us this new 'evolution' version of the large floorstanding 775.

Quite what the evolution involved remains unclear, as this is actually *Choice's* first encounter with the 775. Finished in real wood around the wrap, standing well over a metre tall and turning the scales to a hefty 21kg, this is a whole lot of classy looking speaker for the £800 asking price. On purely perceived value grounds, it looks fully comparable to the Group C models in this Mega Test, which cost more than half as much again.

More's the pity, then, that one of our samples blotted its copy-book with a dry joint in the crossover network. It was pure chance the problem was even spotted at all, and once diagnosed it was easy enough to rectify. And in fairness to Mission, a 'dry joint' is notoriously difficult to detect, and could easily have occurred in transit, but careful inspection in production is essential precisely because this sort of thing is so



difficult to detect.

This is a two-way design, and one reason it stands so tall is to accommodate the d'Appolito style driver arrangement (using twin main drivers mounted above and

below the tweeter) while also keeping the tweeter axis up at seated ear level. Such a configuration keeps the simplicity of a two-way whilst also allowing the front to be made much slimmer for the same total cone area. The difficulty comes in the fact that the main drivers now behave more like a line- than a point-source.

The box proper is 18mm particle board, while the front panel uses a double-thickness 38mm laminate for extra rigidity, heavily chamfered to improve both the appearance and the dispersion. A chunky MDF plinth doesn't increase the footprint but does provide secure spike accommodation, and the speaker feels stable enough.

The two main drivers each have 120mm cones, and should give plenty of bass radiating area in conjunction with a large port. The tweeter is Mission's familiar 25mm fabric dome, mechanically decoupled from the box proper using a leaf spring arrangement. Twin terminals permit bi-wire/-amp configurations.

Mission suggests placing this speaker fairly close to the wall, but our in-room measurements urge some caution and experimentation, as this could make the mid-bass too heavy. Elsewhere, output looks rather strong in the upper bass (150-300Hz).

SOUND QUALITY

The panel reacted quite positively to the 775e, appreciating its openness, a lack of 'boxy' effects and a fair measure of transparency. The midband 'breathes' well, delivering a wide dynamic range right through the bass and midrange, albeit with a mild 'thickening' of textures and slight voice 'chestiness'.

Dynamics themselves might be more expressive. The sound as a whole lacks serious weight and authority, though there's plenty of headroom on tap, so there's no sense of strain when playing loud. Timing is very good, and the 775e delivers its music with good pace and drive and a decent measure of gusto, all of which adds up to an involving, fun-filled experience.

CONCLUSION

Not a true sonic heavyweight, nor perhaps as neutral as some of the competition, the 775e is nevertheless a very entertaining performer, with an unusually generous material content for its £800 asking price. All of which adds up to a comfortable Recommendation.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£799.90

Lots of speaker for the money, and musically involving too, if a little short on serious weight and authority.

■ TWO YEAR GUA ANTEE

☒ Mission Electronics, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED
(01480) 451777

"The 775e delivers its music with good pace and drive, and a decent measure of gusto - a fun-filled experience."

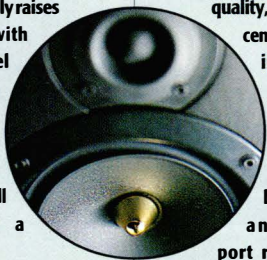
THE LAB REPORT

After two issues (*HFC* 199 & 201) in which Mission was berated for claiming too high a sensitivity for its Keraform-equipped speakers, the 775e genuinely raises the rafters. Equipped with twin, lightweight Aerogel bass/mid units, the 775e maintains a full 93dB (re. 2.83V/1m), putting it a smidgen behind the Araxe from BC Acoustique, but still capable of delivering a massive 111dBa in-room.

Axially, there's a hint of the 'Aerogel dip' through the presence band (preceded by a misterrmination around 570Hz) but the treble unit picks-up strongly beyond 6kHz or so. Brightness is tamed by offsetting the speakers by 20 degrees or so, but then the

upper bass begins to look a little more exposed below about 300Hz. The distortion, with high sensitivity and good component quality, hovers between 0.2-0.3 per cent (at 96dBa), only increasing to 0.7 per cent near the mid/treble crossover frequency.

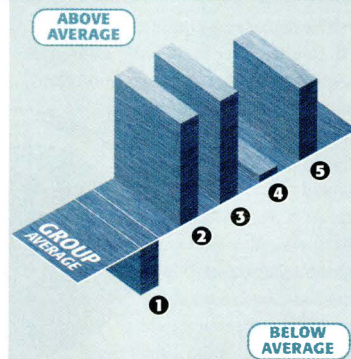
A notch at 105Hz in the nearfield response of the bass driver coincides with a null in what looks like a dual port resonance at 43Hz and, again, at 130Hz and is reflected on both impedance and phase spectra. This phenomenon was observed with the Mission 774 speaker back in *HFC* 183. The impedance trend is under-damped with an average 8 Ohm and acceptable minimum of 3.5



HOW IT COMPARES

Very much more sensitive and capable of playing far louder than Mission's Keraform speakers but arguably more 'characterful' as a result.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	-30%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	70%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	70%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	5%
5 BASS EXTENSION	55%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	92dB	93.0dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohm	8.0 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	38Hz	30Hz

PROAC Tablette 2000 Signature

An upmarket British brand with decades of experience, ProAc has spent most of its history focusing on export markets, while maintaining a fairly low profile here in Britain. A year or two back the company decided to take the home market more seriously, and we got to review a couple of upmarket floorstanders as Statements reviews. However, this is, to my knowledge, the first time a ProAc has appeared in one of our loud-speaker Mega Tests.

The Tablette is a well known ProAc model name that goes back many years, but this 2000 Signature is a brand new variation on what is, fundamentally, a timeless theme. It's a medium size two-way stand-mount, and a pretty expensive one too at £899, but the standard of finish, quality of ingredients, and especially the very classy bird's-eye maple veneer on the cabinets of our review pair definitely puts it right up in the luxury class.

The Signature epithet implies that this speaker has evolved from an existing 'standard' Tablette 2000. That is indeed the case, and the earlier Tablette can be found at the significantly lower price of £649. Both share the same box and driver size, so where has the extra £250 gone?

Part of it is down to the veneerwork. All the Tablette 2000s feature real wood veneer, but the luxury woods – ebony, burr oak, bird's-eye maple, yew and rosewood – are reserved for the Signature model. But the enclosure itself has been beefed



up and now features extra damping, and the drive units are both higher spec examples of the same basic type.

Indeed, the 2000 Signature shares the same 19mm soft dome tweeter as the rather more upmarket Response models. Said tweeter is offset from the baffle centre line, to de-focus the cabinet edge diffraction effects, and the speaker pairs are mirrored to maintain visual and

sonic symmetry. The speaker's main driver is a classy affair too. Built on a 170mm cast alloy frame, it uses a 120mm cone and has a copper magnet assembly and phase plug. Classy twin terminals are fitted, permitting bi-wiring (or -amping).

The far-field in-room response is unusually smooth and flat – and therefore rather brighter than average through the upper registers. Under our conditions output was a little lean in the midbass when clear of walls, and a little heavy around 50Hz (the port tuned frequency) if placed up close. Take time to experiment.

SOUND QUALITY

Presented twice to the listening panel, the reactions were impressively consistent, but not entirely complimentary. This is a speaker that leads with its mid-band, which is very neutral and attractively open – but also a bit thin and 'shiny' with it. On some

tracks this was quite welcome, but others could sound a little edgy and uncomfortable.

The bass packs a goodly thump, but wasn't entirely convincing in either dynamic contrast or punch, and didn't really convey the direction the music was heading. The midband has some of the classic neutrality of the BBC monitoring tradition, though dynamic expression seemed a little muted. And although the top end is clean and clear, it somehow needs to be balanced by a little more warmth lower down.

CONCLUSION

This is a beautiful little loud-speaker, with its clean-cut lines and fabulous veneerwork. The open and relatively bright balance is a quite strong characteristic which could be a blessing or a curse depending on the rest of the system. It wasn't, in truth, an ideal match for our test conditions, but under the right circumstances could be a tempting prospect.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£899.00

Beautifully veneered compact stand-mount with a classically open balance, just a little on the bright side of neutral

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

ProAc, Highpoint House, Riding Road, Buckingham Road Ind Est, Brackley, Northants NN13 7BE.

(01280) 700147

"All the Tablette 2000s feature real wood veneer, but the luxury woods are reserved for the Signature model."

THE LAB REPORT

This version of the Tablette maintains the tradition for a smooth midrange response, even though its bass (sub-200Hz) looks very peaky by comparison.

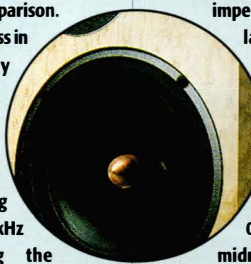
Any suggestion of brightness in the high treble is easily tamed by toeing the speakers inward slightly. A narrowband analysis shows a sharp cancellation notch and unexpected swing in phase/impedance at 4.6kHz (presumably following the crossover) but this will have less subjective impact than the exposed bass output – this speaker *must* be sited clear of rear walls!

Maximum driver output is achieved at 120Hz with a broadly-tuned rear port augmenting this between 30Hz-110Hz (-3dB

points). There is some distortion clearing the port at 930Hz, which is also visible on the speaker's forward response and both impedance and phase plots. The latter remains within +/-40 degrees, the former an easy

14.8 Ohm average with an equally easy 6.2 Ohm minimum. Conventional harmonic distortion, however, is very low indeed at 0.5-0.6 per cent through the midrange at 96dB, bearing in

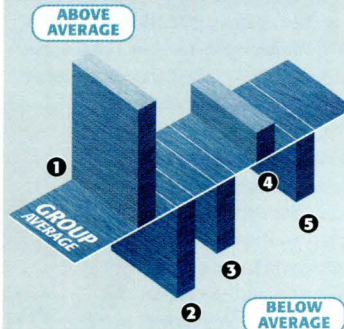
mind the relatively low 85.6dB sensitivity. ProAc's figure of 87dB can only really be achieved if its boosted bass is factored into the equation but, whatever way you turn, the Tablette will never achieve the levels of its more voluminous competition! **PMI**



HOW IT COMPARES

A pushover to drive but only capable of modest sound levels by the standards of the group. Bass looks over-compensated for a box of this size.

1	EASE OF DRIVE	80%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-60%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-45%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	20%
5	BASS EXTENSION	-40%



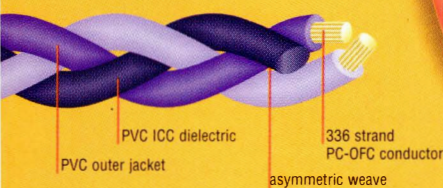
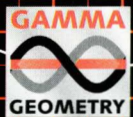
SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	87dB	85.6dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohm	14.8 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	32Hz	40Hz

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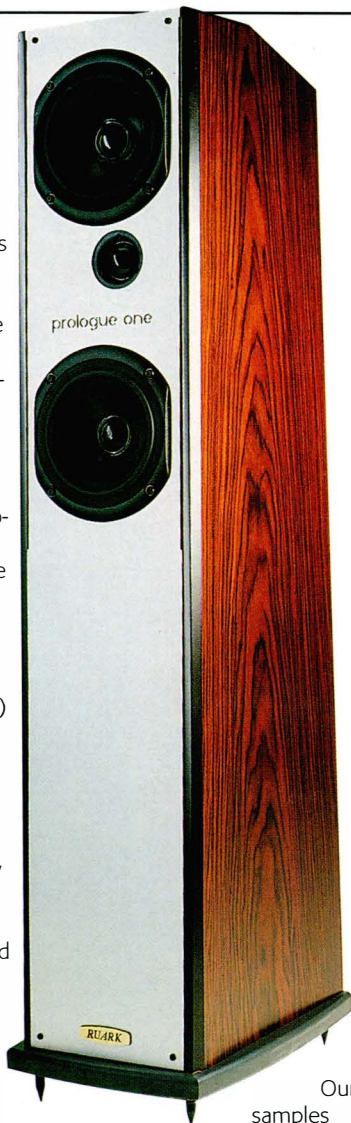
RUARK Prologue One R

Ruark makes some of the best looking speakers around, and has long catered to those whose taste in furniture runs along traditional lines. Three years ago the company first launched its Contemporary series, to extend its appeal to a broader base of customers – and Ruark has now furthered its plans by evolving the Contemporary R series.

A very compact and stylish floorstander which retails at £949, the Prologue One R is a two-way design, using twin main drivers operating in parallel above and below the solitary tweeter – the so-called d'Appolito configuration. Unconventionally, the tweeter here is not positioned exactly on the centre lines linking the main drivers, but is slightly offset, laterally and vertically. (The two halves of a pair are mirror-imaged.)

Style is at the heart of this design, and the most striking single element is the full height polished aluminium front panel, set at a subtle backward tilt, its clean lines only slightly marred by a little fixing screw in each corner. However, it's run close by the dramatically contrasting perforated plastic grille, which is black and strongly curved.

The sides and back of the Prologue One R have a rather more conventional finish – real wood veneer with painted beading to soften the edges – but the shape is interestingly asymmetric. The split and angled top surface is functional as well as decorative, in helping to 'spread' internal standing wave frequencies.



Our samples arrived with mass loading already added to a chamber in the base. This is not a standard feature, but can apparently be ordered from dealers at extra cost. The extra mass certainly

"The Prologue One R deserves to succeed simply on the grounds of its strikingly innovative styling."

aids stability, though it did make fitting the little MDF plinth a little tricky. Indeed, the whole thing feels very solid and secure, standing on well-founded 8mm spikes.

The two main drivers are small affairs, with 140mm plastic frames and c90mm profiled cones, the latter with a pentagonal edge to help dissipate edge vibration. Both are magnetically shielded, so can be placed close to a TV, and are reflex loaded by a rear port. The tweeter is also shielded, Neodymium magnets driving a 28mm soft fabric dome. Twin terminals provide a bi-wire/-amp option.

The in-room measurements show that the 40Hz-tuned port provides plenty of kick in the mid-bass, even with the speakers well clear of walls. Thereafter the upper bass/lower mid is rather lean, while the broad midband, presence and treble are very well ordered.

SOUND QUALITY

Nicely balanced and projecting plenty of detail, the One R didn't come in for any serious criticism, but neither did it inspire any real enthusiasm amongst the listening panel. As one panelist put it: "Well balanced, easy to follow the music, but dynamics are a little soft. This speaker needs a kick up the backside to get going". Another described it as "Very competent, but rather bland".

While the bottom packs a fairly decent thump, the upper bass and lower mid are a little too restrained, and that in turn leaves the upper mid a little exposed, emphasising detail but rather at the expense of warmth and richness. Elsewhere, sibilants were nicely reproduced, but consonants seemed a little muted, while the lack of dynamic freedom somehow made the sound seem a little small.

CONCLUSION

The Prologue One R deserves to succeed simply on the grounds of its strikingly innovative styling. The sound was a little cold and thin under our conditions, delivering plenty of detail but without the warmth, body or scale of some alternatives.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £949.00

Strikingly contemporary compact floorstander is well voiced but a little lean in overall balance.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

Ruark Acoustics Ltd, 59 Tailor's Court, Temple Farm Ind Est, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5TH.

(01702) 601410

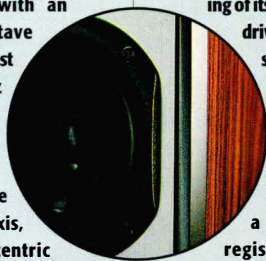
THE LAB REPORT

It's refreshing to encounter a manufacturer with a realistic view of its speaker's performance. Rated at 89dB, it achieves a sensitivity of 89.4dB with an admirably flat 3rd-octave response and only the merest 'sag' around the 2kHz crossover point. However, there's a noticeable lack of integration about the crossover point as the speaker is rotated off-axis, leading to a more eccentric frequency balance. Under ideal conditions you'll be listening to the Prologue's on-axis and in line with the top of the cabinet, assuming the boxes are placed on the floor.

Distortion is very low indeed at just 0.3 per cent or so above 200Hz (re. 96dBA) and

with no obvious penalty around the crossover point. Furthermore, Ruark has been very conservative with the bass loading of its two 140mm doped-paper drivers. A nearfield analysis shows these have a -6dB point of 58Hz, augmented by a port resonance at 43Hz. Both driver and port are free of false emphasis, contributing to a smooth 'boom-free' bass register. Load-wise, the

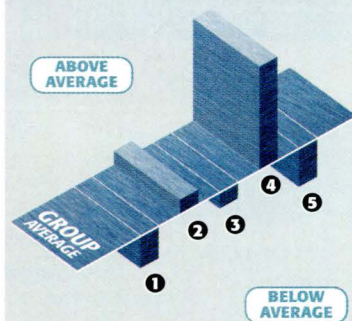
speaker's phase angle peaks at +45 degrees at the 2kHz crossover point then falls to -40 degrees at 20kHz where, thankfully, the impedance rises above 10 Ohm. The latter shows a minimum of 3.7 Ohm at 5kHz, which is acceptable. **PMI**



HOW IT COMPARES

Harmonic distortion is very low indeed, but the speaker's balance may still appear colored if auditioned off the proper axis.

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-20%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	10%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-10%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	70%
5	BASS EXTENSION	-25%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	89.4dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohm	9.0 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	45Hz	40Hz

AUDIO NOTE AN-E/D

Reviewed and Recommended way back in 1992, the Audio Note Type E has long been a favourite tool amongst *Choice* reviewers. In fact, the history of this loudspeaker actually goes back decades. The original Type E was designed and manufactured by US engineer Peter Snell, but his successors at Snell stopped making the original range in favour of slimmer and more up-to-date designs.

The proprietor of Audio Note UK, Peter Qvortrup, was European distributor for Snell at that time, and was less than happy with the decision to 'modernise' the range. Old fashioned looks notwithstanding, he set up to manufacture some of the original designs, re-introducing them under the Audio Note brand in the late 80s.

The AN-E is the larger of three basic ex-Snell models, and certainly looks a bit of a throwback, designwise. There's something decidedly uncompromising about a stand-mount with a baffle 36cm wide and 79cm high. Normal stands are quite inappropriate, so Audio Note supplied its own matching heavyweight platforms (£199), which lift the speaker 28cm of the ground and provide significant mass loading.

More confusingly, the AN-E is itself available in a whole variety of versions. All feature the same basic box size and drivers, but the ingredients themselves – internal wiring, cabinet materials, crossover components etc – are systematically upgraded through some six different levels. Our samples were the basic 'entry level' AN-E/D,

which sells for £1,520, but the top-of-the-line AN-E/SEC Silver costs a rather more extravagant £13,600! If you're worried about spending that much in one fell swoop, don't – any speaker may be upgraded by one or two levels at a later date.

Being the entry level model, this AN-E/D comes in a vinyl wood-print – but a very good quality one from an imitation point of view. Bi-wire terminals and a large port are fitted on the rear. The tweeter has a 25mm doped fabric dome with short horn flare, and the main driver uses a 200mm cast frame and a 150mm paper cone, terminated in a foam surround.

Apparently, following a redesign of the rear port, the AN-E can be placed close to a wall – information which only became available after the listening tests were finished. However, this has traditionally always been a free space design, something which the in-room measurements amply confirm, so feel free to experiment!

SOUND QUALITY

The most expensive model in the test group did at least help justify its price with a top rating in the listening tests. Praised for providing loads of detail, subtlety and insight, this is a good all-rounder which draws its compromises very artfully, delivering an even overall

tonal balance with excellent low bass weight and extension, yet also creating music with lively and invigorating dynamics.

It gives a very 'busy' sound, with loads going on. The music has fine pace, but can sound just a tad untidy, lacking some smoothness found in less sensitive designs. There is, perhaps, just a slight lack of presence energy, which dulls the impact and explicitness of voices, but those are minor quibbles about an otherwise well balanced design.



CONCLUSION

The AN-E/D might look like a throwback, but the music it makes is as good as ever, and it's a most elegant compromise with a fine balance, wide bandwidth and expressive dynamics. A stand-inclusive price of over £1,700 seems a little pricey for a Best Buy flag, but the AN-E/D is warmly Recommended, nevertheless.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,520.00

9 This classic large stand-mount might have throwback aesthetics, but it delivers an exceptional all-round quality sound.

■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

Audio Note UK Ltd, Unit C Peacock Ind Est, 125-7 Davigdor Rd, Hove, E Sussex BN3 1SG.
(01273) 220511

"The most expensive model in the test group did at least help justify its price with a top rating in the listening tests."

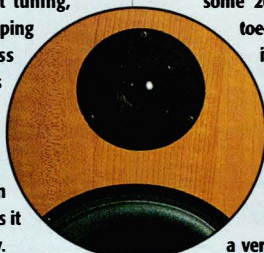
THE LAB REPORT

The Audio Note E is a very sensitive speaker capable of nearly 91dB/2.83V at 1m and a peak output of some 107dBA in the 'average' room. This has been achieved by revising the rear port tuning, changing the internal damping material and using a less dense baffleboard. There's a +/- 45 degree phase swing through the 2.1kHz crossover region but the impedance is high, giving an average 10.3 Ohm that puts it in the 'easy-drive' category.

Measured midway between the bass and treble drivers, a suckout at 1kHz recovers to yield a slightly depressed-looking presence band. Measured slightly above the cabinet top (which, from

experience, is a more likely orientation), the midrange is lumpier still and the far treble even more prominent. It's only when the speakers are shifted clear of walls, raised some 20-30cm off the floor and toed-in by 20 degrees or so that its upper bass, midrange and treble start to look truly integrated. Clearly, positioning is crucial to obtaining the best from the Audio Note Es.

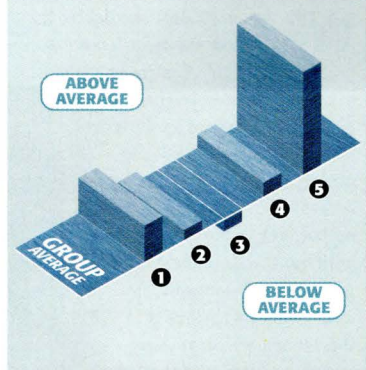
Furthermore, the E enjoys a very consistent <0.5 per cent of, typically 2nd harmonic distortion, right across the audio range while the bass reflex system is adroitly-tuned to a low 33Hz, smoothly extending the low register without recourse to a false 'thump'. PMI



HOW IT COMPARES

High sensitivity coupled with a relatively easy drive and low levels of coloration contribute to a very 'musical' package.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	25%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	5%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-5%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	10%
5 BASS EXTENSION	70%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	94dB	90.9dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	6 Ohm	10.3 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	20Hz	25Hz

BC ACOUSTIQUE Araxe

A new name to this reviewer and this magazine, and indeed pretty much a newcomer to the UK, it's not hard to guess that a company called BC Acoustique comes from France. Interestingly, the UK importer is The Audiophile Club, the same operation that brings in the Triangle brand, also from France.

Run by Messrs Bruno Roux and Christian Avedissian, BC Acoustique seems to be primarily a speaker operation, though it does have some electronics involvement. The catalogue lists some fifteen different loudspeaker models, eight of which are primarily for two-channel stereo music replay. Five of these are floor-standers, and this £1,300 Araxe sits on the second rung up that ladder. Incidentally, it's named after a river, but I haven't figured out which one (there's also a stand mount Tamise, which translates as Thames!).

The price may seem a bit on the high side for such a compact loudspeaker, but there are enough interesting elements in this design to justify it – and the hefty 19kg total weight is clear evidence of some serious engineering content.

Let's start with the outside, nicely finished in a good quality real wood veneer, and cunningly, if unconventionally, shaped. The base is deeper than the top, which has a number of benefits, enhancing the footprint stability, 'spreading' the internal standing waves and directing the first internal reflection downwards rather than straight back through the driver cone. Unusually here,

however, the front baffle is vertical, and the back tilts forwards. The top section of the baffle edge is heavily chamfered, assisting dispersion, and the whole affair looks very smart, with or without the grille in place.

It's a two-and-a-half-way design, using twin main drivers with 115mm cones, running the upper one right up to the crossover point, but rolling off the lower one early so that it just reinforces the bass region. A slot port further reinforces the bass. The tweeter used here is a full horn-loaded pressure device, something rarely found in hi-fi speakers.

The input terminals are unusual too. There are ten 4mm sockets distributed around the input panel, and bridging links are supplied to select between three different relative tweeter levels, and between single or bi-wire/-amp connection. It looks confusing, but actually makes plenty of sense.

"Ten 4mm sockets are distributed around the input panel, and links are supplied to select between three tweeter levels."



The in-room measurements show rather strong output at around the port frequency of 50Hz, even with the speakers clear of walls. They also confirm the high sensitivity, gained at some expense in bass extension and smoothness.

SOUND QUALITY

The Araxe did pretty well in the listening tests, though the panelists

were a little unsettled by its 'differentness'. At least one panelist didn't find the horn tweeter to taste, commenting that it could become edgy on peaks, and that strings didn't sound right.

Another found his reaction varying from track to track, which perhaps indicates that this speaker is good at drawing out the very real differences between recordings on different media from different eras.

That certainly seemed to be the case during the hands-on work, where the Araxe proved very involving and communicative. More than any other speaker in the test group, it proved capable of generating some genuine dynamic grip and tension, though ultimately the lack of deep bass remains a minor handicap.

CONCLUSION

Neat, compact and attractive, the Araxe might not have the weight and scale of some rivals, but its level of dynamic literacy and musical tension is fair compensation, and justification for a Recommendation.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £1,140.00

9 Neat compact floorstander is a very lively communicator, if a little short of deep bass grunt.

■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

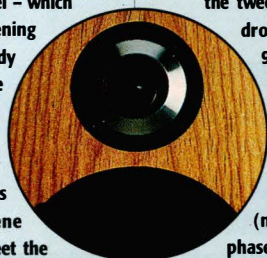
✉ The Audiophile Club, PO Box 6477, London N13 4AY.

☎ (020) 8882 2822

THE LAB REPORT

With some 93.4dB available for 2.83V/1m, increasing to 94.0dB in the '+1dB' treble position, there's a +1.2dB boost in the overall treble level when compared to the mean midband level – which may be useful when listening off-axis as there's a steady decline in the Araxe's treble output. Set to the '0dB' position, there's a slight depression in the forward, axial output from 2-4kHz as the 170mm polypropylene midrange struggles to meet the 17mm aluminium dome, but the latter picks-up without adding a sting to the tail. Loading is tough, however, with an average of 6.5 Ohm and a breathtaking 2.5 Ohm minimum at 210Hz.

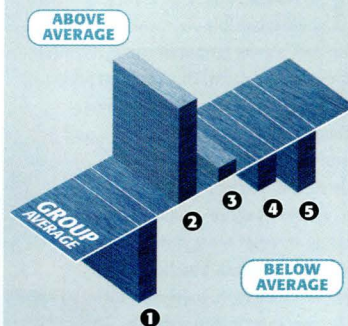
Levels of distortion also increase between 2-4kHz, from the low 0.3 per cent measured at bass frequencies to over 1 per cent just prior to the crossover point. Once the tweeter is in command, THD drops back to 0.5 per cent (re. 96dBA). Bearing in mind its very high sensitivity, these figures are little disappointing. There's a notch in the bass driver's nearfield trace at 270Hz (matched by glitches in phase and impedance spectra) and some very high-Q resonances escaping the rear, folded port around 500Hz but, otherwise, both driver null and port are very sharply tuned to a relatively high 55Hz. PMI



HOW IT COMPARES

Exceptional sensitivity at the expense of amplifier loading with a lively but potentially lightweight sound by way of recompense.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	-50%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	65%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	10%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-20%
5 BASS EXTENSION	-35%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	92dB	93.4dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	4 Ohm	6.5 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	54Hz	45Hz

DALI Evidence 870

Dali is actually an acronym for something to do with Danish audiophile loudspeakers, and the brand is part of a Danish group with both manufacturing and retail interests. UK distribution is handled by The Audio Club, alongside NAD electronics, and the several Dalis which have come our way over the years have included at least two floorstanders of notably good value.

The same characteristic clearly applies to this massive Evidence 870. It might cost a not inconsiderable £1,300, but it dwarfs the competition here in terms of bulk and weight, and features a pretty classy glass and real wood combination finish too. It is, in truth, a bit of a monster, turning the scales to around 28kg – a third more than anything else in this Mega Test – and stands comfortably over a metre tall. The 24cm width is hardly 'slimline', while the depth is half as much again, so at least the proportions look good.

The finish looks very good from most angles, with real wood on the front and the double-tapered sides, plus a shiny glass top (no coffee cup guilt). A full three-way design, both the midrange and tweeter are slightly offset from the cabinet centre line to 'spread' the edge diffraction effects, and the speakers



are built as a mirror-image pair to keep the overall symmetry. A hefty integral plinth provides secure accommodation to the chunky spikes.

There'll be loads of bass energy on tap here, with two drivers each with 150mm cones, augmented by a port tuned to a low 30Hz. The midband is delivered from a

93mm cone driver, while the tweeter uses a 28mm dome.

The far field in-room measurements show a smooth and well controlled balance, but even with the speakers well clear of walls in a reasonably large room, the output is rather strong through the bass and lower midrange.

SOUND QUALITY

The very real strengths of this large loudspeaker were clearly evident to the panel. As one panelist summed up: "A very good all-rounder. The balance is very good – maybe a touch heavy in the bass, but not unpleasantly so. The mid and treble show good detail, and timing is good, though I'd like the bass to be more agile."

However, another was a rather more critical, complaining, "Everything sounds a little sat on... Where's the colour, sparkle and vigour...? Lacks real transparency and freedom."

After extended hands-on listening, I feel there's some truth in both these observations. The sound is undoubtedly big, full

scale and genuinely authoritative, while the ample headroom also provides excellent analysis and dynamic contrasts through the bass region in particular. But it can also sound a bit heavy-handed, thickening textures somewhat, and does have some thumpy tendencies. And despite its fine detail and perspectives, the midband does sound a little constrained, and lacking true freedom of expression.

CONCLUSION

There's no denying that you get a whole lot of speaker for your money here, though its claim to represent an 'amplifier friendly' load doesn't really stand up to scrutiny, despite the high sensitivity. The smooth and very well controlled balance comes with massive headroom reserves and copious bass output – probably too much for some smaller rooms, in truth. It is perhaps slightly more suited to movie than music replay overall, but the total package looks impressive enough for Recommendation.

VERDIC

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,299.95

A real heavyweight, sonically and physically, with massive headroom. Good for movies as well as music.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

The Audio Club, Unit 15 Faraday Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 3RY.

(01296) 482017

"It dwarfs the competition in terms of bulk and weight, and features a pretty classy glass and real wood combination finish."

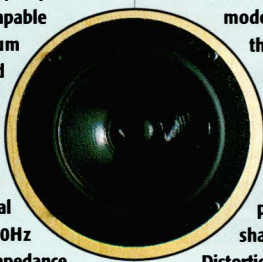
THE LAB REPORT

Crossing the finishing line just behind Mission's and BC Acoustique's super-sensitive 775e and Araxe, respectively, Dali's huge 870 still musters a very respectable 92.1dB/2.83V/1m and is capable of a deafening maximum 113dBA when partnered with a suitably powerful amplifier. Talking of which, the 870s represents the toughest load in our test for though there's a minimal phase angle beyond 120Hz (max. -20 degrees), the impedance never rises above 7 Ohm. The minimum of just 2.9 Ohm (120Hz) may influence upper bass quality with some amplifiers.

Moreover, both on and off axis, its response is gratifyingly even as the midrange

'filler' driver prevents either the bass or treble units over-stretching their bounds. Both upper and lower rear-firing ports are tuned to 43Hz and show the same moderate degree of damping, though both also suffer some spurious outputs at 605Hz (the bass/mid crossover) and 750Hz. Either way, a smooth bass extension down to 28Hz should be possible in bigger rooms, shaming some subwoofers!

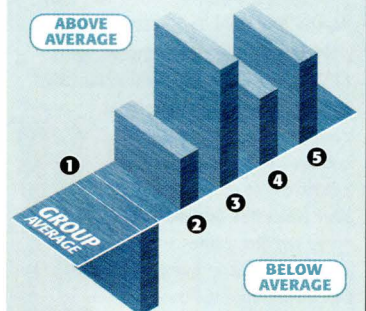
Distortion is also exceptionally low at a little over 0.1 per cent through the bass (re. 96dBA), though the midrange unit rather lets the side down as unwanted harmonics increase by a factor of 10x until the soft-dome tweeter takes over the reins. **PMI**



HOW IT COMPARES

Plenty of sound level and bass if your room and amplifier can handle the demands of this huge box.

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-55%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	35%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	80%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	45%
5	BASS EXTENSION	55%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	91dB	92.1dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	4 Ohm	5.1 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	35Hz	28Hz

JMLAB Electra 905



More relevantly, perhaps, the 905 is closely related to the

£1,795 Electra 915, which we reviewed in *HFC* 195. Indeed, the 905 is essentially the middle and top sections of the three-way 915, leaving out the bass driver/enclosure elements and using the 915's twin midrange drivers to cover the bass as well as the midband.

Judging by the state of the carton, as well as a fracture on one of the grille frames, our well-travelled samples didn't need any running in! The first surprise was in lugging said carton, as these stand-mounts are packed in pairs, and at 14kg each they're as heavy as some of the floorstanders.

Although relatively new to the UK, JMLab is one of France's leading hi-fi brands. The company built its early reputation as the manufacturer of the highly regarded Focal drivers, and this technology now forms the basis of an enormous line up of complete loudspeakers, organised into some five separate ranges.

The Electras sit one level below the top-of-the-line Utopias, and can therefore be expected to supply something pretty close to the ultimate in performance, at rather less than the ultimate price. This 905 is the baby stand-mount in the Electra range, and at £1,200 is still pretty expensive for a speaker of its size – but then the Mini Utopia costs an extravagant £4,500!

These speakers are no simple box. The side panels are chunky hardwood slabs, with some post-forming to soften the edges, while the other four sides are plain black finished, as is the grille, so the net result is sober but classy.

In fact the sides are slightly tapered, slimmer at the top than the base, while the front baffle is a complex affair, arranged so that the lower main driver is tilted slightly backwards. The upper main driver is then mounted on a small sub-baffle which protrudes a couple of centimetres and tilts it downwards a few degrees. This means that the three drivers are not only in a vertical line geometrically, but their diaphragms are also equidistant from the listener. This is, in short, a d'Appolito with added time alignment.

The drivers are very similar to those used in the Utopias. The cone units use the same 'W-sandwich' cones, with a layer of structural foam between woven glassfibre skins, while the tweeter has an inverted, oxide-coated titanium dome.

Both main drivers have cast frames and 90mm cones, while a slot-shaped port provides further low end reinforcement. Connections are made via two pairs of terminals, and the room measurements point firmly towards free space siting.

SOUND QUALITY

Well-liked by the listening panel for its refinement and delicacy, the 905 shows a lovely freedom from 'boxiness'. The bass is tight and well controlled, driving on with a measure of power and authority rare in a stand-mount, if a little constrained in air and freedom, and inevitably lacking in bottom octave weight. And if the treble is slightly obvious, it's also notably sweet and clean.

The midband may not be the last word in dynamic expression, and voices do sound slightly 'pinched', but the sound is both smooth and detailed, and the actual dynamic range is very wide, thanks presumably to the negligible box signature.

CONCLUSION

Under our conditions, this little 905 proved rather more successful than its bigger 915 brother. What it may lack in sheer weight and power handling, it more than makes up for in coherence, subtlety and agility. Amongst top quality stand-mounts, it has few peers.

"The first surprise was in lugging said carton, at 14kg each they're as heavy as some of the floorstanders."

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,199.00

Compact but massively engineered stand-mount delivers a very classy sound with exceptional dynamic range.

■ THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Sound Image UK Ltd, 52 Milton Road, East Sheen, London SW14 8JR.

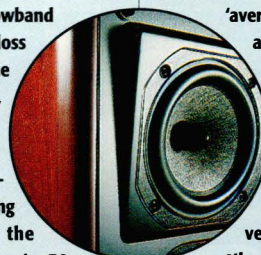
☎ (020) 8255 6868

THE LAB REPORT

Computed between 500Hz and 8kHz, the Electra's 3rd-octave response yields a sensitivity of some 89.5dB (re. 2.83V/1m) which is a little shy of the rated 91.5dB. This, and a narrowband trace, also reveals some loss in output just prior to the 2.8kHz crossover region, after which the inverted dome tweeter rallies to provide a more even-handed presence and strong treble band. Toeing the speakers inwards by up to 30 degrees provides a far more even balance, 'filling-in' the slight suck-out while simultaneously taming the strong treble.

The decently high sensitivity ties in with very low levels of harmonic distortion

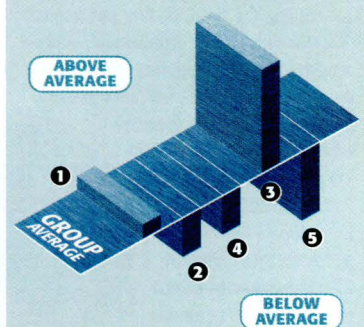
(though not necessarily low coloration) which are typically better than 0.4 per cent at 96dBA. The maximum sound levels generated by a pair of 905's in the 'average' room are likely to be around 105-106dBA. Phase angles are modest above 200Hz or so, and the mean impedance of 8.7 Ohm (minimum of 4.3 Ohm at 200Hz) is not especially tough. The bass/mid driver(s) are sharply tuned with a 4th-order roll-off and high-Q port resonance at 63Hz that's closely aligned to a very sharp notch (in the driver output) at 58Hz. The end result looks a little 'peaky' rather than one that might encourage a smoothly extended low bass. **PMI**



HOW IT COMPARES

A well-balanced standmount, offering good sensitivity and loudness for the size with consistently low distortion across the audio range.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	10%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-25%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-25%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	70%
5 BASS EXTENSION	-45%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	91.5dB	89.5dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohm	8.7 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	57Hz	40Hz

PMC FB1

PMC has built itself a fine reputation in the professional monitoring sector over the past 10 years, its larger models widely used by Hollywood film studios, and also carrying the personal endorsement of a certain Mr Robbie Williams. *Hi-fi Choice* has got on very well with its more domestically oriented models, which are notable for their smooth and relaxed balance and fine transparency.

Fashion is not a priority down at PMC, which explains why this new design is actually the company's first domestic floorstanding model. The designers didn't exactly rush things either, as its first show appearance in Spring 1999 was several months before production actually started.

Now finalised, the £1,275 FB1 is an attractively slim and rather tall floorstander with nicely rounded baffle edges, finished (in the finest Castle tradition) in a choice of five high-quality real wood veneers. A curvaceous black MDF plinth extends the footprint, providing secure accommodation for chunky floor spikes, and greatly improving appearance and overall stability.

Transmission lines are PMC's favourite method of loading a bass driver, and a metre tall floor-standing enclosure makes a natural partner. Although a transmission line shows some similar characteristics to reflex loading, the idea is to use the long, tapered and damped conduit – three metres effective length in the case of the FB1 – to absorb the midrange output from the back of the cone, so

that only the low bass gets right down through to the large port output down at floor level and reinforces the direct output from the main driver. Creating the folded, tapered line makes cabinet construction both complex and expensive, but a useful by-product is that the internal partitions provide considerable stiffening for the side panels.

It came as some surprise to find that the FB1 actually uses the same two-way driver line up as the company's TB1 models – two sub-£500 stand-mounts which received Best Buy ratings in HFCs 160 and 177. That said, these Vifa units are quality items, the main driver using a 170mm cast alloy frame with a 125mm doped paper cone, while the tweeter has a 25mm metal dome with protective phase compensator.

Twin terminals permit bi-wire/-amp options, and PMC also offers powered versions, primarily for its Pro customers, using Bryston

power amps fitted onto the back panel.

Far field in-room measurements show that the transmission line is very effective in generating full bass extension, and indicate the speaker will give the most even balance when clear of walls.

SOUND QUALITY

The listening tests gave mixed results, two panelists giving the

FB1 their top marks for the day, whilst the other two were rather less impressed. I suspect the doubters were reacting to PMC's characteristically slightly laid-back balance, as extended subsequent hands-on listening left me quite convinced that this is an exceptionally fine loudspeaker in the group context, even if it could perhaps be smoother overall.

It's sonically very cultured and refined, with exceptional dynamic range throughout, excellent timing, and clean, lively dynamics. Stereo images have good ambience recovery and fine transparency, combining a freedom from boxiness with delicate detailing and plenty of weight.

CONCLUSION

A class act, no question. The FB1's real strength is the way it combines the lively coherence of a high quality two-way, with the sort of bass weight and extension normally only found with multi-way designs.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£1,275.00

This good-looking transmission line design has the lively coherence of a simple two-way alongside full scale bass weight and extension.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

Unit 72 Haslemere Ind Est, Tewin Rd, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL7 1BD.
(01707) 393002

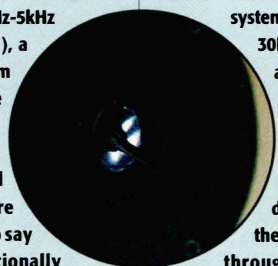
“It came as some surprise to find that the FB1 actually uses the same two-way driver line up as the company's TB1 models.”

THE LAB REPORT

It's not uncommon for PMC's speakers to be a little over-rated on sensitivity (see HFC 199), but the large FB1 fails to achieve its 90dB specification by some margin. In practice, and over an 800Hz-5kHz span (see Oasis, HFC 201), a figure of 87.2dB/2.83V/1m is more realistic and in line with the 88dB-rated TB1 derivative. PMC has confirmed my figures and will amend its literature accordingly. I'm bound to say the speaker's exceptionally smooth axial response – flat as a millpond from 400Hz through to 8kHz – is recom-pense enough, as is the easy loading.

Toe in by 15 degrees to take what edge might remain off the alloy tweeter, and the

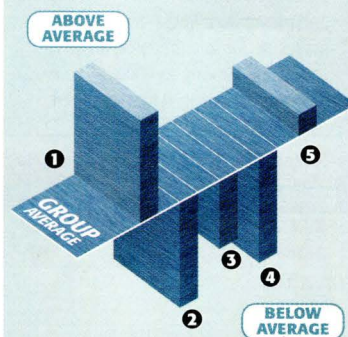
FB1 begins to look like a very flat monitor indeed. But perhaps the most interesting 'feature' of the FB1 is its bass. Using a 3m-transmission line for bass loading, the system is ostensibly tuned to 30Hz but its principle output appears at 165Hz (+7dB) just before the line 'rolls-off'. There's a glitch on both phase and impedance traces here while distortion also climbs from the 0.5 per cent enjoyed through the midband to an alarming 4.5 per cent of almost pure 2nd harmonic. If nothing else, this will add 'character' to the FB1's bass register not unlike the similarly well-received Castle Severn (see p30). **PMi**



HOW IT COMPARES

An easy-going load plus a very flat and neutral upper bass/midrange is earned at the expense of some sensitivity. Bass distortion is high, however.

1 EASE OF DRIVE	70%
2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-70%
3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-45%
4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-70%
5 BASS EXTENSION	15%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	90dB	87.2dB
■ Impedance (Nominal/Mean)	8 Ohm	11.5 Ohm
■ Estimated Bass Extension	22Hz	35Hz

SPEAKERS

CONCLUSIONS

THE BEST IN THE TEST



**HI FI CHOICE
BEST BUY**

DYNAUDIO Audience 50
£577.00

Slightly modified, the Audience 50 repeated its giant-killing act this time around. It sounds impressively clean, lively and agile, with a wide dynamic range and fine balance and voicing.



**HI FI CHOICE
BEST BUY**

PMC FB1 £1,275.00

The FB1's real strength is in the way it combines the lively coherence of a high quality two-way, with the sort of bass weight and extension normally only found with multi-way designs.



**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

CASTLE Severn 2 SE £699.90

One of the best looking compact floorstanders around at its price, the Severn 2 SE is more engaging and involving than its predecessor, if rather less neutral through the voice band.



**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

MISSION 775e £799.90

Not a true heavyweight, nor as neutral as some, but a very entertaining and communicative performer nonetheless, and a lot of real wood finish loudspeaker for the asking price.



**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

JMLAB Electra 905 £1,199.00

What the 905 lacks in sheer weight and power handling, it more than makes up for in coherence, subtlety and agility. Among top quality, compact stand-mounts, it has few peers.



**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

BC ACOUSTIQUE Araxe
£1,140.00

Neat and compact, the Araxe might not have the weight of some rivals, but its dynamic literacy and ability to create real musical tension seems more than fair compensation.



**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

DALI Evidence 870 £1,299.95

A whole lot of speaker for your money, the smooth balance comes with massive headroom and copious bass output – perhaps slightly more suited to movie than music replay, overall.



**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

AUDIO NOTE AN-E/D
£1,520.00

This speaker might look a bit of a retro throwback, but the music it makes is as good as ever, and a most elegant compromise, with fine balance, wide bandwidth and expressive dynamics.

MAKE	AUDIO NOTE	BC ACOUSTIQUE	CASTLE	DALI	DYNAUDIO	INFINITY
MODEL	AN-E/D	ARAXE	SEVERN 2 SE	EVIDENCE 870	AUDIENCE 50	KAPPA 70
PRICE	£1,520.00	£1,140.00	£699.90	£1,299.95	£577.00	£795.00
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	5yrs	5yrs	5yrs	5yrs	5yrs	1yr
SIZE (WxHxD, cm)	79x36x27	90x21x21-30	81x21x23	104.6x24.4x36.7	20.4x33x25.6	92x26x26.5
SENSITIVITY@1m/2.83V	90.9dB	93.4dB	89dB	92.1dB	87.6dB	87.7dB
IMPEDANCE (MEAN)	10.3 Ohms	6.5 Ohms	12.6 Ohms	5.1 Ohms	6.6 Ohms	6.0 Ohms
ESTIMATED BASS EXTENSION	25Hz	45Hz	40Hz	28Hz	45Hz	35Hz

**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

**HI FI CHOICE
RECOMMENDED**

**HI FI CHOICE
BEST BUY**

Paul Messenger rummages in his bag of tags for the best speakers in the test.

There's always something interesting to report when we group test this relatively upmarket loudspeaker sector. Within a price range from £500 to over £1,500, designers are not constrained by price, and have the opportunity to indulge in rather more than beer-budget engineering. The consequence is a wide variety of speaker types, shapes and sizes.

Our group of 12 illustrate this very well. They're a very diverse group, including three stand-mounts and nine floorstanders. Five are regular two-ways; three are so-called d'Appolito two-ways (which use two main drivers, mounted above and below the tweeter); two are 'two-and-a-half-ways' (essentially two-ways but with an extra main driver used just to reinforce the bass region); and two are full three-ways (both actually using four drive units, as twin bass drivers allow a slimmer front).

Of these different configurations, the two-ways (including the d'Appolitos) would seem to have the advantage on pure sound quality grounds. Their simplicity tends to bring greater total coherence to individual musical instruments and voices, while larger examples like the PMC FB1 and Audio Note AN-E/D seem fully capable of delivering bass right down into the lowest audible octave. Not surprisingly, the three-

ways offer superior power handling and loudness capability – at least in theory, but in practice this can be compromised because they tend to represent a more difficult load for the driving amplifier.

One surprise was the high sensitivities of a number of the models. The AN E/D's high 91 dB was a true rarity when we tested it in 1992, but in this year's group it's beaten by several other models. Sensitivity refers to how loud a speaker will go for a given electrical (voltage) input, so a high value should mean less work and stress on the amplification. In practice, however, these high sensitivity models usually achieve such high ratings by drawing extra current from the driving amplifier, which at least partly negates any apparent advantage.

Speaker designers today have to bear in mind that their stereo speakers are quite likely to be used for movie as well as music replay. Being a hi-fi magazine, our tests are oriented purely to stereo music, but in the real world many people will be intending to use their main stereo speakers for movies as well. Music and movie replay are fundamentally fully compatible, but in practice movie fans tend to want rather more bass weight and 'thump' than is ideal for music replay.

In my view, probably the best way to accommodate this dual role is to use a separate subwoofer just for movie replay. But I suspect some speaker designers are deliberately adding a little extra bass weight to make their designs rather better suited to a dual role. Furthermore, since the US scene comfortably leads the world in AV system market penetration, it may be no coincidence that the two continental American brands in this Mega Test (Infinity, Mirage) provide two of the more obvious examples of this trend.

Looking at the test group as a whole, the Recommendations show a strong bias towards the more upmarket Group C sector. This is largely coincidental, I'm sure, but it's also a reflection of the way diversity increases with price. It's simply not possible to make a meaningful comparison between, say, the big Dali floor-stander and the compact JMLab stand-mount. Both are fine loudspeakers, but are just too different in conception and capabilities to be likely to appeal to the same buyer. Indeed, to some extent

each shows up the other's limitations – and much the same can be said for all the speakers in Group C.

Recommending the entire group doesn't imply that they're in any way equal. Each has its own particular strengths and limitations. Loudspeakers are peculiarly complex in the number of variables and compromises involved: that's why it's important for the customer to play an active role, in figuring out his/her requirements before starting to work out a shortlist of likely candidates.

BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDATIONS



BEST BUYS: Our famous Best Buy swing-tag is awarded to hi-fi equipment which offers an excellent standard of performance at an attractive price. Best Buy winners are superb all-round components.

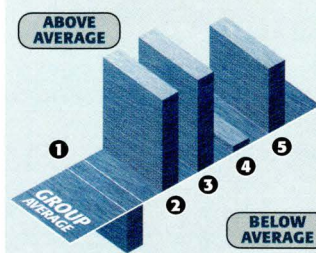


RECOMMENDED: Recommended products are first-class audiophile propositions, losing out to Best Buy status only because of a higher price or less competitive overall sound quality.

UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR GRAPH MEASUREMENTS

Behind Hi-Fi Choice's unique bar graphs are some of the most advanced measurements made anywhere on the planet. They are provided by our Technical Editor, Paul Miller, using both GPIB-controlled measurement hardware and his own award-winning, PC-based Virtual Instrument software. Each bar graph value is derived from a weighted statistic of several key measurements and is displayed relative to a notional zero per cent which represents the group average for that particular category.

THE BAR-GRAPHS



1 EASE OF DRIVE: This is derived from the reactive and resistive components of the speaker load, indicating how tricky it is for the amp to drive.

2 RELATIVE LOUDNESS: Speaker sensitivity is measured at 1m with a 2.83V input across third-octave bands 17-29, then weighted according to the human loudness contour to indicate how 'loud' one speaker will sound relative to another.

3 MAXIMUM LOUDNESS: This takes into account the speaker's sensitivity, distortion, the maximum useable amplifier power and the effects of placement in an 'average room' to gauge the maximum practical Sound Pressure Level.

4 AUDIBLE DISTORTION: This test momentarily raises the output to 96dBa with dynamic signals through bass, midrange and treble. This allows us to more realistically assess distortion.

5 BASS EXTENSION: This gives an indication of the likely bass extension in an 'average' room, according to the maker's suggestions for positioning.

TEST INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR

Our Technical Editor, Paul Miller, has been awarded Test Innovator of the Year by *Test* magazine, the leading European journal of the test and measurement industry. This gong came in recognition of Paul's Jitter Measurement Suite, as used to test CD players for Hi-Fi Choice.

test
The European Test Industry Journal

MAKE	JMLAB	MIRAGE	MISSION	PMC	PROAC	RUARK
MODEL	ELECTRA 905	FRX7	775E	FB1	TABLETTE 2000	PROLOGUE 1R
PRICE	£1,199.00	£549.90	£799.90	£1,275.00	£899.00	£949.00
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	3yrs	5yrs	2yrs	5yrs	5yrs	5yrs
SIZE (WxDxD, cms)	47x23.5x28	91.4x17.5x33	110x22.5x32	100x20x30	35.6x11.9x24.1	90x17.5x28.5
SENSITIVITY@1m/2.83V	89.5dB	88.1dB	93.0dB	87.2dB	85.6dB	89.5dB
IMPEDANCE (MEAN)	8.7 Ohms	9.6 Ohms	8.0 Ohms	11.5 Ohms	14.8 Ohms	9.0 Ohms
ESTIMATED BASS EXTENSION	40Hz	35Hz	30Hz	35Hz	40Hz	40Hz
STATUS	HI FI CHOICE RECOMMENDED		HI FI CHOICE RECOMMENDED	HI FI CHOICE BEST BUY		

HELP

Panic on the streets of Hull. Panic on the streets of Swansea. Not to worry – Tim Bower's here to solve your hi-fi hassles.

Are four speakers better than two? My

Marantz PM-48 amp gives the option.

Johan De Silva, via email

For a two-channel music source like CD or vinyl, definitely not. You can use the extra terminals on your amp to add speakers in another room.

Home hi-fi killed the radio star



I used to be a member of my local hospital radio station. The station had a pair of Technics SL-1210 MkII turntables, hooked through a professional SoundCRAFT mixing desk, with a budget amp and speakers on the end. At home I use an old Marantz 873se CD player (bought in 1989), a Cyrus 1 amp and Mission 737 LE speakers, but I much prefer the sound we produced at the station. It seemed warmer and more natural, with more width and depth. In comparison, my set-up sounds flat, sterile and less than engaging. Is this because quality turntables produce a superior sound to CD players? As a result, I am thinking of buying a turntable (possibly the Technics).

Robert Thomas, West Glamorgan

In many ways vinyl is a superior sound source to CD, though the gap has closed in recent years. It's also true to say that you have to spend a considerable amount of time and money to unlock vinyl's full

A different corner



My current system consists of an Arcam Alpha 8 CD player, Linn Intek amplifier, Tannoy Profile 633 Speakers, Gale speaker cable and SonicLink Red interconnects. I listen to rock, classical and bhangra music. I was happy with my system until I moved to my current address, where my listening room is about 5x9m with a 0.5m void under the wooden floor.

I recently added a Yamaha DSP-E492 surround processor and Pioneer DV-626D DVD Player after reading your recommendations! Since then I've had to rearrange the room and move the speakers into the corners for multi-channel. Now I'm happy with surround sound, but I'm less sure about the hi-fi performance – I've now got rather boomy bass. I'd appreciate your thoughts on how I can best upgrade my system. Should I replace the aged amp, upgrade the CD player to an 8SE or 9, or replace the speakers and cables?

Dev Ruprai, via e-mail

Ah, so the addition of surround sound has had an adverse effect on your system's two-channel performance. Sad, but often the case. You've gone about it the right way, adding a decent processor to your existing hi-fi amp instead of switching to a home cinema integrated, but moving your speakers to the corners is sure to have contributed to the boominess you describe. Try placing them on Mana Sound Base plinths (£175 per pair) to help tighten things up, or if that's too steep you could try a couple of slabs of concrete from your local builder's merchant. Also, try to bring them out from the corners if at all possible.

potential, while the quality of budget CD players has steadily improved through the '90s.

Though it's hardly the most 'hi-fi' of turntables, it is no surprise to hear the Technics sounded more inviting than your rather elderly budget CD player. The mixing desk may have also added its own signature to the mix, perhaps making things sound more attractive to your ears with the benefit of 'EQ'. If you were to buy a good, affordable CD player today – Arcam's Alpha 7SE, say (£350) – the chances are you would find it much more listenable.

However, we would certainly recommend you invest in a decent turntable too, particularly if you've got the vinyl to make it worthwhile. The Technics is more DJ oriented; try something like the Audio Note AN-TT1 (£594) or Rega Planar 25 (£619) instead.



Magnum double



I have a Magnum IA-170 amp and I'm looking for a CD player and speakers to go with it. On the speaker side I'm interested in the B&W CDM1SE or ProAc Tablette 50, but I have no idea regarding the CD. What would you recommend? I listen to all kinds of music, including classical, rock, soul, blues, jazz and electro.

Tibor Nadai, via e-mail

Your Magnum shouldn't have any problem with either of the speakers you mention. Both are relatively laid back in tone, with particular strength in mid-band performance. If you would like to try an alternative that is arguably a little more engaging seek out Dynaudio's Audience 50 (£577). As for the CD player, Rotel's RCD-971 (£450) would match very nicely, or for something different try Rega's Planet (£450).





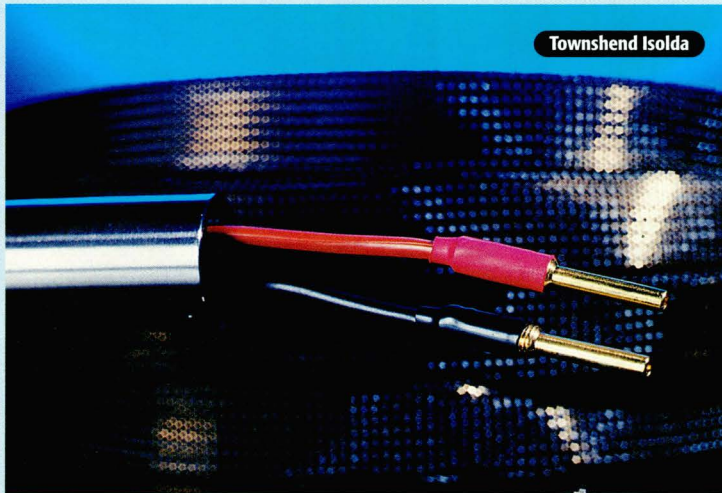
Hi-fi choice – literally!



I am planning to build a small system for my humble abode, preferably around one of the following three amplifiers: Primare A10, Marantz PM-66 KI Signature or Cyrus 7. Could you shed some light on the relative merits of these individual amps? I want an open and lively sound, with plenty of ambience and detail.

Kenneth Kin Yeang Chan, via e-mail

You are considering three very fine amplifiers, Kenneth. The Marantz has proved something of a bargain at £400, but is about to be replaced by the PM-6010 KI Signature, on which we shall reserve judgement until a sample is available. Between the Primare (£500) and Cyrus (£700) it is really a matter of personal preference. The Cyrus offers a touch more refinement and excellent imaging, but the Primare is equally agile, superbly built and £200 less. You're going to have to make the final choice yourself by auditioning, but whichever you choose you will be the basis for a very fine system indeed.



Making the upgrade



My system consists of a Sony SCD-777ES SACD player, an Arcam Alpha 10 amp bi-amped with a 10P, B&W Nautilus 805 speakers, QED Genesis speaker cable and Chord Anthem interconnects. For my next upgrade I am considering three options and would be very grateful for any opinions as to which would be the best route. First, upgrade the amps to a Chord CPA 2200 and SPM 600 (this will really break the bank). Second, upgrade the 805s to 803s. Third, add a subwoofer B&W or REL, don't know which model yet. Any ideas?

Stefan Avey, via e-mail

In terms of your bass preferences, you are ultimately limited by your speakers, so an upgrade to 803s or the addition of a subwoofer would be logical routes. However, the 803 can be a difficult beast to drive, and it may be that your Arcam combo might reveal its limitations. On the other hand, if you splash out on an expensive sub you may later find it surplus to requirements when funds eventually allow upgrades to both amp and speakers.

Our advice would be to maximise the bass potential of your existing set-up before you make any main component upgrades. Consider changing your speaker cable to Townshend Isolda (£50/m), which works wonders with bass. Also think about a Townshend Seismic Stand, or two Seismic Sinks, for the electronics.

Then try to audition the Nautilus 803 with your Arcam amp set-up. If you feel it is being properly driven, and you like what you hear, that may be your answer. Otherwise, we would probably go for a musical and relatively affordable subwoofer like the REL Storm III (£800).

Gold dust



Many moons ago, I purchased an A&R A60 amplifier having read an article by your colleague Andrew Gold (*Who he? – Ed*) who enthused over it. The subsequent demonstration of the amp proved him to be absolutely correct.

I use the amp with ageing baby Gale GS1 speakers and an original Marantz CD-63 CD player. I am now in the market to replace all of these and have £1,500 to spend.

Don Langton, via e-mail

We can give you a starting point, Don, but the important part is to take some of your favourite discs to a specialist dealer and arrange some auditions. It's also important to leave some of your budget aside for cables and supports, assuming you don't already have some of a suitable calibre. A combination we rate highly which falls within your price bracket consists of the Arcam Alpha 7SE CD player (£350), Audio Analogue Puccini amp (£450) and Dynaudio Audience 40 speakers (£400), which comes to a total of £1,200. You could also consider swapping the CD for Rotel's RCD-971 (£450), the amp for Musical Fidelity's new X-A2 (£499) and if you fancy floorstanding speakers how about the Mission 773e (£400) or Tannoy Revolution R2 (£350).

By the way, Mr. Gold's christian name is Alvin.



HELP

Which is the best CD player: the NAD Silverline S500 or the Musical Fidelity A3?

Samir Berrada, Sweden

We love them both, Samir. The A3 is arguably more engaging and slightly better value at £800, but the only way to decide is to audition them both.

Q Can you recommend an inexpensive flat cable to run under the carpet, no more than £2 or £3 per metre?

*Christopher Jenkins,
Swansea*

A Prowire's Out of Site (£1.99/m) is designed expressly for that purpose and it does a decent sonic job too.

Transatlantic cable



I have just bought a Musical Fidelity A300 amp, with matching tuner and CD player, and a pair of Sonus Faber Grand Piano speakers. What brand of interconnect and speaker cables would you recommend for the above system? Please note that I live in USA, in Seattle, so UK brand interconnects may not be available.
Renan Jeffereis, USA

Given your requirements, we would recommend Supra EFF-ISL interconnects and Goertz speaker cables. The latter come from the US; the former are from Sweden but are well distributed. You may also like to audition some cables from Kimber (also North American) whose extensive range of interconnects and speaker cables have consistently done well in our tests.

Opposites detract



The layout of our family room dictates that I have to have my TV along the same wall as my speakers – Jean-Marie Reynaud Studio 3 floorstanders. Unfortunately, they are not magnetically shielded and I can't quite keep the speakers far enough apart so as not to influence the TV, which is starting to show the effects. I am happy with the speakers' sound but I'm willing to move them to another room if I can find some magnetically shielded bookshelf speakers I like. My budget is around £1,000. What do you recommend?

Also, what do manufacturers use to shield the speakers? If I can't find the right speaker, could I build this material into my speaker's cabinets myself?

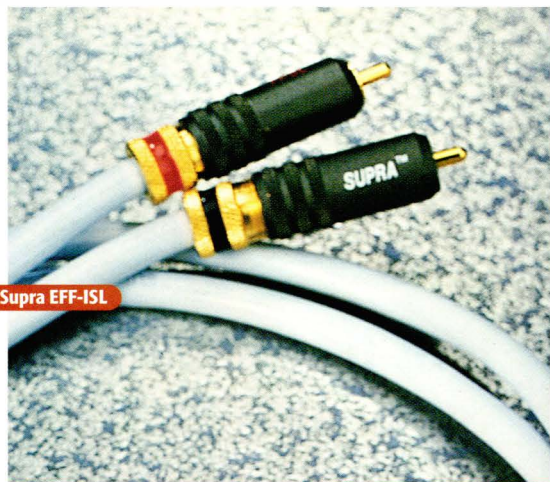
Nicolas, via email

There are a number of excellent bookshelf speakers around the £1,000 mark, some of which are magnetically shielded. The top contenders include Celestion's A1 (£899), a beautifully made and relatively large standmount with a similarly substantial sound. If you prefer a sound that's not quite so enveloping but a touch more agile try Dynaudio's Contour 1.3 MkII (£1,198).

Magnetic shielding is not a particularly straightforward process, so unless you have experience in sourcing materials and building your own speakers it's probably not a viable option. One material used to shield drive units is mu-metal (as in the Greek symbol μ), which is effective but quite expensive. Reverse magnets can also be used to cancel stray flux.



Celestion A1



Supra EFF-ISL

Up the Creek



May I pick your brains for some buying advice? My listening room is approximately 17x10 feet, with speakers firing across the room. I sit about eight feet from the speakers, though I sometimes wonder about moving them so they fire down the room, but that would make the seating awkward. I mainly listen to classical music – orchestral, voice, piano and especially organ, plus some folk and country.

I use a hearing aid and my sensitivity to high frequencies has deteriorated. My budget for CD player, amp and speakers is £3,000-£5,000 or so but, bearing in mind my hearing loss, is there any real benefit in going beyond the lower figure? My thoughts so far concern the Creek P43R/A52SE pre/power combo and Arcam Alpha 9 CD player, but nothing yet for speakers. I'd be right grateful for your expert comment.

Simon Mountford, via email



Creek P43R/A52SE

And we're right pleased to be able to help, Simon. The Creek pre/power combo you're considering is an excellent example of the breed; full and mellifluous, and strong value at £949. It will work nicely with the Arcam Alpha 9 CD player, particularly if you want a sound that is substantial yet offers an abundance of subtle detail. If you would like to audition this combination against something else, you might like to consider CD and amp combinations from Musical Fidelity's 'A' Series and NAD's Silverline range, or an all-Arcam set-up from the excellent top-of-the-range FMJ kit.


Check out some good standmounted speakers like the Dynaudio Contour 1.3II (£1,198), Jamo D830 (formally Concert 8, £1,365) and Chario Academy Millennium 2 (£2,100).

The only way to assess how much you should spend is to audition a variety of equipment at stepped price points until you are no longer receiving the sonic gains to warrant further outlay. As for speaker positioning, rooms are unpredictable and the only real way to see which works best is to try the alternatives.



Audio Analogue puccini Remote


Routine check-up

 At present my system consists of the following: Pioneer DV-717 DVD player, Denon DRM-800 cassette deck, Arcam Delta 90 amp and B&W DM602 S2 speakers on Atacama stands. Can you see any fault with my present set-up? I intend to upgrade my amplifier to either an Audio Analogue Puccini Remote, Musical Fidelity X-A1, Densen Beat 100 or Cyrus 5. With a budget of around £650, is this a wise choice? Classical music makes up 95 per cent of my musical diet.

E. Wood, Gloucester

Pioneer's DV-717 (£550) is one of the best DVD-Video players we've heard with CDs, but it is outshone by dedicated CD players at the price – Rotel's RCD-971 (£450), say. Before you take the plunge with an amp, you might try auditioning in that area; relegating the Pioneer to video duties might prove a worthwhile option. Amp-wise, given your musical preference, you might find something like the Primare A10 (£500) more appealing. The Cyrus 5 is still an unknown quantity (until next issue at least) and the X-A1 is in the throws of being replaced by the X-A2 (£499).

Get Linn there!

 I am looking to purchase a pair of floorstanding speakers and a turntable, with around £1,000 to spend. I am considering a pair of B&W DM603 S2s and a second-hand Linn LP12, and I am interested in your opinion. I listen to 60s pop and 70s rock (especially Led Zeppelin) and 90s rock and dance (not pop).


Graham Greenwood, Hull

The B&W DM603 S2 (£550) would be an excellent choice – it offers prodigious bass coupled with an expressive midrange.

However, you should note that it is happier at relatively loud levels, and it doesn't take kindly to sluggish-sounding amps. You should also listen to the Mission 774 (£500) for a rather more direct style of sound. As for the Linn, if you can find one you can afford and you are happy with its condition, go for it – LP12s can make great second-hand buys. In terms of new decks, consider Audio Note and Rega.



Natural Evolution

 My main system consists of a Roksan Radius turntable, Marantz CD-1711 CD player, Musical Fidelity X-24K DAC and Snell E5 Tower speakers. I used to use an Aura Evolution VA100 amp, but recently converted to surround sound and replaced it with a Yamaha RX-V795, with Snell centre and rear speakers. The Aura is now ensconced in a secondary two-channel system elsewhere.

My problem is that I am quite happy with the multi-channel set-up with movies, but I miss the old Aura when I play music. Detail, bass, space and cohesiveness are all lacking via the Yamaha; I guess I need to upgrade to a better AV amp system in order to satisfy my musical needs. My budget can stretch to £5,000 but I'd rather stay below £2,500 if possible, and I'm considering Arcam, Roksan, Myryad or even the TAG McLaren if I have to spend that much.

Martin J. Long, Singapore

Truth is, up to this point the majority of multi-channel amps have been more concerned with cinema processing than sonic purity. However, as multi-channel has become bigger business, more and more specialist hi-fi brands have got in on the act – partly with DVD-Audio and SACD in mind. It's now quite fashionable to make multi-channel gear that claims to have a 'music first' philosophy. The downside is that most of this kit is quite costly.

From a musical perspective, the best multi-channel system I have used at home centred around TAG McLaren's excellent AV32R processor (£2,000), with five Musical Fidelity X-200 mono power amps (£1,000 per pair). On a more affordable level, the three other brands you mention – Arcam, Myryad and Roksan – are all worthy of audition. We reviewed both the Roksan Caspian DSP/5-channel combo (£2,290) and Arcam Alpha 10 DAVE (£2,500) in our January 2000 edition and marginally preferred the Arcam – the Roksan delivers a touch more weight but the Arcam is better with subtle detail.

I recently obtained an Orelle CD and amp combination.

Which speakers would you recommend I partner them with, bearing in mind I can get a discount with Musical Technology?

Andre Aribi, via email

Try the Musical Technology Falcon (£680), or for a more dramatic sound the Triangle Zephyr II (£599).



A3 RANGE.

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FRONT PANEL.

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MUSICAL FIDELITY

BUYING GUIDE TO TUNERS



For years, the world of radio tuners has been on the hi-fi back burner. Units have still sold, as people add them to their system for a spot of air-wave surfing

when they mood takes them, but the number of hi-fi buyers who count radio as a major source are relatively few. However, in recent times the tuner has become big technological news. The reason? Digital Radio, aka Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB).

Just like TV, radio is in the process of switching from analogue broadcasts (FM/AM/LW) to digital. It is inevitably a long process – even the most pro-digital estimates reckon FM will still be around as this decade draws to a close. But digital is already with us, and it offers a number of advantages over FM and AM which may tempt you to change sooner rather than later.

So, if you listen to the radio and you want a hi-fi tuner, there is now an additional choice to be made. It is no longer simply a question of "Which model should I buy?" Now you need to ask yourself, "Which format is best for me: FM/AM or digital?"

The arguments for digital...

Just like digital TV, the primary argument put forward by the digital camp concerns choice. With the FM waveband now massively crowded and hopeful stations fighting for very limited licences, digital transmission opens up a whole new area in which broadcasters can operate. Digital-only stations are beginning to emerge; the first to start up late last year were Planet Rock and Core, both national stations encompassing 'classic rock' and 'contemporary hits' respectively.

These are in addition to many established stations now broadcasting on both FM (or AM) and digital, including BBC Radios One to Five Live and commercial stations like Virgin, Talk Radio and Classic FM. In London there are now more than 20 stations pilot broadcasting in digital, including the likes of Kiss, Xfm, Heart, Capitol Gold, News Direct and LBC all. And the number of stations nationwide is set to grow, with the opportunity to offer the kind of specialist programming and extended live coverage not possible on crowded FM.

Another crucial benefit is sound quality. Digital Radio is immune from the multipath distortion and ignition interference that can plague FM, and offers the potential to banish 'poor reception' for good. What's more, the BBC's main stations are broadcast without the additional compression associated with FM, which raises the format's sonic potential further. And crisp sound should be achievable with just a basic indoor aera.

Another pro-digital argument is ease of use: simply choose from a list of available stations instead of tuning between different frequencies. And finally there's Digital Radio's capacity to provide data along with audio infor-

mation, which far exceeds that of FM's RDS system – future tuners could come equipped with a large TV-like screen to display text and images.

...And the arguments against

If all that sounds too good to be true, well, perhaps it is – at least for the moment. Despite the aforementioned performance advantages, Digital Radio remains sonically hampered by the MPEG Layer 2 data reduction system which is fundamental to its operation. This does a considerable amount of damage to its outward promise of CD-quality sound – at 48kHz/16-bit it is potentially slightly better, before reduction. At present, data rates are around half that of MiniDisc, depending on the broadcast, and that's plainly not good from a sonic standpoint.

It should be said that quality varies not just from station to station but also broadcast to broadcast, and that quality is increasing as broadcasters discover how to get the most from the system. Coders and their algorithms are also likely to improve over time, and manufacturers will no doubt improve the quality available to the end user. After all, these are early days.

In addition to quality, there is also the question of coverage. Only around 69% of the population is currently in the digital catchment area, and even within that area there appear to be localised 'holes'. Coverage will widen, of course, but it's something to bear in mind.

So what should you do?

For most people, the time is not yet right to dive into Digital Radio. The tuners are expensive and for the casual listener a good budget FM/AM model will do perfectly well. Serious radio listeners are likely to be better served by a high quality analogue tuner and a decent roof aerial than by the current range of digital models on the market. But quality will improve, prices will fall and one day we will all go digital.

However, if you're keen to invest in a piece of broadcasting future today it may be safest to opt for one of the current hybrid tuners, serving up FM, AM and LW as well as digital – in theory the best of both worlds. We're impressed with Sony's STS-777ES, reviewed this issue (see page 17).

Getting the most from your tuner

Like all hi-fi components, tuners benefit from isolation. Use a good quality equipment support, perhaps with an additional isolation platform to sit the tuner on. Decent interconnects are equally important, and if you want to get the most from FM broadcasts a good roof aerial is essential – it's just as fundamental as a turntable's arm and cartridge. Contact a local aerial specialist to find out about which type of 'twig' is best for the area. For additional information you could try Luton-based hi-fi stalwart Ron Smith Aerials on (01582) 736561.

SIX OF THE BEST



FM/AM

CREEK T43 £399

UK-made tuner which eschews RDS frills in favour of excellent, mellifluous sound.



DENON TU-260L II £130

The latest version of Denon's little classic – shows how good a budget FM/AM tuner can sound.

NAIM NAT01 £1,780

There may be better sounding FM tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one.

DIGITAL

ARCAM Alpha 10 DRT £800

The best sounding DAB tuner we've tried, a bit short on presets though.

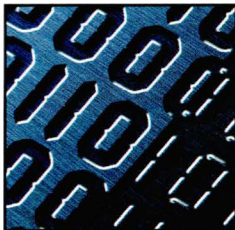
SONY STD-777ES £550

Excellent amalgamation of digital and FM/MW/LW reception.

TECHNICS ST-GT1000 £500

The most affordable digital model yet, includes FM/AM reception. Good value all round.





PAUL MILLER'S OASIS OF SANITY

Paul introduces the technology to split the men from the boys in surround sound processing.

What with all the excitement generated by MP3 and competing data-compression schemes, including AAC (a collaborative effort between Sony, Dolby, AT&T and the Fraunhofer Institute), it's easy to forget that the most significant 'perceptual coding' regime has already been with us for over eight years. This is Dolby AC-3, latterly known as Dolby Digital, and the first practical data compression regime specifically conceived for multi-channel audio, whether this is realized as a movie soundtrack or surround sound music.

I have covered data reduction and compression technologies

as far back as 1992 when we explored Philips' now defunct DCC (HFC 110), right up to the present day with Sony's MD and the PC-orientated MP3 (HFC 196 and 201). The rationale behind all these schemes, including Dolby's AC-3, is broadly similar. How to squeeze as much information into the least number of data bits for either storage (on disc) or transmission (via satellite or between a DVD player and decoder, for example).

Without any data reduction, a 5.1-channel linear PCM audio program would occupy: 6 channels x 48 kHz sampling x 18-bits resolution or a whopping 5.184 Mbps (5184kbps). In practice, AC-3 squeezes these discrete 5.1

channels into a single, serial bit-stream of code running at just 384kbps which represents a data-saving of 13.5-to-1.

Two techniques are employed in tandem. The first is a form of

space are removed. This allows more information to be represented by less digital data, without interfering with the music that it describes. Where data rates must be reduced still

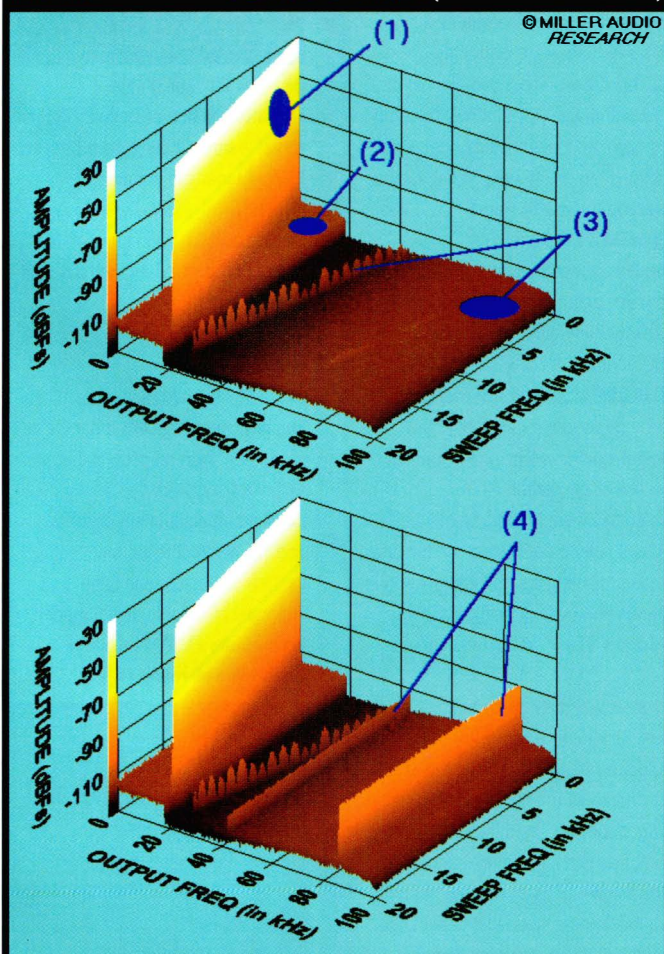
"No 'lossy' compression is entirely transparent, but some certainly sound sweeter than others."

'lossless' compression, so called because the description of the data (in this case, music) is left wholly intact. Instead of coding each sample of data with a full 16 or 24-bits, any excess digital 0's that are simply taking up

further, as is the case with MD, MP3, AC-3 and its competitor, dts, then a type of 'lossy' compression must also be entertained.

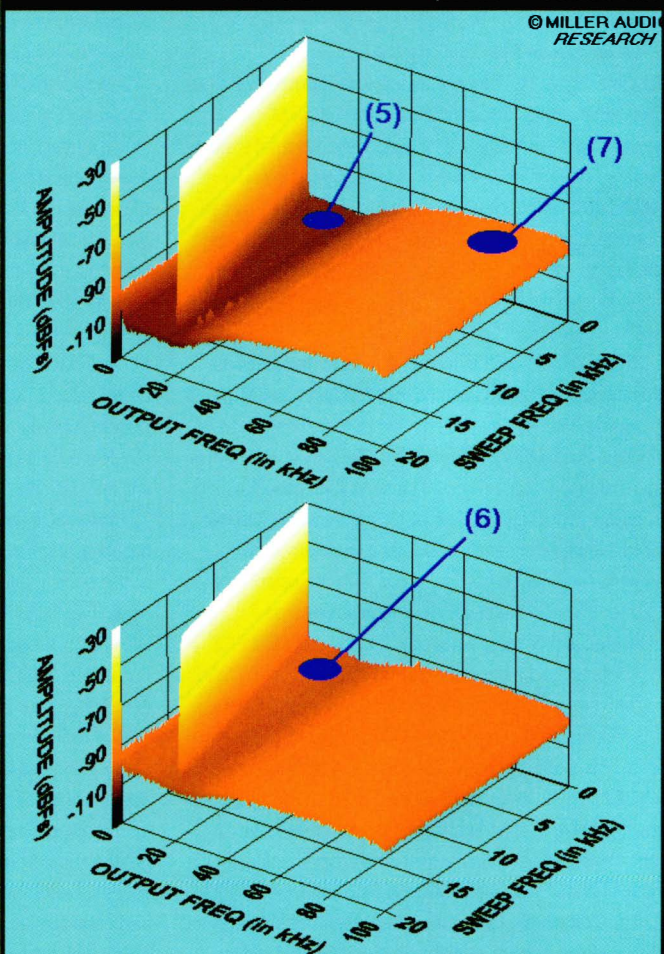
As its name suggests, 'lossy' compression is an adaptive

McLAREN AV32R: DD DECODE @ -30dBFS (FRONT & SURROUND)



Distortion and spurious produced by McLaren AV32R in response to a Dolby Digital 5.1 channel input (front and surround).

ROTEL RSP-966: DD DECODE @ -30dBFS (FRONT & SURROUND)



Distortion and spurious produced by Rotel RSP-966 in response to a Dolby Digital 5.1 channel input (front and surround).

selection process that decides, moment by moment, what elements of a musical performance may be coded at lower resolution or discarded altogether without there being too heavy a subjective impact. Like other lossy coders, AC-3 divides the musical spectrum up into a series of narrow frequency bands which are allocated data bits from a limited 'pool' according to the spectral and temporal nature of the program.

Those frequency bands containing a percussive sound might momentarily require more data bits for an accurate description than a sustained organ note, for example. Similarly, a quietly plucked bass string might be rejected or masked by the overwhelming presence of a timpani being struck. During the encoding process, these decisions are made according to a built-in psycho-acoustical model of our hearing. And it's the efficacy of this 'perceptual audio coding' that separates the 'sound' of Dolby Digital from dts, MD, MP3 and other regimes.

No 'lossy' compression is entirely transparent, but some certainly sound sweeter than others (see HFC 201) and AC-3 is reckoned to be up with the best. AC-3 encoding is certainly very economic with subcode used to instruct the decoder, leaving as

much data as possible to define the audio itself. No stone is left unturned in the quest to pack in data more efficiently. For example, data is saved by grouping high frequency bands together in envelopes, which are still sufficient for the human ear to localise effectively.

Furthermore, AC-3 avoids any sort of matrixing (L+R or L-R as used by Dolby Pro-Logic, for example), thereby preventing one channel's quantisation noise (a type of digital distortion) from popping-up in another where, in all likelihood, it might be more audible. Moreover, its flexible bit allocation capitalizes on the multiplicity of channels by accounting for both intra- and inter-channel masking effects and assigning bits accordingly. As a rule of thumb, the average data rate of a multiple channel regime is proportional to the square root of the number of channels. So, if 128kbps are required to encode a single channel, then 128x(root 5.1) or 289kbps is necessary for AC-3.

According to Dolby's specification, AC-3 will handle 20-bit data over a maximum 3Hz-20.3kHz frequency range with the bass effects channel spanning just 3-120 Hz. Sampling rates of 32kHz, 44.1kHz and 48kHz are supported with data rates

ranging from as low as 32kbps for a single mono channel to as high as 640 kbps for 5.1 channel audio. Typical applications include 384kbps for 5.1-channel Dolby Digital consumer formats and 192kbps for two-channel audio distribution.

In the format's infancy, an AC-3 decoder would have required some five 27MHz Motorola 56001 processors for full 5.1

channel operation, but this was subsequently condensed onto a single Zoran ZR-38000 chip before commercial decoders became widespread. Decoder technology has moved on since then, and it's this hot processor technology that's shoe-horned into the AV amps and decoders currently on the market.

MCLAREN'S LEAD

Measurement technology has also kept apace, so we can now 'see' inside these devices and witness just how effective different decoders are at handling compressed, multi-channel data. Quite the best example I've encountered is provided by McLaren's AV32R, which utilises Analog Devices' 60MHz ADSP-21065L, 32-bit SHARC DSP for decoding in conjunction with six separate 24-bit bitstream DACs from AKM. The same signals used to create my 3D plots (familiar to regular readers in our analysis of CD player performance) are replicated here as Dolby Digital (AC-3) encoded 5.1-channel data.

The spectral integrity of McLaren's decoder is clear to see (Figure 1) as the 20Hz-20kHz sweep (1) is reproduced from both front (upper plot) and surround channels (lower plot), free of distortion in the audioband (2). The mild curve of ultrasonic noise and oversampling ripple (3) originates with the DACs and not the decoder, with only some leakage of sample tones (4) to spoil the surround channel's otherwise near-perfect specification. Few CD players look this good!

NOISE POLLUTION

Rotel's RSP-966 AV processor is a more affordable implementation of Crystal's CS492604 Dolby digital/dts decoder with all six DACs (front L/R, center, surround L/R and LFE) combined on a single CS4226 substrate. The 3D plot looks clean enough but there's an obvious increase in noise (or a loss in dynamic range) both in (5) and outside (7) of the audioband. The surround channel is noisier still (6) as evidenced by the lighter color of the plot, but there's no aggressive distortion or digital images to adversely affect its sound.

BURNING RIDGES

More affordable still at just £350, but clearly running into

GLOSSARY

5.1 CHANNEL AUDIO: Six discrete channels, typically front left and right, centre, surround left and right, and LFE (Low Frequency Effects).

AC-3: Audio Code number 3, the compression algorithm that lies behind the familiar name of Dolby Digital.

LOSSLESS COMPRESSION (IN THIS INSTANCE): A method of reducing the number of data bits (density) without corrupting the original description of the musical signal.

LOSSY COMPRESSION: Reduction in data density by recourse to a psycho-acoustical model that predicts what is, and what is not, audible within a sequence of music.

QUANTISATION NOISE: A form of distortion or noise resulting from errors in the description of the musical signal by the digital code.

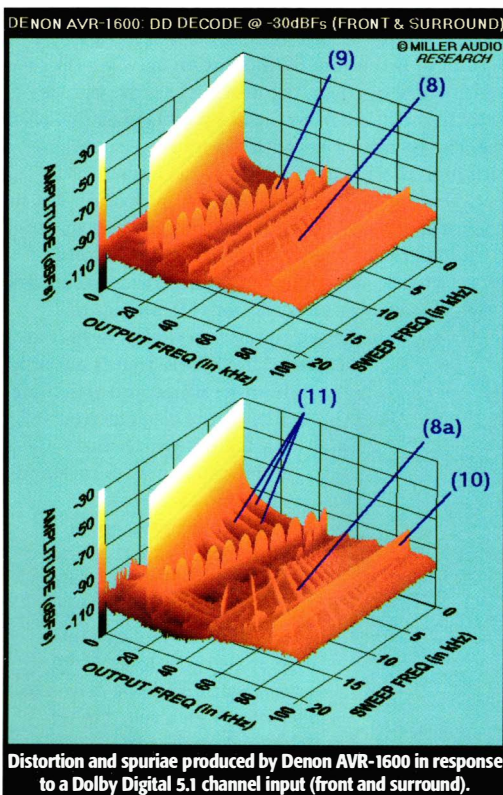
SAMPLE RATE: The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For AC-3 this is typically 48kHz or once every 0.021msec (0.021 thousandths of a second).

problems, is Denon's AVR-1600 AV amplifier which uses a mix of Zoran's ZR38601 Dolby Digital processor with an AKM AK4526 codec containing the six DACs. Both the front channels (upper plot) and surround channels (lower plot) include an extended pattern of harmonic distortions (8) (increasing on the surrounds, 8a), a strong stop-band image (9) released by the DAC's oversampling filter, and leaky sample tones (10).

This will undoubtedly colour the sound of the amplifier. Of potentially greater significance, though, is the evidence of corrupted data realized as 'ridges' on the two plots (11). Whether this is due to a series of momentary dropouts (which may manifest as audible 'clicks' or be too short to be directly audible) or through incomplete or incorrect decoding is unclear.

Fortunately, this problem is not carried over to Denon's costlier SHARC-based AV amplifiers but it does go to show that compromises are, perhaps, inevitable in all-singing, all-dancing AV amps at bargain prices. This month's technical diversion also demonstrates that the differences between commercial AV decoders and DACs look to be as great, if not greater, than those between competing CD players.

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



Prodigal Fun

*Alvin Gold finds himself dwarfed and drowned out – but thankfully not too shocked –
by Martin-Logan's new electrostatic speakers.*

Martin-Logan, the Kansas-based manufacturer of electrostatics and electrostatic/moving coil hybrids, recently chose a quiet West London hotel to launch two loudspeakers, the Statement S2, which is the new flagship, and a less costly model called the Prodigy. Of the two, the Prodigy is by far the more important. It employs much of the core technology of the Statement S2, but it is also a much more real world product. It doesn't require a ballroom to breathe properly, for a start, and although the price is a rather high £8,967 a pair, it reflects the materials and expertise that have gone into it. The Prodigy is also priced roughly on a par with a particularly prominent stratum of high end speakers from B&W, JM Labs, ATC and others.

Martin-Logan long ago produced what might be described as its statement full range electrostatic, the CLSIIz, which remains available for those who want a purist, minimum compromise electrostatic (a model incidentally that makes even the Quad Electrostatic, with its delay lines, clunky mechanicals and layers of clothing over the diaphragm, seem contrived). But the CLS needs a massive diaphragm to generate what is not a particularly full or extended bass, and in many ways it behaves more like a giant pair of headphones than a true loudspeaker as it lacks the weight and the ability to image properly when not sitting on the central bisector between the two loudspeakers.

To address this larger requirement, Martin-Logan long ago switched its main focus to developing hybrids in which the electrostatic panel is dedicated to frequencies above 200Hz (allowing them to be made much smaller) and plugging the low frequency gap with a moving coil bass section. Early efforts in this direction were little short of risible, in part due to the wildly different directivity of the two transducer types. Over the years, though, they have been progressively developed and refined, and have recently managed to offer quite impressive levels of integration – but it would be too strong to suggest that the joins are completely seamless. In the Statement S2, the problem is addressed with a bipolar line source bass section made from moving coil drivers, but for the Prodigy this would have been impractical, and instead the problem has been addressed using a new technology called ForceForward.

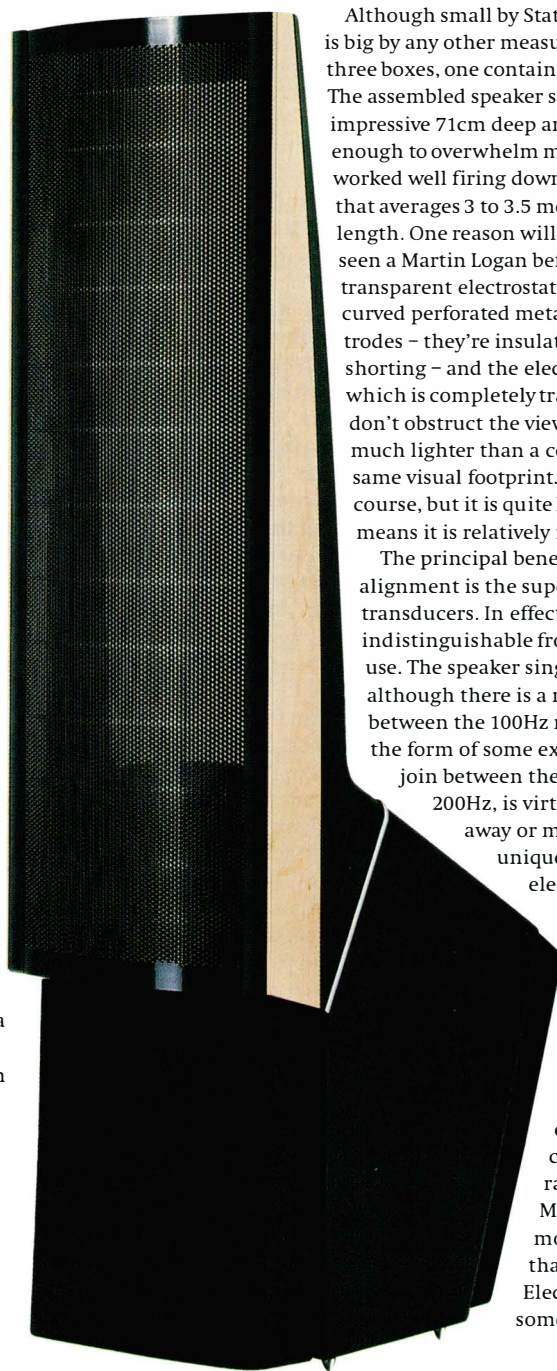
There's not a lot more that can be said about ForceForward, as it is currently the subject of a patent application, and the maker has asked for confidentiality to be preserved. All that can be said is that there are two bass drive units, one at the front and the other behind the enclosure, each in

its own isolated acoustic chamber, and each coupled to its own crossover filter. It's also designed so that the acoustic output is largely cancelled behind the speaker, and reinforced in front. The result is a loudspeaker that can be used closer to the rear and side walls than usual without any signs of boom or overhang. In practice the speakers need to be some way out from the rear wall to avoid destructive comb filter colourations from midband energy reflected from the rear wall adding to the direct output of the electrostatic panel. In the test room, this dictated that the front of the speakers should be about 1.5 meters from the rear wall, and this proved ideal for the bass too.

Although small by Statement S2 standards, the Prodigy is big by any other measure. A pair comes packaged in three boxes, one containing the two electrostatic panels. The assembled speaker stands a full 179cm tall, an impressive 71cm deep and 42cm wide. This ought to be enough to overwhelm most surroundings, but they worked well firing down the length of a listening room that averages 3 to 3.5 meters wide along its 10 meter length. One reason will be familiar to anyone who has seen a Martin Logan before, namely the semi-transparent electrostatic panel, which consists of two curved perforated metal panels which act as the electrodes – they're insulated to prevent electric shock and shorting – and the electrostatic diaphragm itself, which is completely transparent. The panels, therefore, don't obstruct the view behind, making them feel much lighter than a conventional speaker with the same visual footprint. The bass section is quite deep of course, but it is quite low, and its black colouring means it is relatively inconspicuous in practice.

The principal benefit of the ForceForward alignment is the superb integration between the transducers. In effect, the moving bass drivers are indistinguishable from the ELS panels in everyday use. The speaker sings with a single voice, and although there is a mild change in character between the 100Hz region and the midband – say, in the form of some extra low frequency warmth – the join between the two, which happens around

200Hz, is virtually inaudible from two meters away or more. Better still, and quite uniquely in my experience, here is an electrostatic hybrid that is not only defiantly refined and articulate like all the best electrostatics, but which also understands how to rock and roll. It has excellent, propulsive timing, and a strong sense of solidity and weight, with all the benefits expected in the areas of tonal colour, sonority and dynamic range. It also goes loud. Early Martin-Logans could be driven to moderately high levels, higher than equivalent Quad Electrostatics of the time, but at some point they would become





"Here is an electrostatic hybrid which is not only defiantly refined and articulate, but which also knows how to rock and roll."

unresponsive or they would 'crack' as the diaphragm hit one of the metal panels, and that level was well within reach of anyone with a modestly powerful amplifier.

But not so here. The Prodigy is extremely difficult to catch out, and it goes as loud as most large moving coil speakers, with little suggestion of compression before it reaches its end stops. This is implied in the specifications, which quote 300 watts/channel power handling and a 91dB/watt sensitivity for a nominal four Ohm system. A couple more figures while we're about it: the bass is said to extend to 28Hz (-3dB anechoic), and the impedance dips to one Ohm at 20kHz, which should be less of a problem than it sounds as not much real world music signal is generated at such frequencies. Nevertheless, the Prodigy was mollycoddled on test with Krell FPB600 monoblocks,



driven by a Krell KPS25sc CD/preamplifier, which together proved to be a match made in heaven.

Much has been said here about the qualities you might not expect from an electrostatic, or electrostatic hybrid, loudspeaker. But let's not forget that the stock in trade of any electrostatic is its fine timbral and dynamic discrimination, especially the small scale, local changes that help the listener distinguish individual instruments in a group of similar sounding instruments – such as exists in almost all sections of an orchestra. All that need be said here is that the Prodigy starts off on the shoulders of its predecessors, and that its newly found solidity and consistency only help enhance its subtlety and expressiveness. In every sense, the Prodigy is a true classic.



£8,967.00 per pair, Absolute Sounds ☎ (020) 8971 3909

Super Audio Dynamite!

Paul Miller gets to grips with Sony's first 'affordable' super audio player.

The success of any new format depends on it achieving a broad market penetration, and Sony's SACD is no exception. In the medium term, Sony's strategy includes the upgrading of all its players for SACD compatibility. High-end machines like the SCD-1 and SCD-777ES (see *HFC 194* and *198*, respectively) may have formed the

vanguard, but it's new mid-priced players like this £550 SCD-XB940 that are intended to satisfy the demand created by these flagships.

By comparison with the massive SCD-1, the SCD-XB940 is positively lightweight, but it's only mass and not technology that's been shed in an effort to reduce manufacturing costs. For CD replay, the XB940 actually uses a superior digital filter and still includes the familiar, switchable filter (slope) settings. Furthermore, the substantial, discrete two-laser pick-up used in the SCD-1 and SCD-777ES has been replaced by a DVD-derived mechanism with a single, dual-focus laser.

This is one reason why you must first stop a hybrid SACD/CD disc before switching between its surface (SACD) and inner (CD) layers (see *Oasis*, *HFC 193*). Both layers have separate TOCs (Table of Contents), for example, while the reading speed of SACD is up to three times faster than that of CD – all of

which requires some pause for thought on the part of the XB940! Otherwise, operating this machine is little different from any other CD player, save that it will not recognize either CD-RW or CD-R software and accepting that track access is slightly slower.

Sound Quality

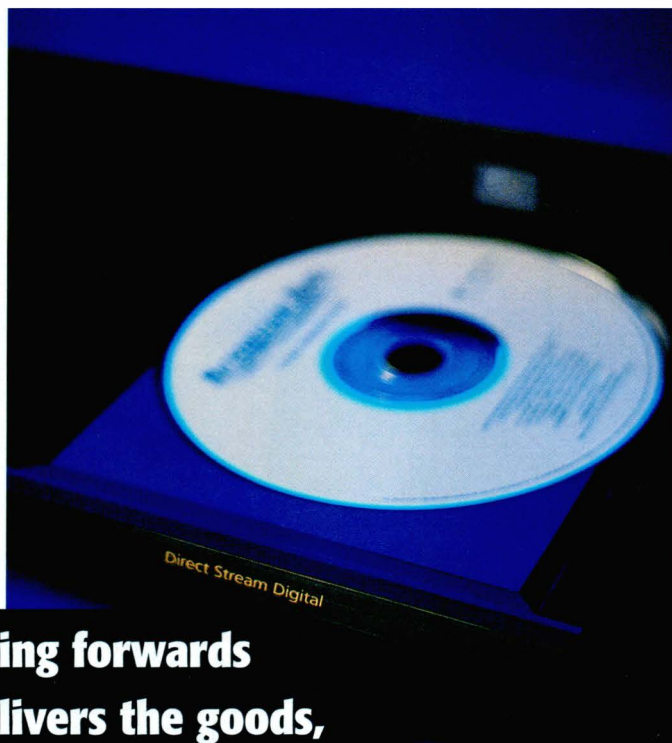
Auditioned by our blind panel using DPA 100S amplifiers and Audio Note AN-EII

loudspeakers, the differences in performance between CD and SACD material seemed to owe as much to the nature of the two media (i.e. linear PCM versus DSD, respectively) as to the SCD-XB940 itself. With conventional CD software, the player has a generally bold and forthright sound though there's more than a hint of hardness in its enthusiasm.

Shawn Colvin's *One Cool Remove* sounded clear and to the point but was a little brutal, her voice too forward and sharp. Rebecca Pigeon's CD also sounded characteristically open and transparent but her voice was also slightly strained, the strings and percussion a little edgy.

It's tempting to suggest that Sony could have made the CD section of the player sound better than this, after all the experience with its giant-killing budget players. Perhaps there's sufficient interference from the 'SACD environment' to compromise the potential of its CD facility. Either way, if CDs sounded any richer and smoother then the contrast with SACD might not have been so impressive.

And it's SACD that really gets the SCD-XB940 jumping. Joe Beard's rendition of *See See Rider* sounded a little cold and monotonous from the CD layer but was fundamentally warmer, more expansive, fluid and dynamic when switched to SACD. You'd hardly credit that such a difference might exist between two versions of an inherently simple guitar/vocal mix, but it's impossible to escape in practice. Bass too, seemed to extend beyond audibility, and this from a bass guitar. In



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and clearly delivers the goods,
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fact, so natural, effortless and unobtrusive is its bass that our listeners found it difficult to even comment upon, let alone criticize! Via CD, Jon Hassell's *Suite de Caravan* sounded a little too blunt, unsympathetic and uninvolved. Switching to the SACD layer changed

the nature of the tape hiss from "cchh" to "sshh" which was to prove both far smoother and less distracting. The piano was now quicker and slicker, contributing to a liquid, free-form jazz which sounded deft and subtle. The CD version was simply too heavy-handed to communicate this level of subtle detail, whereas the SACD layer proved fundamentally more enjoyable. And if a new medium makes new music more accessible, it must be doing something right.

Conclusion:

Although this is far more affordable at £550 than the monster SCD-1 and SCD-777ES, it does not represent the same material or entirely superficial 'ooh! ah!' value. Then again, these first players must have cost more to produce than their retail price. Quite frankly, Sony must begin to realise the commercial value of SACD, and the SCD-XB940 is the first practical example of this.

Early adopters will see the player as a 'must have' while others, with a substantial investment in CD discs, would get better value buying a very high performance CD player at £300-£400. The format is moving forwards and clearly delivers the goods, but I would wait to see a more comprehensive catalogue of discs before taking the plunge. Advice that holds equally true for DVD-A when it eventually arrives.

★★★★★☆☆☆☆

£549.99 Sony ☎ (0990) 111999



HYBRID (DUAL-LAYER) SOFTWARE

Joe Beard: *For Real* (AudioQuest SACD1049)

This might have started out as a two-channel analogue recording (rather than a DSD original), but the fact that Joe Beard is a genuine Mississippi Blues artist shines through in the passion of the performance. *For Real* is aptly



named for its authentic atmosphere and vividly earthy playing. Joe sounds like a young John Lee Hooker and is ably supported by Bruce Katz, a particularly deft piano player. The recording succeeds in sounding polished without sounding processed. Slick but not superficial, this is the real star of the limited hybrid SACD/CD catalogue.

Jon Hassell: *Fascinoma* (WLA-CS-70-SACD)

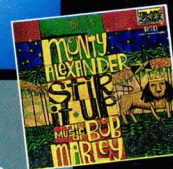
Recorded and stored on BASF tape between 1997-8 using valve equipment and no noise reduction,



Fascinoma is a collaboration between Jon Hassell (the trumpet player), Ry Cooder, Jacky Terrasson and Ronu Majumdar. Finally encoded into DSD data in 1999, it's best described as 'ambient jazz'. This is technically interesting if not musically enthralling; esoteric stuff bathed in an ever-present sea of hiss. The SACD sounds markedly superior but the music remains audio Marmite – you either like it, or you hate it.

Monty Alexander: *Stir it Up, The Music of Bob Marley* (Telarc DSD-83469-SA)

Captured directly by a DSD analogue-to-digital converter (i.e. not originally stored as analogue tape), this recording is free of the noise and colorations



typically introduced by analogue links. However, the music is a technical exercise in function over form – nary a hair out of place but neither is there any passion, emotion or spirit. The SACD layer has more range but, musically, it's up there with alcohol-free lager and decaffeinated coffee.

Hue & Cry: *Next Move* (Linn AKD131)

A little off the wall and somewhat derivative of Level 42 and the early-80s soul patrol, this recording is not terribly comfortable, sounding thin and featuring rather obscure lyrics: "Little god in a box throwin' bolts to heaven, pilot man in my hand only counts to seven". Perhaps we were missing the point, but the music seems to lack soul, direction and a plot.

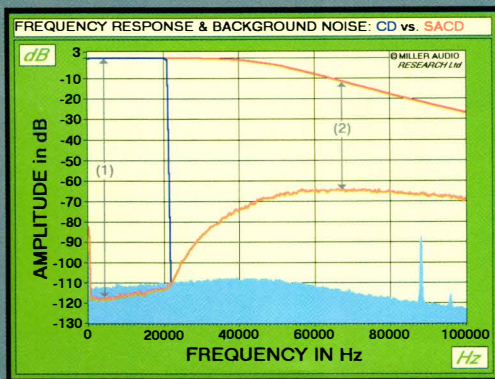


SACD IN A NUTSHELL

Super Audio CD discs may look little different from their CD and DVD partners, but the manner in which the audio information is encoded is far removed. Instead of using the PCM technology of CD or DVD (where audio is sampled

anywhere between 44.1kHz and 192kHz, and then represented as large 16 to 24-bit digital 'words'), SACD samples at a massive 2.8224MHz (2822.4kHz) but stores the data as proportionally smaller 1-bit 'words'. This is called DSD or Direct Stream Digital and, quite frankly, is the technology that probably would have been chosen for CD, had the silver disc been invented in the year 2000 and not 20 years earlier.

The graph clearly shows that while the frequency response of CD (dark blue trace) stops almost immediately after 20kHz, SACD (red trace) rolls-off very gently beyond 100kHz. This is more than sufficient bandwidth to capture those ultrasonic musical nuances while avoiding the repercussions of CD's sharp digital filtering (see *Oasis*, last month). Theoretically, SACD should have a far wider dynamic range than CD but, in practice (1), the realities of audio engineering mean that only a small advantage is realized by the SCD-XB940. The noise-shaping inherent to the DSD process (see *Oasis*, HFC 193) also diminishes its dynamic range outside of the audio range (2).



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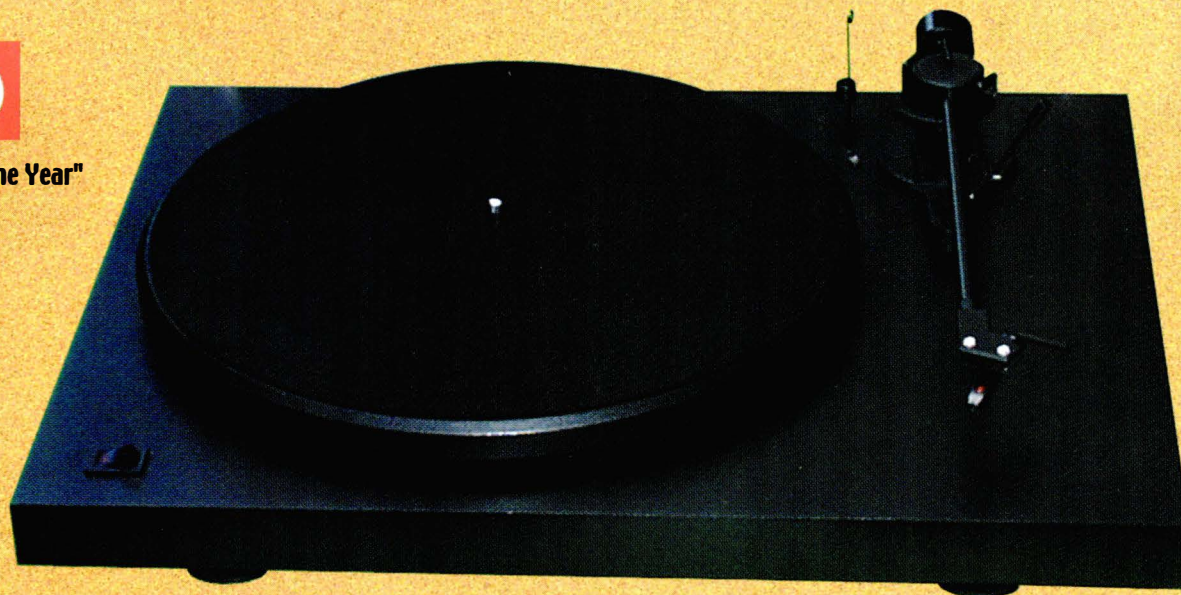


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Personal Stereos

Which is the best format for music on the move this summer?

Tim Bownen wires up and investigates.

I remember the first time I experienced the wonderful world of personal stereo. It was the early 80s, I was 10 and my cousin from Canada was visiting for the summer. He brought with him a Sony Walkman – a pretty slim one for the time – and a selection of tapes of the latest transatlantic Brit invasion. The Cure, China Crisis, that kind of thing. The experience moved me beyond belief – brilliant sounds I could take with me anywhere. My love of music leapt up a notch, right there and then.

When Sony launched the first Walkman in 1979, I wonder if even its inventor could envisage the way the technology would unfold. From the beefy original design through smaller successors, the personal stereo became a lifestyle proposition, an essential accessory. You could use it to block out the outside world with music; that rectangular box quickly became a symbol for a generation wired for sound.

As the analogue world gave way to digital, so new personal formats arrived on the scene. The first attempts with CD were cumbersome and plagued by an aversion to jogs and knocks, a problem only recently overcome to an effective degree. Shock protective memory systems steadily improved as CD models shrank a little year by year, but only now can we say CD is a truly portable medium, compact and unflappable.

While CD struggled to find its portable feet, another digital format arrived with ideal credentials for the job. MiniDisc (MD) had all the right ingredients: rugged, compact software; lower susceptibility to jogging and low cost digital recordability. It is an incredibly versatile and user-friendly digital recorder, while the hardware itself is now pretty much at its finest – beautiful little gadgets that slip easily into a pocket.

If there's a threat to MD's superiority as a portable recording format it is probably MP3. For the uninitiated, MP3 (MPEG layer 3) is a 'codec' used to reduce digital files to a more manageable size. It has led to something of a revolution in Internet circles, making it practical to upload music onto the Web and download it onto a hard drive via a normal telephone line; with MP3 it is possible to maintain reasonable quality without taking up too much memory and time to download.

Hand-in-hand with these developments are a new breed of personals using solid-state memory to store MP3 files downloaded from your computer, either sourced from the Internet or encoded from your own CDs via a CD-ROM drive. They actually record music on silicon, which means there are no moving parts – perfect for jog-free music on the move – and because there is no tape or disc to insert these portable MP3 players can be smaller than ever. Some have built-in memory and most are expandable via tiny flash memory cards, and while storage is currently limited this will improve over time. The same can be said of playback quality, which is generally sub-MD standard but will improve as new codecs and better hardware emerge.

How the tests were done

Assembling a definitive collection of personals spanning all formats proved difficult, with ranges constantly shifting and new models emerging just a little too far down the line to feature. However, through a mix of begging, borrowing and sheer perseverance we have presented what we feel is a good overview of the best the market has to offer. At this point, thanks should go to the Sony Centre in Ealing, West London, without whose help our cassette

personals group would not have featured the brand that created the technology in the first place. Testing was a simple matter of taking the personals out and about with the supplied headphones, listening at home with a set of Sennheiser HD 455 'phones and also plugging through a hi-fi system. The MD personals were tested for recording ability as well as play back (where relevant), and a variety of downloads were used to compare the MP3 units.

THE CAST LIST

Cassette

Aiwa HS-PX307	£29.99
Panasonic RQ-SX71	£69.99
Panasonic RQ-SX91	£79.99
Sony WM-EX404	£34.99

CD

JVC XL-PG7	£100.00
Philips ACT7582	£115.00
Sony D-EJ815	£139.99
Sony D-EJ915	£149.99

MiniDisc

Aiwa AM-HX50	£179.99
Panasonic SJ-MR100	£249.99
Sharp MD-MT831H	£249.99
Sony MZ-R91	£249.99

MP3

Aiwa MM-VX100	£129.99
LG AHA-FD770	£199.99
Pontis SP504	£158.20
Vivanco Vmax	£150.00



MP3 GLOSSARY

DOWNLOADING: Saving an MP3 music file from a Website to your computer, or from your computer to an MP3 portable.

PARALLEL/USB: Some MP3 portables attach to your computer via a parallel (printer) port, others use USB connection. USB is a more efficient 'plug and play' type of connector, but only newer PCs and Macs are equipped.

ENCODING RATE: Measured in kilobits per second (Kbps). The higher the figure, the better the quality and the more memory it will use. 128Kbps is considered the 'optimised' rate for MP3.

MMC CARD: Multi Media Card. Rapidly becoming the most popular type of flash memory card for MP3 players. Capacity is measured in megabytes (MB) – a 32MB card will store around 35 minutes of music at 128Kbps.

IN-LINE REMOTE: a small remote control situated part way along the headphone lead.

On features alone, this fully stocked little nipper goes a long way to explain Aiwa's market-leading position in low-cost personals. Of particular note is a basic but functional in-line remote control, a rarity at this price point and usefully detachable should you wish to upgrade the supplied in-ear headphones. There's also Dolby B noise reduction, auto-reverse, manual tape type select, 24-hour battery life and Aiwa's Ear Guard system, which limits volumes to 'safe' levels. Ear Guard might help save your hearing, but noise-niks may find its lack of grunt frustrating.

Ergonomics are equally open to debate. It looks pretty flash for the money in a medallion man sort of way, but those little buttons don't come to hand as easily as old-fashioned side-mounted controls. Its reasonably enthusiastic on the sound front but also rather ragged, a bit woolly in terms of clarity and thoroughly bloated when bass boost is employed. The 'phones are relatively comfortable, though, and tape drive is well enough controlled to withstand all but the most vigorous of exercise.



Sound is only so-so, but an impressive features roster makes this Aiwa decent value for money.



Aiwa HS-PX307 £29.99

With so many super-sexy CD and MiniDisc personals to choose from, why would anyone want to spend as much as £80 on a cassette model? A fair point perhaps, but the RS-SX91 makes a reasonable case as to why the dedicated cassette user might consider spending more. In most respects it is similar to the £70 RS-SX71, but that extra tenner buys all-metal casing (the RS-SX71 uses some plastic) and a neat 'flip top' eject mechanism for easy tape access. You also get an even longer potential play-back time of 90 hours, together with smaller buttons which actually make operation a touch more awkward. The supplied in-ear headphones and detachable in-line remote are the same, complete with cool transparent display and red illumination.

Given such similarities, it would be reasonable to expect these two Panasonic models to sound the same. But the RS-SX91 is a bit more forward at the frequency extremes, which initially gives the impression of a more detailed sound, but turns out to be less comfortable to listen to in the long term. Swapping the in-ear 'phones for a pair of hi-fi headphones confirms it – the less costly model is better balanced overall.



A super-slick personal for well-heeled cassette users, though not perfect by any means.



Panasonic RQ-SX91 £79.99



HI FI CHOICE RECOMMENDED

Panasonic RQ-SX71 £69.99

Take your budget over the £50 or £60 mark and your cassette-based options start slimming down in both number and size. This aluminium-bodied Panasonic isn't much thicker than a cassette, yet it boasts every facility a tape aficionado could ask for: Dolby B, auto-reverse and music search are duly present, together with a clever little function for reducing hiss between tracks. A stick-type rechargeable battery is supplied (less bulky than the cylindrical kind) and a clip-on battery adaptor is provided for normal 'AA' batteries when recharging isn't appropriate. What's more, a whopping 80 hours of play-time is claimed if you use both rechargeable and dry cell battery types at the same time – more than enough for even the most sluggish of marathon runners.

Though not the best we've heard at the price, this Panasonic's performance is more than respectable. It is a little on the bright side but offers decent clarity and pace, and for once the bass boost function is a worthwhile addition. We're not so sure about the 'train' setting though – it cuts treble response to make the sound less irritating to the outside world, but to the user it sounds simply awful.



A sleek aluminium body, decent sound and superb features make this a tempting tape buy.



Sony WM-EX404 £34.99

Though effectively part of Sony's 1999 Walkman line-up, the popularity of this little number has ensured its continuation through 2000 and beyond. It's not hard to see why: staring out at you from the confines of a display cabinet, its chic exterior yells 'buy me' louder than any other personal at the price. But it's actually more plasticky than it looks, and though pretty chunky it doesn't feel too substantial. There's also a definite comfort issue when it comes to the supplied in-ear headphones – Sony 'phones are not renowned for their perfect fit, but these really take the proverbial.

Shame really, because the WM-EX404 delivers a performance well above average for the money. If you can stand sticking the 'phones in your ears, or are willing to upgrade to a better pair, its sound treads an effective line between smoothness and urgency. There are two bass boost settings, the first of which gives an enjoyably punchy sound with rock and dance tracks, though the second turns low frequencies into something of an amorphous blob. You also get Dolby B, auto reverse, manual tape type switching and a volume limiter which can be turned on or off.



A typically stylish cassette personal from the people who invented the concept. Affordable but flawed – particularly those damn earphones!

These days you can pick up a CD personal for as little as £30, so despite being the most affordable here this JVC model isn't exactly 'budget'. But if you want a decent personal this is about the minimum you should pay, though breaking the £100 barrier is no guarantee of quality, as the XL-PG7 proves.

Champagne gold plastic, flimsy build and ugly controls do nothing for the eye, but all could be forgiven if its sound outshone its appearance. Unfortunately that's not the case – it isn't an unlistenable disaster, but compared to the other models here it's as woolly as Wales in sheep shearing season. There's little punch and the bass is decidedly limp. With bass boost turned on, it just gets more messy, and the so-called 'live' setting is simply horrid.

On the plus side, the shock protection circuitry proves effective when switched in, there's a detachable (though limited) in-line remote and the front-mounted controls make operation easy. 'AA'-sized rechargeable batteries are included in the package, and a clip-on cartridge can be used to add more to increase playing time to 48 hours.



Tacky build and below-par sound do not a Best Buy make. Shame.



This CD personal from Philips follows the sporty route, where chunky build, bright colours and the ubiquitous translucent plastics are the order of the day. Its splash-proof body is perfect for pool side use while you're baking in Barbados (or Bognor) this summer. Although this splash-proofing, can be a pain. There's a clip on the front which clamps the player shut, handy for keeping out moisture but irritatingly stiff when you want disc access. It's also a rather bulky machine and some will think it ugly; others will find its see-through apparel and rubbery texture enticingly touchy-feely.

It's the most sprightly performer of all the CD units here, up-front and comparatively strong on detail, though also a little bright. It zips through rock and dance tracks with zest, while orchestral stuff comes across as more than just a wall of sound. The shock protection works a treat and rechargeable batteries are supplied, but there's no remote control or digital output. The supplied in-ear 'phones are OK, though their clip-around-the-ear fit takes some getting used to.



Up-front and entertaining, though a little bright in character, this splash-proof model could be the perfect personal to take on holiday.



James Bond

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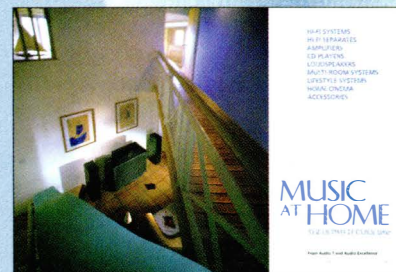
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Sony's D-EJ815 is a superbly specified personal CD player – super-stylish, hi-tech and highly desirable, particularly when you consider its down-to-earth price. The technology count is high, top billing going to Sony's G-Shock system: ultra-effective shock protection. It works a treat, with even the most vigorous shakes having no effect. The unit also delivers a whopping playback time of 76 hours, if you combine its 'AA'-sized rechargeable batteries with alkaline ones placed in the canister supplied.

Ergonomics are good and build quality excellent, with a reassuringly expensive feel to the controls. The in-line remote is intuitive when it comes to basic controls, though less commonly used functions are hidden rather awkwardly round the back, and the supplied in-ear headphones could be more comfy.

Sound-wise, it's rather soft around the edges, and some may crave more detail and excitement. However, its character serves to make it a more comfortable listen over time and overall its sound is pleasingly robust across a wide range of music.

★★★★☆

Hi-tech build and features make this a highly desirable personal for the money; sound is soft-edged but substantial.

In times gone by, anyone hankering after Sony's state of the art CD Walkman would have to fork out around £300. In return you'd get a super-compact model crammed with the latest technology – last year's D-E01 for example. This was the smallest CD player yet, its diameter barely larger than that of an actual disc; it also introduced the excellent G-Protection 'jog proof' technology to the world. But Sony has decreed that this year's range-topper will cost just £150, be virtually the same size and incorporate the same technology. Enter the D-EJ915.

It's almost entirely circular, like a CD, with no display on the unit itself and controls around the rim rather than on the top. That makes it slightly more awkward to operate, but the trade off is a lighter and more compact personal, with equally effective shock protection and a cleaner, even more desirable appearance. The D-EJ915 has a smooth and substantial sound quality, still a little soft but seeming to convey a touch more clarity and detail. An excellent package overall.

★★★★☆

A beauty to behold, this personal's form follows its function. The most portable CD player yet, and a good performer to boot.

Sony D-EJ815 £139.99



Sony D-EJ915 £149.99



James Brown

that's a CD player...



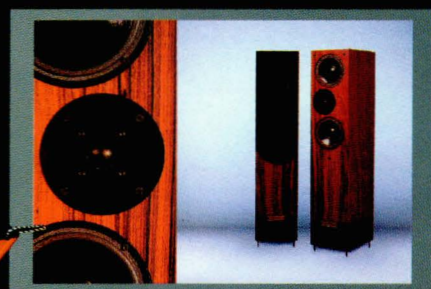
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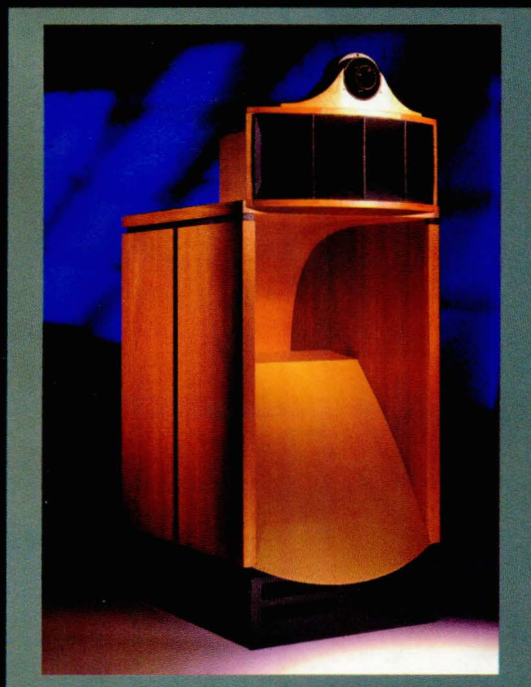


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While Sharp and Sony have stolen many of the plaudits for their recording MD personal, Aiwa has nurtured a laudable reputation for less costly playback-only models of considerable style and ability. This is one of the latest, a tiny and exceptionally light player combining beefy sound with tidy looks, as light as a cigarette packet and small enough to slip into a shirt pocket. And boy, does it chuck out the bass.

Now, given that few buy into MD simply to play back the limited pre-recorded music available, it's likely you have (or will have) a home-based MD deck to make recordings. If that's the case, this Aiwa is a pretty tempting way of making those recordings portable. Its sound is a little indistinct and rolled off in the treble, but the compensation is a substantial low-end thump to give bass lines a good kicking. Detail is not its forté. On the other hand, it doesn't sound over-bright like some, and the sheer proportion of its sound is impressive. On the down-side, the in-line remote isn't particularly well designed and the rubber-clad in-ear headphones feel a little bulky, though they're comfortable enough once you're used to them.



A neat playback-only MD personal, a little short on detail but endowed with impressive bass.

This solid recording beastie from Panasonic is actually quite bulky by this year's standards, but it's still small enough to fit neatly into a coat pocket without drawing attention to itself. Build quality is excellent, strong enough to withstand the inevitable wear and tear of use on the road, and while it's not the flashiest looker around its main controls are well designed. The supplied in-ear headphones are above average in quality, but we're not so keen on the tacky in-line remote.

Sound quality is solid; reasonably clean and clear, though a little short of verve. The top-end manages to sound distinct without verging into harshness and bass avoids stodginess, even if the boost options are rather limited, but ultimately it fails to distinguish itself against the opposition. It manages to pull back ground with its recording abilities, though: a recording played back through a hi-fi system proved comparatively clean through the middle and top frequencies, with bass reasonably well proportioned to boot. A 'line' cable for analogue playback and recording is included, but you have to buy a separate optical cable to record digitally.



A solid if unremarkable top-end personal, but as a portable recorder it's certainly



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Panasonic SJ-MR100 £249.99

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Sharp has long aspired to dominate digital thinking amid the mass-market, a cause that has placed it among the chief exponents of MiniDisc. For the last few years its recordable MD personals have been among the best around. Compact and solidly built, the MD-MT831H is an excellent example of the breed. Its controls are neatly laid out, if a touch fiddly, and its main display is the largest and most informative of all the models here. The in-line remote is pretty well designed too. You also get both optical and line cables for digital and analogue recording and playback.

Performance here is notably more up-front than that of its competitors. It's the best of the bunch with classical and acoustic material, able to convey a greater sense of detail and separation between instruments, while sounding impressively vital with cleaner sounding rock and dance tracks. However, with rougher material it can get a bit bright and edgy; this is partly due to the somewhat over-enthusiastic in-ear headphones. An upgrade in that department would improve things considerably, particularly as the Sharp is capable of making laudably crisp recordings.

★★★★★

Smart design, sprightly sound and a well appointed package – an impressive piece of kit.

In the must-have shiny toy category, this little Sony scores a perfect 10. It measures just 78x72x17mm, which makes it the smallest recording MD in the world, with a light yet rigid body. It's a super-slick looker too, a vision of subtle curves and ellipses with a choice of metallic finishes and perfectly proportioned controls. Unfortunately, in the quest for this svelte physique, Sony has made it rather less intuitive to operate than models of old – secondary functions are selected via a 'jog lever', very neat in theory but awkward in practice. The in-line remote is a little quirky too, but get used to the controls and you'll find this Sony a slick and superbly specified MD.

Playback performance finds the Sony a little podgy in the bass and a touch wayward up top, but fine mid-frequency strengths carry it through with a substantial yet unassuming character. Recording quality is roughly similar, though tainted by a degree of sibilance, and overall this is a fine alternative to the (ahem) sharper-sounding Sharp. Be warned though: no cables are supplied for recording, so if you want optical and/or line interconnects you'll have to buy them separately.

★★★★★

Surely the sexiest recording MD personal yet, with good sound and excellent facilities.

Visit Our Website: www.hifichoice.co.uk



Sharp MD-MT831H £249.99



Sony MZ-R91 £249.99

SME MODEL 10



The Model 10 is a valuable addition to our range of precision turntables. The designer's aim; to rival more affordably, the performance and engineering excellence of our Models 20/2 & 30/2 has been notably successful. The SME Model 10 mirrors their exacting standards and ease of use. Novel features include polymer isolators contributing to a pleasing detailed sound balance that encourages fresh exploration of any record collection. Untroubled by the most complex material it's firm clean bass makes this a turntable that will set your feet tapping!

Details and reviews on request from:

SME LIMITED • STEYNING • SUSSEX • BN44 3GY • ENGLAND • ☎+44 (0)1903 814321 • ☎+44 (0)1903 814269
www.sme.ltd.uk • e-mail – sales@sme-ltd.demon.co.uk

As MP3 filters down to the mass market, several more familiar names from consumer electronics are getting in on the act. Enter the very first portable MP3 player from Aiwa, available exclusively from the company's Website (www.aiwa.co.uk).

Aside from a dodgy turquoise colour scheme, it's an unusually smart player, neatly appointed and with a solid feel to the controls. Its display is the prettiest of the players here, and there's even a decent in-line remote – a rarity for MP3 players thus far. Connection is via a parallel port and the supplied management software is easy enough to operate, while download times are pleasingly short. It took just 25 seconds to download a 5m30s track with an encoding rate of 128Kbps – considered to be the 'optimised' rate for MP3. Any lower and quality really suffers.

Sonic performance is average for a portable MP3 player – rather murky and lacking treble definition, but free from unwanted nasties. A built-in memory of 32MB now looks rather weedy against the growing number of 64MB models, though this is expandable via an optional memory card.



Aiwa's expertise in the personal stereo field is visible, but performance is only average.

Aiwa MM-VX100 £129.99



Pontis' parallel-linked SP503 portable has earned itself a reputation as one of the best-sounding units around, and the new USB-equipped version, the SP504, keeps that tradition firmly intact. Though the player itself is rather heavy and isn't terribly pretty, the overall package oozes quality. There's no built-in memory but two card slots are incorporated and one 32MB MMC card is included in the price (you can buy it with two for £220). Management software is comprehensive and compatible with both PC and Mac, and downloading is relatively quick.

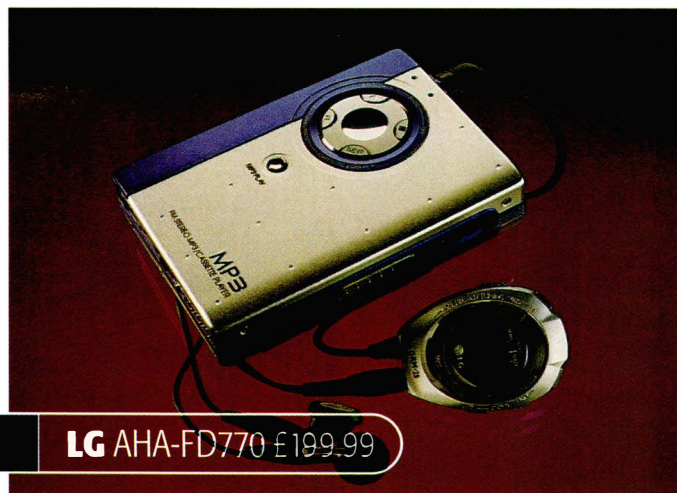
So far so good, but this player really scores on sound quality. Pontis claims to have chosen its internal components carefully, and the result is the best-sounding MP3 portable we've heard. Treble definition is far better than the other players on this page and the overall tone is significantly clearer, the benefit of which is particularly audible if you upgrade the supplied in-ear headphones. A great MP3 buy for anyone who cares about performance.



One of the first MP3 portables to approach the quality of a MiniDisc personal, albeit with the inevitable storage limitations.



Pontis SP504 £158.20



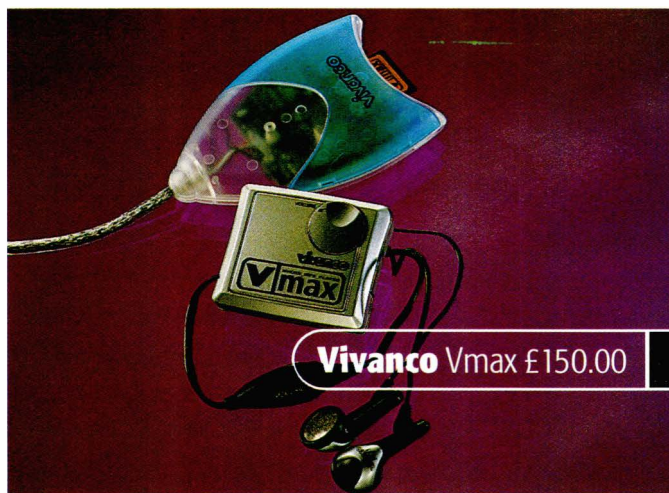
LG AHA-FD770 £199.99

Korean firm LG has been racing ahead with MP3 development, quickly establishing itself as one of the flag-bearers for the format. Its eclectic array of new and forthcoming designs is intended to cater for every whim, like this one. The AHA-FD770 is actually a tape player, FM radio and MP3 player in one, which explains its unusually bulky size. On the MP3 side, its supplied management software is basic but fuss-free, ensuring file download is simple via your computer's parallel port. Download times are fairly lengthy though – it took 70 seconds to download a track 5m30s in length with a bit-rate of 128kbps. There's no built-in memory, but two 16MB memory cards are supplied and can be inserted simultaneously – enough capacity between them for around 35 minutes of music at 128Kbps.

Of course, with cassette and radio also at your disposal the limited storage time might be less of a problem, except that tapes sound murky and radio performance is mediocre, not to mention a right pain to operate. MP3 files sound OK, short on definition but overall pretty average. As a transitional multi-purpose player it's a nice idea. In practice, though, its performance doesn't warrant the outlay.



Cassette, MP3 and radio in one – a nice idea, but at £200 its sound simply isn't good enough.



Vivanco Vmax £150.00

Small is beautiful in the crazy world of MP3 portables, and this minuscule gadget from Vivanco is actually the tiniest yet. That in turn makes it the world's smallest personal stereo, radio-only units excepted, with dimensions of just 53x46x15mm.

In terms of material value, you don't get a lot for your £150 – the player itself is uninspiring, made from plastic with awkward little controls. There's no memory built-in, but slots are provided for two MMC memory cards which you load up with MP3 files via a separate reader/adaptor. A 32MB card is supplied as part of the package and the unit is available with a choice of parallel or USB connection. If your computer is suitably equipped, go for USB for its plug-and-play convenience.

The supplied in-ear headphones aren't great, but sound quality isn't bad overall – there's not a lot of clarity on offer, though it is enjoyably punchy. But where this package really scores is with its software. There's a straightforward installation CD-ROM and a second disc containing eJay MP3 Station, a comprehensive downloading, playback and encoding package that also lets you create your own on-screen visuals. Lots of fun and quite a boon for Vivanco.



The world's smallest MP3 player is 'plasticky' and fiddly to use, but has much to commend it.

Visit Our Website: www.hifichoice.co.uk

CONCLUSIONS

PERSONAL STEREOS

This is a rather different kind of test for *Hi-Fi Choice*. Not only are we dealing with components that are distinctly non-high fidelity in nature, we're also looking at four different formats at once.

While some might argue that such things have no place in this magazine, I would counter that any device permitting you to take a portion of your music collection with you wherever you go has an absolute right to feature in a publication where love of music is the cornerstone. And the best personals actually do a fine job.

Due to the nature of these products, and the difficulties of comparing different formats in chart form, this Conclusions page comes without the usual 'Comparison Table' and 'Best Buys and Recommendeds' box. Instead, we thought it might be pertinent to provide information on a number of accessories you may add to your new travelling companion, some of which we

have tested during the course of this review. But before that, allow me to sum-up the conclusions drawn from the test proper.

Though sales have dropped over the past few years, the cassette personal is still very much alive, particularly at the lower end of the market. Our group of four turned out to be a touch disappointing, but for anyone with a lot of tapes the Panasonic RQ-SQ71 gives a good account of itself.

Our clutch of CD personals proved much more exciting. The Sony D-EJ915 is particularly droolsome and shows just how far the format has come as a portable medium. With a diameter barely greater than a CD and terrifically effective shock protection, it really

is an excellent way to take your CD collection out and about.

In contrast, MiniDisc was always made with portability in mind. Recordable MD personals are now incredibly small and easy to hook up to your hi-fi, negating the need to buy a home-based recording unit, and all of the models we tested came with compact stick-type rechargeable batteries and a variety of other accessories to add value. This is a format at the height of its portable powers, and models like the Sharp MD-MT831H and Sony MZ-R91 are its pinnacle.

If MD is at its apex, MP3 is just starting out. Right now, MP3 portables are entertaining computer peripherals for Internet users with a penchant for music,

rather than personal stereos for mass consumers, but that will change. Hardware performance will improve and memory restrictions will lessen as technology moves on and card prices fall.

Better quality codecs than MP3 will also emerge – there's much talk of AAC in America, often nicknamed MP4, while Sony and Panasonic are launching their own compression technologies (see *News*). From a compatibility point of view, some new portables are 'codec agnostic' and will accept future upgrades. MP3 players in watch and pendant form will soon be with us, along with – crucially – hardware that lets you convert CDs to MP3 then load up an MP3 portable without the need for a computer. But for now the Pontis SP504 is among the best we've heard for a spot of music surfing on the Internet, along with the DAP 64 Pro and Diamond Rio 500 (*HFC* 195).

"Though sales have dropped over the past few years, the cassette personal is still very much alive."

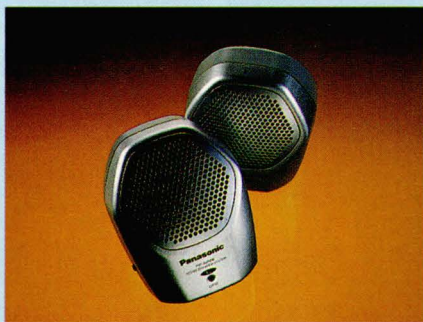
ACCESSORIES



HEADPHONES

An obvious way of improving the sound of your personal stereo is to upgrade the headphones, ideally to a decent pair of hi-fi style ones. However, there aren't many people who are willing to wear a pair of chunky 'ear muffs' out in public, so it's worth looking at some more discrete alternatives – 'phones that are more comfy than the supplied in-ear variety and may improve sound into the bargain.

'Back band' headphones are very fashionable at the moment, as a quick trip on the London Underground will tell you. They sit on the ear rather than inside, and the headband goes round the back of the neck instead of perching on top of the head. We tried three models during the course of this test, and found the Sony MDR-G59G Sports (£30) to be more refined than the JVC HA-B10-SL (£17). But best of the lot is the Philips SBC HS500 (£17) for its price, big sound and relatively comfortable fit.

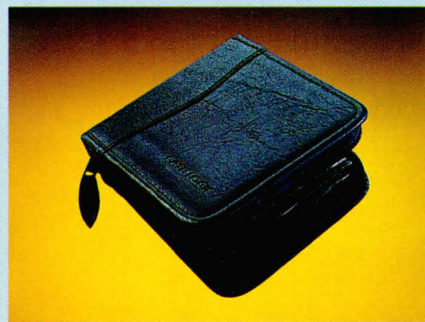


ACTIVE SPEAKERS

If you want to take your personal stereo's sound out of your ears and into the open, a pair of active speakers is what you need. We tried two battery operated designs: the Sony SRS-A55 (£15) and Panasonic RP-SP28 (£17). Both sound very tinny but are better than nothing if you want some communal sounds on holiday, for example. Of the two, the Panasonic pair goes louder and has more bite. For a more substantial sound you could try a pair of computer-style multi-media speakers. We tried Aiwa's SC-C48 (£35), which are mains only so lack portability, but offer a more solid sound with at least some degree of bass!

CABLES

If you want to record from a digital source like CD to a MiniDisc personal you'll need a special optical connector. Some models come with one supplied, for others it's an optional extra. To record from an



analogue source like vinyl or an ordinary tuner you'll need a connector with phono plugs on one end. One of these can also be used to play your personal through a hi-fi system. Again, a few models come with these in the box; if not, the Ixos range is worth seeking out.

BLANK MEDIA

For MiniDisc recorders, our favourite affordable blank discs are TDK MD-RXG, TDK Cool or Hi-Space MD. For tapes we recommend TDK AR (ferric) or SA (chrome), and if you have a CD recorder Traxdata CD-R discs are great value.

STORAGE

There are various storage cases available aimed at the personal market. Some are designed to protect the player, others store software and some do both. Case Logic has by far and away the biggest range – pictured is the KSW24/12 CD wallet (£10), which will hold up to 24 discs.

THETA Attraction

THETA Digital was founded a decade ago with a mission to put back the musical emotion many listeners found lacking in Compact Disc player reproduction. Since the Theta has grown a family of outstanding digital products.

Casablanca proved to be the most exciting home entertainment product ever—showing the future of audiophile audio/video. Modular design means Casablanca can 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. Buy just a basic system and later add 'the works'. You won't have to worry about trading in out-of-date home cinema kit, Casablanca lets you add and expand, growing with your needs and new standards. And from Theta you know build quality is



exceptional. You pick the processing: Dolby Prologic™, Dolby Digital AC-3™ or DTS Coherent Acoustic. Casablanca can be configured to control up to nine sound channels with balanced or single ended inputs. It can be chosen with remote control and is programmed through either its LEDs or via on-screen display on your TV.

CasaNova borrows the processor heart of Casablanca to produce a AV processor of exceptional performance

"one of the most rewarding AV processors we've heard to date for both music and movies alike and comes with the strongest recommendation" (Home Entertainment April/May 1999). And what better to partner the CasaNova than Theta's new Dreadnought

multichannel power amplifier. You start with the channels you need and add later what you want. Dreadnought is Theta's answer to those underpowered and sonically bare acceptable multichannel amps foisted on videophiles. Theta call it an amp that 'truly serves the music'.

DaViD is Theta's DVD/CD transport.



Home Entertainment magazine was sufficiently impressed to award the Editor's Choice and say "turns in the best performance we have yet seen from a DVD player" (Home Entertainment April/May 1999)

Voyager is a Universal DVD/CD/LD transport that will play any digital disc out there and some more when they become available. Its performance was described as: "a definitive lesson in what separates a true high-end product from the mainstream" (Jonathan Valin Fi-DeLity January 1999).

Pearl brings Theta quality into a new price range. Pearl features the jitter reduction technology and multiple high quality power supplies that made the early more expensive Theta transports perform so well.

Jade is Theta's new high-end CD transport which draws on technology from the Pearl. To quote one reviewer "it stretches the compact disc medium about as far as it will go and a long way further than many not exposed to this level of ability would credit" (Alvin Gold, Hi-Fi News September 1998).

Miles is Theta's first integrated CD player and is available in both balanced or single ended output forms. Alan Sircom was "entranced with the sheer sophistication of the sound. Every time I played a disc, I had to play another" (Hi-Fi Choice March 1998).

We still feel the Theta Data Basic II and Pro Basic IIIa make a magical combination, providing a true state-of-the-art, high value CD player/DAC combination at under £5500.

High-value high-end products from Theta include the Chroma D/A converter available

with or without HDCD offering unbelievable performance under £1000 and ILC 'Timebase Linque Conditioner' is a staggering anti-jitter bargain at just £199. This tiny box reclocks the optical output of a CD player or transport for a jitter-free feed to a D/A converter. "The TLC

will treat you, regardless of the calibre of your playback system, to a reduction in glare and harshness" (Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News April 1995).

Attracted? Contact Absolute Sounds for more information about Theta products and for full details of dealers where you can hear Theta's Attraction in action.



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http://www.absolutesounds.com

Voyager

Casablanca

DaViD

Miles

Audio Surgery for the Amateur

Richard Black has been tweaking his system via software with some pleasing results. Why not have a go?

Tone controls are a bit like sex manuals: not many people would want to own up to owning them, still less using 'em. All the same, they have their use (tone controls, that is – I wouldn't know about the other). You disagree? Maybe you're one of the lucky ones whose favourite artists record exclusively with the best engineers, producers and record labels. I'm quite sure, however, that most readers of this magazine will own at least a few recordings whose sound quality is marred by some distinct flaw such as lack of bass or treble, general lack of life and dynamics, or even something as obvious as persistent hum or whistles.

Conventional bass and treble tone controls will only have limited success in tweaking most recordings. But supposing you had access to a whole studio-load of sophisticated equalisers and dynamics processors, not to



rare beast now, and all one needs in addition is the software. The program I was using, Steinberg Wavelab, cost me £300, and it's not the cheapest available. So for the price of a budget-ish amp or CD player, many folks can now add to their system what is in fact a professional digital mastering tool.

Now granted, if you own a Cello Audio Palette or similar (the price of a pretty decent car, as I recall), or perhaps even a studio analogue equaliser (a couple of grand for a decent one), you might not be so interested in all this. The abilities of such devices are considerable if they're intelligently used, their sound quality is generally very good and of course you don't have to do all this copying on and off PC to get the benefits. But I reckon there's a seriously empty niche that home digital mastering could fill.

“Suppose you had access to a whole studio-load of sophisticated equalisers and dynamics processors: could you imagine improving those sub-standard studio jobs?”

mention editing: could you imagine making use of that lot to apply a few subtle improvements to those irritating live recordings and sub-standard studio jobs? Fact is, if you already own a recent PC (or Mac), you're closer to that position than you might realise.

This came to me one evening recently. I'd just bought an Ian Dury CD in tribute to the lately-deceased master. It's a live gig and the sound quality is, on the whole, pretty disappointing. Now I earn part of my living making recordings, so I've got a few bits of software that can do some digital audio tweaking, and it was the work of not many minutes to load a couple of tracks on to the PC and run them through some effects to see what I could do. Within a quarter-hour at most I had arrived at settings that seemed to increase the life and drive of the recording and do at least something to relieve its general feeling of 'flatness' (something which, if you're a Dury fan, you'll realise was never really his style), so I loaded the rest of the tracks, set the whole lot to process on autopilot, and went for a snack. That took maybe another 10 minutes, followed by about eight minutes to burn a CD – the version I'm listening to as I write.

The thing that struck me about all this is that most of the equipment I was using could in fact be found in many households where no one ever had any thought of being a sound engineer. A PC with a reasonably decent sound card and a CD burner is not such a

Remix, re-master

How does one go about this? By far the easiest way to get audio on to a hard drive is to 'rip' it off the CD, using the PC's CD reader/burner. Most of these can read a whole CD to hard disc in between five and 10 minutes, creating either one file per track or one for the entire disc. You'll need about 600 megabytes available for one hour of audio, and as much again to save your work afterwards. No problem there: hard

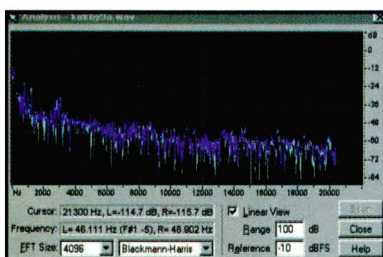
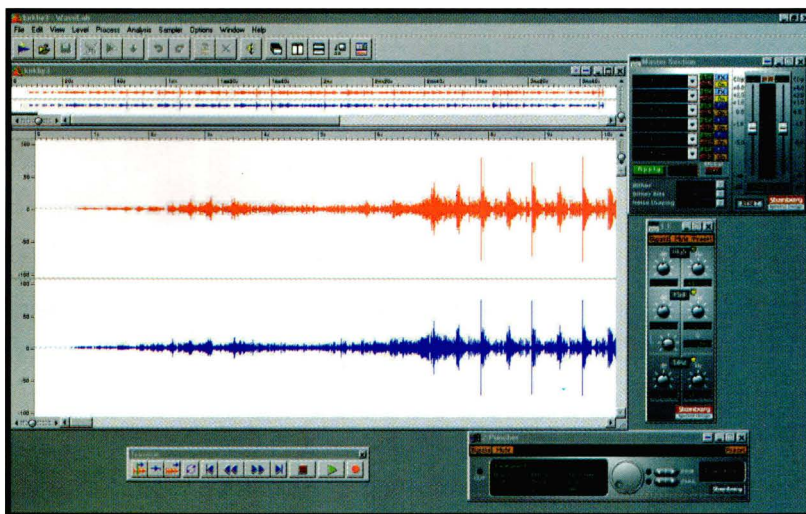
High fidelity and the PC

Whatever your choice of editing software, there are many factors that combine to influence the final sound quality of your CD-R or CD-RW recordings. Back in *HFC* 191, we evaluated the performance of domestic CD-R media and were amazed at the difference in sound quality between the various brands. Although the integrity of the copies was never in question, the CD-R's various and vividly-coloured dye-layers had some influence on the 'shape' of the data pits formed as the recording laser pulsed beneath. And this, in turn, influenced the RF eye-pattern recovered by the CD player's laser during playback (see *Oasis*, *HFC* 192).

Similarly, during our auditioning of different compressed media (*MD versus MP3*, *HFC* 201) we also made linear copies from CD to CD-RW via a PC hard-drive as a subjective 'control'. In the event, blind listening comparisons between CD and those tracks copied onto CD-RW via a .wav file suggested that the additional number-crunching does, indeed, exact its own penalty. The CD-RW copies sounded slightly thinner, missing the easy, fluid quality of the original, while stereo images were flatter in perspective.

Evidently, copying from CD to CD-RW via a PC is not an entirely transparent process, whether or not additional software-based editing is employed. In future issues of *Choice*, we'll explore whether this is a function of the CD-RW media itself or a degradation imposed by the PC environment. With the convergence of PC and home audio, no audiophile can afford to miss our results!

PMI



Top: Wavelab operational interface; Above: FFT filter from Cool Edit – WYSIWYG response tailoring; Far left: Cool Edit spectrum analysis; Left: Wavelab filter controls.

“Obviously, there’s some degree of skill to all this, but one quickly learns to listen analytically when remastering.”

disc space now costs little more than a fiver per gigabyte. To get the audio back to CD afterwards you need either a built-in CD burner (best option by far) or an external CD recorder connected to a sound card with a digital output. Actually, the latter is a useful way of monitoring as you work, typically using headphones. Sound quality is usually better than internal sound cards, but for copying audio back to CD it’s a drag because you usually have to insert track markers manually – which means sitting there paying careful attention for the whole duration of the disc.

Filtering is always the backbone of remastering. Wavelab’s basic filter block is a three-band ‘parametric EQ’ with high, mid and low filtering. High and low sections are ‘shelf’ filters while the mid is a

variable-Q (steepness) notch or boost. With just one such block you can already achieve quite a lot but it’s possible to invoke several at once, making for quite subtle control. I’ve also found the ‘Puncher’ control (a sort of dynamics booster) useful in reviving stale recordings, used in careful moderation. Things like echo and chorus aren’t of much interest in this context, but the stereo expander can be useful occasionally, and I’ve resampled a few recordings to correct speeds, something that will be of interest to many collectors of historic reissues.

Obviously there’s some degree of skill to all this, but one quickly learns to listen analytically when remastering. One of the best ways to learn, I’ve found, is to start with a good recording and see what various filters bring to it. That way one soon finds out what a given degree of bass cut sounds like, for instance, and one can then apply the reverse to cure it.

The sound quality of modern digital processors is remarkably good. Some very early ones sounded pretty ropey because they used crude filtering algorithms and didn’t dither the results properly, leading to quantisation distortion. Wavelab and Cool Edit both dither properly though, and both have pretty transparent processing: for instance, I recently used Wavelab to filter a 1kHz whistle from a recording. It achieved that nicely, and the filter had barely any discernible effect on the music in test passages which weren’t affected by the whistle.

One limitation to the filters in almost every programme I can find is that one has little or no control over phase response. In fact many filters are basically linear phase (no phase shift). This might sound like a good thing but it actually isn’t when one bears in mind that, in this application, one is often trying to reverse the effects (amplitude and phase) of non-linear-phase filters – a classic example would be the woeful bass response of many studio multitrack analogue recorders. Anyway, amplitude is always the most important part of the equation and one can really work wonders with what’s already available.

In a brief article like this it’s clearly not possible to do more than skim the surface of what can be a lifetime’s work, but I hope you’ve got some idea of the potential. Not everyone will want to bother, but for those who do it can become a fascinating way not only to improve sound quality but also to learn about sound and hearing.

Software

Wavelab isn’t the cheapest, but it’s one of the nicest programmes I’ve ever used for any purpose. Most importantly, it has some excellent filters and other effects which can be adjusted in real time as one listens – a very clever bit of programming. More details at www.steinberg.net. Cool Edit 2000 (\$69 as a download from www.syntrillium.com) is a lovely programme too with a brilliant real-time spectrum analyser display which is invaluable in pinpointing whistles and specific frequency-response irregularities, but it doesn’t give real-time adjustment of effects so you have to process a bit, listen and then ‘undo’ if you don’t like it. Wavelab also supports ‘plug-ins’ from other vendors, some of which are free or shareware, while Cool Edit offers full-function MP3 encoding, should you need it.

Hardware

Any Pentium or later PC with a processor speed of 200MHz or more will be just fine, running Windows 95/98/NT/2000. If you don’t already own a CD burner, look for one make only – Plextor. Their drives (readers and burners) have much better support for audio work than any others, and they’re fast, high quality, reliable, well supported by software vendors and a joy to use. They also tend to use a SCSI interface so you may also have to fork out for an adapter card but it needn’t be a particularly fancy one. Soundcards vary a lot and it’s worth checking specs carefully before you buy. Some professional ones have only digital inputs and outputs, like the excellent Zefiro Acoustics card I use, so you have to have an external DAC of some sort (I use a Marantz CDR in Record/Pause mode) to hear what’s going on.

Mac users are not quite as well catered for as the PC fraternity, but many programmes (including Wavelab) are available for both platforms.

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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value for money ★★★★★★
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 verdict ★★★★★★

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 190a New North Road
 020 7226 5500

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 61/63 Webbs Road, Battersea
 020 7924 2040

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 109 Chiswick High Road
 020 8400 5555

SOUTH

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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

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INFIDELITY
 9 High Street Hampton Wick
 020 8943 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 AUDIO
 278 High Street,
 01895 465444

MIDLANDS

Banbury OVERTURE
 3 Church Lane
 01295 272158

Birmingham SOUND ACADEMY
 152a High Street, Bloxwich
 01922 493499

Leicester CYMBIOSIS
 6 Hotel Street
 0116 262 3754

Northampton LISTEN INN
 32 Gold Street, 01604 637871

Shrewsbury
CREATIVE AUDIO
 9 Dogpole 01743 241924

NORTH

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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

AUDIO ILLUSION

23 Langley Broom
Langley
Berkshire SL3 8NB
TEL: 01753 542761 FAX: 01753 772532

Classé Audio

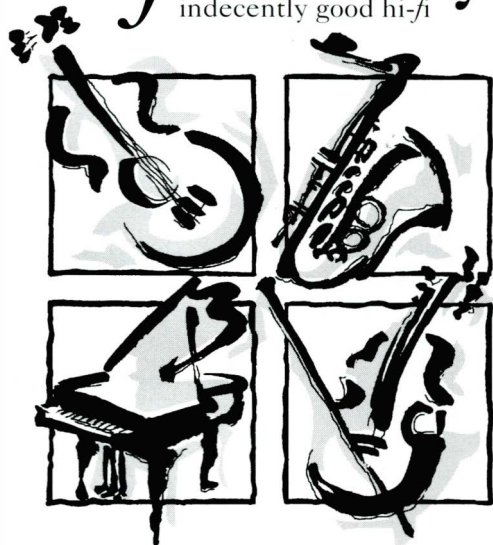
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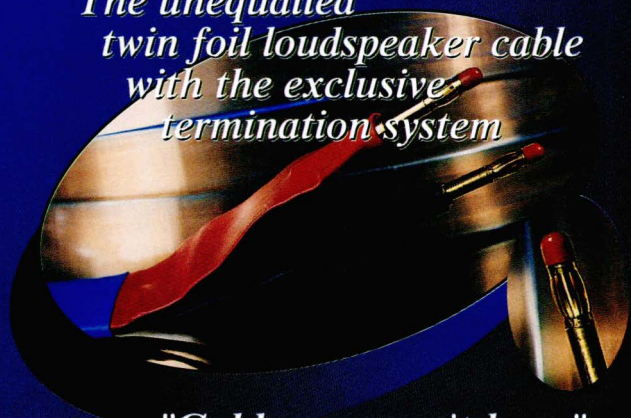


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CD & DVD Multi-disc Players

Alvin Gold loses the use of his legs as he checks out some gear that may mean you never need to leave your sofa again.

Multi-disc CD players have had a bad press over the years. There has been an almost unspoken assumption that they are not strictly kosher, as though the very idea of adding a multi-disc loader to an otherwise ordinary compact disc player in some manner renders it less worthy. Stereotypes of this kind often turn out to be self-fulfilling prophecies, as audiophiles tend to give them a wide berth, and so a vicious downmarket spiral is established. The reality then is that multi-disc players often do not achieve when playing music.

But it needn't be like this. Multi-disc players sell in serious numbers, and of course there is significant commercial pressure on manufacturers to do it right, and some – repeat, some – rise to this challenge. The result can be some worthwhile machinery, with

the extra benefits of being able to load it with discs and forget about them, and to programme across multiple discs in a single operation. At least some of the players in this report hold the

promise of handling the multi-disc challenge in style, and not just because the list in this report includes names like Nakamichi – which was once exclusively associated with the kind of conservative engineering that attracts the audiophile – or that one player, from Denon, costs £1,000.

The Denon model is one of two that establish a completely new category, one that is bound to become more important in the future. Along with the representative from Sony, it is capable of dealing with DVDs as well as CDs. In fact one of these is different for another reason too; the Sony is capable of storing up to 200 discs, which could easily be a lifetime's collection. At a much lower price, the Technics model will do something similar, but solely for compact discs.

Hints & Tips

Multi-disc players are no more nor less than conventional single-disc players with added multi-disc loaders, and as such they respond to the usual treatment you would give conventional CD players. Using quality cables is an absolute must, and so is using an appropriate supporting platform – though appropriate in some of these cases (Nakamichi excepted) may mean much bigger than you expected. All of these models, apart from the NAD, have digital outputs, one of whose applications would be to use a separate D/A converter – a natural way to upgrade most of these players without throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

How the tests were done

The bulk of the test was an assessment of sound quality, which in this case involved two main steps: burning the players in and then auditioning them. As the test period coincided with the loan of a new Martin-Logan speaker, the Prodigy (the subject of a *Statements* piece in this issue – see page 54), it

became the main focus of the listening, along with a Krell KPS-25sc CD/preamplifier and matching amplification, and for good measure a Sony SCD-777ES SACD player used in CD compatibility mode. The DVD-V players were additionally assessed in video mode using a Philips TV as a monitor.

THE CAST LIST

Denon DVM-3700 DVD changer	£999.99
Kenwood DPF-R6030 CD changer	£179.99
Marantz CC3000 CD changer	£149.90
NAD 523 CD changer	£249.95
Nakamichi MB-10	
MusicBank CD changer	£399.99
Sony DVP-CX850D DVD changer	£599.99
Technics SL-MC7 CD changer	£299.99



DENON DVM-3700

DVD changers are a new product category, and have yet to define a role for themselves. There is one application: many films (and their extras) are packaged across more than one disc, especially dts encoded ones as this encoding takes up more real estate on a disc than Dolby Digital, thanks to its higher data rate. But a multi-disc DVD player can also act as a multi-disc CD player, and this was the focus of this test, and that of the other multi-disc DVD player, the Sony DVP-CX850D, reviewed separately.

As a DVD-Video player (with the coming of DVD-Audio this is soon how we will all be forced to describe them), the Denon is fully up to date. It recognises dts discs and delivers the data through electrical and optical digital outputs. The video signal is available through composite and Y/C S-Video outputs, two for each format, and also true component video (Y, Cb, Cr) for those with high-end video projectors – but little has been done to customise the model for the UK (other than Region 2 compatibility of course), leading to the omission of RGB and Scart outputs. Video processing is 10-bit 27MHz, now the industry standard for quality players. The audio from DVDs is handled by twin D/A converters capable of reading 24-bit data from the AL24 digital filter, which is based around Denon's own interpolation algorithm which can work on digital input data up to



"Simply as a piece of electro-mechanical engineering, the Denon is impressive stuff."

24-bit resolution, and up to 96kHz sampling frequency. Note that this is not the same as saying it has 24/96 resolution, because this is outside the limits of currently affordable technology. There are some alternative picture modes (soft, normal, fine, cinema), and the output can be optimised for different types of display device.

For those still interested during this run-up to DVD-Audio, the Denon will deliver a 24bit/96kHz output for off-player processing from those few DVD-Video discs that are available in this format. Simply as a piece of electro-

mechanical engineering, the Denon is impressive stuff. As a CD audio player, the DVN-3700 benefits from the same AL24 digital filter and twin DAC, and it also offers full HDCD compatibility.

SOUND QUALITY

Although a little fussier than some about disc surface cleanliness, the Denon performed well. As a DVD player, picture quality was no better than the Sony, hamstrung by the lack of RGB, and the result was a little softer than available from the best single-disc players. On the other hand, as a CD player, the Denon performed above expectations. In recent tests in *Hi-Fi Choice*, DVD players have almost invariably performed worse than equivalent CD players – even after making reasonable allowances for the fact that DVD players do more, and must inevitably cost more. But, on the whole, the Denon DVM-3700 managed to outperform all but the best of the CD-only multiplayers in its compact disc-playing role.

Clearly superior to the above mentioned Sony DVP-CX850D, the Denon is more colourful and varied, and gives better anchored imagery, and a greater variety of tonal hue and instrumental texture. It lacks only the propulsive drive and physical edge available from a truly top class CD player. Even so, the Denon has a strong bass by the standards of the group. Where it really excelled, however, was in the upper mid-band and treble, which delivered

its message with an unusual clarity and what can best be described as verve and presence. It is an enjoyable player to listen to, and to listen through.

CONCLUSIONS

As a first of its type, Denon has pushed the boat out, basing key parts on the technology that went into the Denon DVD-5000 single disc DVD player, with a new five-disc carousel mechanism that sets new standards of speed and refinement – as you might expect given that it costs £1,000. A formal Recommendation is appropriate, with the caveat that prices will undoubtedly come down in due course, but this is an impressive player by current standards.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £999.99

High class five-disc carousel DVD/CD player is also a more than routinely capable CD player, but the price surely reflects the current paucity of choice.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Hayden House, Chiltern Hill, Chalfont St Peter, Bucks SL9 9UG
(01753) 888447

SPECIFICATIONS

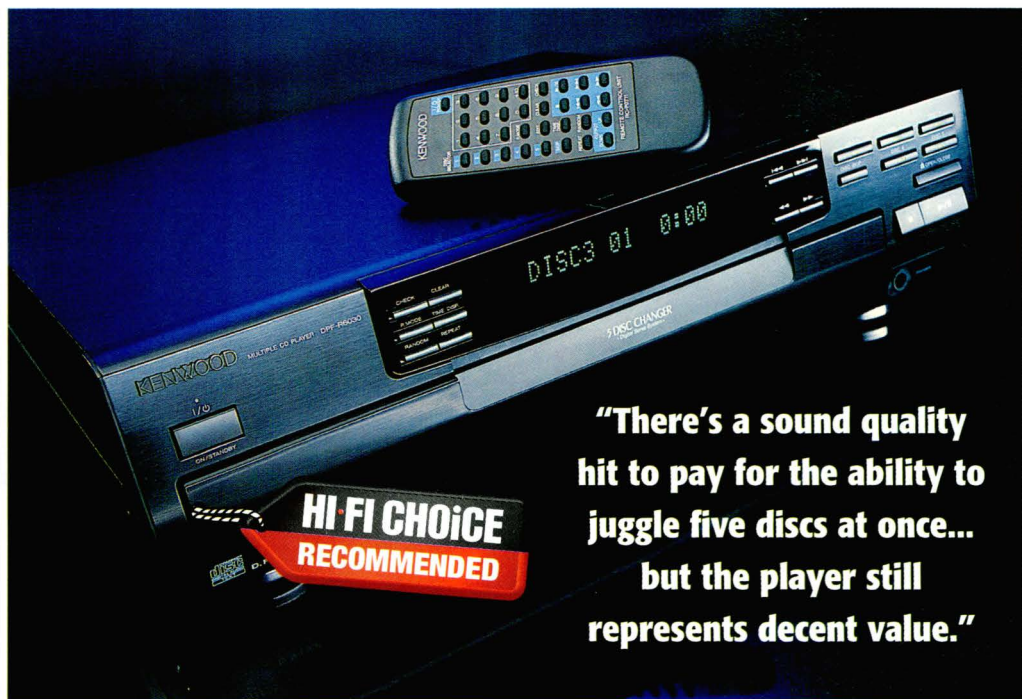
- Number of discs – 5
- Digital outputs – optical, electrical
- Time taken to change discs – 15 seconds max (includes 7 seconds to read the Table of Contents track).



KENWOOD DPF-R6030

The five-disc carousel effectively determines the exterior dimensions, which correspond quite closely to the other carousel-loading players. Just make sure you have plenty of shelf space. Not many would describe the DPF-R6030 as attractive. It's a strictly utilitarian affair – rather like the model number – which is adequately finished and quite lightly built with a poorly damped lid and plenty of dark plastic on show to the outside world. The upturned bottom lip of the display gives it a slightly cheesy grin, like some recent Ford cars whose designers also seemingly fail to understand the anthropomorphic principle.

On the whole the equipment levels are fairly basic, but there are a couple of points that deserve mention – like the ability to show CD Text title information, which will be of serious interest to some, though the system has been hamstrung by its lack of widespread acceptance on the part of the disc producers. The Kenwood boasts a full implementation that will show disc titles and the lead artist as well as track titles, and the data is sent automatically as a subcode through the digital outputs to any attached MiniDisc player, so MD dubs are fully titled. Another useful feature is the provision of CCRS support, which allows multidisc editing onto cassette with compatible Kenwood cassette decks made over the last decade. Random and repeat modes are



“There’s a sound quality hit to pay for the ability to juggle five discs at once... but the player still represents decent value.”

good for 32 tracks, and the random play mode is the delete type, which won't play the same track twice. Unless it forgets, of course.

This is a 1-bit player with Kenwood DRIVE (Dynamic Resolution Intensive Vector Enhancement – phew!) circuitry, which is said to guarantee 16-bit resolution down to -90dB by reducing step (quantisation) distortion on low level waveforms.

SOUND QUALITY

Many of the players tested have slick exteriors, but when the drawer is opened, or discs are

being changed, the players put on a respectable impersonation of a cement mixer. By contrast, the Kenwood has a slow, stately drawer mechanism, and although it is far from quiet, at least you don't feel like apologising every time you show it to friends.

The Keb' Mo' track was reproduced with a rather plummy textured yet lightweight bass, while the midband and treble were crisply articulated. A similar pattern was repeated with a wide range of other material. Only the sonorous Mahler extract split ranks by sounding distinctly superior, thanks to the player's excellent midband transparency, and a smooth, detailed and spacious quality at the high frequency end of the band. All it lacked was a convincing sense of weight in the bass. So, propulsion and drive deux points, mid/top, dix points. Well, neuf, anyway.

Although the slightly 'off' quality of the bass was a consistent factor, the Kenwood performed rather unevenly with different types of music. The player was clearly at its best with the Mahler extract, which is unusual in that much of the musical energy here is concentrated in the bass and through to the lower midband. Much of the other test material was more evenly distributed across the audio frequency band, and it was mainly with them that the rather odd, sometimes anaemic, bass behaviour began to raise its head. The rather too obviously contained and lightweight bass frequency led

to the conclusion that the Kenwood sounded thin and raw with some tracks, but this appears to be no more than a spotlighting effect as mid/treble sound quality is well above average.

CONCLUSIONS

In most respects deeply average, the DPF-R6030 is just what it says on the label, except that CD Text and the cassette editing CCRS features go beyond the standard brief for a low-end changer. Although it is well priced, there is a sound quality hit to pay for the ability to juggle five discs at once, and there is a loss of solidity and range to the sound despite a decent quality midband and treble. But taking price into account, it represents decent value. Recommended.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £179.99

Lean and clean sound and typically bulky packaging distinguish this well priced player.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Kenwood Electronics UK Ltd, Kenwood House, Dwight Road, Watford, Herts WD1 8EB
(01923) 816444

SPECIFICATIONS

- Number of discs – 5
- Digital outputs – optical, electrical
- Time taken to change discs – 11 seconds worst case



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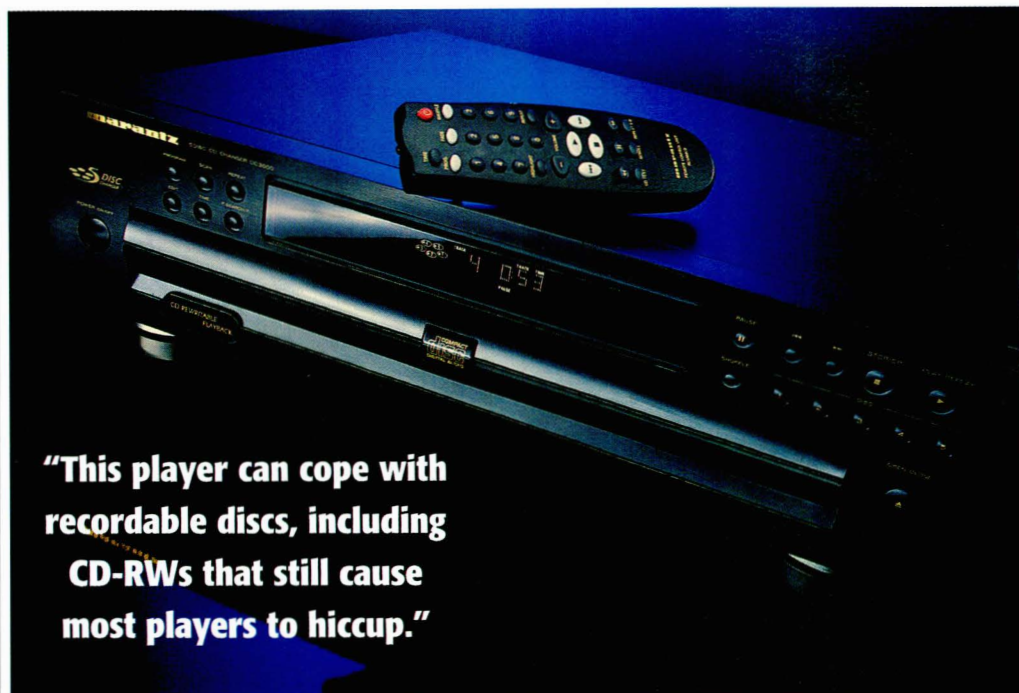
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MARANTZ CC3000

As entry level 5-disc carousel CD players go, this one is quite an impressive package. The first clue is with the drawer open, revealing two keys on the loading tray, one of which starts Quick Play from the adjacent 'preferred disc' loading position, and another that moves the discs around by two steps, easing loading and disgorging of discs. The CD platform also accelerates between positions with almost indecent haste, and when checked against the stopwatch the CC3000 turned out to be easily fastest player in the group when changing from disc to disc. It is also pretty quick when starting play with an open loading drawer.

And there's plenty more where that came from. This is a player that can cope with recordable discs, including low reflectivity CD-RWs that still cause most players to hiccup, a capability that is being introduced throughout the Marantz CD player range. Next on the list comes variable output, both from the analogue and from the digital outputs, and even, according to the Book of Words, from the headphone socket. Not that the CC3000 actually has a headphone socket.

Back in the real world, the player has a whole raft of trick play modes, including programming for up to 30 tracks, not a very generous allocation for a multi disc player, you might argue – various repeat and random play modes, intro scan and even a fade in/out



feature. In contrast to some of the other models, there is also a decent level of support for CD to tape dubbing. This works with compatible Marantz cassette decks using a synchronisation lead, and involves selecting the tape length, and allowing the player to organise the tracks appropriately, and also add short gaps between tracks if required to allow reliable operation of cassette deck track search functions. The editing features are backed up by peak search, which is particularly useful when recording in the analogue domain.

SOUND QUALITY

Looking back through recent reviews of Marantz CD players in *Hi-fi Choice*, there are obvious parallels with the CD5000, a low cost (£150) single disc player that coincidentally or otherwise uses the same continuous calibration DAC and floating VAM1201 mechanism. In that review, I wrote that the player was 'energetic and lively (and also) rough and untidy, with a lean, dry and in the end very un-Marantz like bass. Depth information tended to be rather foreshortened and there was little of the solid presence that some players seem to project almost as a matter of second nature'. These words could have been written about the CC3000 too. In this case I noted a strange, reedy mid-band colouration that was especially obvious with the Mahler, and a treble that sounded consistently brittle and sometimes aggressive and steely in tone. Additionally the bass lacked vitality and had a woolly quality, and timing cues were poorly resolved. The Keb Mo track for example lacked its customary propulsive quality. 'Limping' was the single word from the listening notes that came closest to summing it all up for this track.

In common with the CD5000, there is a certain raw vitality to this player, and on the whole the sound gave an initial impression of being quite detailed, but ultimately there is no disguising its lack of sophistication and its rough and ready audio manners. The player

is weakest out towards the frequency extremes, but there is also an overall loss of weight and of image depth, and distinct elements in music mixes sometimes seemed to partially merge with each other, and in the end the impression of detail is a chimera.

CONCLUSIONS

The strongest feature of this player is its price. £150 for a multi-disc player from a primary manufacturer like Marantz is not to be sniffed at, and the player is also worth considering for some of its features, including tape editing and the ability to read CD-R and CD-RW discs. Unhappily the audio processing throws a spanner in the works for a player that is not representative of the classic warm Marantz house sound.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £149.90

Good feature set, rapid disc handling, but sound quality is rough and ready.

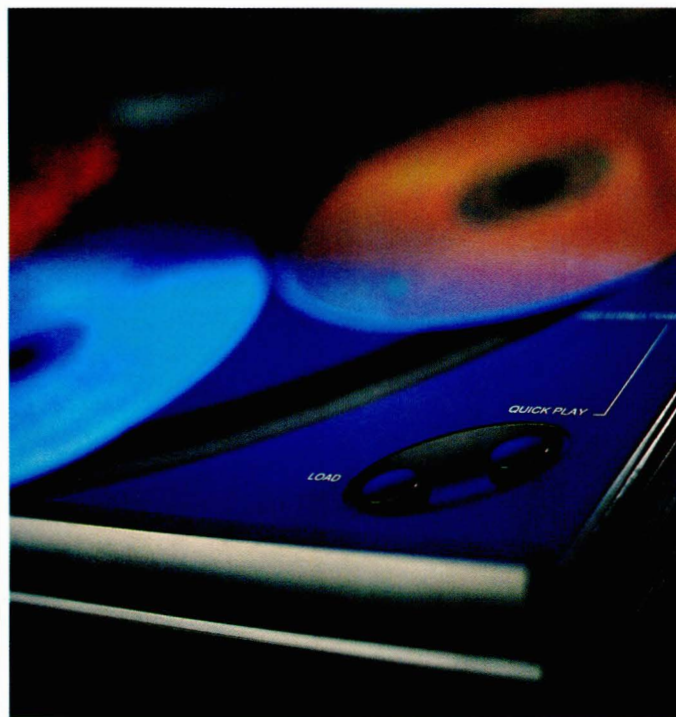
TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Marantz Hi Fi UK Ltd., Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 575-583 Bath Road, Longford, Middlesex UB7 0EH.

(01753) 680868

SPECIFICATIONS

- Number of discs – 5
- Digital outputs – electrical
- Time taken to change discs – 6 seconds worst case

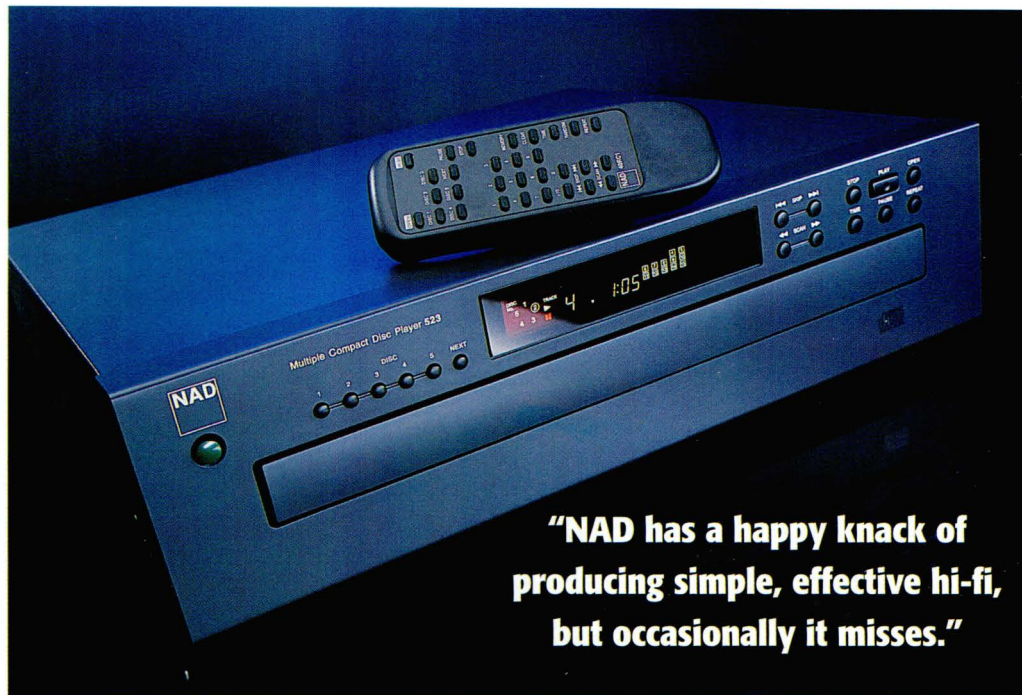


NAD 523

NAD bills the 523 in their product literature as "probably the least expensive truly high-performance CD changer in the world", so what explains their unaccustomed modesty? A five-disc carousel loading player, the hardware complement under the skin includes separate analogue and digital power supplies, an NPC Delta Sigma processor with 8x oversampling and the analogue output stage is taken from the output of a 4 pole analogue filter. Selected passive components are used in critical areas.

As a piece of industrial design, the NAD 523 is an acquired taste. All the front panel features are squeezed into the area above the drawer which makes it look – this is jargon, but you'll get the idea – wrong. The display also looks cluttered – but to its credit is informative enough. And if the control layout is uninspired, so what? The compact handset is even quite well designed in its low-key way.

OK, so perhaps it scores thanks to its innovative and comprehensive feature set. Wrong again. There is no digital output (the only player in this group not to have one) and this will be an particular blow for those interested in copying CDs onto other digital media, an activity that is rapidly gaining in popularity with the increasing diversity of digital recording media, especially MiniDisc and CD-R. There's no headphone socket either, but the rest of the feature



"NAD has a happy knack of producing simple, effective hi-fi, but occasionally it misses."

set – 40-track programming, repeat and random play – are all present and correct, and remote control links allow the player to be operated as an integrated part of a complete NAD system from a system remote control handset, or as part of a full multi-room system.

SOUND QUALITY

At their best, NAD products have always sounded clean, straightforward and direct, but at their worst they have tended to sound dull and slow. Sadly, this is one of the second group – and in spades.

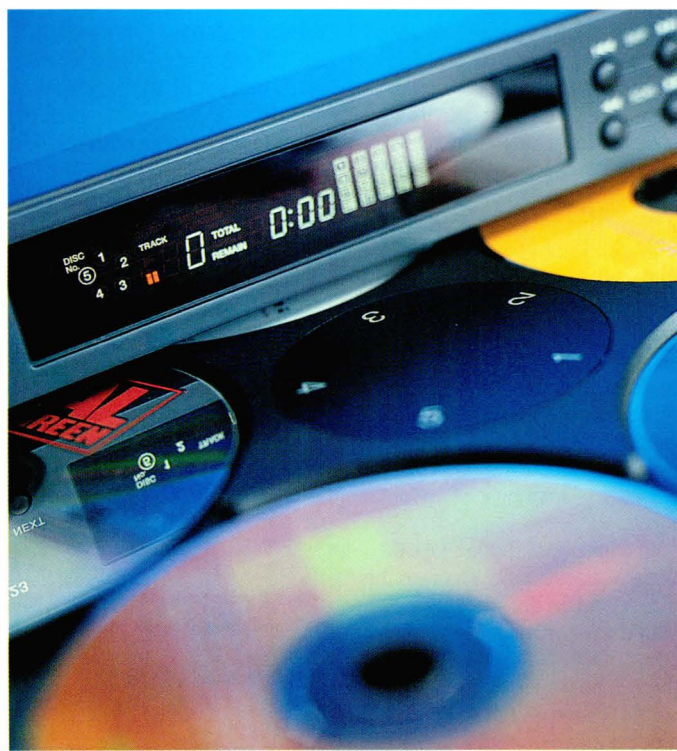
The lively Keb' Mo' track, for example, was distinctly off colour. It sounded dull and plummy right across the frequency band. The acoustic guitar part, which normally has a bell-like clarity, was opaque and curiously lacking in texture, and the voice was reproduced with an unaccustomed sense of harshness. The Mahler started well, with a very full cello entry, and on the whole this piece was quite successfully handled, the player coping with the layered complexity of the string playing with something approaching panache, though with less of the sense of analysis that some of the other players were able to bring to the party. But the NAD was palpably less happy with the Ravel chamber piece, which scored a thumbs down with its dull, clanging piano sound. Again there was the tell-tale lack of clarity and of tonal variation, expressiveness and dynamic.

And so it continued. Running the player within the time limits available for this test led to very little significant improvement, and a consistent complaint was that soundstage presence was underplayed. The word "mono" and close derivatives appeared in the listening notes more than once. In addition, there was a limited sense of instrumental and vocal separation. On the plus side, those who find that the compact disc format is too harsh and bright will find solace in this player. But the NAD swings too far in the opposite direction, and the loss of clarity is

insupportable. Too often, this player simply sounded dull.

CONCLUSIONS

NAD has a happy knack of producing simple, effective hi-fi, but occasionally it misses, and this is one such example – despite a five star review in another place, by the way. The player's refined disc handling did impress: it's a world away from some of the competition, and the lack of wiggles would be no bar to its success, except it has been taken too far with the omission of a digital output. But it is the dull, restrained and sometimes sat-upon sound quality that ultimately rules this player out of serious contention.



VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £249.95

■ **Lack of a digital output is a significant shortcoming, but it is the dull and flat sound quality which earns a thumbs down.**

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Lenbrook UK, 15 Farraday Rd, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 3RY.

☎ (01296) 482017

SPECIFICATIONS

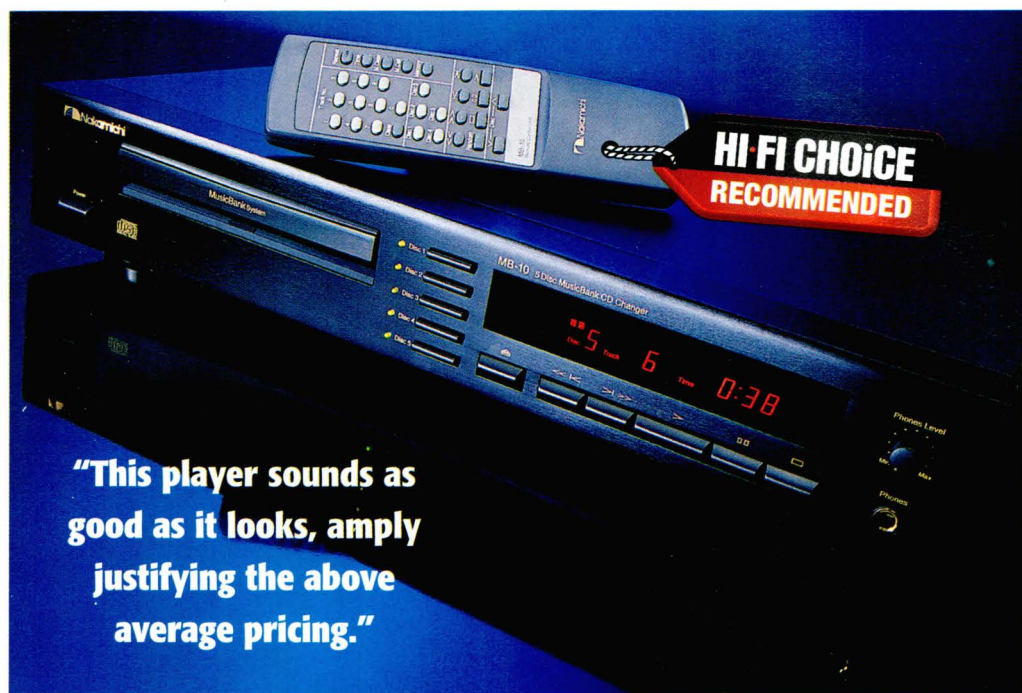
- Number of discs – 5
- Digital outputs – none
- Time taken to change discs – 8 seconds worst case

NAKAMICHI MB-10 MusicBank

The Nakamichi MB-10 MusicBank CD changer is a little different to the norm, with the emphasis here firmly on 'MusicBank' and 'little'. MusicBank is the name given to the proprietary stacking mechanism that stores up to five discs, one above the other, instead of around the edge of an inevitably enormous rotating tray carousel arrangement, which is the most popular model for multidisc mechanisms. As well as being extremely compact, MusicBank has some additional benefits. As the discs move only over very small distances, accessing discs is rather quicker than a conventional single disc player, and changing from disc to disc is also very quick. Additionally, the disc is only drawn in and handled by its edge, and this provides a clue that the origin of MusicBank was probably in the world of car audio.

The MB-10 is much, much smaller than any of the other players, and smaller even than the majority of single disc players, which is impressive stuff. But I was less impressed when the MusicBank mechanism threw a wobbly by failing to register a disc that had been inserted, or to eject it when asked to do so. It recovered, without any further histrionics, once the unit had been restarted after being disconnected from the mains, and from that time on I was unable to get it to misbehave. Hopefully this was a one-off.

The mechanism is indeed very



"This player sounds as good as it looks, amply justifying the above average pricing."

slick, and the control system places no undue obstacles in the user's path. Indeed this is the most cleanly designed player in the group by a long chalk. Apart from the standard set of transport controls, all you get are five buttons representing the five discs – with LED indicators to show which slots are occupied. And the remote control is scarcely more complex.

User facilities are limited to the usual collection of random, repeat and programme modes, the last capable of remembering up to 50

tracks from a random selection of discs. Electrical as well as optional digital outputs are available, and the player has a headphone socket with a volume control.

SOUND QUALITY

There is no equivocation with this player. It sounds as good as it looks, amply justifying the above average pricing. It has a particularly fresh, lively and detailed presentation, but it's leavened with stability and solidity. Instrumental timbre is clean and realistic through the midband, with just a hint of a metallic, too keenly polished edge in the treble. At the opposite end of the band, the Nakamichi was occasionally guilty of being on the lightweight side of neutral, which was a common if not universal finding with this group, but the absence of weight and – as it was sometimes perceived – muscularity was far from severe, and often it wasn't an issue at all.

And there was plenty more to like about the MB-10. Once thoroughly run in, it was not just lively and detailed, it was also fluid in its presentation, with little of the abruptness and edge that, for some, defines the sound of compact disc. Imagery was also a good point, and a good sign: believable, three dimensional (or even good two dimensional) imagery is a useful litmus test for hi-fi systems. When it doesn't happen right, the sound either tends to flop from one speaker to the other, or much of the stereo spread is leached out of the image – the MB-10,

however, suffers from neither of these distractions. The Nakamichi has a rounded quality, with images placed naturally between the speakers, and no trace of phasiness or edginess. This is not just a good-sounding player, it's a thoroughly likeable one.

CONCLUSIONS

The only problem with the MB-10 was the one-off fault experienced with the transport, but as it performed faultlessly thereafter, it has not been taken into account in the scoring, and this model is formally Recommended.

Although a little more costly than most multi-disc players, and modest in terms of features, the MB-10 is compact, easy to use and engaging musically.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £399.99

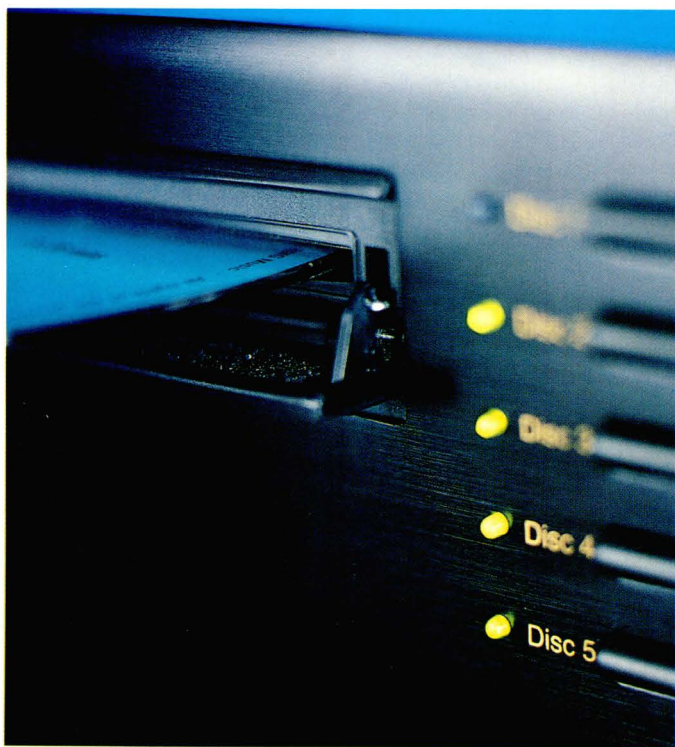
Cleanly designed player works well, with a prodigious disc capacity and a transparent control system at an attractive price.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

BBG Distribution Ltd, Unit 3 Barrett Way, Tudor Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 5QS
(020) 8863 9117

SPECIFICATIONS

- Number of discs – 5
- Digital outputs – optical, electrical
- Time taken to change discs – 8 seconds worst case



SONY DVP-CX850D

Imagine taking a perfectly conventional hi-fi component, and then blowing it up with a bicycle pump until it reaches absurd proportions. This, in a nutshell, is the Sony DVP-CX850D, a monster of a DVD multichanger in almost every respect, except in the slime and dripping fangs department. In fact it is quite a tour de force, as you find out when dropping the full width front panel for the first time to reveal a huge carousel, reminiscent of a Kodak Carousel slide projector magazine, except that instead of 100 slides, this one is capable of accepting no fewer than 200 discs in any combination of CDs and DVDs. For many people, this player will accommodate a lifetime's collection of discs, all of which are available for immediate access, and in this context, waiting for up to 23 seconds to find and play a new disc doesn't seem like such an imposition.

Especially when you see what other tricks the Sony has up its sleeve. The more routine of these include a quick access slot, and resume play, but the pièce de résistance is the ability to load up the Table of Contents information from all the discs inserted. You can then use the disc browser to search through the titles and track data – even the start up screens (where available) – of your collection, either in individual categories (all DVDs, or all CDs for example), using alphabetic designations (like A to D), or the entire set together. For discs that are not titled, such as CDs without CD Text, a simple text label can be programmed. Add in a whole raft of secondary



"This player is a tremendously powerful disc management and organising tool."

features including random play, repeat play and 99-track programming, Virtual Surround and more, and there is little left that the Sony won't do except make the tea.

The DVP-CX850D is less of an enthusiast's player than the Denon DVM-3700 (insofar as any multidisc player will appeal to video or audiophiles), as can be seen from the character of the feature set. The player has an on-board Dolby Digital processor, along with dts compatibility of course, though dts signals are only available from the digital outputs. Two Scart connectors include S-Video and RGB compatibility, but the digital output won't deliver

96kHz digital outputs.

SOUND QUALITY

The mechanics of the Sony are understandably slow, and distinctly noisy, but it is its sound quality that disappointed most, though it seems almost churlish to complain given the player's alternative claims to fame.

The basic pattern was of a player with a tight, rather dry delivery which lacked tonal colour when playing compact discs, and which displayed relatively little image depth. Known recordings that can normally be relied upon simply failed to grip, and the bleached out quality of the player made most discs sound rather unvarying, and therefore uninteresting. Imagery also failed to reproduce with the expected sense of depth behind the speaker plane in the test system. The flat midband was partly to blame, but so was a clear lack of low frequency punch, while the treble simply sounded synthetic.

More surprisingly perhaps, the quality of the picture was also a little deficient. Through the composite output, it was not dissimilar to the Denon, with clear signs of limited video bandwidth by DVD standards, with fine detail lost and sharp edges smoothed over. There was some improvement through the higher performance outputs, but not enough to equal the best of Sony's own single-disc DVD players.

CONCLUSIONS

It is easy to be dismissive about a player like this one, as it is clearly a long way from being state of the art in audio, or even video, terms. But it was never meant to cover these particular bases, and the fact remains that it is a tremendously powerful disc management and organising tool that will be an impressive addition to most multi-room and many other systems. Given the scope of its talents, the £600 price seems very reasonable, especially as there is currently no equivalent from any other source. No formal recommendation here of course – the Sony doesn't meet the fundamental performance criteria – but one can't help but be impressed.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £599.99

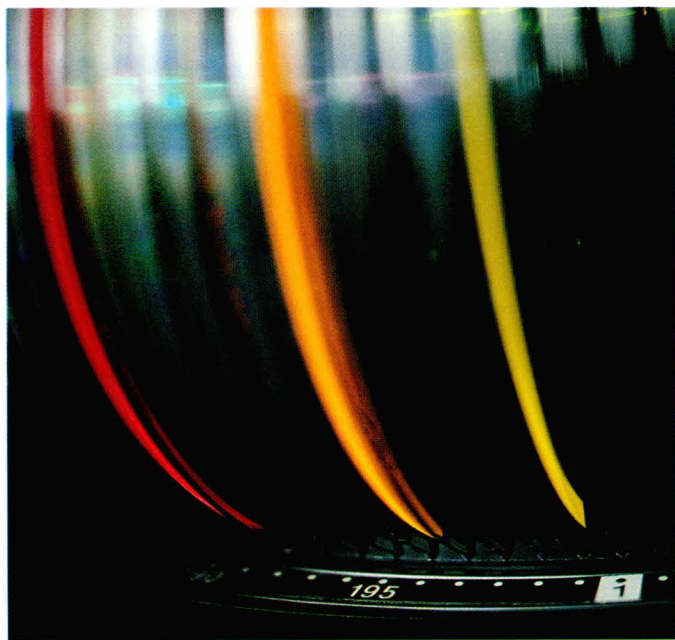
A horses-for-courses product: buy it for its astonishing capacity and flexibility, not for its blazing performance.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Sony UK Ltd., The Heights, Brooklands, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0XW.
☎ (0990) 111999

SPECIFICATIONS

- Number of discs – 200
- Digital outputs – optical, electrical
- Time taken to change discs – 23 seconds max (includes 7 seconds to read the Table of Contents track).

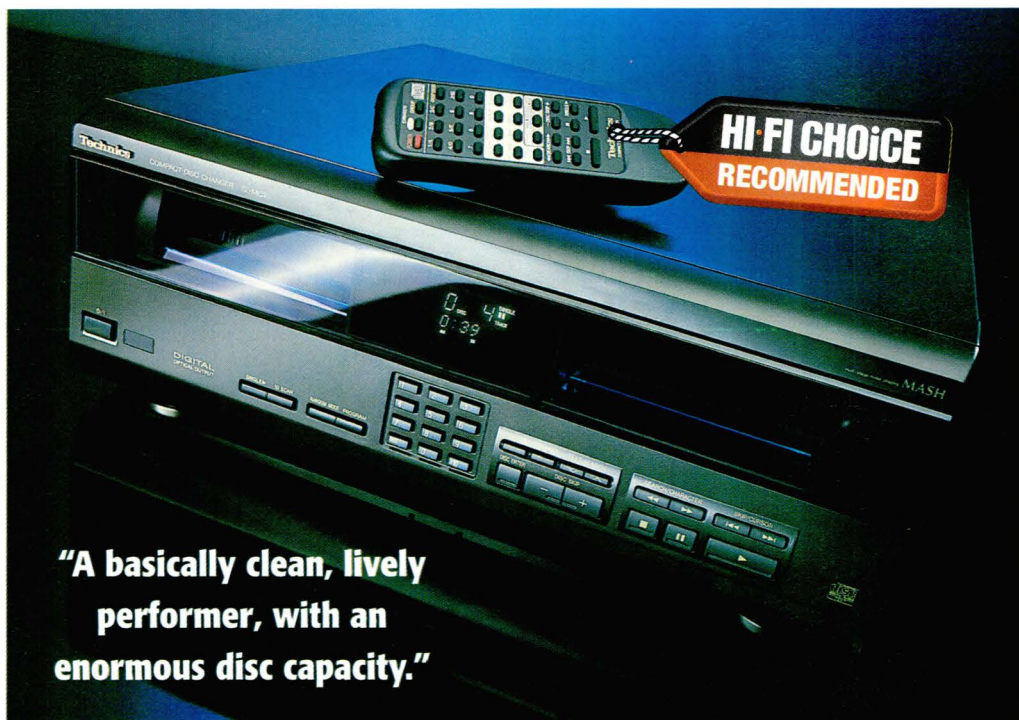


TECHNICS SL-MC7

Players that can accommodate entire collections of discs for instant access are often specified for multiroom systems, where they can be positioned out of easy reach along with other central system resources. This is one such player.

A little taller than the others, but otherwise deceptively ordinary at first sight, the whole front panel hinges down to reveal a cavernous internal space capable of storing 111 discs in a long line, jukebox fashion – 110 plus one 'single disc play' slot reserved for listening to a disc without disturbing the permanently stored collection. This feature works in conjunction with a 'single' play key (note the ambiguous terminology), or rather it is supposed to. All attempts to make this feature work without first cancelling a mysteriously invoked 'programme' mode failed. On a more practical vein, Technics supplies a soft back book-like organiser for the disc liner booklets, and numbered adhesive labels for identification purposes.

As you might expect, the SL-MC7 has a number of features designed to manage a large disc collection. CD Text reads out disc, track and artist title information from encoded discs (which remain a comparative rarity, unfortunately), and non-CD Text titles can have basic disc information added, which remains accessible as long as the disc remains undisturbed in its slot. Up to 32 tracks can be programmed, and tracks added from the remote control. Random play can deal with up to 250 tracks drawn from a random



"A basically clean, lively performer, with an enormous disc capacity."

selection of discs, though in this mode (as opposed to single disc random play) individual tracks may be repeated, which is a clear memory limitation, though it remains a great party feature. Discs can be grouped in up to five groups or genres, for example classical and pop – with Charlotte Church and Vanessa Mae allowed to belong to both, despite the clear injustice of the situation. Surprisingly, however, the CD Text information is not squirted down the digital output to an MD player.

A rather worrying warning note – which is deemed important enough to place in a conspicuous position inside the cover – is that

the discs should be removed before the player is transported. With this many discs, this is not something most of us would wish to do regularly.

SOUND QUALITY

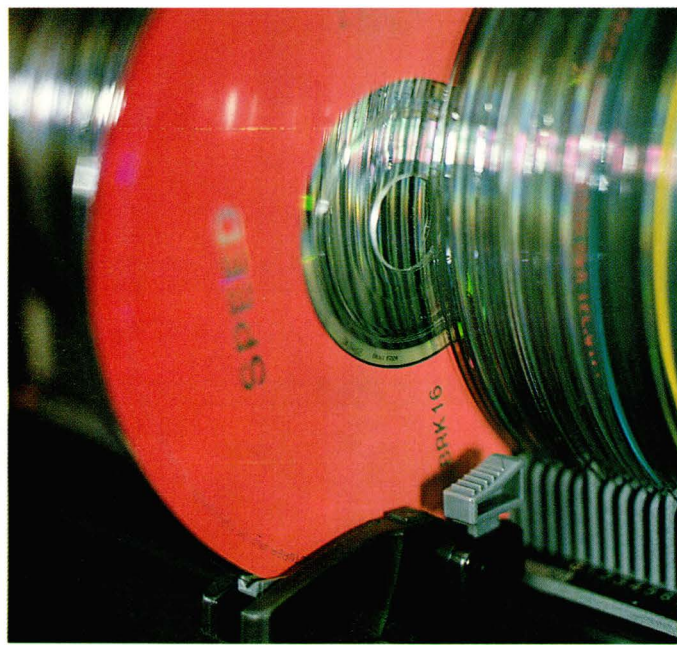
The Technics suffered with locked spiral-type indigestion with one disc which behaved perfectly on the other players, and the problem with the single (disc) play feature has already been mentioned. In other respects the SL-MP7 behaved well, and with less clankiness than some of the carousel players. Functionally, omissions include switchable remote control coding which would have allowed multiple players in a single system, and more support for tape dubbing would have been welcome.

Musically, it is a classic seven out of 10 product. Strengths in one of the test tracks, Keb' Mo's *Perpetual Blues Machine*, included high levels of detail and strong separation of the singer and the instrumental parts, and an equally clear demarcation between the direct sound and the reverberant soundfield captured on disc. Similarly the recording of Ravel's Piano Trio sounded airy and spacious, and again reproduced with plenty of detail. On the negative side, the Technics sounded very flat after the reference players, with little sense of differentiation in the depth plane, and a rather inorganic sense of musical expression. Detailed but a little crude is a fair summation.

Still, it's not a bad sounding player, especially taking price into account, and ironically it should stand easy comparison with some of its single disc siblings.

CONCLUSIONS

Although not the best of the multi-disc players, the SL-MC7 is a basically clean, lively performer, with an enormous disc capacity, generally good disc handling and an attractive selling price. With players destined for multi-room systems, where access may be limited, there is a tremendous premium on reliability, and this is the one performance attribute that cannot be quantified in a test such as this. It seems well made, however, and Technics has a good reliability record.



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £299.99

Cleanly designed player works well and has a prodigious disc capacity, all at an attractive price.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Panasonic UK Ltd, Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 8FP
☎ (0990) 357357

SPECIFICATIONS

- Number of discs – 110 + 1
- Digital outputs – optical
- Time taken to change discs – 11 secs worst case



CONCLUSIONS

MULTI-DISC PLAYERS

If your concern is for sound quality first and foremost, don't give multi-disc players a second look. There is a penalty for their abilities, and their complexity does shift the focus away from sound quality, at least to an extent. Just as car air conditioning adds weight, cost and fuel consumption, so multi-disc spinners are bulky, complex and aurally a little crude by the best single-disc standards. But most of us would trade the demerits of aircon for the undoubted benefits, and so it is for many with multi-disc spinners.

This test coincided with the launch of the first multi-disc DVD players, which might be regarded by some as a solution in search of a problem – who would want to watch more than one film at a sitting? But this isn't the whole story. Some DVDs are multi-box sets, especially if they are dts encoded – *Dances with Wolves* is one example – because dts takes up more space on disc than Dolby Digital. Additionally, DVD information layers are packed much more tightly than CDs, and



“Most of us would trade the demerits of car aircon for the undoubted benefits, and so it is for many with multi-disc spinners.”

they withstand disc mis-handling much less readily. Finally, DVD changers are also by definition CD changers.

Another split in the test group derives from the type of loader. The standard solution is a large rotating tray, the carousel, which is capable of handling five discs at once. Carousels are mechanically relatively simple and reliable, but are extremely space consuming. Nakamichi's stacking mechanism is a much more elegant and compact solution to the same problem, and it is the only player that competes for size with conventional single disc players.

Finally there are the mega-disc players, in this case from Technics (CD) and Sony (DVD) which are capable of storing 100+1 and 200 discs respectively. Although the Sony was a little disappointing sonically, it is hard not to be impressed by the thoroughness and power of its disc browsing software, which is surely a model for future players of this kind.

RECOMMENDED



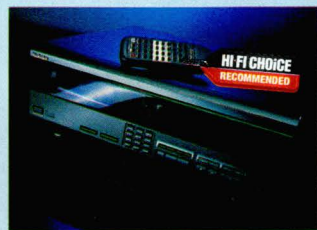
DENON
DVM-3700 £999.99
An intriguing but expensive combo of audio- and videophile appeal with the convenience of multi-disc loading.



KENWOOD
DPF-R6030 CD £179.99
A lot of player for the money, the Kenwood offers reasonable sound, CD Text and editing facilities.



NAKAMICHI
MB-10 MusicBank £399.99
An innovative and extremely compact five-disc stacker which also offers fluid and open music making.



TECHNICS
SL-MC7 £299.99
A 100+1 disc changer that offers good disc handling, the Technics will be a natural in multi-room systems.

MULTIDISC PLAYER COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	DENON	KENWOOD	MARANTZ	NAD	NAKAMICHI	SONY	TECHNICS
MODEL	DVM-3700	DPF-R6030	CC3000	523	MB-10	DVP-CX850D	SL-MC7
PRICE	£999.99	£179.99	149.90	£249.95	£399.99	£599.99	£299.99
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	2yrs	1yr	2yrs	2 yrs	1yr	1yr	1yr
NUMBER OF DISCS	5	5	5	5	5	200	100+1
DIGITAL OUTPUTS	Optical, Electrical	Optical, Electrical	Electrical	None	Optical, Electrical	Optical, Electrical	Optical
TIME FOR DISC CHANGE	15 seconds max	11 seconds max	6 seconds max	8 seconds max	8 seconds max	23 seconds max	11 seconds max

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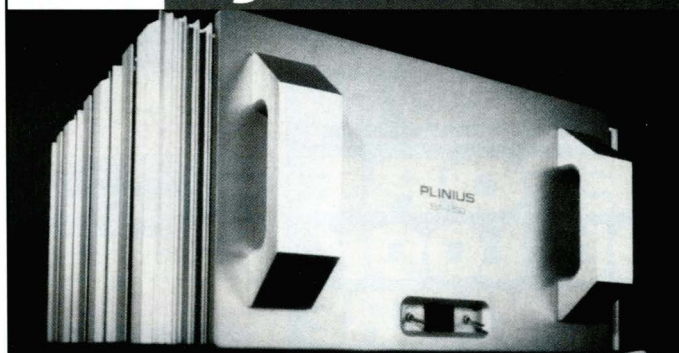


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Strictly Danish

DYNAUDIO
AUTHENTIC FIDELITY

It would seem that making loudspeakers comes naturally to the Danes, they appear to have something of a knack for it. None more so than Dynaudio, a brand that designs, develops and manufactures both drive units and complete loudspeakers with more success than most.

Founded 25 years ago, Dynaudio now employs 175 people the majority of whom are dedicated to the brand's domestic ranges. It also makes drive units and speaker systems for studios and other pro-audio applications under the Dynaudio Acoustics banner. And that's not all, the company also makes a no compromise amplifier called the Arbiter that it uses for R&D purposes and is commercially available, albeit at an alarming £130,000 price.

AUDIENCE

Dynaudio's entry level range is called Audience and consists of five stereo models, a centre channel, two subwoofers and LR surround speakers. Finished in black ash, cherry and rosewood vinyl the Audience range uses in-house drivers and externally sourced cabinets to keep the pricing competitive. The latter ranging from £399 to £1,460.

Kicking off the range is the Audience 40, a compact stand mount with a five inch mid/bass unit that's driven by a three inch voice coil – Dynaudio is particularly keen on large voice coils and uses them in all its cone drive units. High frequencies are provided by an Esotec D260, a unit common to the Audience range.

The stand mount Audience 50 (reviewed on page 31) uses a six inch mid/bass driver while the 60 is a floorstanding version of the same design. The Audience 70 adds an extra bass driver to the 60 format whereas the big Audience 80 makes the jump to three-way operation, incorporating a pair of eight inch bass drivers and a five inch midrange.

The Audience range, like all Dynaudio loudspeakers, uses first order crossovers and single wire connections. Controversially, Dynaudio feels that bi-wiring is unnecessary.

CONTOUR

The Contour range crosses over with the Audience with prices starting at £879 but the

differences are not subtle. Most obvious are the superb real wood veneers – cherry, rosewood, beech and black ash being available as standard and others, including Steinway finished piano black, as options. The Contour models have drive units matched to half a dB and each model's spec is stored at the factory in case you manage to blow a drive unit.

Kicking off the range is the 1.1 two-way stand mount which uses a five inch mid/bass unit and the aforementioned D260 tweeter. The £1,198 Contour 1.3 II incorporates a six inch main driver coupled to a 28mm tweeter, it is also the least expensive Dynaudio to use its cabinet-in-a-cabinet system. This is what it sounds like, the two boxes being separated by a compliant bonding to minimise resonance. The bass driver is unusual too, its magnet is offset in order to increase field

linearity under dynamic conditions.

The Contour 1.8 II (reviewed in June '97) is a two-way floorstander with a pair of six inch mid/bass drivers in a compact enclosure. While the 3.0 is a three-way with a Kapton former for the voice coil on the eight inch bass driver, a five inch midrange and cabinet-in-a-cabinet construction. It costs £4,815.

CONFIDENCE

The hand-crafted Confidence range consists of two very classy models, one of which is a £4,846 stand mount two-way featuring neodymium magnets and drive units matched to within a quarter dB. The Confidence 5 (left) needs no stand and incorporates a compound driver system which works along similar lines to Linn's Isobarik technique of using two bass drivers in parallel – one on the baffle, and one inside the speaker. This £5,900 model uses a four inch voice coiled eight inch bass unit and a three inch soft dome mid.



The Dynaudio Evidence (left) uses aluminium on its mid and high frequency baffle and prefers tri-amping with Arbiter amps (above).

CONSEQUENCE

This well established high end floor-stander has been in production for 17 years, costs £14.5k and utilises brass driver mountings with dramatic aesthetic effect.

EVIDENCE

This no-holds-barred Dynaudio was launched last year with the claim that it has limitless power handling; the web site specifies an only slightly more restrained capability of 500 Watts long term. Which seems pretty ambitious for a domestic loudspeaker, until you hear some of the specs or see a pair in the flesh. For a start they are two metres tall, albeit none too wide, and each incorporates four eight inch bass drivers, two 28mm tweeters, that split the high frequencies between them, and a pair of six inch midrange cones. With an all up weight of 135kg and the capability to produce levels in excess of 126dB this is no ordinary loudspeaker. A fact reflected in the extraordinary price: £50, 909.

As you can see there's rather more to Dynaudio than the popular Audience range and the proliferation of its drive units might suggest. Last year Dynaudio incorporated a racoon into its marketing campaign, marking the brand out as anything but ordinary, a state of affairs that's hard to disagree with.

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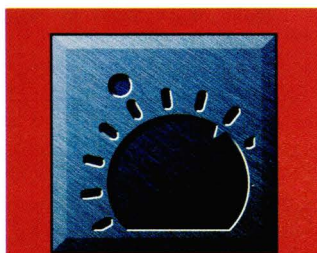
STEP 1 DISCOVER which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide, which starts on this page. The product listing is updated using manufacturers' data every other month, and aims to include every hi-fi component currently available in the UK. (But please fax us on (020) 7317 2686 with any omissions!) It is an alphabetical listing divided into different types of hi-fi component, and also into price bands.

STEP 2 PRODUCTS whose names are printed in **RED** are those we have reviewed, which you can read about in the Directory (starts after the Price Guide). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy, Recommended or Editor's Choice awards, denoting products of exceptional quality and value. The Directory is sorted by product type and listed alphabetically, and the beginning of each section provides essential information about each kind of hi-fi component.

STEP 3 FIND your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (at the end of the Directory) to book a demonstration of the hi-fi equipment you want to hear. Remember to take your own software!

DIRECTORY INDEX

ITEM	PAGE NUMBER
PRICE GUIDE	90
REVIEWED PRODUCTS	
INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS	110
PREAMPLIFIERS	111
POWER AMPLIFIERS	112
PHONO STAGES	112
MULTI-CHANNEL AMPLIFIERS	113
CABLES	
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS	113
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS	114
LOUDSPEAKER CABLES	114
CARTRIDGES	115
CASSETTE DECKS	116
CD PLAYERS	117
CD TRANSPORTS	118
DACS	119
DVD PLAYERS	119
DIGITAL RECORDERS	119
HEADPHONES	120
LOUDSPEAKERS	121
SUBWOOFERS	124
STANDS & SUPPORTS	124
TONEARMS	125
TUNERS	125
TURNTABLES	126



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NAD 310	Ⓢ	20W	100
NAD C300	Ⓢ	25W	146
NAD C320	Ⓢ	40W	200
NAD 312	Ⓢ	25W	200
Pioneer A-105	Ⓢ	30W	130
Pioneer A-204R	Ⓢ	25W	160
Pioneer A-300R	Ⓢ	50W	200
Pioneer A-305R	Ⓢ	50W	200
Pioneer A-407R	Ⓢ	45W	230
Pioneer A-405R	Ⓢ	45W	250
Rotel RA921	Ⓢ	25W	125
Rotel RA931	Ⓢ	35W	175
Rotel RA971 Mk II	Ⓢ	60W	250
Sansui AUX-410R	Ⓢ	50W	150
Sansui AUX-510R	Ⓢ	70W	230
Sherwood AX 4050R	Ⓢ	50W	150
Sherwood AX-7030R	Ⓢ	95W	230
Sony TA-FE230	Ⓢ	40W	100
Sony TA-FE30R	Ⓢ	60W	130
Sony TA-FB730R	Ⓢ	40W	200
Teac A-E2000	Ⓢ	50W	180
Teac A-R600	Ⓢ	90W	200
Technics SU-V300	Ⓢ	25W	130
Technics SU-V500	Ⓢ	30W	160
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	Ⓢ	37W	200
Technics SU-V620	Ⓢ	70W	230
Technics SU-A707	Ⓢ	70W	250
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	Ⓢ	45W	250
Yamaha AX-396	Ⓢ	60W	170
Yamaha AX-496	Ⓢ	85W	230

£251 TO £500

Arcam Alpha 7R	Ⓢ	45W	300
Arcam Alpha 8R	Ⓢ	50W	380
Arcam Alpha 9	Ⓢ	70W	500
Audio Analogue Puccini	Ⓢ	40W	475
Audiogram MB1	Ⓢ	40W	493
Creek 4330	Ⓢ	40W	279
Creek 4330R	Ⓢ	40W	355
Creek 5250	Ⓢ	50W	450
Cymbal CA1	Ⓢ	40W	499
Cyrus 5	Ⓢ	40W	500
Denon PMA-735R	Ⓢ	65W	300
Denon PMA-1500R	Ⓢ	70W	500
Edmund Audio ES110	Ⓢ	85W	400
EMF Audio Sequel	Ⓢ	50W	450
H/K HK650	Ⓢ	60W	330
Kenwood KA-5090R	Ⓢ	65W	300
Magnum IA120	Ⓢ	65W	265
Magnum IA170	Ⓢ	96W	330
Magnum IA170SE	Ⓢ	90W	430
Marantz PM-68	Ⓢ	90W	300
Marantz PM-66 Kl Sig.	Ⓢ	50W	400
Marantz SR5000	Ⓢ	105W	500
Monrio Asty	Ⓢ	55W	400
Musical Fidelity E11	Ⓢ	60W	300

Musical Fidelity X-A1	Ⓢ	50W	480
Musical Fidelity A2	Ⓢ	25W	500
Myryad T-40	Ⓢ	50W	400
NAD 314	Ⓢ	35W	260
NAD C340	Ⓢ	50W	270
NAD 317	Ⓢ	80W	400
Onkyo A9210	Ⓢ	40W	260
Onkyo A921	Ⓢ	50W	350
Onkyo A922	Ⓢ	70W	400
Pioneer A-607R	Ⓢ	60W	300
Pioneer A-400X	Ⓢ	50W	300
Pioneer A-605R	Ⓢ	80W	400
Pioneer A-300R Precision	Ⓢ	35W	400
R-20 A10	Ⓢ	50W	500
Rega Big Brio	Ⓢ	35W	298
Rega Luna	Ⓢ	40W	375
Rega Mira	Ⓢ	40W	475
Roksan Kandy	Ⓢ	475	
Rotel RA-972	Ⓢ	70W	450
Shearne 2.5	Ⓢ	35W	499
Sony TA-FB20R	Ⓢ	65W	300
Sony TA-FA30ES	Ⓢ	70W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	Ⓢ	40W	500
TAG McLaren 60i	Ⓢ	60W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	Ⓢ	50W	500
Teac AH-500	Ⓢ	50W	280
Technics SU-A808	Ⓢ	55W	300
Technics SU-A909	Ⓢ	100W	400
Token K50	Ⓢ	55W	350

£501 TO £700

Alchemist Kraken APD6A	Ⓢ	55W	600
Alchemist Nemesis	Ⓢ	80W	700
Audio Analogue Puccini Remote	Ⓢ	50W	575
Audio Note Kanji Line SE	Ⓢ	9W	699
Audio Note First Integrated	Ⓢ	40W	699
Audio Refinement Complete	Ⓢ	50W	699
Audiogram MB2	Ⓢ	60W	599
AVC EL34	Ⓢ	30W	650
CR Dev CR324se	Ⓢ	150W	569
CR Dev Kalypso	Ⓢ	15W	599
CR Dev CR325	Ⓢ	175W	699
Creek S250SE	Ⓢ	60W	665
Cyrus 7	Ⓢ	60W	700
Densen Beat B-100 MKII	Ⓢ	60W	700
Gamma Gemini	Ⓢ	12W	699
H/K HK690	Ⓢ	60W	530
Hi Q Sound MCI	Ⓢ	30W	565
LFD Integrated 0	Ⓢ	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	Ⓢ	33W	650
Lynwood Opal	Ⓢ	80W	685
Magnum IA200	Ⓢ	100W	599
Magnum Class A	Ⓢ	85W	690
Musical Fidelity A220	Ⓢ	50W	700
Myryad Cameo	Ⓢ	50W	530
Myryad MI 120	Ⓢ	60W	700
Naim Nait 3	Ⓢ	30W	990
R-20 A20 Mk II	Ⓢ	70W	600
Rose Scion	Ⓢ	65W	615
Shearne Phase 2	Ⓢ	50W	689
Sugden Audition T	Ⓢ	65W	549
Talk Electronics Cyclone 1	Ⓢ	60W	550
Talk Electronics Storm 2	Ⓢ	50W	650
Teac AB-X7R	Ⓢ	50W	700
YBA Complete Integre	Ⓢ	50W	699

£701 TO £1000

Alchemist Nexus	Ⓢ		799
Alchemist Forseti Integrated	Ⓢ	100W	1,000
Arcam Alpha 10	Ⓢ	100W	800
Arcam FMJ A22	Ⓢ	100W	1,000
Aria S2	Ⓢ	12W	1,000
Audio Analogue Puccini SE Remote	Ⓢ	60W	795
Audio Note Oto Line PP	Ⓢ	12W	950
AVI S2000MI	Ⓢ	100W	999
Copland CSA48	Ⓢ	60W	899
Creo IMP702	Ⓢ	70W	850
Creo IMP703	Ⓢ	70W	1,000
Denon AVR-3300	Ⓢ	75W	800
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	Ⓢ	50W	995
Electrocompaniet ECI-3	Ⓢ	75W	1,000
Exposure XX Super	Ⓢ	60W	800
Exposure XV Super	Ⓢ	60W	900
Exposure RC0XV	Ⓢ	60W	1,000
LFD 0 LE Integrated	Ⓢ	60W	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	Ⓢ	33W	800
Magnum Class A SE	Ⓢ	80W	795
Marantz PM-17	Ⓢ	60W	900
Meridian 551	Ⓢ	55W	795
Musical Fidelity A3	Ⓢ	85W	849
Musical Fidelity X-A100R	Ⓢ	75W	999
MVL A2	Ⓢ	100W	970
NAD T770	Ⓢ	90W	1,000
Naim Nait 3 R	Ⓢ	30W	780
Nakamichi AV-10	Ⓢ	140W	1,000
Pathos Classic One	Ⓢ	55W	995
Pioneer A-07	Ⓢ	80W	999
Pioneer VSX-908RDS	Ⓢ	80W	1,000
Plinius 2100i	Ⓢ		995
Roksan Caspian	Ⓢ	70W	795
Shearne Phase 2 Reference	Ⓢ	50W	799
Sonneteer Alabaster	Ⓢ	50W	900
Sugden A21a Int	Ⓢ	25W	799
Sugden Audition C	Ⓢ	60W	799
TAG McLaren 60iRV	Ⓢ	60W	995

£1001 TO £2000

Aria SR-1	Ⓞ	80W	1,250
Aria S6	Ⓞ	35W	1,600
ATC S1A2-150	Ⓞ	150W	1,984
Audio Analogue Maestro	Ⓞ	150W	1,995
Audio Note Soro Line PP	Ⓞ	20W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Line SE	Ⓞ	12W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Phono SE	Ⓞ	12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE	Ⓞ	18W	1,699
Audio Valve Assistant-S 20	Ⓞ	20W	1,250
Beam-Echo SA-50	Ⓞ	50W	1,950
Beard 30-60 Mk II	Ⓞ	30W	1,495
Bow Technologies Wazoo	Ⓞ	50W	1,795
Bryston B-60	Ⓞ	60W	1,281
Canary Audio CA-608	Ⓞ	24W	1,495
Copland CSA14	Ⓞ	60W	1,499
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	Ⓞ		1,191
Credo LIM 703	Ⓞ		1,249
Densen DM-10	Ⓞ	75W	1,450
EAR 859	Ⓞ	13W	1,999
EAR 834	Ⓞ	40W	1,999
Golden Tube Audio Si-50 MkII	Ⓞ	50W	1,100
Graaf Venticinque	Ⓞ	25W	1,790
Jadis Orchestra	Ⓞ	40W	1,345
LFD Integrated 1	Ⓞ	65W	1,099
Lundahl Mag Amp	Ⓞ	23W	1,735
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
Praecisa Sonoro	Ⓞ	100W	1,800
R-20 A30.1	Ⓞ	100W	1,500
Restek Fantasy 2	Ⓞ	100W	1,499
Roksan Caspian DSP	Ⓞ		1,295
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	Ⓞ	25W	1,299
T+A R1200R	Ⓞ	90W	1,750
Woodside ISA230 Line	Ⓞ	30W	1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	Ⓞ	30W	1,249
YBA a Integre Line	Ⓞ	50W	1,095
YBA a Integre DT Line	Ⓞ	50W	1,395

OVER £2000

Adyton Opera	Ⓞ	50W	2,595
AMP Flux System 2	Ⓞ	50W	3,000
Arcam Alpha 10 DAVE	Ⓞ	100W	2,500
Arcam FMJ A22 DAVE	Ⓞ	100W	2,850
Aria S8	Ⓞ	24W	2,950
Art Audio Integra	Ⓞ	25W	2,400
Audio Note Meishu Line	Ⓞ	9W	2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	Ⓞ	26W	56,000
Audio Research CA50	Ⓞ	45W	3,399
Belcanto SET40	Ⓞ	40W	4,450
Belcanto Orfeo 30S1	Ⓞ	35W	5,450
Cary CAD-300SEI	Ⓞ	15W	3,395
Conrad-Johnson CAV-50	Ⓞ	50W	2,495
EAR V20	Ⓞ	24W	2,495
Electrocompaniet ECI-1	Ⓞ	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm	Ⓞ	18W	2,499
Gamma Rhythm Ref	Ⓞ	20W	3,499
Gamma Moment	Ⓞ	40W	19,999
Jadis DA30	Ⓞ	30W	2,690
Jadis DA60	Ⓞ	60W	4,483
Krell KAV300i	Ⓞ	150W	2,495
Krell KAV300r	Ⓞ	150W	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
Pathos Twin Towers	Ⓞ	35W	3,250
Pioneer A-09	Ⓞ	45W	4,000
Rotel RSP-985/RPB-985	Ⓞ	130W	2,225
Rowland Concentra	Ⓞ	100W	5,500
Sonus Faber Musica	Ⓞ	50W	2,295
Sony TA-E9000ES	Ⓞ	110W	2,300
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	Ⓞ	350
Creek P52	Ⓞ	499
Crimson CS610D	Ⓞ	475
Cyrus aEQ7	Ph	498
Densen DP-Drive/DP-02	Ph	500
DPA Enlignment pre	Ph	275
Dynavector L200	Ph	349
Dynavector P100	Ph	449
Dynavector L100	Ph	499
ECA Vista S	Ph	495
ECA Vista HD	Ⓞ	150
ECA Prisma	Ⓞ	350
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5	Ⓞ	149
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6	Ⓞ	449
Exposure XIII	Ⓞ	499
Exposure XIX	Ⓞ	345
Exposure XVII	Ⓞ	345
Exposure RC XXI	Ⓞ	330
Gate PR101P	Ⓞ	500
Golden Tube Audio SEP-2	Ⓞ	500
Golden Tube Audio SEP-3	Ⓞ	500
Graaf WFB Two	Ⓞ	149
Graaf WFB One	Ph	249
Henley HMC200	Ⓞ	349
Hi Q Sound MCB2	Ⓞ	120
Hi Q Sound MCL2	Ph	130
Jadis DPL2	Ⓞ	200
Krell KAV250p	Ⓞ	400
LFD MC1 PhonoStage	Ph	40
LFD L51 Linstage	Ph	270
LFD MC2 PhonoStage	Ph	430
LFD L52 Linstage	Ⓞ	360
LFD LS2 Linstage	Ⓞ	485
Linn Wakonda	Ⓞ	130
Linn Linto	Ⓞ	400
Linn Kairn	Ⓞ	450
Lumley LV1.5	Ph	40
Lumley LV1	Ph	35
Lumley PV1.5	Ph	450
Lumley PV1	Ph	398
McIntosh C712	Ⓞ	475
Meracur Ingredi	Ⓞ	445
Meridian 501	Ph	450
Meridian 562	Ph	150
Meridian 562V	Ⓞ	155
Meridian 502	Ⓞ	250
Michell Delphini	Ⓞ	499
Michell Orca	Ph	430
Muse Model 3	Ⓞ	500
Musical Fidelity X-1P2/X-PSU	Ⓞ	300
Tom Evans Groovette	Ph	399
Trilogy 905	Ⓞ	375
Trilogy 904	Ⓞ	375
Trilogy 900	Ph	499

£501 TO £2000

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 Line	Ⓞ	550
Audio Note M1 RIAA	Ⓞ	550
Audio Note M2 Line	Ⓞ	999
Audio Note Discovery	Ⓞ	999
Audio Note M2RIAA	Ph	1,099
Audio Prism Mantissa	Ⓞ	1,995
Audio Research LS8 MkII	Ⓞ	1,449
Audio Research PH3	Ph	1,490
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	Ⓞ	595
Audio Synthesis ADQ Disc Stage	Ⓞ	995
Audio Synthesis Passion Ultimate	Ⓞ	995
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
Clearaudio Symphono	Ph	740
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	Ⓞ	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	Ⓞ	1,990
Copland CSA303	Ⓞ	1,099
Copland CTA301 MkII	Ⓞ	1,249
CR Dev Carmenta	Ⓞ	659
CR Dev Argento	Ⓞ	699
Credo CMP004	Ph	1,246

Credo CMP005	Ⓞ	1,876
Cyrus aC47	Ⓞ	800
Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	Ph	826
Densen Beat B-200	Ph	1,000
Densen DM-20	Ⓞ	1,380
DNM 3 Start	Ⓞ	1,000
DNM 3A Start	Ph	1,300
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	Ph	880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5	Ⓞ	1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6	Ⓞ	1,750
Exposure XIII	Ⓞ	800
Exposure XIX	Ⓞ	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	1,390
Graaf WFB One	Ph	1,750
Henley HMC200	Ⓞ	600
Hi Q Sound MCB2	Ph	545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	Ⓞ	645
Jadis DPL2	Ⓞ	1,590
Krell KAV250p	Ⓞ	1,999
LFD MC1 PhonoStage	Ph	949
LFD L51 Linstage	Ⓞ	999
LFD MC2 PhonoStage	Ph	1,499
LFD L52 Linstage	Ⓞ	1,599
LFD LS2 Linstage	Ⓞ	1,999
Linn Wakonda	Ⓞ	750
Linn Linto	Ⓞ	850
Linn Kairn	Ⓞ	1,400
Lumley LV1.5	Ⓞ	895
Lumley LV1	Ⓞ	1,150
Lumley PV1.5	Ⓞ	1,700
Lumley PV1	Ph	1,700
McIntosh C712	Ph	1,999
Meracur Ingredi	Ⓞ	925
Meridian 501	Ⓞ	695
Meridian 562	Ⓞ	765
Meridian 562V	Ⓞ	995
Meridian 502	Ⓞ	1,295
Michell Delphini	Ⓞ	895
Michell Orca	Ph	1,650
Muse Model 3	Ⓞ	1,990
Musical Fidelity X-1P2/X-PSU	Ph	628
Musical Fidelity X-P100	Ⓞ	800
Musical Fidelity F25	Ph	1,500
Myryad MP100	Ⓞ	600
NAD S100	Ⓞ	600
NAD 118	Ⓞ	1,000
Naim NAC92R	Ⓞ	650
Naim NAC72	Ⓞ	745
Naim NAC102	Ⓞ	1,000
Quad 99 Pre	Ⓞ	750
Rega Hal	Ph	998
Roksan ROK-L2.5	Ⓞ	1,250
Rose RV-235	Ph	525
Rotel RC995	Ph	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 Auditor Pre	Ⓞ	549
Sugden Masterclass Pre	Ⓞ	1,995
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	Ⓞ	849
TAG McLaren PPA20	Ph	1,499
TAG McLaren PA20R	Ⓞ	1,499
TAG McLaren DPA32R	Ⓞ	1,695
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
Tom Evans The Groove	Ⓞ	1,500
Trilogy 901	Ⓞ	750
Trilogy 906	Ⓞ	995
Trilogy 902	Ph	1,595
Tube Tech Seer Line	Ⓞ	935
Tube Tech Mac Phono	Ⓞ	1,150
Tube Tech Prophet	Ⓞ	1,970
van den Hul Pre-amp	Ⓞ	1,800
Woodside SC27 Line	Ⓞ	949
Woodside SC26 Line	Ⓞ	1,557
XTC PRE-1	Ⓞ	1,350
YBA 3a Line	Ⓞ	995
YBA 2a Line	Ⓞ	1,450

OVER £2000

Adyton Temper	Ⓞ	2,495
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Adyton Modus	Ⓞ	2,695
Art Audio VPS Dual Mono Line	Ⓞ	2,350
ATC SCA2	Ⓞ	2,999
Atma-Sphere MP-3	Ⓞ	3,795
Atma-Sphere MP-1	Ph	7,600
Audio Note M3Line	Ⓞ	2,650
Audio Prism Avanti	Ⓞ	7,995
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	Ⓞ	3,400
Boulder L5M	Ⓞ	3,800
Boulder 2010	Ⓞ	22,000
Canary Audio CA-801	Ⓞ	3,750
Cary SLP-98L	Ⓞ	2,395
Chord CPA 1800	Ⓞ	2,220
Chord CPA 2200	Ⓞ	2,740
Chord CPA 3200E	Ⓞ	4,041
Chord CPA 4000E	Ⓞ	6,675
Conrad-Johnson PF-R	Ⓞ	2,490
Conrad-Johnson PV-12A	Ⓞ	2,590
Conrad-Johnson Premier 15	Ph	3,995
Conrad-Johnson Premier 14	Ph	4,495
Conrad-Johnson Premier 16LS	Ⓞ	7,995
Conrad-Johnson Art	Ⓞ	14,995
CAT SL1 Ultimate	Ph	5,750
CR Dev Kastor	Ⓞ	2,995
Credo LPR 001	Ⓞ	2,815
DN		

Cyrus Power	50W	500
Earmax Headphone	0.1W	375
Earmax Headphone Pro	0.1W	425
LFD Mistral Power	60W	449
LFD PAO Powerstage	50W	499
Magnum MF120	85W	365
Marantz MA-500	125W	250
Marantz MA-700	200W	400
Moth 30 Stereo	30W	249
Moth Phones-01	0.1W	299
Moth 30 Mono/40	40W	469
Musical Fidelity X-CANS	0.1W	130
Musical Fidelity E30	100W	500
Musical Fidelity X-A50	50W	500
Myryad T-60	50W	300
Myryad MA 120	60W	500
NAD 912	30W	200
NAD 214	80W	370
NAD 216THX	125W	470
Naim NAP90/3	30W	460
Parasound HCA-750A	75W	450
Rega Maia	85W	475
Rotel RB971 Mk II	70W	225
Rotel RB981	130W	355
Shearpe 3.5	35W	489
Talk Electronics Tornado 1	50W	450
Technics SE-A1010	100W	350

ES01 TO E2000

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	35W	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	1,695
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	1,565
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	1,876	
Creek AS2SE	100W	599
Crimson CS630D	100W	850
Crimson CS640D	200W	1,300
Cyrus aPA7	150W	1,900
Densen B-300	100W	800
Densen DM-30	100W	1,380
DNM PA Start	45W	1,000
DNM PA1 Start	45W	1,300
DNM PA3	50W	1,900
DPA Enlightenment pwr	100W	995
Dynavector HX75	75W	1,995
ECA Lectern S	50W	880
ECA Lectern HD	50W	1,480
Electrocompaniet AW60FTT	60W	1,095
Exposure XVIII Super	75W	900
Exposure XVIII Mono	60W	1,800
Golden Tube Audio SE-40	40W	1,100
Golden Tube Audio SE-300B MkII	8W	1,790
Graaf Venticinque P	25W	1,395
Graaf 5050	50W	1,995
Hi Q Sound MCM	70W	715
Jadis DA5	150W	1,749
Krell KAV150a	40W	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 Ciere	60W	1,095


Meridian 555	60W	750
Meridian 556	100W	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	1,499
Musical Fidelity X-A200	200W	1,000
Myryad MA240	120W	1,000
NAD 218THX	200W	850
NAD S200	200W	1,400
Naim NAP140	45W	770
Naim NAP180	60W	1,112
Naim NAP135	1,705	
Naim NAP250	70W	1,705
Papworth TVA50	50W	1,425
Parasound HCA-1000A	125W	600
Parasound HCA-1500A	205W	1,000
Quad 99 Stereo Power	85W	550
Quad 909	140W	900
Quad 99 Monoblock	150W	1,300
Rega Exon	125W	598
Roksan Caspian Power	70W	595
Roksan ROK-S1.5	70W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	75W	550
Rotel RB991	200W	600
Rotel RB-1090	380W	1,575
Rothwell Rubicon	10W	949
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	549	
Sugden A21a Power	25W	649
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
Trilogy 948	50W	1,895
Trilogy 948T	22W	1,895
Tube Tech Unisis Sig. Pwr	22W	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 £2000

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
Cary CAD-572SE	20W	2,250
Cary CAD-2A3 SE	SW	3,150
Cary CAD-300SE	20W	4,495
Cary CAD-805C	50W	7,995
Chord SPM 600	130W	2,040
Chord SPM 1000B	200W	2,920
Chord SPM 1200B	250W	3,790
Chord SPM 1200C	330W	4,210
Chord SPM 1400E mono	500W	5,650
Chord SPM 5000	580W	14,500
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	
Credo LPO 804	2,456	
Credo PMP 155	2,676	
Credo LPO 455	4,975	
Credo LPO 155	6,983	
DNM PASS	2,900	
Dynavector HX1.2	130W	3,995
EAR 861	32W	3,599
EAR 509 Mk II	100W	3,999
EAR 519	100W	4,699
EAR 549	200W	6,499
Electrocompaniet AW120DMB	120W	2,695
Electrocompaniet AW250R	250W	3,995
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	180W	4,595
Exposure IV	90W	2,199
Exposure XVI	125W	4,000
Gamma Aeon	20W	4,999
Gamma Space Ref	18W	7,999
Gamma Aeon Ref	70W	49,999
Gate TR201A	22W	3,335
Golden Tube Audio SE-100	100W	2,495
Graaf GM20	60W	2,950
Graaf GM100	100W	4,450
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	4,800
Levinson 334	125W	5,495
Levinson 335	250W	7,495
Levinson 336	350W	8,995
Levinson 33H	150W	19,395
McIntosh MC150	150W	3,499
McIntosh MC300	300W	3,999
McIntosh MC500	500W	8,999
McIntosh MC1000	999W	14,999
Meracur Tentare	75W	2,245
Meracur Cantare	-W	8,995
Muse Model 160 Ser. II	160W	2,290
Muse Model 150	125W	2,690
Muse Model 175 Ser. II	175W	3,490
Muse Model 300 Ser. II	300W	3,990
Musical Fidelity F16	200W	2,500
Musical Fidelity NuVista 300	350W	3,500
Musical Fidelity F19	300W	4,000
Papworth M100	100W	2,645
Papworth M200	200W	3,825
Plinius SA50/3	2,750	
Plinius SA100/3	3,450	
Plinius SA250/3	5,850	
Roksan ROK-M1.5	160W	2,250
Rowland Model 2	75W	4,999
Rowland Model 6	150W	10,999
Rowland Model 8T	250W	12,499
Rowland Model 9T	350W	27,999
Sharp SM-SX1000	165W	10,000
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,399
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
Sunfire Load Invariant	300W	2,280
Sunfire Signature	600W	2,600

T+A A3000	190W	2,850
TACT Millennium II	150W	7,000
TAG McLaren 125M	125W	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 WE300B	8W	6,550
Tron Type PX25 Mono	5W	12,300
Tron Type WE300B Mono	15W	13,100
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	70W	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.

Clearaudio Sixstream
Connections UK Ultra
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 Focus 1.2
Insert IC100 Mk II
Insert Image 5.1
Insert Status 3.4
Ixos 104
Ixos 1003
Ixos Gamma 1002
Ixos 103
Ixos 102
Ixos 1000
Ixos 101
Ixos 100.X03
Kimber PBJ/Ultraplata
Kimber KC1
Kimber Hero
Kimber Silver Streak
Kimber KCAG
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
PHY-HP Intercon. unscrd
PHY-HP Intercon. scrd
Precious Metals S550
Precious Metals S553
Precious Metals S552

365.00
28.00
39.00
46.00
30.00
40.00
75.00
40.00
41.00
75.00
220.00
65.00
75.00
155.00
165.00
550.00
700.00
799.00
145.00
130.00
195.00
265.00
20.00
35.00
65.00
95.00
150.00
39.00
21.50
46.95
84.95
159.95
20.00
30.00
39.95
45.00
60.00
89.95
100.00
150.00
68.00
96.00
110.00
180.00
390.00
720.00
3700
58.00
95.00
151.00
340.00
420.00
420.00
580.00
620.00
1,000
1,400
115.00
175.00
115.00
23.00
40.00
50.00
100.00
200.00
35.00
60.00
84.95
98.00
150.00
300.00
825.00
1,250
250.00
120.00
165.00
50.00
50.00
70.00

Precious Metals S553
Precious Metals S5100
Precious Metals S5102
Precious Metals S5103
Precious Metals S5104
Precious Metals S5200
Precious Metals S5202
Precious Metals S5203
Precious Metals S5204
Prowire Silver
PAD Elementa
QED Qunex 2
QED Qunex 4S
QED Qunex Sil'r Spiral
Roksan HDC-02A
Rothwell River
Rothwell Torrent
Shinpy Red Star 2
Shinpy Black Star 2
Shinpy Pulsar 2
Shinpy Quasar 2
Shinpy Big Bang 2
Siltech MC2-12
Siltech MC4-24S
Siltech FTM-3S
Silver Sounds S52
Silver Sounds S51
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
Straight Wire Encore II
Supra DAC-X
Supra EFF-IX
Supra EFF-ISL
Supra EFF-XLR
Tara Prism 5
Tara RSC Axiom
Tara RSC-Prime Gen/2
Tara Prism 55i
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
TCI Viper
Transparent Cable Musichord
Transparent Cable The Link
Transparent Cable Music Link
Trichord Pulsewire 75
Vampire Wire CC
Vampire Wire CCC/II
Vampire Wire SC/IV
Vampire Wire SC/IV
Vampire Wire Al/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


90.00
100.00
130.00
160.00
190.00
220.00
290.00
360.00
430.00
60.00
145.00
30.00
60.00
90.00
60.00
55.00
119.00
120.00
240.00
495.00
850.00
1,995
308.00
400.00
730.00
99.00
199.00
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95.00
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52.06
76.83
102.57
25.00
35.00
50.00
65.00
85.00
125.00
150.00
195.00
300.00
450.00
695.00
995.00
40.00
80.00
99.95
59.95
69.95
79.95
89.95
21.95
137.00
170.00
195.00
224.50
336.00
560.00
790.00
894.00
1,144
2,175
54.99
48.00
92.00
119.00
169.00
24.00
58.00
98.00
144.00
259.00
412.00
29.99
50.00
65.00
79.95
145.00

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 12S
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

240.00
275.00
320.00
550.00
1,400
1,750
30.00
40.00
30.00
30.00
40.00
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

Moth Leyline Datalink
Nordost Moonglo
Nordost Silver Shadow
Precious Metals SD35
Precious Metals SD100
Precious Metals SD200
Precious Metals SD202
QED Qunex OT
Roksan HDC-01D
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 AT&T
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

140.00
155.00
335.00
20.00
50.00
110.00
145.00
30.00
45.00
265.00
145.00
60.00
44.95
45.00
45.00
59.99
119.99
345.00
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



CABLES
Digital Interconnects

KEY
 ☉ - Stranded construction.
 ● - Solid-core construction.

Prices of interconnects are for a one metre terminated pair.

Art Yam Church 5000
Audioquest Digital/video 1
Audioquest Digital/video 2
Audiosource Petros Blue Plus 5
Audiosource Stratos Ser. 2
Cable Talk Digital 3
Cardas Audio Lighting
ChordCo Codac
ChordCo Optichord
ChordCo Prodac
DNM-Reson DIG100
DPA Opt-link
DPA Digi-link
Ecosse Ref MD2
Harmonix HS-101DIG
Insert Dataline 500
Insert Dataline 700
Insert 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



SPEAKER CABLES

KEY
 ☉ - Stranded construction.
 ● - Solid-core construction.

Price per mono metre, unterminated.

ALR/Jordan QMM
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 Slate
Audioquest Bedrock
Audioquest Granite
Audioquest Gibraltar
Audioquest Caldera
Cable Talk Theatre 2.1
Cable Talk Flat 1

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products@russandrews.com
www.russandrews.com



HI-FI HELP

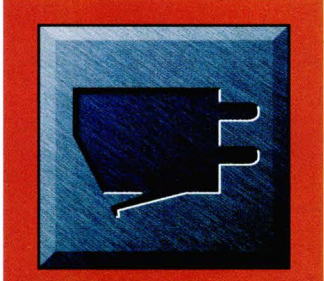
Let our experts help with your hi-fi problems. Send your query to 'Help' at the usual address.

Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.50
Cable Talk Flat 1 Biwire	4.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1	4.50
Cable Talk Talk 3.1 Biwire	5.00
Cable Talk Flat 2	5.00
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	8.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1 Biwire	9.00
Cable Talk Flat 2 Biwire	10.00
Cable Talk Symphony 3	14.00
Cable Talk Concert 2.1 Biwire	16.00
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin SC	35.00
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five SC	59.00
Cardas Audio Cross SC	99.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five SC	109.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink GoldenS SC	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	789.00
ChordCo 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 CS2.2	2.50
Ecosse Ref CS2.3	3.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.15	5.75
Ecosse Ref MS2.2	15.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.3	20.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.15	30.00
Ecosse Ref US2	450.00
Electrofluidics Monolith 2020	45.00
Gale XL105	1.00
Gale XL189	1.00
Gale XL3.15	2.00
Gale XL160-2	2.50
Gale XL3.15-2	3.99
Gamma Wonder Line	99.00
Goertz M1	16.00
Goertz M2	32.00
Goertz Big Boy	64.00
Harmonix Harmonic-Strings	30.00
Harmonix HS-101T-1	56.00
Harmonix HS-101SC	88.00
Ixos 607	2.00
Ixos 6004	3.00
Ixos Gamma 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 BIMIRE	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
Nam 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
PHY-HP Speaker	40.00
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

Profigold Silverflex LC8258	4.00
Prowire Out of Sight	1.99
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 QED Micro	1.50
QED QED Micro Bi-wire	3.00
QED QED Mk II Bi-wire	4.85
QED QED Silver Anniv.	5.00
QED Profile 4x4	9.00
QED Profile Silver 12	15.00
QED Genesis S'r Spiral	30.00
QED G's S'r Spiral B/W	60.00
Rega Speaker	1.58
Rega SC42	19.98
Roksan HDC-015	6.00
Shinpy Red Star 2	235.00
Shinpy Black Star 2	375.00
Shinpy Pulsar 2	625.00
Shinpy Quasar 2	1,245
Shinpy Big Bang 2	4,250
Siltech LS2-45	109.00
Siltech FT-12 MkI	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 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
Straight Wire Duo	3.00
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 Rondo 4x2.5	4.95
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 Ply 3/4/S	7.95
Supra Quattro 4x4	8.95
Tapenwire 418	7.00
Tapenwire 212	16.00
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	36.00
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
TCI Python	7.99
Tech + Link SPC 79	1.20
Townshend Isolda	50.00
Transparent Cable Musicchord	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	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 Teatrac 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
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

Audio Note IO1	99
Audio Technica AT-91	15
Audio Technica AT-95E	20
Audio Technica AT-110E	28
Audio Technica AT450E	70
Audio Technica AT440ML	90
Benz-Micro MC20EII	70
Denon DL110	70
Denon DL160	90
Denon DL103	100
Goldring Elan	20
Goldring Elektra	30
Goldring 1006	65
Goldring 1012GX	85
Grado Prestige Black	49
Grado Prestige Green	59
Grado Prestige Blue	69
Grado Prestige Red	99
N'ham Tracer II	98
Ortofon OM 3E	16
Ortofon OM 5E	20
Ortofon OM 10	30
Ortofon 510	40
Ortofon OM DJ	50
Ortofon OM 20	70
Ortofon 520	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	75
Ortofon Concorde DJ	80
Ortofon OM 30	90
Ortofon 530	100
Pickering TE-15	20
Pickering VE-15	25
Pickering T-E	25
Pickering V15-DJ	28
Pickering TL-E	35
Pickering TL-2E	45
Pickering XV15-625E	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	50
Pickering TL-2-S	55
Pickering XV15-757S	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	70
Pickering TL3S	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	100
Pickering TL-4-S	100
Rega Bias	42
Rega RB78	42
Rega Super Bias	64
Rega Elys	89
Shure SC35C	36
Shure M44G Pro	45
Shure M447 Pro	53
Stanton 500AL II	35
Stanton 500EL	44
Stanton 680AL/X	59
Stanton 680EL/X	74
Sumiko Oyster	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	50
Sumiko Pearl	70
Sumiko Blue Point	100



CARTRIDGES
KEY
MM - Moving-magnet type.
MC - Moving-coil type.
UP TO £100

Allaerts MC1 Eco	MC	850
Allaerts MC1 B	MC	1,295
Allaerts MC1 B MkII	MC	1,995
Allaerts MC2 Finish	MC	2,995
Audio Note IO2	MM	139
Audio Note Soara	MC	795
Audio Note IO1V	MC	1,095

Ortofon MC1 Jubilee	MC	1,250
Ortofon MC7500	MC	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	MM	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	MM	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Rega Super Elys	MM	150
Rega Exact	MM	275
Reson Mica	MM	195
Reson Recca	MM	270
Reson Aciore	MC	330
Reson Etile	MC	485
Reson Lexe	MC	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	MM	145
Roksan Shiraz	MC	995
Shure V15XMR	MM	295
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	120
Sumiko Blue Point Special	MC	250
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	950
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	950
Transfiguration Temper Supreme	MC	2,250

Audio Note IO1td	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9ML	MC	330
Audio Technica AT-33PTG	MC	489
Benz-Micro The Glider	MC	600
Benz-Micro Reference	MC	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	MC	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	MC	1,600
Clearaudio Alpha Mk 2	MM	135
Clearaudio Beta Mk 2	MM	190
Clearaudio Beta-S Mk 2	MM	250
Clearaudio Virtuoso	MM	295
Clearaudio Sigma	MC	590
Clearaudio Gamma-S	MC	810
Clearaudio Victory	MC	960
Clearaudio Signature	MC	1,540
Clearaudio Accurate	MC	2,515
Clearaudio Insider	MC	5,165
Clearaudio Insider Ref.	MC	6,810
Denon DL504	MC	200
Dynavector 10X4II	MC	189
Dynavector DV20XH	MC	299
Dynavector DV-20XL	MC	299
Dynavector DV20XL	MC	299
Dynavector 17D2	MC	450
Dynavector XA-1L	MC	998
Dynavector XA-1	MC	998
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	MC	1,698
Goldring 1022GX	MM	105
Goldring Erica LX	MC	120
Goldring Eroica	MC	120
Goldring 1042	MM	130
Goldring Elite	MC	235
Grado Prestige Silver	MM	119
Grado Prestige Gold	MM	149
Koetsu Red T	MC	1,359
Koetsu Red K Sig	MC	1,899
Koetsu Urushi	MC	1,999
Koetsu Signature	MC	2,999
Koetsu Gold PR	MC	5,498
Linn K9	MM	125
Linn Klyde	MC	500
Linn Arkiv	MC	1,000
London Decca Maroon	MM	299
London Decca Gold	MM	359
London Decca Maroon Dp	MM	379
London Decca S Gold	MM	439
London Decca Gold Dp	MM	439
London Decca S Gold Dp	MM	519
London Decca Jubilee	MM	999
Lyra Lydian Beta	MC	599
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	MC	995
Lyra Parnassus DCT	MC	1,895
N'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 TL-3003	MM	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	MM	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Rega Super Elys	MM	150
Rega Exact	MM	275
Reson Mica	MM	195
Reson Recca	MM	270
Reson Aciore	MC	330
Reson Etile	MC	485
Reson Lexe	MC	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	MM	145
Roksan Shiraz	MC	995
Shure V15XMR	MM	295
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	120
Sumiko Blue Point Special	MC	250
Transfiguration Spirit	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 IIIGLA	MC	2,800
van den Hul Grasshopper IIICMN	MC	2,800
van den Hul Grasshopper IIICHN	MC	2,900
van den Hul Grasshopper IIVGLA	MC	3,000
van den Hul Black Beauty	MC	3,000
Wilson Benesch Matrix	MC	786
Wilson Benesch Analog	MC	1,572
Wilson Benesch Carbon	MC	1,573



CASSETTE DECKS

KEY

↔ - Autoreverse - no need to remove and turn around the tape.

3-H - 3 heads, i.e. separate record and replay heads.

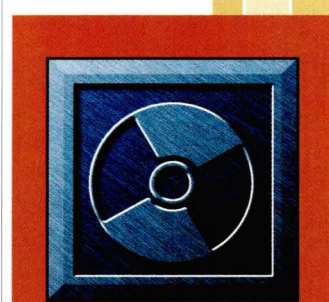
UP TO £200

Ariston WX-510		70
Denon DRM-555		150
Denon DRW-585		200
H/K DC520		200
JVC TD-X372BK		170
JVC TD-R472BK		160
Kenwood KX-WA080		200
Kenwood KX-3080		160
Kenwood KX-W6080		200
Kenwood KX-5080S		200
Marantz SD-455		170
Marantz SD-57		199
Onkyo K 185		100
Pioneer CT-S250		200
Pioneer CT-W205R		160
Pioneer CT-W505R		180
Pioneer CT-S450S		200
Pioneer CT-W606DR		200
Sony TC-WE435		130
Sony TC-KE230		130
Sony TC-WE635		150
Sony TC-KB820S		180
Sony TC-WE835		200
Teac W-416		100
Teac V-615		130
Teac RH-300		160
Teac W-790R		170
Teac V-1050		180
Teac RH-500		200
Technics RS-BX501		170
Technics RS-TR373		180
Technics RS-TR474		200
Technics RS-A26		200
Yamaha KX-393		130
Yamaha KX-W321		170
Yamaha KX-493		180

OVER £200

Denon DRM-740	3-H	270
H/K TD420		250
JVC TD-V662BK	3-H	270
JVC TD-W718BK		300
NAD 613		230
NAD 614		270
NAD 616		300
Nakamichi DR-10	3-H	800
Onkyo TA 6210		230
Onkyo TARW 211		270
Onkyo TARW 311		320
Onkyo TA 6310		330
Onkyo KR 609		350
Onkyo KW 606		370
Onkyo TARW 411		370
Onkyo K 611	3-H	460
Pioneer CT-S550S	3-H	250
Pioneer CT-W806DR		300
Pioneer CT-S550S Precision	3-H	340
Pioneer CT-S830S	3-H	500

Pioneer CT-95	3-H	1,000
Rotel RC960BX		250
Sony TC-KA6ES	3-H	600
T+A CC1200R	3-H	1,180
Teac W-860R		230
Teac W-6000R		450
Teac V-6030S	3-H	550
Teac V-8030S	3-H	650
Technics RS-A27	3-H	270
Technics RS-TR575		280
Yamaha KX-580SE		250



CD PLAYERS

KEY

⇒ - Multiplayer: can be loaded with more than one disc.

□□10 - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.

Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

UP TO £250

Ariston CDX700		50
Ariston CDX710		70
Ariston CDX720		80
Cambridge CD5		100
Cambridge D100		120
Cambridge CD4	□□10	150
Cambridge CD4SE	□□10	200
Cambridge D500	□□10	200
Denon DCD-435		130
Denon DCD-655		180
Denon DCD-735		230
Eclipse CD101a		40
H/K FL8350	⇒ □□10	200
H/K HD720	⇒ □□10	230
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 CD5000	□□10	150
Marantz CD-38		200
Marantz CD-48	□□10	200
Marantz CD-57	□□10	230
Marantz CD-67II	□□10	250
NAD C520		170
NAD 522		170
NAD 510		200
NAD 524	□□10	250
NAD 523		250
NAD 512	□□10	250
Onkyo DX-7222		170
Pioneer PD-106		130
Pioneer PD-206		150
Pioneer PD-S507		190
Pioneer PD-F606		200
Pioneer PD-M603		200
Pioneer PD-F706		250
Sansui CD220		120
Sherwood CD-4030R		180
Sherwood CDC680	⇒ □□10	180
Sherwood CDC6050R	⇒ □□10	180
Sony CDP-XE220		90
Sony CDP-XE350		100
Sony CDP-M305		120
Sony CDP-XE530		130
Sony CDP-CE335		160
Sony CDP-XB720E	⇒ □□10	200
Sony CDP-CX57		250
Synergy CDJ1210		120
Teac CDP-1120		100
Teac CD-P1820		130
Teac CD-P1440		200
Teac CD-P3450SE		200
Teac PD-D2400		200
Teac PD-H500i		240
Technics SL-PG390A	□□10	90

Technics SL-PG490A	□□10	100
Technics SL-PG590A	□□10	120
Technics SL-PD6	⇒ □□10	140
Technics SL-PD8	⇒ □□10	160
Technics SL-P5670D	⇒ □□10	200
Technics SL-P5770D	⇒ □□10	250
Yamaha CDX-396	⇒ □□10	130
Yamaha CDC-575	⇒ □□10	180
Yamaha CDX-496	⇒ □□10	180
Yamaha CDC-675	⇒ □□10	230
Yamaha CDX-596	⇒ □□10	230

£251 TO £500

Arcam Alpha MCD	⇒ □□10	330
Arcam Alpha 7 SE	⇒ □□10	350
Arcam Alpha 8SE	⇒ □□10	500
Cambridge CD6	⇒ □□10	300
Cyrus dAD1.5	⇒ □□10	400
Denon DCD-835	⇒ □□10	280
Denon DCM-260	⇒ □□10	300
Denon DCD-1550AR	⇒ □□10	350
H/K HD740	⇒ □□10	300
H/K FL8550	⇒ □□10	300
H/K HD760	⇒ □□10	300
JVC XL-Z674BK	⇒ □□10	300
Kenwood DP-R7080	⇒ □□10	300
Kenwood DP-9090	⇒ □□10	300
Kenwood DP-5090	⇒ □□10	300
Kenwood DP-7090	⇒ □□10	400
Marantz CD-67SE MkII	⇒ □□10	300
Marantz CD6000 OSE	⇒ □□10	300
Marantz CC-870	⇒ □□10	400
Marantz CD-651K1	⇒ □□10	400
Musical Fidelity E60	⇒ □□10	300
Musical Fidelity A2 CD	⇒ □□10	500
Musical Fidelity E624	⇒ □□10	500
Myryad T-10	⇒ □□10	400
NAD 513	⇒ □□10	290
NAD C540	⇒ □□10	329
NAD 515	⇒ □□10	350
NAD 514	⇒ □□10	370
NAD 517	⇒ □□10	400
Nakamichi MB10	⇒ □□10	399
Onkyo DX 7210	⇒ □□10	260
Onkyo C721	⇒ □□10	290
Onkyo DXC 320	⇒ □□10	380
Onkyo DX 7510	⇒ □□10	400
Onkyo CM 716	⇒ □□10	450
Parasound C/DP-1000	⇒ □□10	499
Philips DVD750	⇒ □□10	400
Pioneer PD-S707	⇒ □□10	300
Pioneer PD-F805	⇒ □□10	300
Pioneer PD-S705	⇒ □□10	300
Pioneer PD-F906	⇒ □□10	350
Pioneer PD-S904	⇒ □□10	400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	⇒ □□10	460
Rega Planet	⇒ □□10	475
Roksan Kandy	⇒ □□10	475
Rotel RCD-951	⇒ □□10	350
Rotel RCD-971	⇒ □□10	450
Rotel RCC-955	⇒ □□10	500
Sony CDP-XB930E	⇒ □□10	300
Sony CDP-CX350	⇒ □□10	350
Sony CDP-XA20ES	⇒ □□10	450
Sony CDP-X3000ES	⇒ □□10	500
Sony CDP-CX260	⇒ □□10	500
Synergy CDJ2010	⇒ □□10	300
Technics SL-MC7	⇒ □□10	300

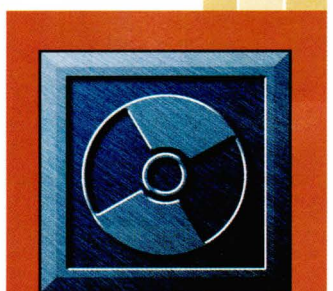
£501 TO £1000

Acurus ACD11	□□10	899
Alchemist Nexus	□□10	600
Arcam Alpha 9	□□10	800
Audio Analogue Paganini	□□10	750
Audio Note CD1	□□10	599
Audio Note AN-CD2	□□10	999
Audiomeca Obsession	□□10	999
AWI S2000MC 24 Ref	□□10	999
Creek CD43	□□10	599
Cyrus dAD3	□□10	600
Cyrus dAD3 Q24	□□10	900
Denon DCD-1650AR	□□10	700
DPA Renaissance int CD	□□10	950
Helios Model 3	□□10	700
Helios Model 2	□□10	950
Linn Mimir	□□10	875
Linn Genki	□□10	995
Magnum CD2020	□□10	595
Marantz CD-17	□□10	800
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	□□10	799
Musical Fidelity A3 CD	□□10	800
Myryad Cameo	□□10	580
Myryad T-20	□□10	600
Myryad MC100	□□10	800
Pioneer PDS-06	□□10	550
Quad 99	□□10	650
R-20 D20	□□10	700
Roksan Caspian	□□10	895
Rotel RCD-991	□□10	750
Sony CDP-XA555ES	□□10	1,000
Suggden Audition	□□10	649
Talk Electronics Thunder 1	□□10	550
Talk Electronics Thunder 2	□□10	700
Talk Electronics Thunder 3	□□10	1,000
Teac VRDS-8	□□10	600
Teac VRDS-9	□□10	700

Teac VRDS-25X	□□10	1,000
Trichord Genesis	□□10	569
Trichord Digital Jukebox 25	□□10	619
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50	□□10	669
Trichord Digital J'box 100	□□10	719
Trichord Revelation	□□10	819
YBA Complete	□□10	649
YBA Special	□□10	695

OVER £1000

Acoustic Precision Eikos	□□10	1,850
Advantage CD15	□□10	3,995
Alchemist Kraken CD	□□10	1,249
Alchemist Forseti Int.	□□10	1,249
Alchemist Forseti	□□10	1,995
Arcam FMJ CD23	□□10	1,100
Audio Analogue Maestro	□□10	1,100
Audio Research CD2	□□10	3,399
Audiomeca Keeps	□□10	1,500
Audiomeca Talisman	□□10	2,150
Audiomeca Talisman SE	□□10	2,300
Balanced VK-05	□□10	3,995
Cary CD-301	□□10	2,350
Classe CDP-3	□□10	1,395
Conrad-Johnson DF-2	□□10	1,699
Conrad-Johnson DV-2b	□□10	2,495
Copland CDA-266	□□10	1,199
Copland CDA277	□□10	1,649
Copland CDA289	□□10	1,898
Copland CDA288	□□10	1,999
Cymbal CDP12	□□10	1,299
Densen B-400	□□10	1,280
Exposure CD Player	□□10	1,050
Helios Model 1	□□10	1,250
Helios Stargate	□□10	2,250
Jadis Orchestra	□□10	1,345
Krell KAV250cd	□□10	2,490
Krell KAV300cd	□□10	3,599
Krell KPS25s	□□10	19,995
Linn Ikemi	□□10	1,950
Linn Sondek CD12	□□10	12,000
Marantz CD-17KIS	□□10	1,100
Marantz CD-7	□□10	3,500
Levinson 39	□□10	4,995
Mclntosh MCD7009	□□10	3,699
Meracus Tanto	□□10	1,395
Meracus Imago Player	□□10	4,495
Meridian 506	□□10	1,100
Meridian 508	□□10	1,995
Myryad MCD500	□□10	1,300
NAD S500	□□10	1,100
Naim CD3.5	□□10	1,050
Naim CDX	□□10	2,200
Naim NACDSII/XPS	□□10	5,625
Oracle CD Player	□□10	9,499
Pink Triangle Numeral	□□10	1,049
Pink Triangle Ltural	□□10	2,200
Proceed CDP	□□10	3,395
R-20 D302	□□10	1,500
Resolution CD50	□□10	2,995
Roksan Attessa-DP3P	□□10	1,495
Shearne Phase 7	□□10	1,499
Sherwood CD1	□□10	1,100
Sonic Frontiers Anthem CD1	⇒ □□10	1,699
Sonic Frontiers SFCD-1	□□10	3,799
Sony SCD-1	□□10	2,700
T+A CD1210R	□□10	1,185
T+A CD1220R	□□10	1,540
TAG McLaren CD20R	□□10	1,250
Theta Miles SE	□□10	2,390
Tube Tech Fusion	□□10	1,350
Tube Tech Fulcrum	□□10	1,850
Wadia 860x	□□10	7,495
XTC CDP-1	□□10	1,350
YBA Integre a	□□10	1,095
YBA CD3a	□□10	1,850
YBA CD2a	□□10	2,950
YBA CD1a	□□10	3,895



CD TRANSPORTS

KEY

□□10 - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.

Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Alchemist Forseti Drive	□□10	1,100
Altis CDT III	□□10	4,995
Audio Note CDD Zero	□□10	399



Audio Synthesis Transcend Decade	1010	3,995
Audiomeca Damnation	1010	999
Audiomeca Damnation SE	1010	1,100
Audiomeca Talisman	1010	1,850
Audiomeca Talisman SE	1010	1,999
Audiomeca Talisman DOB	1010	2,250
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	1010	1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	1010	775
Jadis JD5	1010	1,999
Jadis JDI	1010	9,190
Linn Kank	1010	1,850
Levinson 37	1010	3,995
Levinson 31.5	1010	9,295
Meracus Imago	1010	3,995
Muse Model 5	1010	1,800
Muse Model 8	1010	3,500
Oracle CD Drive	1010	7,399
Pink Triangle Cardinal II	1010	909
Rega Jupiter	1010	598
Resolution VT960	1010	3,500
Roksan Attesa-DP3	1010	1,295
Sonic Frontiers Transport 3	1010	5,999
T+A CM1200R	1010	875
TAG McLaren CDT20R-T2L	1010	1,499
Teac VRDS-T1	1010	550
Teac P-30	1010	2,500
Theta Pearl	1010	1,349
Theta Jade	1010	2,650
Thorens TCD-2000	1010	999
Trichord Digital Turntable	1010	719
Wadia 8	1010	3,195
Wadia 20	1010	4,370

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
Rega Io		475
Resolution D92		1,500
Roksan Attesa-DA2		595
Sonic Frontiers Processor 3		5,999
Sumo Theorem IIb		1,155
Teac D-T1		500
Theta Chroma 396 Std		799
Theta Pro Geny		1,099
Theta Pro Prime IIa		1,699
Theta Pro Basic IIIa		2,990
Theta Casablanca LS		6,158
Thorens TDA-2000		700
Trichord Pulsar Ser One		1,395
Tube Tech Fulcrum Xport		950
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 TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)

KEY
④ - Number of digital inputs.

Alchemist TS-D-1		300
Alchemist Forseti DAC	③	1,100
Altis Reference	③	4,995
Audio Note DAC Zero		369
Audio Note DAC1		675
Audio Note DAC2		1,099
Audio Note DAC3		1,750
Audio Research DAC5	④	2,335
Audio Research DAC3 MkII	④	3,999
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade	④	2,995
Audiolabor 531	④	7,550
Audiomeca Elbar	④	799
Audiomeca Ambrosia	④	1,850
Boulder 2020	④	21,000
Cary DC-303		2,695
Chord DSC900E		2,040
Chord DSC1100E	③	2,815
Chord DSC1500E	③	4,895
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	①	1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	①	1,990
dCS Elgar	③	8,500
DPA Little Bit 3	③	525
DPA Renaissance DAC		595
DPA Enlightenment DAC		850
DPA X128		2,000
DPA SX256		4,000
DPA SX512		8,000
Harmonix Reimyo DAP-77		2,790
Jadis JS2		2,499
Jadis JS1	③	6,990
LFD DAC2		1,950
LFD DAC3		3,000
Linn Numerik	⑥	1,500
Levinson 360	⑥	4,395
Levinson 360S	⑥	6,895
Levinson 30.6		16,495
Meracus Auriga		1,295
Meracus Flagrare		2,495
Meridian 566		1,095



DIGITAL RECORDERS

KEY
MD - MiniDisc
DAT - Digital Audio Tape
② - Portable

Denon DMD-1000	MD	500
Denon DMD-1600AL	MD	600
Kenwood DMF-9020	MD	499
Kenwood DM-7090	MD	500
Kenwood DM-9090	MD	550
Marantz CM635	MD	500
Marantz DR700	MD	600
Onkyo MD-121	MD	450
Onkyo MD-122	MD	700
Philips CDR770		1
Philips CDR775		1
Philips CDR570		1
Philips CDR951		1
Pioneer MJ-D707	MD	199
Pioneer PDR-509		300
Pioneer PDR-W739		399
Pioneer PDR-555RV		480
Pioneer PDR-04		700
Pioneer D-05	DAT	900
Pioneer PDR-05		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-540	MD	1
Sony MZ-R37	MD	1
Sony MZ-R5ST	MD	1
Sony MDS-JE530	MD	200
Sony MDS-JB930	MD	300
Sony MDS-JA20ES	MD	500
Sony MDS-JA555ES	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	MD	399
Yamaha MDX-595	MD	230
Yamaha CDR-S1000	MD	400



HEADPHONES

KEY
'D' - Dynamic type, compatible with virtually all normal headphone outputs.
'E' - Electrostatic type; generally includes a separate power supply.
④ - Open-back construction.
② - Closed-back construction.

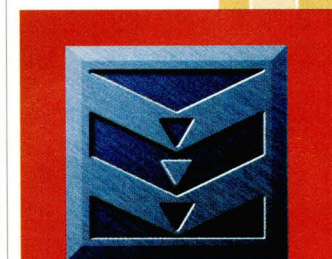
UP TO £40

AKG Rox	D	②	30
Aural Envelope DX200	D	②	20
Aural Envelope DX220	D	②	30
Beyer DT131	D	②	29
Beyer DT131TV	D	②	32
Beyer DT75	D	②	34
Beyer DT231	D	②	40
Hama SL273	D	②	20
Hama SL275	D	②	25
JVC HA-CD88	D	②	18
JVC HA-D525	D	②	20
JVC HA-F65	D	②	20
JVC HA-D626	D	②	25
Kenwood KPM-310	D	②	18
Kenwood KPM-410	D	②	25
Maxell HP-2000	D	②	20
Pioneer SE-A40	D	②	20
Pioneer SE-A20V	D	②	23
Pioneer SE-M250	D	②	25
Pioneer SE-M350	D	②	30
Sennheiser HD56	D	②	18
Sennheiser HD433	D	②	20
Sennheiser HD400	D	②	25
Sennheiser HD470	D	②	35
Sennheiser HD60TV	D	②	40
Sony MDR-250V	D	②	18
Sony MDR-A34L	D	②	18
Sony MDR-ED228LP	D	②	18
Sony MDR-G52LP	D	②	20
Sony MDR-E848LP/MP	D	②	20
Sony MDR-ED238ML	D	②	22
Sony MDR-G56V	D	②	25
Sony MDR-G62LP	D	②	25
Sony MDR-G59G	D	②	30
Sony MDR-G72LP	D	②	30
Sony MDR-V300	D	②	30
Sony MDR-IF130K	D	②	30
Sony MDR-EX70LP	D	②	35
Sony MDR-ED268LP	D	②	35
Stanton ST Pro	D	②	25
Technics RP-F200	D	②	25
Technics RP-F400	D	②	30
Technics RP-F500	D	②	40
Vivanco SR250	D	②	20
Vivanco FMH 3000	D	②	30
Vivanco IR5800	D	②	30

OVER £41

AKG K301	D	②	70
AKG K240DF	D	②	100
AKG K222IR	D	②	100
AKG K401	D	②	120
AKG K501	D	②	150
AKG K333IR	D	②	150
AKG K444IR	D	②	180
AKG K290S	D	②	250
AKG K1000	D	②	700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	D	②	80
Audio Technica ATHD40FS	D	②	100
Audio Technica ATH-M40	D	②	120
Audio Technica ATH911	D	②	120
Beyer DT331	D	②	70
Beyer DT431	D	②	80
Beyer DT433/863	D	②	100
Beyer DT531	D	②	110
Beyer DT831	D	②	135
Beyer DT100	D	②	160
Beyer DT931	D	②	180
Denon AH-D210	D	②	45
Denon AH-D650	D	②	95
Denon AH-D750	D	②	130
Grado SR60	D	②	79
Grado SR80	D	②	100
Grado SR125	D	②	150
Grado SR225	D	②	200
Grado SR325	D	②	300
Grado RS2	D	②	495
Grado RS1	D	②	695
Hama SL276	D	②	50

Hama IR Cordless	D	②	60
Jecklin Float Model 1	D	②	79
Jecklin Float Model 2	D	②	99
Jecklin Float ELS	E	②	399
JVC HA-D727	D	②	43
JVC HA-D50	D	②	45
JVC HA-W60	D	②	49
JVC HA-D910	D	②	65
JVC HA-W200RF	D	②	75
JVC HA-DX1	D	②	200
JVC HA-DX3	D	②	250
JVC HA-D1000	D	②	250
JVC HA-F25	D	②	699
Koss TD/80	D	②	50
Koss R/100	D	②	100
Pioneer SE-M550	D	②	50
Pioneer SE-M750	D	②	60
Precide Ergo Model 1	D	②	120
Precide Ergo Model 2	D	②	140
Sennheiser HD200	D	②	50
Sennheiser IS 380	D	②	50
Sennheiser HD490	D	②	50
Sennheiser HD495	D	②	60
Sennheiser HD500	D	②	70
Sennheiser RS30	D	②	70
Sennheiser RS40	D	②	80
Sennheiser HD270	D	②	80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	D	②	90
Sennheiser HD570 Symphony	D	②	90
Sennheiser RS60	D	②	120
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	D	②	125
Sennheiser HDC 451-1	D	②	130
Sennheiser HD250II	D	②	150
Sennheiser HD25-13	D	②	160
Sennheiser HD590	D	②	160
Sennheiser RS80	D	②	160
Sennheiser HD25	D	②	160
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	D	②	200
Sennheiser HD600	D	②	250
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	E	②	998
Sennheiser Orpheus	E	②	9,652
Sony MDR-V500DJ	D	②	50
Sony MDR-RF830RK	D	②	60
Sony MDR-V700DJ	D	②	100
Sony MDR-D77	D	②	130
Sony MDR-F1	D	②	200
Sony MDR-CD1700	D	②	200
Sony MDR-DS5000	D	②	400
Stanton DJ Pro 101/HB	D	②	65
Stanton DJ Pro 1000	D	②	95
Stanton DJ Pro 1001	D	②	150
Stax SR-001	E	②	280
Stax SR-Lambda Nova C	E	②	370
Stax Lambda Nova Basic	E	②	449
Stax SR-Lambda Nova S	E	②	450
Stax Omega	E	②	1,896
Technics RP-F800	D	②	50
Technics RP-HC100	D	②	55
Vivanco SR650	D	②	45
Vivanco SR750	D	②	50
Vivanco SR850	D	②	50
Vivanco FMH7980	D	②	60
Vivanco SR950	D	②	80



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Hi-Fi Tables

KEY
④ - Number of shelves.

Avak Furniture A4	4	350
Alphason SM17	1	49
Alphason VSM17	1	85
Alphason GSM17	1	85
Alphason GMV1P	1	110
Alphason RT17/17	3	120
Alphason GMH1P	1	150
Alphason VR17/17	3	190
Alphason GR17/17-AS	4	275
Apollo Soprano	4	275
Arcici Air Head 1	1	275
Arcici Air Head 2	1	425
Arcici Air Head TNT	1	725
Arcici Suspense 4	4	1,695
Arcici 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 Isoschell	5	1,100


BCD Model 1006/8	1	795
BCD Model 1000	3	1,250
Custom Design Aspect 650	4	250
Custom Design Aspect 850	5	280
Custom Design e'lite E5	5	280
Custom Design Aspect 500AV	3	290
Custom Design e'lite XE5	5	300
Custom Design e'lite AVE	8	350
Deadrock 701	1	60
Deadrock 802	2	90
Deadrock 703	3	130
Deadrock 705	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 X5	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 Isotube 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-Rx 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	1	190
JPW 3 Tier	3	80
JPW 5 Tier	5	100
Linn K3000	1	85
Mana Sound Frame	1	125
Mana Mini Table	1	150
Mana Power supply table	1	150
Mana Reference flat top	1	150
Mana Sound Shelf	1	175
Mana Sound Stage	1	200
Mana Sound Table	1	235
Mana Ref Shelf	1	325
Mana Reference Table	1	350
Mana 2 Tier Stand	1	375
Mana 3 Tier Stand	1	450
Mana 4 Tier Stand	1	500
Mana 5 Tier Stand	1	600
Mana 6 Tier Stand	1	700
Mana 7 Tier Stand	1	800
Mana 8 Tier Stand	1	900
Mission Stance	1	100
Optimum OPT 3406	3	149
Optimum G5	5	180
Optimum OPT 4906	4	199
Optimum G5P	6	200
Optimum OPT 3000	3	200
Optimum OPT 6606	5	249
Optimum OPT 340	3	249
Optimum AV200	2	270
Optimum OPT 5000	5	280
Optimum OPT 490	4	299
Optimum AV30	3	299
Optimum OPT 440	4	299
Optimum OPT 10206	6	299
Optimum OPT 660	4	349
Optimum AV 300	3	349
Optimum OPT 7000	7	359
Optimum OPT 1020	6	399
Optimum OPT 8000	6	400
Optimum OPT 1190	8	400
Optimum OPT 1190	7	450
Optimum AV400	4	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
Roksan Glass stand	4	495
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 Z540	4	140
Sound Org Z560	5	160
Sound Org Z545	4	160
Sound Org Z530	3	170
Soundstyle Radius SR210	2	200
Soundstyle X053	4	230
Soundstyle X100	4	240
Soundstyle Finewoods W100	4	245
Soundstyle X058	5	250
Soundstyle Radius SR310	3	250
Soundstyle Radius SR100	4	250
Soundstyle X310	3	260
Soundstyle X6053	4	260
Soundstyle X105	5	265
Soundstyle X6100	4	275
Soundstyle Radius SR105	5	280
Soundstyle X6058	5	290
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	5	295
Soundstyle XG105	5	300
Soundstyle XG310	3	300
Soundstyle Finewoods W310	3	360
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 Supp4	5	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	1	400
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-3D	1	410
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 Asside Basic	4	590
Wilson Benesch Asside	4	720
Wilson Benesch Triptych	1	990

Atacama SE20	4	250
Atacama SX700	4	250
Atacama SL300	4	320
Atacama TP600	3	350
Atacama TP500	3	400
Atacama SE615	4	450
Atacama SE515	1	195
Atacama SE415	1	195
Atacama SL400	4	495
Atacama SE1000S	1	141
Atacama R724	1	152
AVF P6171BP	4	220
AVF Tower P6144BP	4	310
BCD Model 1010	5	572
Black Box Speaker Stand	5	317
Credo STD 001	4	140
Custom Design M Range	5	160
Custom Design R/S 300 Mk II	6	160
Custom Design Ref. stands	3	200
Deadrock 903	6	60
Deadrock 902	4	47
Deadrock 901	3	39
Elemental Reference SB1	8	399
Elemental Isotube SZ	4	499
Elemental Isotube SZse	6	599
Elemental Isotube SCZ	4	699
Elemental Isotube SCZse	4	799
Elemental Reference SZ	5	999
Elemental Reference SCZ	5	1,499
Heybrook Stand-56	6	69
JPW M52	4	45
JPW M53	6	55
JPW M51	4	80
JPW H51	6	120
JPW H52	4	120
Mana Sound Base	8	175
Opera WS1/E	60	235
Opera S1	60	295
Opera S2	60	345
Partington A-4	60	119
Partington Dreadnought Ultima	63	299
Pioneer CP-7	50	50
Pioneer CP-8	80	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	475
Sonus Faber Stonewood	497	497
Sonus Systems Excel	65	99
Sound Org Z522	59	89
Soundstyle Finewoods W122	57	95
Soundstyle X122	57	95
Soundstyle Select	59	95
Soundstyle Radius S122	57	110
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 HM60	55	106
Target R1	53	280
Townshend Sismic Sink L/S	4	499

AR Status S10	130
Ariston MSX 03	30
Ariston MSX 05	50
Celestion 12i	119
Denon SC-M2	80
Denon SC-ES135E	130
Eltax Liberty 1+	99
Eltax Monitor III Mk II	129
Gale Mini Monitors	70
Gale Gold Monitors	90
Gale 2i	130
Genexa GX300	80
Genexa GX330	80
GLL Arena	90
GLL Imagio IC208	100
Interaudio IC1000	130
Jamo Arlina	120
Jamo 28	125
Jamo Cornet 145	130
JBL CM40	90
JBL MX300	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
Monitor Audio Bronze 1	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
Tannoy mX1	120
TDL Nucleus 1	75
TDL Nucleus 2	150
Teac LS-X8 Mk II	80
Technics SB-CS65	100
W'dale Valdis 100	80
W'dale Diamond 7.1	100
W'dale Valdis 200	110
W'dale Modus Micro	110


£131 TO £200			
Acoustic Energy Aegis Centre	140		
Acoustic Energy Aegis One	150		
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		
Eltax Liberty 3+	149		
Eltax Liberty 5+	199		
Genexa CX650	140		
Genexa Pro	160		
GLL Imagio IC218	140		
GLL Imagio IC318	200		
Heybrook HB1/2000	150		
Heybrook Heylette	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 D165	200		
Jamo 68	200		
Jamo 892	200		
JBL CM52	150		
JBL MX1000	170		
JBL LX20	200		
JBL MX1500	200		
JM Lab Tantal 505	199		
JPW ML510i	150		
JPW ML610i	180		
KEF Cresta 2	149		
KEF Coda 8	189		
KEF Model 60S	199		
KEF Q15.2	200		
Kenwood LS-200G	200		
Magnat Vector 22	179		
Mission 701	160		
Mission 77C	199		



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS
Speaker Stands

KEY
60 - Height of stand in cm.

Acoustic Solutions Platform Eight	49	220
Aliante Base	425	425
Aliante Vela	750	750
Alphason NCI	60	47
Alphason Akros I	60	49
Alphason RS1	120	49
Alphason Akros II	60	65
Alphason NCII	60	84
Alphason HDS	60	85
Alphason Titan S	60	125
Apollo Olympus	60	75
Apollo AZ6	66	80
Apollo A4/6	51	82
Atacama Nexus 6	60	50
Atacama BD21	56	55
Atacama BD17	50	55
Atacama BD25	60	60
Atacama SE16	65	65
Atacama SE12	65	65
Atacama SX500	67	67
Atacama F2	70	70
Atacama F1	70	70
Atacama SX600	70	70
Atacama SL200	70	70
Atacama SE24	61	70



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

Acoustic Energy Aegis Compact	55
Allison Micro Monitors	95
Allison Mini References	120

Mission 77DS	199
Mission 771e	200
Mission 702e	200
Monitor Audio Bronze 2	180
Monitor Audio Monitor 1	200
Mordaunt-Short MS206	200
Paradigm Mini Monitor	200
Pioneer CS-5030	170
Polk M2	180
Polk RT3	200
Polk AB610	200
Royd A7X	155
Sequence 200	199
Sony SS-126EB	150
Sony SS-176E	200
Tangent Monitor 9	150
Tangent Monitor 11	180
Tannoy Mercury M2	140
Tannoy Saturn S6C	200
Tannoy Revolution R1	200
TDL Nucleus 3	200
Technics SB-CS95	150
Technics SB-M20	200
TLC Maestro 70S	159
Wdale Diamond 7.2 Ann'y	150
Wdale Valdis 300	150
Wdale Modus Music Two	200
Wdale Valdis 400	200
Yamaha NS-90	180
Yamaha NS-45E	200
Yamaha NS-100	200

£201 TO £300

Acoustic Energy AE100i SE	230
Acoustic Energy Aegis Two	249
ALR/Jordan Entry 2	249
AR 15	275
Arcaydis Baby 1	299
Audio Gem Opal	230
B&W DM602 Ser II	300
B&W 602 S2	300
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 Richmond	249
Castle Keep	250
Celestion C1	299
Celestion 25i	299
Cerwin-Vega VS-8	250
Cerwin-Vega CT-330	300
Chario Syntar 100T	249
Chario Ref 100	299
Chario Hiper 1000	300
Dali 102B	260
Dali 150	300
Eltax Linear Resp. 4.5	249
Eltax Liberty 7+	249
GLL Imagio IC238TL	250
Heybrook Heylios	269
Heybrook HB3/2000	300
Interaudio XL3000	230
Interaudio XL4000	260
Jamo Cornet 175	230
Jamo Classic 4	250
Jamo Art	300
Jamo D265	300
JBL CM62	250
JM Lab Tantal 507	299
JPW ML710i	250
JPW ML810i	300
JVC SX-SW10	300
KEF Coda 9	299
KEF Model 70S	299
Linn Kan	295
Mission 750	248
Mission 772	250
Mission 780	299
Mission 703	300
Monitor Audio Monitor 2	250
Monitor Audio Bronze 3	270
Monitor Audio Silver 3i	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 Ara	255
Royd The Envoy	249
Royd Minstrel	275
Ruark Epilogue	239
Sequence 300	249
Sony SS-176EB	250
Tannoy mX3	229
Tannoy Mercury M3	230

TDL Nucleus 4	300
TLC Maestro 130S	289
TLC Voyager 350	289
Wdale Modus Music Four	230
Wdale Valdis 500	300
Yamaha NS-120	250
Yamaha NS-200	300
ZYP A1	229
ZYP A2S	299

£301 TO £500

Acoustic Energy AE105SE	350
Acoustic Energy Aegis Three	350
Acoustic Energy AE109 SE	450
Acoustic Energy Energy AE120SE	500
Allison Model 2A	420
Arcaydis Baby 2	399
Arcaydis ASC	399
Audiovector C1	350
AVI Neutron	499
AVI NuNeutron	500
B&O Beovox CX50	325
B&O Beovox CX100	425
B&W LCR6	349
B&W DM305	350
B&W CDM2SE	400
Bandor Pictures	352
Boston Micro 90 Sat	369
Boston Micro 80 Sys	369
Boston VR20	380
Castle Inversion 15	425
Celestion 25i	399
Celestion 30i	449
Celestion 35i	499
Cerwin-Vega VS-10	350
Chario Syntar 100T	399
Chario Ref 1000	499
Dali 104B	370
Dali Royal Menuet MkII	400
Dali 606	400
Dali Royal	500
Def Tech Celsius	395
Dynaudio Audience 40	399
Dynaudio LR/C120	439
ELAC CL82 MkII	399
Eltax Linear Resp. 6.5	349
Eltax Chroma Front	349
Eltax Linear Resp. 8.5	449
Energy e:XL25	399
Epos ES12	499
GLL Imagio IC248TL	350
GLL Imagio IC258TL	450
GLL Imagio IC348TL	500
Heybrook Heylo	359
Heybrook HB4/2000	500
Indigo One	330
Indigo Three	500
Jamo Classic 6	330
Jamo Cornet 195	350
Jamo 98	350
Jamo D365	400
Jamo Classic 8	400
Jamo Graphic	400
Jamo 128	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 2	350
KEF RDM One	499
KEF Q55.2	500
Linn Sekrit	395
Magnat Vector 55	349
Magnat Vintage 320	350
Magnat Vector 77	449
Mission 751f	348
Mission 733	399
Mission 773e	400
Mission 704	450
Mission 774	500
Mission 705	500
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	350
Monitor Audio Silver 5i	450
Monitor Audio Studio 2SE	500
Mordaunt-Short MS207	400
Mordaunt-Short MS208	500
Mordaunt-Short MS817	500
Mus Tec Kestrel Evolution	315
Mus Tec Harrier	400
Mus Tec PM15	475
NAD 804	400
Neat Critique	445
Opera Mini	325
Opera Duetto	395
Opera Pnma	495
Origin Live OL-1AS	499
Origin Live Monarch	499
Paradigm Studio/20	350
Paradigm Monitor 9	400
Pioneer S-LC2	450
Polk AB705	330
Polk RT8	400

Polk RT10	500
Polk AB805	500
PMC TB15	470
Promenade SP2	399
Promenade SP3	499
Rega Aya	365
Rega Jura	475
Rega ELA	498
Roksan ROKone 1	400
Royd The Squire	350
Royd Minstrel SE	399
Royd Doublet	485
Ruark Icon	399
Sequence 400	329
Sony SS-X7	400
S Coast Odette	325
Spendor S3/5	499
System 1130	500
Tannoy Revolution R2	350
Tannoy Saturn S6LCR	400
Tannoy Saturn S6	500
TDL G20	380
TDL Chiltern CF100	450
TDL G30	500
Technics SB-M300	350
Technics SB-M500	450
TLC Altus 300	366
Triangle Cometes	359
Wdale Modus Music Six	330
Wdale Modus Music Eight	430
Wdale Modus Music 1/6	500
Yamaha NS-300	400

£501 TO £800

Acoustic Precision Eikos FRI	800
Aliante Stile	580
Aliante Voce	600
Allison Model 3A	525
Arcaydis AK3	599
Arcaydis AS2	699
Arcaydis AK4	699
Audio Gem Emerald	540
Audio Note AN-K/D	620
Audio Note AN-J/B	799
Audiovector M1 Improved	650
Audiovector C2	700
AVI Biggatron	599
B&O Beolab 2500	750
B&W 603 S2	550
B&W CDM1 SE	600
Bose 501	600
Bose A'mass AM3	650
Boston VR30	600
Castle Severn 25E	699
Celestion A Compact	599
Celestion 45i	599
Celestion C2	699
Cerwin-Vega VS-12	550
Cerwin-Vega VS-15	700
Chario Constellation Lynx	549
Chario Ref 100T	599
Chario Hiper 1000T	699
Cura CA-10	699
Dali 107	600
Dali 350	600
Dali 450	700
Dali 109	800
Def Tech BP2X	595
Def Tech CLR2002	595
Def Tech BP6B	750
Diapason Micra II	750
Dynaudio Audience 50	577
Dynaudio Audience 60	729
ELAC CL102 MkII	599
ELAC CL310i:JET	800
Eltax Linear Resp. 10.5	549
Energy e:XL26	600
Epos ES14	675
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799
Heybrook Duet	799
Indigo Four	750
Infinity Kappa 60	595
Infinity Kappa 70	795
Jamo Classic 10	600
Jamo X3M8	600
Jamo X3M10	750
JBL LX80	550
JBL Ti 400	550
JBL SVA1500	650
JBL Ti 600	650
JM Lab Cobalt 807	599
JM Lab Tantal 520	599
JM Lab Cobalt 810	799
Jordan Watts JH400	515
KEF LS3/5a	649
KEF RDM Two	699
KEF Q65.2	700
Kelly KT2	700
Linn Tukan Passive	550
Linn Keilidh Passive	750
Magnat Vintage 210	799
Meridian A500	750
M&K S-85	700
Mission 752f	578
Mission 782	699

Mission 753f	798
Monitor Audio Silver 7i	600
Mus Tec Falcon	680
Naim Intro	680
Neat Mystique 2	575
Neat Petite II	745
NHT Super Two	550
Opera Seconda	595
Opera Pavarotti	695
Opera Platea	795
Opera Operetta	795
Origin Live Resolution	742
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
PMC TB15M	517
PMC TB1	529
PMC TB1M	576
PMC XB1	640
Promenade SP4	650
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
Soliloquy 5.0	795
Sonus Faber Concertino	599
S Coast Lancelot	575
S Coast Hades	695
S Coast Merlin Monitor	795
Spendor S1	549
System 1150	750
T+A TB 100	700
Tannoy Revolution R3	550
Tannoy Definition D100	689
TDL Cotswold CF200	650
Titan Orbital	598
Titan Logic T/2B	600
Titan Logic T/2	699
TLC Classic 2	535
TLC Classic 1	800
Totem Mite	599
Totem Rokk	765
Triangle Zephyr II	599

£801 TO £1500

Acoustic Energy AE1	845
Acoustic Energy AE2-II	1,245
Acoustic Solutions Eight	1,375
Aliante Moda	1,200
Arcaydis AK5	1,399
ATC SCM10	1,000
Audio Note AN-J/D	930
Audio Note AN-K/SPx	1,060
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299
Audio Note AN-J/SPx	1,415
Audio Physic Step	1,299
Audiovector M1 Super Impr.	880
Audiovector M1 Sig Improved	1,180
Audiovector M3	1,200
AVI Positron	899
B&O Beolab 4000	1,100
B&W DM604 Ser II	849
B&W CDM7SE	1,000
B&W Nautilus 805	1,500
Bandor Trident	846
BKS Audio Hybrid 107	1,500
Bose A'mass AM5	900
Bose 701	1,000
Boston VR40	1,000
Carlsson OA-52.2	1,500
Castle Inversion 50	875
Castle Harlech	899
Celestion A1	899
Celestion C3	999
Celestion A2	1,499
Cerwin-Vega AL-1000	1,100
Cerwin-Vega 1515	1,300
Chario Ref 1000T	999
Chario Academy 1	1,299
Cura CA-20	1,199
Dali 850	1,100
Def Tech BP8B	1,000
Def Tech BP10B	1,500
Diapason Prelude II	875
Diapason Karis	995
Diapason Nux	1,395
Dynaudio Contour 1.1	879
Dynaudio Audience 70	1,100
Dynaudio Contour 1.3	1,198
Dynaudio Audience 80	1,460
Electrocompaniet EC-M1	995
Electrocompaniet EC-Qube	1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-Qube SE	1,495
Epos ES15	890
Epos ES22	1,185
Final 0.3	1,495

H I - F I P R I C E G U I D E

Harbeth HL-K6	899
Harbeth HL-Compact 7	1,299
Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,499
Impulse Kora	1,250
Infinity Overture 1	900
Infinity Kappa 80	995
Infinity Kappa 90	1,295
Infinity Overture 2	1,500
Jadis Orchestra	999
Jamo Concert 8	1,365
JBL SVA 1600	850
JBL 4312 MkII-WX	1,000
JBL SVA 1800	1,000
JBL SVA 2100	1,250
JM Lab Cobalt 815	999
JM Lab Electra 905	1,199
JM Lab Cobalt 820	1,199
Jordan Watts JH1+1	1,150
KEF Ref. Model One	1,199
KEF RDM Three	1,500
Kelly KT3	1,200
Linn Tukan Aktiv	1,050
Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,250
L Voice Auditorium	1,500
Lumley L/M3.5	1,050
Magnat Vintage 720	1,199
Magneplanar SMG-C SE	990
Magneplanar MG-0.6 SE	1,370
Meridian Argent 1	995
M&K S-125	1,150
Mission 705a	900
Mission 754f	1,298
Monitor Audio Silver 9i	1,000
Mus Tec Condor	1,000
Mus Tec Hawk	1,250
Mus Tec Eagle	1,500
Naim Credo	1,090
Neat Elite	1,195
Opera Terza	995
Opera Super Pavarotti	995
Opera Callas Gold	1,095
Opera Divina II	1,495
Orelle Swing	1,200
Origin Live Sovereign	1,130
Paradigm Studio/100	950
Polk CS1000	999
Polk LS70	1,200
Polk RTE1000	1,300
Polk RT20p	1,500
ProAc Tablette 2000 Sig	899
ProAc Studio 125	999
ProAc Response 1 SC	1,199
PMC LB1	999
Rega Naos	998
Rehdeko RK115	1,500
RMS Revelation S 1	1,299
Roksan Ojan 3X	995
Royd The Albion	985
Ruark Solus	1,200
Shahinian Super Elf	875
Shahinian Starter	1,195
Shahinian Compass	1,495
Shinpy Micraphonica	1,099
Silverado Ryder	1,395
Soliloquy SM 2A3	1,095
Sonus Faber Concerto	945
Sonus Faber Concerto GP	999
Sonus Faber Signum	1,200
S Coast Classic	1,175
Spendor SP3/1P	825
Spendor FL6	1,099
Spendor SP2/3	1,187
Spendor FL8	1,355
T+A TAS 1200E	1,050
T+A TB 120	1,060
TAG McLaren Calliope	1,495
Tannoy Definition D300	999
TDL Cheviot CF300	850
Technics SB-M1000	1,500
Titan Enigma T/3	825
Titan Logic T2B3	900
Titan Sovereign T/4	1,175
Totem The Arro	959
Totem The Staaf	1,249
Totem Model One	1,249
Veritas 7	1,000
Veritas 15	1,300
Veritas 20	1,400
Vienna Acoustics Mozart	1,500
Zingali Colosseum	975

£1501 TO £3000

Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,995
Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,995
Aliante Zeta	1,850
Aliante Linea	2,060
Aliante One	2,700
Alon I Mk II	1,795
Alon II Mk II	2,495
ALR/Jordan Note 7	2,500
ATC SCM20SL	1,750
ATC SCM20 Tower SL	2,400
Audio Note AN-E/D	1,520
Audio Note AN-E/SPx	2,250
Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999

Audio Wk/p Cyclone 34	2,000
Audiostatic DC1	2,495
Audiovector M3 Super	1,700
Audiovector M3 Sig	2,200
B&O Beolab 6000	1,550
B&O Beolab 8000	2,100
B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,650
B&W Nautilus 804	2,500
Bandor Bandoline	2,350
Bandor Bandora/Mora	2,350
BKS Audio Hybrid 128	2,549
Bose 901 VI	1,650
Boston Lynfield 300L	2,000
Castle Inversion 100	1,975
Celestion A3	2,399
Celestion Kingston	2,500
Chario Academy 2	1,649
Chario Academy Mill'm 2	2,100
Credo SP8 003	1,820
Credo SP8 009	2,453
Cura CA-30	1,799
Dali Grand Coupe	2,500
Def Tech BP2004	1,700
Def Tech BP2002	2,400
Diapason Adamantes III	1,995
Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,894
Dynaudio Craftt	2,598
Dynaudio Contour 3.0	2,930
ECA Servo A.2	2,450
ELAC CL330 JET	2,499
ELS Res'ch Vision	2,800
Epos ES30	2,385
Eurostatic Model 1	2,250
Final 0.4	2,950
Gamma Epoch Ref Five	2,999
Harbeth HL-S8	1,999
Helius Syrius II	2,395
Helius Syrius I	2,850
Heybrook Octet	1,799
Hi Q Sound SM108	2,000
Impulse Lali	1,850
Infinity Overture 3	1,750
Infinity Kappa 100	1,895
Inner Sound Isis	2,375
Jamo Concert 11	2,250
JM Lab Electra 915	1,899
JM Lab Electra 920	2,399
Jordan Watts JH2K	2,400
Jordan Watts JH5K	3,000
KEF Ref. Model Two	1,599
KEF Ref. Model Three	1,999
Linn Kaber Passve	2,000
Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,640
L Voice Aud'm Avatar	2,400
Lowther Accolade 2	1,950
Lumley L/M2 Mk3	2,995
Magnat Vintage 760	1,999
Magneplanar MG-10 SE	1,650
Magneplanar MG-1.5 SE	1,780
Magneplanar MG-2.7 SE	2,650
Martin-Logan Aeries I	2,199
Meridian M60	2,150
Monitor Audio Studio 20SEC	1,900
Naim SBL Active	1,885
Naim SBL Passve	2,080
Neolith NEO 1	2,999
O'hEocha D1-f	1,760
Opera Caruso II	2,495
Origin Live Conqueror	1,750
Polk LS90	1,700
ProAc Response 1.5	1,790
ProAc Response 2.5	2,700
PMC AB1	1,758
PMC IB1S	2,697
Rehdeko RK125	2,650
Ruark Crusader II	1,649
Ruark Equinox	2,000
Shahinian Arc	1,995
Shahinian Obelisk	2,850
Shinpy Euritmica	1,995
Shinpy Altair	2,895
Silverado Silverado 1	1,995
Snell XA-60	2,500
Soliloquy 5.3	1,750
Sonus Faber Electa Amator 2	2,849
Sound-Lab Quantum	2,150
S Coast Excalibur	2,150
Spendor SP1/2	1,674
Spendor FL9	2,220
Spendor SP100	2,234
T+A TB 140	1,760
Tannoy Definition D500	1,999
Tannoy Stirling TW	2,200
Tannoy Definition D700	2,500
TDL Studio Monitor-m	2,750
Totem Tabu	2,299
Totem The Forest	2,675
Veritas 25	1,750
Veritas H1	2,995
Wilson Benesch Orator	2,900
Zingali Overture 2S	1,975

OVER £3000

Acoustic Energy AE5	7,995
Alon Lotus SE	3,500
Alon V Mk II	5,495

Alon Adriana	8,500
Alon Circe	12,000
Alon Phalanx	19,000
ATC SCM20A PRO	3,140
ATC SCM20TASL	3,995
ATC SCM50PSL	4,377
ATC SCM100PSL	5,098
ATC SCM300ASL	5,948
ATC SCM100ASL	6,669
ATC SCM70PSL	8,842
ATC SCM70ASL	10,500
ATC SCM200ASL	16,843
ATC SCM300ASL	19,150
Audio Note AN-JSE Silver	7,900
Audio Note AN-ESE Silver	9,600
Audio Physic Virgo 2	3,399
Audio Physic Avanti 2	6,699
Audio Physic Caldera	10,599
Audio Physic Medea	24,999
Audiostatic DC1 Plus	3,750
Audiovector 5X	3,999
Audiovector 6X	4,800
Avalon Avatar	5,995
Avalon Arcus	6,995
Avalon Eclipse Classic	8,995
Avalon Radian HC	13,995
Avalon Eidolon	20,495
Avalon Sentinel	79,995
Avantgarde Uno	5,300
Avantgarde Duo	7,500
Avantgarde Trio Compact	16,500
Avantgarde Trio Classic	17,300
AVI Gravitron	4,250
B&W Nautilus 803	4,000
B&W Silver Signature	5,500
B&W Nautilus 802	6,000
B&W Nautilus 801	8,500
B&W Nautilus	35,000
Beauhorn Virtuoso Bronze	4,065
Beauhorn Virtuoso Gold	4,185
Beauhorn Virtuoso Ref. DX3	4,420
Beauhorn Virtuoso Ref. DX4	4,945
Beauhorn Accelerando	6,600
BKS Audio Hybrid 175	3,995
Boston Lynfield 500L	4,449
Carrae Little Big Horn	6,795
Carrae Carraehorn	18,000
Chario Academy 5j	5,999
Credo SPB 012	3,147
Credo SDL 001	5,677
Dali Grand	4,000
Def Tech BP2000	3,600
Diapason Adamantes Ltd	3,995
Dynaudio Contour 3.3	4,815
Dynaudio Confidence 3	4,846
Dynaudio Confidence 5	5,924
Dynaudio Consequence	14,566
Dynaudio Evidence	50,909
Eggleston Rosa	8,500
Electrofluidics Sonolith 2.2x	5,999
ELS Res'ch Vista	3,900
ELS Res'ch Illusion MkII	9,000
Eurostatic Model 2	3,650
Impulse Ta'us	3,100
Inner Sound Eros	3,995
Jadis 2	5,900
Jadis 1	18,900
Jamo Oriel	9,000
JM Lab Mini Utopia	4,500
JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	7,300
JM Lab Utopia	18,300
JM Lab Grande Utopia	35,000
Jordan Watts JH10K	7,570
KEF Ref. Model Four	3,299
Kochel K-300S	10,000
Linn Keltik Aktiv	6,000
L Voice Avatar OBX	4,000
L Voice Air Scout	19,500
L Voice Air Partner S	37,200
Lowther Fidelio	3,100
Lowther Academy	3,550
Lowther Bel Canto	3,750
Lowther Delphic	4,300
Lumley L/M 2 Sig. Mk3	4,500
Magnat Vintage 770	3,500
Magneplanar MG-3.5SE	3,800
Magneplanar MG-20 SE P	10,300
Magneplanar MG-20 SE A	11,000
Martin-Logan SL3	3,399
Martin-Logan CLS Ilz	4,555
Martin-Logan Re-Quest Z	5,875
Meridian DSP5000	3,295
Meridian DSP5000	5,950
Meridian DSP6000	9,400
Monitor Audio Studio 50	3,300
Monitor Audio Studio 60	5,000
Naim NBL	6,648
Naim DBL Active	8,050
Neolith NEO 2	3,499
Neolith NEO 3	4,999
Ocellia Tilia	3,400
Ocellia Olea	4,100
Ocellia Kedros	5,500
ProAc Response 3.8	3,990
ProAc Future 1	5,875
ProAc Response 5	9,000
ProAc Future 2	10,575

ProAc Response 4	12,000
PMC MB1P	5,135
PMC BBS-P	8,841
PMC MB1-A	14,805
PMC BBS A	19,799
PMC MB1/XBD-A	22,266
PMC BBS/XBD-A	32,606
Rehdeko RK145	4,000
Revel Gem	5,295
Rockport Merak	13,995
Rockport Syzygy	15,000
Rockport Procyon	32,500
Ruark Solstice	4,000
Ruark Excalibur	7,000
Shahinian Hawk	5,495
Shahinian Diapason	9,495
Shinpy Enigma	3,995
Shinpy Euphonia	5,995
Shinpy Magnifica Suprema	14,500
Shun Moak Bella Voce	6,000
Snell XA-75ps	4,500
Sonus Faber Guarnieri Homage	5,795
Sonus Faber Amati Homage	11,450
Sony SS-M9ED	10,000
Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790
Sound-Lab Aura	6,490
Sound-Lab Pristine III+	7,990
Sound-Lab A-3	11,990
Sound-Lab Ultimate II	13,950
Sound-Lab A-1	13,990
Sound-Lab Ultimate III	18,950
Sound-Lab Ultimate I	23,950
S Coast Excalibur Ref.	5,599
Spendor FL10	3,475
T+A A4D	3,850
T+A A3D	4,550
T+A A2D	8,400
Tannoy Edinburgh TW	3,250
Tannoy Definition D900	3,999
Tannoy GRF Memory TW	4,000
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600
Tannoy Canterbury 15 TW	7,720
Tannoy Westminster Royal	14,920
TDL Ref Standard-m	6,000
Titan Goliath T/4	4,112
Totem Mani-2	3,100
Totem Shaman	9,999
Veritas 45	3,750
Veritas H2	4,495
Veritas H3	5,995
Wilson Audio Cub	5,495
Wilson Audio WATT 5	8,390
Wilson Audio WITT II	10,995
Wilson Audio Maxx	34,995
Wilson Benesch Actor	3,900
Wilson Benesch ACT1 spkr	6,900
Wilson Benesch Act 2	8,900
Wilson Benesch The Bishop	20,000

SUBWOOFERS

KEY

Ⓐ - Active; includes a dedicated power amplifier.

THX - THX-approved by LucasFilm for use in Home THX installations.

Acoustic Energy Aegis Sub	300
Allison Mini Ref Sub	210
Alon Poseidon	12,000
ATC SCM 0.1/1.5	3,810
Audio Physic Terra	3,499
Audiovector M Sub	699
Audiovector M Sub Sig.	849
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 S1i	349
Celestion A6s	800
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D	200
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D	250
Chario Syntar Bass	299
Chano Hiper Bass	499
Credo SDC 001	3,054
Eltax Atomic A-8	129



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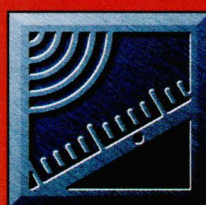
Eltax Atomic A-10	179
Eltax Atomic A-15	299
GLL Le Bass	350
Infinity HPS-250	550
Jamo SW1008	250
Jamo SW410e	300
Jamo SW708	THX 300
Jamo SW-2010	400
Jamo Sub One	400
JBL Control Sub 6	200
JBL Control Sub 10	300
JM Lab Tantal SW20	349
JM Lab Cobalt SW27A	599
JM Lab Electra SW33A	899
JM Lab Sub Utopia	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
Magnat Omega 300	429
Meridian M2500	1,595
M&K VX-7MkII	450
M&K V-75 MkII	650
M&K VX-100	750
M&K V-125	800
M&K V-125 (THX)	THX 800
M&K MX-70	THX 900
M&K MX-700	1,495
M&K MX-150 (THX)	THX 1,500
M&K MX-200	1,800
M&K MX-350THX	THX 1,995
M&K MX-5000 (THX)	THX 2,900
Mission 75as	548
Monitor Audio ASW100	300
Monitor Audio ASW110	700
Monitor Audio ASW210	500
Mus Tec PMS 45	500
Mus Tec Tercel	700
Muse Model 22	1,890
Muse Model 18	3,790
Neat Gravitas	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 Q200E	600
REL Q201E	700
REL Storm III	800
REL Q400E	1,000
REL Stadium III	1,500
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
Soliloquy S10	THX 1,050
Sony SA-W305	130
Spendor Sub3	695
Sunfire Sub Junior	1,099
Sunfire True Sub	1,499
Sunfire Trus Sub Sig.	1,699
Tannoy mSUB 10	250
TDI Nucleus SBR	200
Titan Mercury	350
Titan Mars	450
Titan Jupiter	799
Tsunami TS300	300
Tsunami TS210	350
W'dale Topaz SW-12	400
Wilson Audio Puppy 5.1	8,450
Wilson Audio Whow III	10,999
Wilson Audio XS	17,000
Yamaha YST-SW45	140
Yamaha YST-SW90	180
Yamaha YST-SW160	280
Yamaha YST-SW300	350



TOEARMS

KEY
⊙ - Pivoted.
- Parallel tracking.

Air Tangent IC	#	4,600
Air Tangent 10B	#	8,600
Air Tangent Reference	#	14,000
Audio Note AN-ARM 1	⊙	169
Audio Note AN-0s	⊙	795
Audio Note AN-1s	⊙	995
Audiomeca SL5	#	2,500
Clearaudio Souther TQ-1	#	1,670
Clearaudio Master TQ-1	#	3,620
Dynavector 507	⊙	1,995
Graham Mk 2.0 Basic	⊙	1,810
Graham Mk 2.0 Deluxe	⊙	2,650
Helius Orion 4 Copper	⊙	549
Helius Cyalene 2	⊙	1,495
Kuzma Stogi S	⊙	399
Kuzma Stogi	⊙	750
Kuzma Stogi Ref	⊙	1,250
Linn Akito	⊙	500
Linn Ekos	⊙	1,500
Moth Mk I	⊙	109
Moth MkIII Stainless	⊙	146
Moth Mk III Tungsten	⊙	174
Moth Moth 900	⊙	598
Naim ARO	⊙	1,070
N'ham Interspace Arm	⊙	370
N'ham Space	⊙	450
N'ham Mentor	⊙	800
N'ham Foot	⊙	1,100
N'ham Anna Log Arm	⊙	1,500
Pro-Ject 9	⊙	350
Rega RB250	⊙	124
Rega RB300	⊙	188
Rega RB600	⊙	358
Rega RB900	⊙	648
Rockport Series 7000	#	6,000
Roksan Tabrz	⊙	345
Roksan Tabriz Zi	⊙	445
Roksan Artemiz	⊙	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	⊙	309
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	⊙	338
SME Series II 3009-R	⊙	514
SME Series II 3010-R	⊙	526
SME Series II 3012-R	⊙	565
SME 309	⊙	689
SME 310	⊙	705
SME 312	⊙	802
SME Series IV	⊙	983
SME Series V	⊙	1,461
Triplanar V1A	⊙	3,500
Triplanar V1B	⊙	3,750
Wilson Benesch Act 0.5	⊙	795
Wilson Benesch ACT2	⊙	1,350
Zeta AS	⊙	469
Zeta VDH	⊙	549



TUNERS

KEY
'P20' (etc.) - Number of presets.
RDS - Radio Data System; receives text information on station, programme type etc.

Arcam Alpha 7	P24	230
Arcam Alpha 8	P24	280
Arcam FMJ T21	P07	400
Arcam Alpha 10 DRT	P07	800
Arcam FMJ DT26	P07	1,000
Ariston TX-510	P20	50
AVI S2000MT2	P99	RDS 899
Cambridge T500	P64	180
Creek T43	P64	399
Cymbol C-DAB1	P08	999
Cyrus FM7.5	P29	400

Davidson-Roth FM Ref Classic		5,590
Denon TU-260L MkII	P40	RDS 130
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	RDS 130
Kenwood KT-3080	P30	RDS 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		
Marantz ST-17	P60	RDS 120
McIntosh MR7084	P60	RDS 600
McIntosh MX118	P50	2,499
McIntosh MX130	P50	4,999
Meridian 504	P50	6,999
Musical Fidelity E50	P30	695
Myryad T-30	P29	300
Myryad Cameo	P29	400
Myryad MT100	P29	RDS 490
NAD 412	P24	600
NAD C440	P30	RDS 190
NAD 414RDS	P24	200
NAD 710	P30	RDS 250
NAD 712	P24	270
Naim NAT03	P24	315
Naim NAT02		630
Naim NAT01		1,130
Onkyo T 4210RDS	P30	RDS 1,780
Onkyo T 409	P30	180
Onkyo T 411RDS	P30	230
Pioneer F-204RDS	P30	RDS 140
Pioneer F-504RDS	P40	RDS 250
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	P40	RDS 300
Quad 99	P25	700
Rega Radio R	P24	700
Roksan Kandy	P50	RDS 375
Roksan Caspian	P50	695
Rotel RT940AX	P20	225
Rotel RT-955	P30	RDS 350
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 T32R	P99	1,400
TAG McLaren T32R DAB	P99	2,295
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
Technics ST-GT1000	P97	RDS 500
Thorens TRT-2000	P59	RDS 499
Yamaha TX-396L	P40	100
Yamaha TX-492RDS	P40	RDS 130
Yamaha TX-59 2RDS	P40	RDS 180
Yamaha RX-396RDS	P40	RDS 250
YBA Complete	P14	490



TURNTABLES

KEY
⊙ - Arm included.
- Cartridge included.

Audio Note AN-TT 1		349
Dual CS435-1	⊙	140
Dual CS 455-1	⊙	220
Dual 505-4 UK	⊙	220
Dual CS-750-1	⊙	330
Genexa Lab-710	⊙	60
Genexa Lab-810	⊙	70
Kenwood KD-492F	⊙	100
Michell Mycro	⊙	455
Moth Alamo	⊙	199
Moth Kanoot MkI Arm	⊙	279
Moth Kanoot Mk3 Arm	⊙	329
NAD 533	⊙	220
N'ham Interspace	⊙	500
Pioneer PL-J2500-C	⊙	80
Pioneer PL-990	⊙	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	⊙	170

Pro-Ject 1/510	⊙	200
Pro-Ject 2/510	⊙	250
Pro-Ject Classic/510	⊙	360
Pro-Ject 6/510	⊙	400
Pro-Ject Classic Cherry	⊙	450
Pro-Ject 6.9	⊙	500
Rega Planar 78	⊙	224
Rega Planar 2	⊙	224
Rega P3	⊙	298
Sherwood PM8550	⊙	160
Sony PS-LX150H	⊙	90
Sony PS-LX300H	⊙	150
Technics SL-J110D	⊙	120
Technics SL-BD20	⊙	160
Technics SL-BD22	⊙	180
Technics SL-1210MkII	⊙	400
Technics SL-1200MkII	⊙	400
Thorens TD-180 AT91	⊙	210
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	⊙	230
Thorens TD166 VI 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		5,495
Basis 2800	⊙	7,495
Basis Debut Gold Std III		8,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum		10,300
Chantry QT Level 2		705
Clearaudio Solution	⊙	925
Clearaudio Evolution		1,095
Clearaudio Revolution		2,500
Clearaudio Reference		3,835
Clearaudio Master Ref.		8,510
DNM-Reson Rota 1	⊙	3,100
DNM-Reson Rota 2	⊙	4,100
Garrard 501		5,278
Impulse Moskitto		695
Kuzma Stabi S		695
Kuzma Stabi		1,990
Kuzma Stabi Reference		3,750
Linn LP12 Bask		1,100
Linn LP12 Lingo		1,750
Michell Gyro Spider Ed'n		775
Michell Gyrodeck		875
Michell Orbe SE		1,725
Michell Orbe		1,995
N'ham Spacedeck		750
N'ham HyperSpacedeck		1,700
N'ham Mentor		2,600
N'ham Anna Log		3,500
Oracle Delphi		5,370
Oracle Delphi 15th Anniv		3,800
Pink Triangle Tarantella II		850
Pro-Ject Persephone	⊙	750
Rega P25	⊙	619
Rega Planar 9	⊙	1,698
Reson RS1M	⊙	695
Reson Rota 1	⊙	3,100
Rockport Capella II		9,000
Rockport Sirius III		75,000
Roksan Xerxes 10		1,295
Roksan TMS		2,745
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	⊙	5,750
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		1,995
Verdier Platine Verdier		3,995
VPI HW19 Junior	⊙	650
Well Tempered Record Player	⊙	1,995
Well Tempered Classic V	⊙	3,500
Well Tempered Reference	⊙	5,500
Wilson Benesch Circle	⊙	795
Wilson Benesch Full Circle	⊙	1,995

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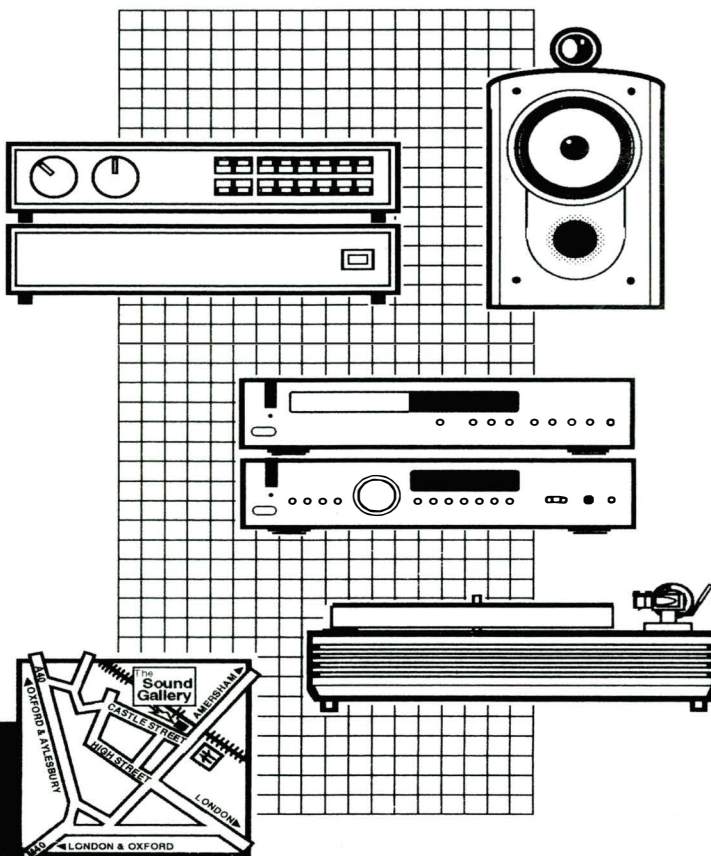
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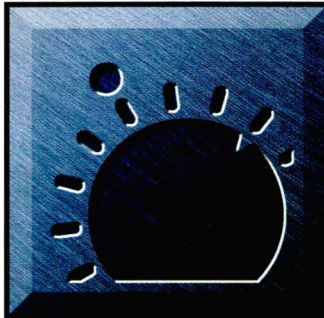
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Amplifiers

The amplifier is at the heart of any hi-fi system, accepting the outputs from various music sources, increasing the amplitude of their signal and then driving the loudspeakers to produce sound. One-box 'integrated' amps rule the roost at low-to-middle price points, but if you pay more, the low-level and high-level signal processes are separated into preamp and power amp boxes, and even separate 'outboard' power supplies come into play. Another luxury is a separate amp for each stereo channel: such devices are known as monoblocks. Finally, output power and sound quality are not necessarily related. Some of the finest amplifiers outputs only 12 Watts, but will yield loudness aplenty when partnered with high-efficiency loudspeakers.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

LINE INPUTS: Number of input sockets for line-level (non-vinyl) sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.
MM PHONO INPUT: An input specially designed for moving magnet (high output) phono pickup cartridges.
MC PHONO INPUT: An input for moving coil (low output) phono pickup cartridges.
REMOTE CONTROL: An infra-red handset to adjust volume etc.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: An integral output for headphones.
POWER OUTPUT (Watts): Our measurement of an amp's RMS power output into 8 Ohms.
RECEIVER: An amplifier with built-in radio receiver (tuner).
FACTSBACK REFERENCE: The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *HI-FI CHOICE* in which an original review appeared.

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Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

LINE INPUTS
 MC PHONO INPUTS
 MM PHONO INPUTS
 REMOTE CONTROL
 HEADPHONE SOCKET
 POWER OUTPUT (W)
 RECEIVER
 FACTSBACK NO.
 ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Affordable Valve Co. EL34	650	A real bargain on the face of it, but the sound is oh so soft, warm and old-valve. Too much of a good thing	4					40			202
Alchemist Kraken APD6A	599	Compact, with Darth Vader styling, yet sound quality is meek and mild, despite strong midband dynamics	5	●				55		2150	175
AMC 3025a	140	Surprisingly potent and easy on the ear, if not especially analytical – classic bargain-basement material, in fact	4	●	●	●	●	30		2045	171
AMC 3050a	170	Tremendous value for money, and a full, big, if rather uninformative sound	4	●	●	●	●	45		1970	167
Arcam Alpha One	230	Rather like an Alpha 7 but without the remote control and what appears to be better sound quality still	6					35		2470	186
Arcam Alpha 7R	300	Decent, if slightly system fussy amplifier that no longer pulls all the right strings	5	●		●	●	45			196
Arcam Alpha 8R	380	The Alpha 8R sets a high level of resolution and stability, and has some useful features for home cinema users	5	●		●	●	50		2634	192
Arcam Alpha 9	500	Not quite a match for the Alpha 9/9P combo, the solo integrated is nevertheless colourful and explicitly detailed	7				●	70		2007	168
Arcam Alpha 10	800	Although not the best sounding in its class, the Alpha 10's modular nature demands it be taken seriously	5				●	100		2318	181
Arcam FMJ A22	1,000	Powerful, articulate, and expandable into a home cinema or multiroom amp/controller	7				●	100			201
ATC SIA2-150	1,984	An impressive sounding integrated amp with a dynamic, open and detailed sound	4				●	150			192
Aria S2	1,000	Glamorously packaged valve amp produces a real eyes closed, feet up kind of sound	4					12			190
Audio Analogue Puccini	450	Superbly finished, the entry-level Audio Analogue performs way out of its class	5	●		●		40		2147	175
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	595	Upgraded, more powerful Puccini is disappointingly sluggish and curiously lacking in musical vitality	5	●		●		40		2314	181
AVI S2000MI	999	Fine, detailed amplifier with excellent timing and strong control of a wide range of loudspeaker loads	5				●	100		2155	175
Bryston B60R	1,249	Great build, but the lazy bass and opaque treble bracket an articulate midband. Comes with 20 year guarantee	5				●	60		2156	175
Cambridge Audio A500RC	200	Solid value, decent build and a surfeit of watts make this an attractive proposition, but it can sound slightly loose	6				●	50		2466	196
Canary Audio CA-608	1,495	If you value the grand scheme of things and appreciate a bit of dynamic vigour this could be the amp for you	4					24			202
Copland CSA8	945	Sophisticated yet transparent, this is one of those amplifiers that sounds good even when the gloss has worn off	5					60		2010	168
Copland CSA 28	1,249	Elegant Scandinavian cool, abundantly detailed if somewhat system dependent	5	●			●	60		2542	189
Copland CTA 402	1,698	A unusually flexible valve amp with an attractive and textured sound	5	●				35			193
CR Developments CR324	569	Solid and capable on paper, this is a bit of a blunt instrument when let loose on the music	5					150		2315	181
Symbol CA1	499	Lacklustre amplifier tends to underperform with complex material. Best with straightforward compact loudspeakers	6					40		2236	178
Creek 4330	279	Diminutive but classy amp will drive anything, and can be specified in various configurations	4	●				40		2630	192
Cyrus IIII	598	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance was not liked. Upgradeable using PSX PSU unit	5	●			●	50		1854	162
Cyrus 7	700	Welcome return to form for the Cyrus stable: this is the best sounding audio brick around	6				●	60			196
Denon PMA-250SE	140	This amp can sound rough when extended, but within its limits it is open, detailed and likeable	5				●	30		2046	171
Denon PMA-350SE	180	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, this SE model is a control freak, but can sound wonderful	4				●	50		1856	162
Denon PMA-535R	230	The kind of amp they made in the 70s, dressed to the nines, and nowhere to go	5	●			●	50		2627	192
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation, but musically unexciting	5	●			●	97		1802	157
Denon PMA-1500R	500	Recommended for its outrageous power, especially with problem speakers	5	●	●		●	70		2316	181
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	650	High 'air guitar' factor, and can punch above its weight, but check it will complement your system	5					60		2151	175
Densen DM-10	1,375	Big, bold and expressive amplifier, but sometimes rough around the edges, and not as powerful as it appears	6					75		2546	189
Edmund Audio ESI10	400	Honest but unexciting straight line amp from REL associate company	6					85		2635	192
Electrocompaniet EC1-3	1,000	Basically good, but too many rough edges to warrant recommendation	6				●	75			201
Graaf Venticinque	1,790	Smart and practical, but it just never seems to shine sonically	6					25			202
Harman/Kardon HK630	200	Sharp, clean but sometimes slightly raw-sounding budget amp	4	●			●	40		2628	192
Harman/Kardon HK690	530	Bold, dynamic amplifier with plenty of balls, but not the most sophisticated sound on earth	6	●			●	100			196
Hofli Audis Signature	750	A 'no-feedback' circuit giving outstanding resolution, but significant load dependency	4	●				65		2319	181
JoLida 202	695	Well-built and technically accomplished, affordable valve integrated with subtle refined, if not quite gripping sound	4					40		2011	168
JVC AX-R5	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●			●	45		1466	149
Kenwood KAF-3010R	180	Plenty of twiddly bits yet weak on inputs, and basically good, but somewhat uneven sound quality	4	●			●	70		2463	186
Kenwood KA-5090R	300	Large, well equipped and high tech integrated, but TRAITR output still gives a harsh, unsuitable performance	5	●		●	●	65		2053	171
Krell KAV-500i	5,000	More at home in background listening/home cinema applications than out-and-out audio maniac set-ups	5				●	250			192
Lundahl Mag Amp	1,735	Unusual valve/magnetic amp hybrid with relaxed balance and good timbre	5					23			196
Magnum IA120	265	Mirror finish amplifier with bold, colourful delivery, but needs careful system matching to avoid loss of clarity	6				●	65		2054	171
Magnum IA170	330	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic; preserves colour and dynamics	6				●	96		1260	142
Magnum IA200	599	Sweet, valve-flavoured solid state amplifier which flatters where it doesn't cast light	7					160		1860	162
Magnum Class A SE	795	A MOSFET amplifier drawing inspiration from the world of valves, this is an erratically refined, detailed amplifier	5	●			●	80		2159	175
Marantz PM-6010SE	229	Good starter amplifier, with characteristic smooth, low key delivery	5	●			●	50			196
Marantz PM66 KI-Signature	400	It knows how to rock and roll with holographic detail and stereo, but prefers small/medium scale acoustic material	5	●			●	50		2003	168
Marantz PM-17	900	Probably worth it for the WBT terminals and other build features alone, but this model doesn't sing as it should	6	●		●	●	60		2323	181
Marantz PM-17 KI-Signature	1,300	Full feature audiophile amp where the end results don't quite justify the fantastic ingredients	6	●		●	●	60		2544	189
Monrio Asty	400	Engaging, but ill-disciplined, even OTT amplifier with unpredictable system compatibility	5					55		2237	178

CONTINUED

Amplifiers

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R Musical Fidelity E1	199	Richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special	6				30		2050	171
Musical Fidelity E11	299	Well built minimalist amp with a five year guarantee, but can sound congested when extended	6				60		2232	178
B Musical Fidelity X-A1	479	Idiosyncratic visuals just another plus for an amp that is powerful, well built, and serves the music superbly	6				50		2317	181
Musical Fidelity A3	849	Similar to the XA-100R internally, and a little too relaxed for some	5	●	●	●	85			196
R Musical Fidelity X-A100R	999	Sings like a thoroughbred, but better with Mozart than Mötörhead	6			●	75		2545	189
MVL A2	970	Curiously designed, and curious sounding amplifier with Sound Sentinel circuits to address perceived weaknesses	9	●		●	100			201
Myryad T-40	400	The T-40 is a well built and sensible, but needs more dynamics and finesse	6	●		●	50		2636	192
R Myryad MI120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, although it can sound rather brittle	6			●	60		2152	175
B NAD 310	100	Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness	5				20		1468	149
B NAD C320	200	Excellent budget amp from the maker of the seminal 3020 offers better clarity and neutrality and good build	6			●	40		2467	186
R NAD C340	270	A classic NAD amplifier copes with any speaker, delivers plenty of power, and does so with calm decorum	6	●		●	50		2632	192
R NAD 317	470	Build quality aside, the current improved version is a real powerhouse, but smooth and detailed too	6			●	80			196
NAD S300	1,900	Substantial integrated with loads of power and no shortage of finesse, slightly bass-strong	5			●	100			189
R Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5				30		1748	154
R Naim Nait 3R	780	Remote control variant of the basic Nait has a similarly dynamic credible sound but ultimately lacks power	5				30		2536	189
Opera Aida	795	Low power (in practice) minimalist integrated amp, but the mahogany wings don't help it to fly	5	●	●		60			201
Pathos Classic One	995	Unusual looks and even more unusual electronic design, but compromised musical potential	5			●	55			202
R Pioneer A-300R	200	Its bright and breezy sound is a natural tonic to those of us worn down by the ongoing stress of life	5	●		●	50		1469	149
R Pioneer A-407R	230	Clean, consistent, finely detailed sound, good finish and (mainly) good build	5	●		●	45		2471	186
R Pioneer A-607R	300	Lively, articulate amp with plenty of drive and a hint of brightness	5	●		●	60		2633	192
B Pioneer A-300R Precision	400	Sophisticated variant of the A-300R. Not an obvious winner, but it slowly plys you with its subtle charms	5	●		●	35		1863	162
Pioneer A07	999	Curious blend of high-end attributes and inconsistent, though undeniably detailed sound	5	●			80		2160	175
R Præcisa Acustica Sonoro	1,800	It is not often that transistor amplifiers are made to sound so palpably valve-like	5			●	100		2547	189
B Primare A10	500	Sharp, clean and agile sound quality, class leading build and an excellent control system – what more can you ask?	6			●	50			201
R Primare A20 MkII	799	Everything except packaging has changed in Mk II version: but ballsier model has lost none of its refinement	5	●		●	70		2321	181
B Primare A30.1	1,499	Superb build and aesthetics, and undemonstrably musical down to its smallest screw	6			●	100		2548	189
Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier, derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, although at least it is well behaved	4	●			50		1865	162
Restek Fantasy II	1499	Muscular, but ultimately rather strident amplifier which needs careful system matching	6			●	100		2549	189
R Roksan Caspian	795	Mainstream Roksan line level amp works well under most circumstances	6			●	70			201
Rose Scion	615	Unique two-box integrated gives real subtlety and low level resolution, but the sound lacks scale and weight	5	●	●		65		2009	168
Rotel RA-931	150	Rather dry and unforgiving sound from this internally well specified and attractively priced amplifier	4	●		●	35		2048	171
B Rotel RA-971 MkII	225	Improved AR971 is a chip off the old block: bags of power, but with added precision and clarity	6			●	60			196
Sharp SM-SX100	10,000	The world's first stable, 1-bit digital amplifier is a technological milestone that should go from strength to strength	n/a				110			200
R Sony TA-FB730R	200	Brilliantly sharp and realistic sound is offset by some obvious sonic flaws – and maxi feature set doesn't help	5	●		●	40			196
R Sony TA-F448BE	250	Minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit with satisfactory effect – but keep the volume in check	5	●		●	55		2055	171
B Sony TA-F3000ES	500	Champagne 'shoobox amp' may lack power reserves, but is quick and articulate. In every sense a knockout	5	●	●	●	35		2239	178
T+A PA-1220R	1,445	Unique presentation and feature set, but sometimes rather relentless sound quality	7			●	100		2550	189
Tact Millennium Mk II	7,000	This digital class D amplifier represents a bold declaration on the future expansion of digital audio in the home	n/a			●	150			194
TAG McLaren 60i	800	Clean, slightly antiseptic sound from this beautifully turned out entry level Audiolab 8000LX replacement	6			●	60		2540	189
TAG McLaren 60iRv	999	Looks, feels and sounds better than the Audiolab it supersedes. Smooth, open, refined but lacks body and drive	6			●	60			184
R Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model	6			●	50		1868	162
Talk Electronics Cyclone 1	550	Much improved build quality and silver finish, but the sound lacks physicality and can sound strained	6			●	65			196
R Talk Electronics Storm 2	650	Crisp, clean, well defined sound, arguably lacking warmth, but a good midrange purchase overall	6			●	50		2154	175
Teac A-E2000	180	Has the potential to cause significant damage in the budget amp sector once the wrinkles are ironed out	6				50			195
Technics SU-A660 Mk 3	200	Plenty of wellie for the price, but the sound can be a tad coarse and lacking in fine detail	5	●		●	37			186
Technics SU-A808	300	Intriguing amplifier, with abundant detail but dynamically rather flat	6	●		●	55			196
R Technics SU-A800D Mk 2	300	Two-box amplifier looks great, has plenty of gadgets, and makes good, if slightly overexuberant, music	5	●		●	55		2234	178
Technics SU-A900D Mk 2	400	Looks like a pre/power amplifier, but in effect it's an integrated, with a rather soft-centred sound to match	5	●		●	70		2149	175
R Token Audio K50	350	Stainless steel finish, others available. Sound is warm and attractive, though a little undynamic	5				50		2472	186
Tube Technology Unisis Sig	2,400	A very attractive product which combines many classic valve attributes to good effect	5	●			30			202
Yamaha AX-392	170	Standard budget fare, and it's easy to pick holes, but in undemanding surroundings it works creditably	6	●		●	60		2629	192
R Yamaha AX-492	220	Powerful, well equipped amplifier at an attractive price, offers powerful and engaging music-making	5	●		●	85		2231	178
Yamaha AX-592	280	Fine, middle ranking amplifier, with a detailed midband but performance declines at frequency extremes	5	●	●	●	100		2056	171
PREAMPLIFIERS										
Amp Flux System 2	3,000	Three-box affair with a clean, spacious sound and plenty of slam. A touch steely, but undeniably potent	5			●	50			187
Alchemist Kraken APD7A MkII	549	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	6							187
R Arcam Alpha 9C	400	Well specified and flexible preamp with sound only just lacking in greatness	6			●				187
Audio Note M Zero	299	Neat shoe box-size preamp. Able to impart music with real life and soul when partnered with P Zero power amps	5							191
R Copland CTA-301MkII	1,249	Sweet sounding, but never gets bogged down in audio treading	4	●					1630	151



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Amplifiers

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MM PHONO INPUTS MC PHONO INPUTS HEADPHONE CONTROL REMOTE CONTROL POWER OUTPUT (W) FACTSBACK NO. RECEIVER ISSUE NUMBER

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B Creek P43R	350	Excellent sound, remote control operation and upgrade options from this fine value preamp	6				●			187	
R Crimson CS610	450	Good, clear sound, including a decent phono stage, but flexibility is limited	3	●	●					187	
Cyrus aCA7	798	A decent enough unit at the price but not as good as the Cyrus aPA7 power amp it was tested with	5				●	●		190	
Densen Beat B-200	1,000	A versatile preamp with a high 'air-guitar' factor and Densen's characteristic styling	6	●	●					191	
F Levinson 380	3,995	True high end preamplifier combines precision and warmth with unusual configurability	6				●			195	
LFD Mistral Linestage	449	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6							1930 165	
Meridian 501	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. (Tested with 555 power amp)	5	●			●			1303 145	
Meridian 502	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation	7				●			162	
Michell Orca	1,650	Line-level design with a gorgeous remote and focused, spacious sound. (Tested with Alecto power amps)	6				●			187	
Moth 30 Active Line Stage	349	Excellent-sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp	4							1931 165	
Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp	5				●			166	
R Musical Fidelity X-PRE	200	Cleverly configured preamp with many upgrade options, and open, lively and engaging sound	4							2152 175	
R Musical Fidelity X-P100	800	Good long-term listening prospects; detailed and a little fruitiness (tested with X-A200 power amp)	6	●	●					200	
R NAD 114	270	Beer-budget preamp which sounds focused, detailed and consistent	6	●	●		●			1932 165	
R NAD Silverline S100	600	Beautifully built kit that sounds as good as it looks (tested with S200 power amp)	7				●			200	
R Naim NAC92R	630	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry. (Tested with NAP90 power amp)	5				●			1936 165	
R Naim NAC102	1,000	More of a 'character act' than a neutral reproduction system, majors on excitement at the expense of subtlety	6				●			200	
R Rega Hal	998	Passive line stages dedicated to Exon power amps	6	●	●					1942 165	
Rotel RC-971	150	Low price is offset by rather coarse sound quality with certain types of music. (Tested with RB-971 power amp)	5					●		178	
Rotel RC-995	525	Highly capable, though less astonishing value than matching RB-991 power amp (tested as pair)	6	●	●					200	
Samuel Johnson pca100	1,800	Stylish wood and metal fascia - precise, clean sound with an emphasis on leading edges	6				●	●		201	
TAG McLaren PA20R	1,500	Refinement of Audiolab original with clean, detailed sound but limited thrill power. (T/w 125M monoblocks)	6				●	●		184	
Talk Hurricane 2L	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6							1937 165	
Technics SU-C3000	2,997	Price includes SE-A3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	5	●						188	
Technics SU-C1010	300	Although the sound's basically all there, it's arguable that a good integrated offers more, for less	6	●	●					200	
POWER AMPLIFIERS											
B Alch. Kraken APD8A Mk II	549	Unusual looks and unusual sound too, rather rough and lacking detail	1						55	187	
B Arcam Alpha 9P	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1						60	1929 165	
R Arcam Alpha 10P	600	Well made and flexible: upgradeable to 3 channels. Good sound lacking the last degree of detail	1						100	187	
Audio Note P Zero	599	Neat shoe box size valve monoblocks, priced per pair. Impart music with life and soul. (Tested with P Zero preamp)	1						8	191	
F Border Patrol 300B SE	3,995	Single ended valve power amp with passion, grace and fire, and plenty of grunt to boot	1						8.5	186	
Cary CAD 2A3SE	1,575	Monoblock valve power amp. Low power but gives delightful speed, coherence and transparency	1						6	196	
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1						5	1630 151	
Chord SPM-4000	8,500	Sound is as stylish as its appearance is bold. Probably one of the best amps you are likely to hear	1						410	202	
B Creek AS2SE	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	
R 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	
B ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1						50	1302 145	
F Gamut D200	2,995	Single MOSFET pair per side gives tremendous resolution and timing (balanced only). Formerly Sirius	1						200	183	
F Levinson 334	5,495	A mailed fist in a velvet glove; refined, authoritative and transparent	1						125	195	
F LFD Mistral Power	449	Infectious upper band vitality, but LF dynamics lacking - likewise 'grip' and transparency	1						60	1930 165	
F Mana Stealth MA-1	4,800	A monoblock with an uncanny ability to drag you into the music, and spend half the night sitting up listening	2						200	199	
Meridian 555	750	By providing an open window on the music, this amp is wide open to RF and low level IM distortions	1						60	1303 145	
Michell Alecto Monoblocks	1,950	Hefty beasts offering real power and striking imaging. Not the last word in timing. (Tested with Orca preamp)	1						100	187	
Moth 60 Watt Stereo	599	Miniature power amp lacks control and finesse - not comfortable with difficult speaker loads	1						60	1931 165	
B Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. Demonstrated solid balance and proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1						100	155	
R Musical Fidelity X-A50	500	Cleverly configured and attractively packaged, open, lively and engaging sound. Reviewed with X-PRE	1						50	175	
R Musical Fidelity X-A200	1,000	Good long-term listening prospects; detailed and a little fruity (tested with X-P100 preamp)	1						200	200	
R Musical Fidelity NuVista 300	3,300	Powerful smooth sound with tremendous bass extension. Capacity to fulfill the demands of the most dynamic material	1						350	199	
Myriad MA120	450	Based on M1120 integrated - see latter for comments, but sounds significantly better when bi-amped with M1120	1						60	1935 165	
R NAD 214	370	A little lightweight, but detailed, consistent sound quality, and excellent value for money	1						80	1952 165	
R NAD Silverline S200	1,400	Beautifully built kit that sounds as good as it looks with heaps of power (tested with S100 preamp)	1						200	200	
R Naim NAP90	450	Power amp from a Nait integrated with some improvements	1						30	1936 165	
R Naim NAP180	1,122	More of a 'character act' than a truly neutral reproduction system, majors on excitement at the expense of subtlety	1						60	200	
Samuel Johnson ppa100	2,200	Stylish wood and metal fascia - nimble, high resolution and highly coherent sound	1						50	201	
Technics SE-A1010	350	Although the sound's basically all there, it's arguable that a good integrated offers more, for less	1						●	90	200
Technics SE-A3000	2,997	Price includes SU-C3000. Supremely clean and even sounding combo, though it could be more musically involving	1						●	100	188
Thule Spirit PA100	600	More successful than matching preamp: sound is gutsy and lively, and generally clean	1						100	187	
R Rega Exon	1,196	Monoblock, priced each, dedicated to Hal preamp. Bold, outgoing, in-command kind of sound	1						125	1942 165	
B Roksan Caspian Power	595	Excels musically and in conventional hi-fi terms. A power amp for people with long-term satisfaction in mind	1						70	183	
B Rotel RB-971	200	Somewhat better than the accompanying preamp - clean, mean and bridgeable. (Tested with RC-971)	1						70	178	
B Rotel RB-991	600	Top stuff and stunning value: rather outshone the matching RC-995 preamp (tested as pair)	1						200	200	
B Rotel RB-980BX	450	Tapes enthusiastically recorded material with a laid-back and occasionally smeared sound	1						120	155	
TAG McLaren 125M	2,400	Refined Audiolab replacement monoblocks with clean sound but limited thrill power. (T/w PA20R preamp)	1						145	184	
Talk Tornado 2	600	Good, but slightly retiring sound which lacks the authority to stand out in a crowd	1						65	1937 165	
PHONO STAGES											
Clearaudio Symphono	740	Slightly inconsistent balance mars the performance of this lively performer	0				●			201	
R Creek OBH-9	160	A neat little unit with an essentially neutral and listenable character	0				●			189	
Cyrus aEQ7/PSX-R	826	Very hi-tech product which tends too much towards smoothness except at climaxes, which can be rough	0				●			189	
Densen DP-Drive/DP-02	350	Quite unusual design in many ways: sound is mostly good but never quite shakes off a 'synthetic' quality	0				●			189	
R Electrocompaniet ECP-1	495	An excellent phono amp that combines well-rounded balance with detail and low noise	0	●	●					189	
B Moth 30 Series Phono	249	Fine sound all round, in any kind of music, from this bargain phono stage	0	●	●					189	
R Musical Fidelity X-LP2/X-PSU	628	An enjoyable listening experience in its way, but a bit short on inner details	0	●	●					201	
R NAD PP-1	40	A basic phono stage that does its job rather coarsely: a bit bass-shy too	0	●	●					189	
R Pass Labs XOno	2,995	Not absolutely neutral, but the overall result is so beguiling it's hard to resist	0	●	●					201	
R Primare R-20	500	Fights a little shy of densely scored music, but generally an enjoyable and neutral performer	0	●	●					201	
R Pro-Ject Phono Box	40	Moving-coil compatibility is a dubious extra in a way, but MM performance is acceptable at this giveaway price	0	●	●					201	
R QED Discsaver DS-1	35	It's cheap, it's cheerful, it's OK - perfectly adequate for use with a phono-less integrated, though not very refined	0	●	●					189	
R Roksan Artaxenes X/DS1.5	1,150	Delicate and well balanced, slightly congested at climaxes. Power supply expensive, but runs two Roksan components	0	●	●					189	

CONTINUED

Amplifiers

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS MC PHONO INPUTS HEADPHONE CONTROL REMOTE CONTROL POWER OUTPUT (W) HEADPHONE SOCKET FACTSBACK NO. RECEIVER ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	HEADPHONE CONTROL	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	HEADPHONE SOCKET	FACTSBACK NO.	RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER	
TAG McLaren PPA20	1,549	One of the best-equipped phono stages available. Resolution is excellent but timing is marginally behind the best	0	●	●						187	
Tom Evans The Groove	1,500	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for information retrieval off any LP	0		●						201	
MULTI-CHANNEL AMPLIFIERS												
Arcam Alpha 10 DAVE/10P	2,500	Packed with a diversity of electronics that against engineering odds sounds extremely good	5					●	●	110		198
Cyrus AV5	1,000	Few processors are as adept with music. An effective multi-channel solution for music fans	4					●		N/A		201
Denon AVR-3300	800	Not as powerful as Denon claims, but nonetheless capable of impressive high-fidelity multi-channel sound	4					●	●	75	●	198
Marantz SR5000	500	Something of a rough diamond, but a powerful and entertaining package	5					●	●	105	●	198
NAD T770	1,000	Lacks both transparency and subtlety while the omission of dts will be a drawback for some at this price	5					●		90	●	198
Nakamichi AV-10	1,000	A very powerful AV receiver that's easy to install and set-up with a civilised and subtle performance	4					●	●	140	●	198
Pioneer VSX-908RDS	1,000	A flexible heavyweight AV receiver whose sound is just a little too stodgy and lacking in crispness	4					●	●	80	●	198
Roksan Caspian DSP	2,290	A potent combination offering the bare essentials of DD and dts decoding	4					●		130		198
Rotel RSP-985/RPB-985 MKII	2,225	The hugely versatile processor is the weaker subjective link in this otherwise impressive combo	3					●	●	130		198
Sony TA-E9000ES/N9000ES	2,300	Big, gold, powerful and remarkably versatile but fails to cut the sonic mustard	5					●	●	110		198



Cables

Cables are an integral part of a hi-fi system, required to connect source components to amplifiers, and the latter to speakers.

- Analogue Interconnects connect source components and amplifiers, and run between pre and power amps. They are priced for one-metre terminated pairs.
- Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs or digital recorders.
- They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.
- Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SYMMETRICAL:** A twisted pair of conductors.
- **COAXIAL:** A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.
- **STRANDED:** Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.
- **SOLID CORE:** Single or multiple, individually insulated strands.
- **COPPER:** Material used for conductor.
- **SILVER:** Material used for conductor.
- **DIG CABLE TYPE:** O - optical digital, E - electrical digital for CD Players, DACS and digital recorders.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

Cables

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. RECEIVER ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED METRE PAIR)												
Acoustic Precision Eikos	89	Not entirely neutral: probably best suited to upbeat music. Very stiff construction				●	●	●				188
Audio Note AN-A	18	Not especially impressive: warm but well-rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is quite clear	●				●	●				108
Audio Note AN-C	35	Neutral but lacking in subtle texture and unable to distinguish fine detail							●	●		1687 131
Audio Note AN-S	99	Up-beat and enthusiastic sound with satisfyingly deep and grumbly bass	●						●	●		1687 131
Audio Note AN-V	179	15 individually insulated silver strands make up this very clean and dynamically unchallenged cable	●						●	●		1687 131
Audioquest Topaz X2	60	Well made but let down by a pervading sense of muddle and congestion in the sound						●	●			188
Audioquest Coral	99	Slightly forward imaging hardly detracts from its excellent tonal qualities and detail	●						●	●		200
CableTalk Advanced 2	35	Slight roughness in loud music barely detracts from a well-balanced performance with good imaging							●	●		2166 176
Cable Talk Studio 2	65	A first-class performer from tonal, dynamic and rhythmic standpoints	●						●	●		160
Cambridge Pacific	30	Lacks subtlety and bass impact but is otherwise quite serviceable for the price							●	●		2167 176
Cambridge Audio Studio Ref	40	Dynamic cable with strong soundstaging and only a slight lack of detail	●						●	●		160
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
Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare	●						●	●		160
DNM Reson	40	Seemed a little harsh in the test system, but can work well and should be tried	●						●	●		200
Goertz M1 Interconnect	145	Soft sound lacking in bite, with excessive and plummy bass (NB sample used in review was only 0.5m)	●						●	●		2168 176
Insert Audio IC100 MKII	47	Mostly good sound is let down by pervasive dryness							●	●		2169 176
Insert Audio Image 5.1	85	Very good detail and imaging: perhaps a touch bass-light				●	●	●				200
Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble				●	●	●				1692 131
Ixos Gamma 1002	39	Lumpy bass, grainy treble, and poor integration. Nice colour, though	●						●	●		2169 176
Ixos 103	45	Even-handed and generous sound, bass has a well-rounded, bouncy quality				●	●	●				1692 131
Ixos 102	60	A bit bright and undynamic, this cable is nevertheless a good all-rounder, whose faults are largely subtractive	●						●	●		160
Ixos 1000	90	Nothing badly wrong, just a little bit bland and outshone by others at the price	●						●	●		200
Ixos 101	100	A cable with personality: its veiled and shut in quality bring an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike	●						●	●		1693 131
Kimber PBJ	68	Assured sound, solid and natural bass and clear treble – excellent performance all round							●	●		188
Kimber Hero	110	Slight roughness detracts from some music; seems well suited to rock and jazz. Lively and detailed	●						●	●		2170 176
Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy	●						●	●		108
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed, but there's a sense of distance between music and listener: vocals are coarse rather than liquid	●						●	●		108
Nordost Black Knight	60	Flat black cable that is distinctive but slightly coloured – but not in a wholly negative manner	●						●	●		160
Nordost Solar Wind	85	Good tone and dynamics, with just occasionally a touch of bass-lightness in busy music	●						●	●		188
Nordost Blue Heaven	145	Very good bass and only slightly grainy treble add up to a well integrated, natural-sounding cable	●						●	●		176
Precious Metals SS35	50	Extended bass, but dry character suits electronic music better than acoustic				●	●	●				188
Prowire Silver	60	A good cable in every way, with just the occasional hint of coloration and coarseness							●	●		2171 176
QED Qnet 2	30	Very well balanced, refined and detailed, this is everything a good cable should be, and excellent value							●	●		2172 176
QED Qnet 4S	70	Some coloration and roughness in the midrange and treble, but bass is gratifyingly solid	●						●	●		188
QED Qnex Silver Spiral	90	A great cable for lovers of big sounds	●						●	●		200
Reference CS1	75	A moderate performer, with a little coloration and a tendency to lose bass at climaxes	●						●	●		188
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight							●	●		160
SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. We're unsure about the flesh-coloured finish, though...	●						●	●		160

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
F SonicLink Black	49	Nickel-plated copper with a slight dryness in the bass and a hint of treble roll-off don't compromise integration	●	●	●	●	●	●		2172	176
SonicLink Lilac	65	Some dryness can affect transient sounds, though tone is generally good, especially in the bass	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
SonicLink Violet	85	Better bass than treble – a little dry in the upper octaves	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
R Straight Wire Chorus	40	A very confident cable with good bass, though perhaps a shade of treble loss				●	●	●		2173	176
F Straight Wire Sonata	80	Tonal balance favours lower frequencies but despite this it's a very listenable cable				●	●	●			188
Straight Wire Encore II	100	Slightly variable bass performance is a weakness in this otherwise capable cable	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
F Supra EFF-ISL	80	Excellent sound in all areas – nothing to criticise	●	●	●	●	●	●			188
F Tara Labs Prism 22	64	Mild tendency to plumminess offsets some hardness in complex music with mixed results				●	●	●			188
Tara Labs Prism 55-i	195	Good with laid-back music, but seems lazy with more exciting material	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
F TCI Viper	55	Fine performance in all areas: just the smallest hint of sibilance. Very good value				●	●	●			200
F van den Hul PB5	50	A highly neutral cable with fine dynamic and rhythmic performance too – excellent				●	●	●			188
F van den Hul Source HB	65	Price for 0.8m. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness				●	●	●			160
F van den Hul D102 MkIII HB	80	A fine cable, but the competition has crept up and it no longer leads the pack	●	●	●	●	●	●			200
F van den Hul The Second	275	Wonderfully open and relaxing but also intimately detailed, slightly softens percussive dynamics	●	●	●	●	●	●		1702	131
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS (PRICES PER TERMINATED LINEAR METRE)											
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear-cut transparency				●	●	●		E	108
Chord Codac	36	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration	●	●	●	●	●	●		E	108
R Chord Prodac	50	Price for 0.6m length. Lively detailed treble, drives music along confidently with no hint of fizz				●	●	●		E	1706 131
F Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft-edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colorations; plenty of weight, smooth				●	●	●		E	1707 131
F 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
F 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
F SonicLink Green	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a bit over-creaky at times – very compelling, however				●	●	●		E	1709 131
F van den Hul The First	140	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
F 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
F 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
F 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
F Audioquest Slate	15	Capable across the board, with just the smallest degree of dryness, but very listenable	●	●	●	●	●	●			203
F Bandridge LC7409	4	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings				●	●	●		1800	157
F 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 Flat 2	5	Rather unexciting sound, with variable bass and dry voices	●	●	●	●	●	●			203
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
F Chord Company Odyssey	17	Relatively vice-free cable with good detail throughout the range and generally neutral bass	●	●	●	●	●	●			192
- Chord Company Rumour 2	10	Performance is listenable enough but fails to excel in any area	●	●	●	●	●	●			203
F DNM LSCB500	12	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire				●	●	●		1716	133
F Electrofluidics Monolith 2020	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere - one of the best cables available all round	●	●	●	●	●	●			203
Gale XL189	1	Slightly bright and not too subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system	●	●	●	●	●	●			168
F Gale XL315	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value				●	●	●		1800	157
F Gale XL160-2	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy-sounding bi-wire cable. Can be slightly manipulative				●	●	●		1800	157
F Goertz M2	32	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility	●	●	●	●	●	●			168
F Hitachi LC-0FC	7	Very crisp, very clear and very confident. In the right system would be very expensive to better	●	●	●	●	●	●			109
F Ixos Gamma 6003	2.99	A little midrange dryness, but bass is among the best at this price, strong and consistent	●	●	●	●	●	●			203
F Ixos Gamma 6006	5	Bass is better than treble, which can become spitty and sibilant – though only slightly	●	●	●	●	●	●			192
F Kimber 4PR	4.90	Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right				●	●	●			192
F Kimber 4VS	8.50	A good mix of virtues including particularly fine bass	●	●	●	●	●	●			183
F Kimber 4TC	18.80	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas	●	●	●	●	●	●			168
F Kimber 8TC	348	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair	●	●	●	●	●	●			203
Linn K20	4	Seems to work best with lively, unobtrusive 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-yr-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
F Ortofon SPK200	4.99	Good strong bass and fair detail, only slightly marred by a little dryness	●	●	●	●	●	●			183
F 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
Profigold Silverflex LC8258	4	A pretty-looking cable that does little to offend but is let down by some congestion	●	●	●	●	●	●			203
Prowire Out of Sight	1.99	Special-purpose cable for laying under carpets etc. Fair sound across the board	●	●	●	●	●	●			203
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
F QED Qudos Silver	5	A few minor flaws but overall performance is very assured for this price	●	●	●	●	●	●			192
QED Profile 4x4	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding				●	●	●			168
QED Genesis Silver Spiral	30	Commendable bass, with a little dryness and mildly compromised imaging: good, but not the best at its price	●	●	●	●	●	●			203

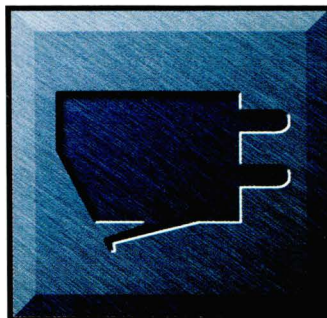
CONTINUED

Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS						ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.	DIG CABLE TYPE
SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER			

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.	DIG CABLE TYPE	
SonicLink S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●			●	●					168
R SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced					●	●		1800		157
R SonicLink AST75	2.95	Unusual materials and rather unusual performance too, strong on excitement and with plenty of bass					●	●				203
R 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 Duo	3	Not so subtle and lacking some detail, but sound is consistent with level and musical style	●			●	●					203
Straight Wire Rhythm	6	Its major flaw seems to be woolly and indistinct bass, which pervades most types of music	●			●	●					192
R Straight Wire Quartet	8	A good all-rounder with full tone, clear detail and natural ambience					●	●				183
R Supra Ply 3.4/5	6.95	Clean sound which stays together well at high levels, with full bass – perhaps a touch of treble restriction					●	●				183
R Tara Labs Klara	2.95	A good budget cable with an even spread of virtues – and very minor vices – across the board					●	●				183
Tara Labs RSC Prime 500	36	More suited to melodious music than anything with bite and drive, with only moderate detail	●				●	●				203
TCI Python	7.99	No single major sin, but detail is not outstanding and rhythm isn't always completely solid	●				●	●				203
R Townshend Isolda	50	Superb sound all round, and amplifier compatibility enhanced by included stabilising inductor					●	●				203
van den Hul The Clearwater	7.99	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky-sounding cable					●	●	●			109
van den Hul Royal Jade	10.99	Lots of technology, but sound suffers from dryness and woolly bass	●				●	●				203
van den Hul CS122 HB	13.99	Good dynamics can make for exciting sound, but fine detail suffers and the treble is often dry	●				●	●				192
van den Hul The Magnum	40	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twin-lead cable, The Magnum sounds soft and old-fashioned					●	●	●			109
R van den Hul The Wind	44	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass					●	●	●			109
van den Hul Revolution	80	Silver-plated OFC combined with carbon fibre prompts a sombre character with an easy and relaxed treble					●	●	●	1726		133



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs; and generally more expensive low- and very-low-output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono-input-equipped valve amps need a transformer to cope with MC cartridges. ■ Even basic high-output MM cartridge designs will benefit from a customised amplifier input load. Consult your dealer for further details on this topic.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MM:** Moving-magnet cartridge with a normal output, suitable for all amplifier phono inputs.
- **MC:** Moving-coil cartridge with a low output, only suitable for high-sensitivity MC amplifier phono inputs.
- **REPLACEABLE STYLUS:** Most MM cartridges have a stylus (needle) that can be removed and replaced when worn out.
- **OUTPUT (mV):** Cartridge output in millivolts.
- **MASS (g):** The mass of your chosen cartridge

affects the choice of partnering tonearm. Consult dealers or manufacturers to establish which arms and pickups work well together.

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B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS						ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)
MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)					

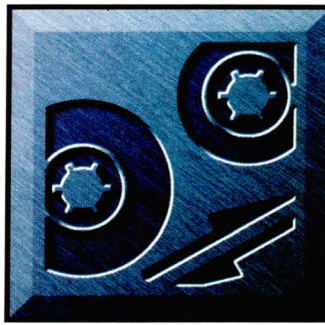
PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.
E Allaerts MC1B	1,295	Highly capable and entertaining Belgian cartridge that warrants the finest turntable and phono stage you can afford		●		0.5			203
R Audio Technica AT-95E	20	Clear and dynamic, though richly 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
R Clearaudio Signature	1,495	A great all-round performer with fine dynamic vitality and a seductive midband intimacy		●		0.55	11.5	2142	175
R 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
R Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether, and a bargain at the price		●					103
R 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
R 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
R 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
R Goldring Elan	19	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●			5.0	7		67
R Goldring 1012GX	79	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency coloration apparent	●			6.5	7		85
R Goldring 1022GX	99	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●			6.5	7		85
R 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
R 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
R 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
R Lyra Lydian Beta	599	A thoroughly enjoyable cartridge – smooth, agile and dynamic in character		●		0.5	8		192
R Lyra Lydian	649	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed		●		0.3	7		158
R Lyra Clavis Da Capo	995	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard		●		0.1	7		143
Lyra Parnassus D.C.t	1,895	A real little jewel of a cartridge, with many good qualities, but handicapped by a rather too obvious treble peak		●		0.22	10.5	2144	175
R Ortofon 510/P	38	For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality		●		3.0	5		85
R Ortofon 520/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, but the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound		●		3.0	5		67

CONTINUED

Cartridges

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (mV)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER	MASS (g)
R	Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but subtle – take it as it comes	●	●	3.3	4	103
R	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
R	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
R	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 Reca	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
R	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/IIA	2,800	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available. It has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse	●	●	0.4	6	122
R	Wilson besech Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive	●	●	0.58	6	158
R	Wilson besech Carbon	1,573	Carbon fibre body contributes to a delightfully clean and open midrange, and a quick, lively and coherent sound	●	●	0.45	7	2145 175



Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Cassette decks hook up to the 'tape loop' inputs and outputs offered by most modern amplifiers. It's worth taking care to choose the best tapes for a specific machine. For example, expensive metal tapes will be a wasted investment for a cheap deck. Many better-specified decks have manual or automatic bias adjustment to get the best from specific samples of tape. Twin decks offer the possibility of copying from tape to tape, playing two cassettes sequentially or recording onto two tapes at once. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but uni-directional mechanisms promise better sound. Dolby S is the ultimate noise reduction system, and three-head decks permit record monitoring off-tape.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

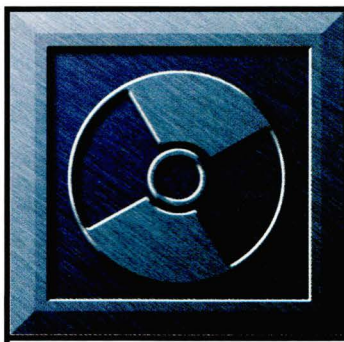
- **DOLBY B/C:** The first and second Dolby hiss-killers.
- **DOLBY S:** A desirable derivative of Dolby SR professional noise-reduction.
- **DOLBY HX-PRO:** Extends headroom for cassette recording.
- **3-HEAD:** Permits monitoring off-tape while you're recording.
- **TWIN DECK:** Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play.
- **AUTOREVERSE:** Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.
- **AUTO CALIBRATION:** The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.
- **ADJUSTABLE BIAS:** Permits manual optimisation of tape.
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B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Cassette Decks

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS	PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS								
				DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY B/C	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
R	Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed deck. Astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1513	136
R	Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin for those who want bells, whistles – and music	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1377	146
R	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
R	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
R	JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	
R	JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile-sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1380	146
	JVC TD-W718	300	Twin deck. Good for creative live recording, but no timer standby. Respectable performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2039	171
R	Kenwood KX-W6080	200	Modestly decent-sounding twin deck, with some transport instability and ragged bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2040	171
	Marantz SD455	170	Works well as a single deck, especially on replay, but dubbing at high/low speed compromises sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		184
	NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
	NAD 616	300	Twin deck with basic features. No Dolby setting memory, transport is too unstable for audiophile use	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2041	171
	Nakamichi DR-10	800	An ergonomic oddity, but one of the last of the great cassette decks. Worth considering against MD	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		195
R	Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer-loading mini-size component with 3 heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146
R	Pioneer CT-S550S	250	Great features, good with cheap low bias tapes, but slightly synthetic sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
	Pioneer CT-W806DR	300	Had it not been for the iffy transport quality, this sophisticated twin would have been Recommended	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2042	171
R	Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High-class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1385	146
R	Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
	Teac V-1050	180	One of the cheapest 3-head machines around, but it shows in very 'thick' sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		184
R	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
R	Technics RS-AZ7	270	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in state-of-the-art	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
R	Yamaha KX-490	200	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
R	Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent deck, with a lightweight tonality, but stability and strong detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2043	171



CD/DVD Players

All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see p129). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical type. The former is preferable for the ultimate sound. A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which converts the disc's digital bitstream into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue converter, or DAC. Although most players are contained within a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs. The first new DVD players have not excelled with CD software.

B BEST BUY

R RECOMMENDED

E EDITOR'S CHOICE

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For electrical connection to an outboard DAC
- **AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT:** Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- **OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For optical connection to an outboard DAC
- **ST OPT DIG OUTPUT:** High-speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- **BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:** Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.
- **HEADPHONE SOCKET:** For 'car' users.
- **VARIABLE OUTPUT:** Remotely adjustable output level (usually non-audiophile).
- **MULTI-DISC:** Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
- **DAC TYPE:** BS - Philips Bitstream; MB - multi-bit; Hyb - hybrid of multi-bit and bitstream technologies; 1bit - single bit types eg MASH, bitstream, PWM, etc; CC - constant calibration.
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CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

- ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT
- AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
- OPTICAL DIG OUTPUT
- ST OPT DIG OUT
- BAL ANALOGUE OUT
- HEADPHONE SOCKET
- VARIABLE OUTPUT
- MULTI-DISC
- DAC TYPE
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	ELEC DIG OUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUTPUT	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
R Arcam Alpha 9	800	Refined, articulate player which employs new DAC technology to great effect	●									Ring	188
Audio Analogue Paganini	750	Basically good, but sometimes heavy-handed player	●									24bit	191
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●						BS	1875 163
Audio Note AN-CD1	600	Easy on the ear, and for a valve player, easy on the pocket, but a bit Radio 2-flavoured	●									Hyb	188
Audio Note AN-CD2	999	High output impedance makes performance unduly system fussy	●									MB	195
AVI S2000MC2	899	A chip off the old block. This model's in-yr-face balance obstructs an otherwise finely detailed sound	●									MB	2179 176
R AVI S2000MC Reference	1,399	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
Cambridge Audio D100	120	Hard, clanging and coloured sounding, and with suspect control logic					●					DS	200
R Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up-and-at-em sound quality	●									Hyb	1268 147
B Cambridge Audio D500	200	Clean and highly articulate player wears well in extended use	●									DS	202
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
R Cyrus dAD3 Q24	900	Bold, lean and lively player demands sympathetic system matching	●									DS	200
R Denon DCD-435	130	Good low cost player, and a step up from the DCD-425, its predecessor										DS	191
R Denon DCD-655	180	Fine, slightly soft-edged budget player, and a good ameliorative for aggressive, edgy systems										MB	200
R Denon DCD-835	280	Refined version of Denon's multi-bit technology is a bit of a star	●									MB	184
Denon DCD-1550AR	350	Disappointing bland and ploddy sound from an immaculately constructed, high-tech player	●									MB	2266 179
Denon DCD-1650AR	700	Powerful, authoritative, and well equipped too, but this player sometimes lacks subtlety	●									MB	195
Exposure CD player	1,049	Slightly weak sounding, but otherwise well optimised, if costly player	●									MB	188
Harman/Kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is amplifier fussy	●									1bit	159
Harman/Kardon HK720	230	Sometimes aggressive and ill-disciplined player, but at least it's well built	●									1-bit	202
R Harman/Kardon HD740	300	Powerful but subtle and involving player: welcome back, Harman/Kardon	●									DS	191
R Harman/Kardon FL8300	300	Generally capable changer with relaxed sound and firm bass. Just a hint of roughness on occasion	●									MB	2220 178
Harman/Kardon HD760	500	Sophisticated internally, but mildly disappointing when treading the boards in anger	●									MB	195
R JVC XL-V184BK	120	Excellent budget player, well presented, a little opaque, but its heart is in the right place										1bit	2072 172
R JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined sound	●									1bit	1270 147
JVC XL-Z574	250	Strong resolving power, good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin	●									1bit	151
R JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even-handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●									1bit	1637 159
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	1835 163
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multi-room features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●									Hyb	1762 155
Marantz CD5000	150	Well equipped budget player sounds thin and rough at times	●									1 bit	202
B Marantz CD6000 OSE	300	Superbly constructed, slightly emasculated sounding, but smooth and articulate	●									1bit	200
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
R Meracus Tanto	1,395	Believable tonal colours and textures, refinement takes preference over dynamics - but it's not cheap	●									DS	169
B Meridian 506	1,100	Revised 506 includes MSR remote and a new D/A chip, which makes it livelier and more detailed	●									1bit	2182 176

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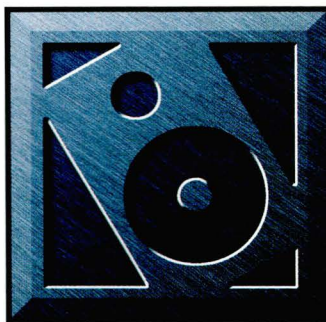
CD/DVD Players

SPECIFICATIONS

OPTICAL DIG OUTPUT
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT
ST OPT DIG OUT
BAL ANALOGUE OUT
HEADPHONE SOCKET
VARIABLE OUTPUT
MULT-DISC
DAC TYPE
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	OPTICAL DIG OUTPUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULT-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Monrio Asty	695	Well built player has solid, propulsive sound quality that deteriorates towards HF	●									DS	200
Monrio Privilege	995	Costly and well-engineered, but ultimately rather heavy-handed and dull, if refined player	●									MB 1963	166
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	799	Brilliantly packaged and clean but slightly antiseptic sounding player	●									MB	184
B Musical Fidelity A3 CD	800	Excellent player has few faults apart from a slight loss of EHF detail	●	●								DS	200
Myryad T-10	400	Rather ordinary player fails to shine with good music recordings	●									DS	184
Myryad T-20	600	Matter of fact styling and sound quality, a tad bright for some systems	●									DS	195
R Myryad MC100	700	A little extra get-up-and-go wouldn't go amiss, but its sheer maturity and composure ensure listenability	●									BS 1889	163
Myryad MCD500	1,300	Well-built, attractive player, showing much promise, but can be a little heavy-going on audition	●									1bit	2185
R NAD C520	170	Significantly improved entry level NAD is smooth and dynamic, if slightly dull	●									DS	202
R NAD 524	250	Clear, clear and essentially musical player in the NAD mould	●									MB	191
NAD C540	330	Not cheap, and disc handling is pedestrian at best, but the C540 is smooth & elegant with just a hint of aggression	●									DS	200
R NAD Silverline S500	1,100	It sounds as good as it looks, which is notably refined and easy on the ear	●	●					●			MB	195
R Naim Audio CD3.5	1,000	Forward and explicit sound needs careful system matching	●									Hyb	188
R Naim Audio CD2	2,000	Provides bags of detail with a solid stereo focus but not all the romanticism we know to be possible	●									MB 1890	163
F Naim NACDSII/XPS	5,625	Brings you the Naim sound, but for once doesn't have to rely on Naim ancillaries to get the results	●									MB	188
R Onkyo DX-7222	150	Competitive following recent price cut, and on the whole a strong performer musically	●									BS	200
Onkyo DX-7510	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●									BS 1640	151
Parasound C/DP-1000	499	Comes on like a high end player, but ultimately sounds a bit weak and soft-centred	●									Hyb	184
B Philips CD-721	130	Surprisingly well-sorted, articulate if slightly glossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead	●									1bit	159
Philips CD751	150	Inconsistent and occasionally opaque and scrawny sounding cheapie	●									1bit	172
Pioneer PD-S507	200	Low cost Legato Link implementation sounds gentle but slightly muddled	●									DS	191
R Pioneer PD-S707	300	Idiosyncratic Legato Link dominated sound, but always subtle and interesting	●									MB	184
Pioneer PD-F906	350	Interesting appearance and concept, but this changer's sound is lacklustre and ergonomics frustrating	●									1bit	2223
R Pioneer PDS-06	550	Technologically sophisticated. Pioneer's first multi-bit player for years is polished and capable	●									MB 2176	176
B Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	460	Assured, fluid-sounding player, with great spatial coherence	●									1bit	1965
Primare D20	799	Well presented player doesn't quite cut the mustard, though it performs promisingly	●									BS	188
Revox Exception E426	2,250	Very stylish with a light, agile sound that extends superbly and has fine timing	●									BS	182
Roksan Kandy	475	Slightly old-fashioned sound quality player available in various colour schemes	●									DS	200
R Roksan DP3P	1,495	Dramatic and compelling. Classical listeners should be ready to 'air conduct' when auditioning	●									BS 1896	163
R Roksan Caspian	895	Solid, articulate, and fundamentally well-engineered player, but with some subtle low-level limitations	●									Hyb	169
Rotel RCD-951	300	Disappointing chopped-down RCD-971 - buy the original	●									MB	191
B Rotel RCD-971	450	Odd disc handling logic, but bold, detailed and refined sound make this a must	●									MB	184
B Rotel RCD-991	750	Confirms Rotel's status as must watch brand: great stuff	●	●								MB	195
R Sherwood CD-4030R	180	Easy on the ear, smooth-sounding player, with limits set by the slightly soft, compressed quality	●									BS	159
Sherwood CD1	1,100	A very neutral, even handed sounding player with a rather flat, lifeless sound. Beautiful construction	●									BS 1899	163
R Sony CDP-XE330	100	Unrefined, but lively, detailed and highly affordable	●									Pulse	202
Sony CDP-XE530	140	Well equipped, but raw, scrappy sounding player lacks depth and weight	●									Pulse	200
Sony CDP-XE510	180	Souped up CDP-XE500 which tells a rather bland and unengaging story	●									1bit	172
R Sony CDP-XB720E	200	Good basic performance and a number of filter settings make this an interesting player for tweaks	●									Low bit	184
B Sony CDP-XB930E	300	Yet another first rate UK optimised player with all the bells and whistles	●									Pulse	195
Sony CDP-XA20ES	450	High-tech, with a long list of gadgets, oddly configured player that ultimately sounds less than compelling	●									1bit	2177
B Sony CDP-X3000ES	500	Shoobox format player, looks to die for, switchable digital filters to tweak the already excellent sound	●									BS	169
E Sony SCD-777ES	1,700	Beautifully built SACD player that looks like a bit of a CD player bargain	●									BS	198
F Sony SCD-1	2,500	The first SACD player sounds fabulous but there's not much competition and limited software as yet	●									BS	194
T+A CD1210R	1,185	Intriguing player with rather pushy basic sound, but has switchable digital filters	●									DS	188
Talk Electronics Thunder 1	550	Entry level upgradeable Talk Electronics player sounds slightly muted	●									DS	200
Talk Electronics Thunder 2	699	Fine player, slightly lacking in dynamics, but readily, if expensively upgradable in various ways	●									1-bit	191
R Talk Electronics Thunder 3	1,000	Clean, fast, and availability of a complete upgrade path make this a good long term proposition	●									DS	195
R TAG McLaren CD20R	1,249	Dry and unatmospheric, but plenty of presence - recommended with caution	●									BS	188
B Teac CDP-3450SE	200	For once a budget player where gadgets take second place to respectable, budget amp-friendly sonics	●									1bit	1960
Teac VRDS-8	600	Superb build quality is matched to good, but not exceptional sound quality	●									MB	184
Teac VRDS-9	700	Well-presented. This Teac is crisp, yet shallow, and inconsistent in sound quality and partnering skills	●									1bit	2178
Teac VRDS-25x	1,000	Excellent, individualistic player with bold, colourful sound, but test sample had ify CD-R compatibility	●									MB	195
Technics SL-PC390	90	It's very cheap. Very, very cheap	●									MASH	202
Technics SL-PC480A	130	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unsubtle, slightly harsh top end	●									1bit	159
R Technics SL-PS670D	200	Fine, middle ranking player which sounds solid, sometimes even a little stolid	●									1bit	2264
Technics SL-PS770D	250	High tech and well built technology battleship which smooths the rough edges off the music	●									BS 2080	172
R Technics SL-MC410	250	If you fancy a CD player that holds 111 discs, this one's cheap, pretty capable, and easy to use	●									Hyb	2224
Thule Spirit CD100	600	Definitely a try before you buy machine, but the bass and mid are excellent	●									DS	188
Trichord Genesis	549	Breathed-on Pioneer is warm and mellifluous, but ultimately lacks drive and authority	●									Hyb	169
Trichord Revelation	799	Well-ordered and clean sound that may be a little too refined for some, images well	●									1bit	1966
Tube Technology Fusion	1,100	Our early test sample was primitive and flawed, but showed signs of greatness	●									PA	195
Tube Technology Fulcrum	2,800	An imaginative two-box player with a smooth sound that lacks some lustre	●									24bit	194
Wadia 830	3,000	Envelope busting dynamics, power and imaging in a rather unexciting box (digital volume control)	●									MB	183
E Wadia 860x	7,450	If you want to discover what CDs are really capable of, this has few peers	●	●								MB	199
Yamaha CDX-493	180	Open and lively, but this player is also messy and lacking resolving power	●									Hyb	191
Yamaha CD-X993	400	A bit of a lush, though the sound is singularly free of grain, and equipment levels are strong	●									BS	184
YBA Spécial	695	There is nothing here to justify the pricing or the high-end parentage. Avoid	●									MB	195
R YBA CD1α	3,895	A remarkably fluid and graceful sound - one of the best we've heard below £5,000	●									18bit	194
TRANSPORTS													
Audio Note CDT Zero	399	Neat shoe box size transport sounds smooth and fluid in the right system. (Tested with DAC Zero)	●										191
Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engaging	●										1323
Roksan Attessa ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of sounding exciting with the right material	●									1bit	1867
Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound. (Tested with D-T1)	●										1325
Theta Carmen	3,299	A well equipped and extremely upgradeable CD/DVD transport. Right now, the finest of its type	●										203
Theta Data Basic II	2,397	Uses a Philips CDM9 Pro mechanism and works a treat with more lively DACs	●										1494
Thorens TCD2000	999	Lively presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble. (Tested with TDA 2000 DAC)	●										1867
R Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer	●										1867



Loudspeakers

As the last link in the hi-fi chain, loudspeakers are at the mercy of incoming signals. Nevertheless, distortions introduced by loudspeakers tend to be the most obvious. Inside the average loudspeaker is a simple electrical circuit (the crossover) which splits the incoming, full-frequency-range signal for the specific drive units to handle: highs to the 'tweeter', lows to the 'woofer'. For any speaker, designers must balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against bass extension (how low it goes). Subwoofers augment bass and are either passive (unamplified) or, preferably, active (self-amplified). Our 'bass from' figures are based on measurements in a particular room therefore results will vary in different environments.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SIZE WxHxD (cm):** Width by height by depth in centimetres.
- **FLOORSTANDER:** Requires no stand support.
- **SENSITIVITY (dB/W):** How much sound results for a given electrical input – the higher the figure, the louder the speaker. An 'A' indicates active operation.
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Impedance, measured in Ohms, indicates how much resistance the speaker presents to an amplifier. As impedance decreases, demands on an amplifier increase.
- **BASS FROM (Hz):** The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce effectively.
- **FREE SPACE:** Speakers which should not sit close to walls.
- **CLOSE TO WALL:** Speakers which should sit between 3 and 12cm from the rear wall.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback section of our Archive page.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of HI-FI Choice in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

- SIZE WxHxD (CM)
- FLOORSTANDER
- SENSITIVITY (dB/W)
- IMPEDANCE (Ω)
- BASS FROM (HZ)
- FREE SPACE
- CLOSE TO WALL
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Acoustic Energy Aegis Centre	140	Good value centre-front speaker but a tad shut in and with a slightly obvious top end (price per speaker)	46,17,20		89	5	50	●			198
Acoustic Energy Aegis One	150	At a new low price, this has a very natural and transparent midband, erring a little on the dull side	19,36,5,24		87	6	40	●			187
Acoustic Energy Aegis Two	250	Floorstanding variation on the Aegis One theme, with a neutral, even and detailed if slightly shiny sound	19,87,24	●	89	8	40	●			201
Acoustic Energy Aegis Three	350	High value floorstander has deep and even bass and a smooth neutrality thereafter	19,90,25	●	90	5	22	●			198
Acoustic Energy AE120SE	500	Attractive styling and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance, and a difficult amp load	18,97,28	●	89.5	10	25	●			199
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
ALR Entry 2	250	Metal cone stand-mount has a generous performance envelope, but sound quality was controversial	20,33,29	●	90	4	22	●			201
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
AR 15	275	Neat and chunky wall/stand-mount certainly knows how to rock and roll, less convincing on the delicate stuff	22,37,22		90	4	45	●			201
ATC SCM10	1,000	A compact speaker with good transparency but lightweight bass	18,38,25,5		80	8	65	●			192
Audio Gem Emerald	540	Pretty, compact floorstander with lively if lightweight sound	18,94,21	●	87	6	40	●		1905	164
Audio Note AN-J/B	799	Light damping and local unevenness add some coloration, but don't spoil the speaker	38,58,25		93	8	25	●			110
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	Coherent, dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity – but ugly	36,84,28	●	94	8	20	●			106
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually-styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47	●	88	8	28	●		1344	143
Audiovector C2	799	Elegant two-and-a-half-way has a big, full bandwidth sound, but midband seemed a little underdeveloped	19,106,27	●	90	4	20	●			190
Audiovector M2	1,399	High-class, smooth and slightly laid-back performer has driving bass. It's upgradable, too	20,102,30	●	89	4	22	●			180
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
AVI Positron	899	This 'mini-floorstander' is capable of great precision and delicacy, but in a rather small-scale way	17,5,74,24.5	●	85	6	40	●		2130	174
B&W DM302	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45	●		1778	156
B&W 602 S2	300	Large stand-mount has fine dynamic literacy and good communication skills at a very competitive price	23,5,49,29		90	5	28	●			201
B&W DM305	350	Ridged paper cone gives lively sound, clever box, but a little uneven	22,87,31	●	89	4	40	●		1908	164
B&W LCR6	349	Large, gutsy standmount intended for all-round AV use delivers fine performance as a stereo pair too	20,5,55,32	●	90	5	20	●			198
B&W CDM2SE	400	Beautifully styled and finished, respectable midband. Lacks definition towards frequency extremes	22,32,25		87	6	40	●			183
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
B&W CDM1SE	600	A great looking standmount with one of the best midbands around, and a subtle blend of other qualities	22,37,29	●	88	5	40	●		2209	177
B&W CDM7	1,000	A combination of serious welly and physical elegance; but a basic lack of midband smoothness	22,97,29	●	90	4	22	●		2131	174
B&W Nautilus 805	1,400	A small-sounding loudspeaker dynamically, but very stylish, clean and 'unboxy', delivering loads of detail	24,42,31		89	12	28	●			199
B&W Nautilus 804	2,500	The prettiest Nautilus has tremendous clarity and imaging but lacks the welly of bigger models	24,101,5,24.5	●	89	8	38	●			200
B&W Nautilus 802	6,000	Outstanding example of the high-tech speaker builder's art, needs real power but gives real sound	39,111,55	●	91	8	34	●			183
B&W Nautilus 801	8,500	The 801 is a magnificent loudspeaker in nearly every respect, but it is one that likes to play loud	52,111,69	●	91	8	34	●			186
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
Cabasse Farella 400	950	Exciting but very upfront-and-in-er-face sound. High sensitivity, fine build and good dynamic drive	26,92,32	●	92	5	28	●			180
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
Castle Keep	250	Substantial centre-front speaker based on Harlech drivers but with rather brighter voicing	48,17,27-29		88	8	45	●			198
Castle Richmond	250	Tiny real-wood miniature has a lightweight but very coherent sound, a bit in-er-face but plenty of fun	17,33,20		90	5	50	●			201
Castle Inversion 15	425	This striking looking standmount is a good all-rounder, commendably free from boxiness	19-22,42,25		91	4	30	●			193
Castle Kendal	500	A beautifully finished compact floorstander with a decidedly forward but communicative sound	17,76,20	●	86	6	45	●		2204	177
Castle Severn 2	539	Carbon fibre cone gives lovely, subtle midband but treble is a bit dull and bass a bit thumpy	21,84,25	●	87	8	30	●		2120	174
Castle Harlech	880	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33	●	88	8	28	●		1820	160
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
Celestion 12i	119	Not without virtue, but the relentless enthusiasm and mid-band colorations can become wearing	19,31,21		88	6	45	●		2254	179
Celestion 25i	300	Cosmetically flawed, but the bottom end has fine get-up-and-go, and works well with dance tracks	24,86,27	●	89	6	30	●		2200	177
Celestion 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
Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35	●	88	6	25	●		1910	164
Celestion A2	1,500	Full-scale, big sound from ultra-elegant floorstander. Smooth and slightly laid back presentation	24,93,39	●	89	6	22	●			180
Chario Syntar 100	249	Pretty with a pleasantly easygoing balance, but not the most communicative or exciting sound around	18,32,27		87	6	45	●		2020	170
Chario Hiper 1000	300	Classy looking standmount has a sweet, easygoing sound with fine midband voicing	18,35,28		87	4	45	●			187
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
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
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
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
Definitive Technology CLR2002	595	Pricy, but undoubtedly one of the better centre-front speakers around, with fine timing and open voicing	55,5,175,31		90	4	40	●			198
Definitive Technology BP2X	595	Pricy but effective bi-polar surround speaker, with unusually high sensitivity	23,37,15		94	4	120	●			198
Definitive Technology BP2004	1,700	Pricy bi-polar floorstander has a fine midband, let down by its built-in powered subwoofer	19,104,31	●	91	5	28	●			198
Dynaudio Audience 5	400	Follows the Dynaudio tradition for fine midband transparency, but the overall timbre is a bit thin	20,31,26		85	4	40	●		2205	177
Dynaudio Audience 40	400	Classy engineering content creates a winning combination of neutrality, dynamic range and involvement	17,28,25		87	4	40	●			190
Dynaudio LR/C 120	439	Slim centre and front standmount, has an evenhanded but rather laid back balance but lacks drive	16,5,57,31		89	5	25	●			198
Dynaudio Audience 50	577	This standmount doesn't look big, but sound quality can match many models at twice the price	20,33,25	●	86	4	30	●		2122	174
Dynaudio Audience 70	1,100	A highly competent and neutral speaker, but pricey for vinyl finish, and doesn't quite drag you into the music	20,5,93,25	●	88	6	20	●			199
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
Elac CL102 II	599	Chunky floorstander with classy drivers has a neutral, slightly 'shiny' character, and could have more punch	20,95,28	●	88	9	23	●			199
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
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
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
Eltax Chroma Front	300	Gorgeous shiny styling package at an ultra-competitive price, suffers from an excess of rather flabby bass	19,98,28	●	87	4	25	●			201

CONTINUED

Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (db/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (HZ) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (db/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
R Energy e:XL 25	400	Neat slimline design delivers a fine all round performance for the price, but could sound smoother	15,87,31	●	90	4	25	●			201
Epos ES12	499	High quality luxury standmount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25	●	85	8	45	●		1823	160
Epos ES25	1,655	Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance	24,90,35	●	88	6	22	●		1346	143
Gale 2i	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27	●	88	7	40	●	●	2021	170
R 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
B Heybrook Heylette	200	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature with classy main driver now has fine overall balance to match	19,5,30,22	●	88	4	45	●			187
B 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
B Heybrook Heylios	269	Classically styled stand-mount has a fine balance of smoothness and dynamics, plus real wood veneer	23,5,36,27	●	89	6	25	●			201
Heybrook Ultima	649	Has the bass wallop to justify its dual hi-fi/home cinema roles, but doesn't excite	22,97,29	●	89	6	45	●		2126	174
R Heybrook Duet	750	Looks slightly old-fashioned, sounds a bit coloured but its fine timing and liveliness serve music well	23,43,30	●	88	11	27	●			199
Heybrook Octet	1,800	Good-looking but pricey floorstander with novel drivers and a fine ceramic-enclosure midband	24,97,31	●	90	6	25	●	●		180
R Indigo Three	500	Cute 'n' chunky standmount is an entertaining communicator. Great fun, despite some sonic weirdness	23,30,5,32	●	86	17	24	●	●		199
Infinity Delta 60	700	Striking and massive floorstander, lots of speaker for the price, but seems a victim of its own complexity	16-29,115,41	●	90	4	25	●			183
Jamo BX100A	350	Offering a cracking output for their size, these rock boxes can be a bit bright but have decent bass	31,5,54,28	●	91	8	40	●		1758	155
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom'n'tizz character sounded crude	22,90,29	●	90	4	28	●		1659	152
Jamo Cornet 195	350	Loads of bass, should have plenty of 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
Jamo 507A	700	Imaginative styling keeps the front view super slim yet still it packs a punch. Class 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 enthusiasm	22,40,27	●	87	8	40	●		2022	170
JBL Ti200	400	Very substantial standmount knows how to rock and roll, but can sound uncouth on more delicate material	21,41,30	●	92	5	40	●			193
R JBL L20	700	Pricey, heavy and a bit laid-back, but this is a fine rock'n'roller which is dynamic and communicative	26,42,28	●	86	8	30	●			1550
JBL SVA1500	700	A distinctive Pro-style bi-radial horn tweeter, with a fun sound, enlivened by a juicy bass thump	17,5,51,31	●	86	8	40	●		2127	174
R JBL L40	1,000	Classic, large, three-way standmount is full of vim and vigour, with a superb sense of balance	30,65,31	●	88	4	23	●			1976
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 brutish 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 standmount 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
R JMLab Cobalt 815	999	Hefty real-wood floorstander has a slight 'boom'n'tizz' character but delivers big speaker grip and dynamics	22,100,31	●	90.5	9.5	22	●			199
JMLab Spectral 909.1	1,375	Multi-driver array in a large and very substantial enclosure. Good scale but lacks delicacy and sweetness	27,107,35	●	90	4	20	●			180
JMLab Electra 915	1,795	Fine headroom and bass, and classy engineering too, but also a tricky amp load which lacks delicacy	26,5,106,36	●	92	4	20	●			195
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
B 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 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
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
R KEF Coda 7	129	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be more taut and build tougher	18,30,23	●	88	6	50	●		1783	156
KEF Cresta 2	149	A good looking/value package but sonically disappointing, and no match for the Q15	20,5,37,24	●	91	4	40	●			195
R KEF Coda 8	189	Outstandingly well-balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29	●	86	6	28	●			1784
R KEF Q15	200	Beautifully balanced and voiced standmount, but a potentially tricky amplifier load at high frequencies	20,5,31,27	●	90	2.5	30	●			187
KEF Coda 9	299	Uneven budget three-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●			1785
KEF RDM One	499	Cute and tiny, nice midband but lack of bass warmth and weight	23,30,24	●	88	6	70	●	●		1913
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
B Keswick Audio Aria II	379	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24	●	89	8	20	●			1405
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
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, 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 crossover and an affinity with valves	21,5,104,27	●	89	8	45	●			196
Magnat Vintage 320	350	Loads of speaker for your money, but the sound is thick, heavy and lacking in presence and authority	25,102,30	●	90	4	20	●			201
Magnat Vector 77	450	Tall, dark and a lot of speaker for the money. Beautiful balance, but lacking in subtlety and transparency	22,115,29	●	89	5	30	●			183
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 standmount miniature has a delightfully well balanced and voiced sound, and real wood finish	17,31,22	●	86	7	45	●			187
R Mission 77C	199	A good centre-front match for 77-series, the triple tweeter might be a curiosity, but voicing is very good	42,17,21	●	91	4	100	●			198
R Mission 77DS	199	Neat flush-mount surround speaker has no bass but a smooth midband and nicely restrained treble	34,26,12	●	92	4	120	●			198
Mission 780	299	Gorgeous miniature has a fine midband and clean, bright treble, slightly odd bottom end	16,5,28,27	●	86	6	40	●			201
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
R Mission 782	699	Ultra-compact floorstander has a glorious midband and slightly odd bass. Good communication skills	16,5,82,28	●	86	9.5	25	●	●		199
B Mission 753 Freedom	798	Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics	21,90,31	●	89	4	40	●			1914
R Monitor Audio 702PMC	700	A good all-round standmount with intimate midband focus	20,40,25	●	87	8	30	●			2128
R Monitor Audio MA703PMC	800	Lovely but pricey floorstander has upfront, coherent, 'shiny' sound	20,89,27	●	88	8	50	●			1826
R Musical Tech Kestrel Evolution	315	Cutely styled, devery compact and a smooth, subtle and coherent performer, best suited to smaller rooms	20,85,19	●	86	4	40	●			201
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
R 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
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	●			170
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	194
R Naim Intro	660	Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth	24,89,27	●	89	6	30	●			1916
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

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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							
F Naim NBL	6,648	Elegant, large floorstander is exceptionally informative with an awesome dynamic range and dry, forward balance	29,116,47	●	89	4	20	●	200
F Neat Critique 2	445	Contemporary standmount has a clean, crisp sound with lovely natural midband voicing	22,32,24	●	86	6	50	●	183
F 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
F 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
F 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
F NHT Super One	250	A fine compromise between size and performance, sensitivity and hence loudness capability is modest	18,5,29,5,23	●	85	8	30	●	170
F NHT 1.5	400	This compact standmount sounds much bigger than it has any right to. Good timing and communication skills	18,42,19-26	●	85	6	40	●	177
F NHT Super Two	550	Black and shiny compact three-way floorstander has marvellously even balance and good coherence	18,5,100,26	●	87	8.5	25	●	199
F Opera Prima	495	Good-looking hardwood enclosure, plus fine mid and treble, but less satisfactory bass	19,34,31	●	90	4	40	●	190
F 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
F Orelle Swing	1,200	A superb example of what an essentially small speaker can do, with bags of brio and enthusiasm	18,101,28	●	87	8	45	●	195
F PMC TB1S	430	Pro-audio version of TB1, cheaper because of black paint finish	20,41,30	●	87	6	40	●	2207 177
F 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
F PMC LB1	999	Still fully competitive eight years after our original review, this genuine compact monitor is now a modern classic	17,5,53,26	●	87	6.5	40	●	199
F PMC AB1	1,496	Lovely, panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room	26,79,43	●	89	6	22	●	114
F Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	●	89	8	25	●	1155 138
F 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
F Polk CS 1000p	999	Monstrously large and heavy centre-front speaker, presumably for those with monstrous intentions	87,22,35	●	92	4	25	●	198
F 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
F Polk RTE 1000p	1,300	Tall elegant tower with built-in powered bass 'subwoofer' that needs using with discretion. Bright but engaging	20,110,35	●	91	4	25	●	198
F 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
F 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
F QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal standmount with heavy, laid-back balance but remarkably unboxy sound	27,37,36	●	83	4	25	●	167
F Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative	19,31,19	●	87	8	50	●	114
F Rega EL8	298	Kyte drivers in compact floorstander give more bass but less coherence	17,72,20	●	86	8	55	●	172 222
F 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
F 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
F 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
F Rehdeko RK 1155a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic coherence	34,42,27	●	95	8	55	●	1982 167
F 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
F Roksan ROKone	595	Large standmount is musically very communicative, if a little coloured	21,45,33	●	89	6	30	●	1834 160
F Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance	28,76,46	●	88	8	20	●	1082 132
F Roksan OJ3X Black	995	Innovative low-line, two-way floorstander with decoupled tweeter; great bass and fine dynamic range	28,79,46	●	84	8	20	●	1979 167
F Royd Minstrel	275	Not much welly or loudness, but fine coherence and timing; a bit bright	18,69,12	●	86	8	30	●	1167 135
F Royd Doublet	485	Great value compact floorstander: lively and very informative, if a little uneven	18,93,19	●	90	4	28	●	1835 160
F 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
F 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
F Ruark Sceptre	599	'Traditional' cabinetwork with classy veneer and shiny gilt fixings, hampered by rather wayward sound balance	21,38,31	●	87	8	40	●	2129 174
F Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence	23,84,32	●	88	8	30	●	118
F 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
F 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
F 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
F Sequence 400	329	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great	25,100,7	●	86	8	45	●	1917 167
F Shahinian Arc	1,875	Occasionally wonderful, small, floorstanding omni directional design: bright but coherent and revealing	35,69,25	●	88	6	24	●	110
F Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact: neutral if bright, tough work for amps	20,40,25	●	83	3	30	●	1918 164
F Snell K.5	795	Classic AV-ready stand mount is very solidly engineered. Sound is neutral but lacks excitement	22,46,30	●	87	6	25	●	190
F Snell XA75ps	4,500	Active bass floorstander with marvellous mid coherence, slightly suspect bass integration	28,117,50	●	91	6	25	●	194
F 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
F Sonus Faber Concertino	599	A beautifully neutral loudspeaker in a beautiful Italian suit of clothes. Classy, if quite pricey	21,32,29	●	87	5	30	●	193
F South Coast Speakers Lancelot	895	Pretty compact standmount has nice ribbon tweeter but sounds a bit soft and lacks dynamic vigour	19,36,26	●	84	8	45	●	199
F Spondor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound	18,89,27	●	87	8	30	●	1836 160
F 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
F System Audio 1150	749	Pricy but persuasive, sonic subtleties sneak up to confound a dodgy first impression. Super-slim	16,105,26	●	90	4	30	●	190
F TAG McLaren F1	15,000	Oddball aesthetics with accurate, unflappable, controlled and a consistent sonic neutrality	40,127,48	●	87.5	8	25	●	202
F 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
F 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
F 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
F Tannoy Saturn S6C	200	A punchy compact standmount based on a serious cast-frame, pro-style dual-concentric driver	38,21,29	●	89	6	25	●	198
F Tannoy Mercury M3	230	Good-looking floorstander; very neutral and even-handed, with fine midband but weak dynamics and drive	20,5,87,28	●	87	7	20	●	2025 170
F Tannoy mX3	300	A great all-round compromise at a very modest price, combining good looks with fine midband voicing	18,5,87,26	●	90	5	40	●	201
F 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
F Tannoy Saturn S6LCR	400	A punchy compact standmount based on a serious cast-frame, pro-style dual-concentric driver	21,38,29	●	89	6	25	●	198
F Tannoy Saturn S6	500	Fine value vinyl floorstander offers plenty of genuine grunt and real dynamic tension	21,89,29	●	91	4	20	●	198
F Tannoy Revolution R3	550	Handsome real-wood floorstander does a decent job, but lacks the evenness of its smaller R2 brother	18,5,103,28	●	89	8.5	28	●	199
F Tannoy D300	999	Gorgeous-looking compact floorstander. And a fine all-round performer, too	16-24,85,23	●	87	6	26	●	167
F 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
F Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600	These awesome horn-loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive	large	●	99	8	38	●	C93
F Technics SB-M20	200	Well-balanced with natural perspectives and fine midband coherence, but bass is a bit boxy and uneven	20,52,23	●	70	8	50	●	1413 148
F 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
F Triangle Cometes	359	Communicative standmount has great midband dynamics, but the very bright top end might be intrusive	22,40,29	●	91	4	42	●	193
F 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
F 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
F 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
F Vienna Acoustics Mozart	1,500	Gorgeous slimline floorstander sounds very laid-back but very charming, and musically literate	17,97,30	●	88	7.5	25	●	199
F 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	520	●	189
F 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
F Wdale Diamond 7.2 Anniversary	200	Lively and exuberant, but a tad untidy with it; can sound a bit cold and hard	19,29,5,24	●	88	4	40	●	187
F Wharfedale Valdus 400	200	Very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	25,80,26	●	91	8	30	●	1414 148
F Wharfedale Valdus 500	300	These rock boxes can move plenty of air, albeit not as subtly as alternatives	25,108,26,5	●	91	4	40	●	1758 155

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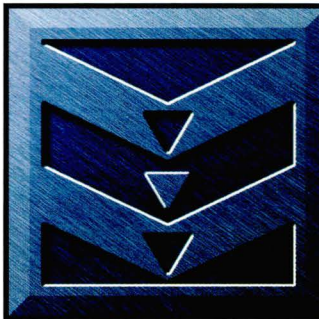
Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
CLOSE TO WALL
FREE SPACE (HZ)
BASS FROM (C2)
IMPEDANCE (Ω)
SENSITIVITY (db/W)
FLOORSTANDER
SIZE WxHxD (CM)

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS							
R Zingali Overture 25	1,975	Gorgeous, pricey, imposing standmount has a horn tweeter of great delicacy. Impressively weighty	30,57,38	90	8	25	●		195
SUBWOOFERS									
Acoustic Energy AE1 08S	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	A		20	●	2248	179
R JB&W SW1000	499	Bulky heavyweight is a high quality item, able to generate more bass output than music is likely to need	54,47,50	●	A	A20	●		198
R JPW SW60	349	A real heavyweight, sounds clean and transparent, if perhaps a little understated. Usefully flexible	55,47,39			20	●	2249	179
KEF Model 30B	499	(Active) Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension	38,5,37,43	●	A	45		1736	154
R M&K MX70	900	(Active) Justifies cost and belies its diminutive size, with an agility that makes sense of the toughest material	25,5,46,35		A	25	●	2250	179
Mission 7AS2	399	Ugly if very effective at supplying very low bass, but filter could do with more flexibility higher up	56,30,31	●		<20	●		198
R REL Q50	375	(Active) Genuinely deep, clean bass from an attractively compact and cost-effective package	40,41,42		A	20	●	2251	179
Soliloquy S10	1,050	(Active) Pretty subwoofer, cosmetically matching SM 2A3 speakers, pricey and mid-bass a bit strong	51,30,5,46	●	A	25	●		196



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 bays 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 faved review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback section of our Archive page.
- **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which an original review appeared.

B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stands & Supports

SPECIFICATIONS

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
SHELF TYPE
NUMBER OF SHELVES
WELDED
FILLABLE
TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)
HEIGHT

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS							
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS									
R Aavik Furniture A4	350	Good sound and stylish Scandinavian looks at an affordable price	80,5	47		4	Wood		193
Alphason GR 17/17-AS	275	Great looks but sound can be bettered for the money	36	60,39		4	Glass		181
Apollo Soprano	275	Uninspiring looks and sonic performance that can be beaten at this price	68,5	45,5		4	Glass		193
Atacama Europa	240	Stylish, expandable modular design with agreeable full-bodied sound – great value	67	48,6		4	Wood		193
R Audiophile Furniture Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43		4	MDF		193
R Avid Isosshelf	1,100	An enthusiasts equipment support stand free from coloration if a little fiddly to set up	87,5	48		5	MDF		193
R Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1,199	Blockbusting size and build. Super sound quality	92	45,49		4	Marb		181
R 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
B Iwerksos 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
lamos Deadrock 704	250	Looks unassuming but sound is full and inviting		46,39		4	Resin		181
B Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	Kind of its type: angle iron, chipboard and glass combine to make a significant difference to sound quality	56	49,39		1	Glass		147
R Mana 5 Tier Sound Table	600	Infinately upgradeable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle-iron design that adds speed and bandwidth	91	49,39		5	Glass	1633	151
R 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
R 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
B Quodraspire Q4	250	Easy to live with, tonally neutral	54	40,49		4	MDF	1633	151
B 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
R 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
R 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
B Standsign Design 4	190	An all-in-one support at a budget price with good sonic performance	88,5	50,8		4	Glass		193
R Target B5	175	Free of colorations, fine grip and good value	81	49,36		5	Wood	1633	151
B 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
B Wilson benesch Asside	590	Sounds even better than it looks. And it looks wonderful	72	37,50		4	Wood		181
SPEAKER STANDS									
Alphason Akros II	65	A well-specified budget stand but the sound is as subtle as a house party	60,45	16,5	●				202
Alphason HDS	85	A reasonable stand with a smooth but rather bland sound balance. Good finish options	45-60	15,5,15,5	●				189
Apollo Olympus	75	A popular stand and a decent performer, but unremarkable by today's standards	40-60	15,12,5	●				189
Apollo A26	80	Fine engineering value, but sound is unexceptional and top-plate small	66	15,13	●	●			159
Apollo A4/6	82	A pretty and robust design that sonically fails to stand out from the crowd	51,40,51	18	●				202
B Atacama Nexus 6	50	An excellent all round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain	60,50	14,5,18	●				202
R Atacama BD21	55	Good looking and good value, but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17	●				159
R Atacama R724	150	Atacama uses its market strength to deliver a superbly appointed product at a very reasonable price	60	15,17	●	●			189
B 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
R Custom Design R/S300 MkII	100	A solid stand improving on the original with better focus and detail	61,56,51	16,5,18	●				202
R 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
R 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
R Mana Sound Base	175	The Sound Base plinth simply improves the sound of every speaker placed on it	8	29,32					202
Mission Stance	100	Detailed and open but needs a firm foundation to give its best	60	19,15					202
B Partington A-4	119	An oddball stand with a sound that's sheer class. More open and focused than almost anything below £150	50-100	19,22	●	●			189
R Partington Dreadnought Ult.	299	Super heavyweight stand that is an open window to the speaker placed on it	63	20,5,23,5	●				202
R RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	349	Pricey carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A					159
Russ Andrews Torlyte	599	Subtle and musical-sounding stands, though a touch more 'pizzazz' is need for Recommendation at this price	61	33,5,24					189
Sonus Systems Excel	110	Strong performance when filled with sand but design flaws let it down	65,45	20,22,5	●				202
Sound Organisation Z524	69	A coherent-sounding stand with particular strengths in the midband, though quality drops at the frequency extremes	61	16,17					189
B Sound Organisation Z522	89	Easy going and likeable performer straight out of the box	59	16,17	●				202

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Stands & Supports

SPECIFICATIONS

TOP PLATE SIZE HEIGHT	FILLABLE WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.
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STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	TOP PLATE SIZE HEIGHT	FILLABLE WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK NO.
Sound Style Select	95	OK but not as good as its cheaper brother the Z522	59	16,17	●			202
Stands Unique HP	220	Real wood disguises high-performance tuned technology	59	22,23	●			159
Target HM60	106	A solid and well-built stand laid-back to the point of coma	40-70	16,5,19	●			202
Target R1	280	Truly high-mass four-pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack	53	15,21	●	●		1373 146
Target TR60	68	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less-than-audiophile-oriented, twin-column design	60	15,15	●			1373 146
Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works well with decent floorstanders as well as standmounted speakers	4	38,48	●			202



Tonearms

Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). However, hard-core vinyl fans should invest in a more expensive separate motor unit with specialist tone-arm – the only way to make the most of vinyl LPs. It is essential to achieve operational synergy between such components, so this is one area of hi-fi where the skills of a knowledgeable dealer are invaluable. The quality of a tonearm's construction and design affect sound quality significantly. There are three basic arm designs listed in the key, and each has strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, being usually the most practical and affordable.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **EFFECTIVE MASS:** This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.
- **PARALLEL TRACKING:** An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
- **PIVOTED:** Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.
- **UNI-PIVOT:** Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
- **EFFECTIVE LENGTH (CM):** Length of the arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.
- **ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT:** Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
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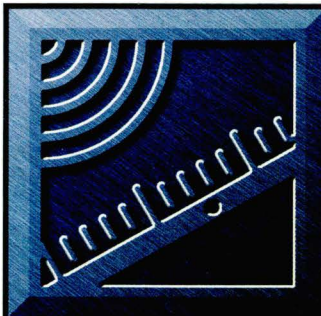
Tonearms

SPECIFICATIONS

PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	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 imponderable is the arrival of digital radio broadcasting, though reception apparatus is currently non-existent outside of the in-car market. These days tuners play second fiddle to hi-fi sources like CD, but in many ways they are a greater engineering challenge than digital equipment, and thus higher price-tags clearly equate to superior performance. High-quality, roof-mounted antennae are essential for audiophile listening, so factor them into your budget.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **WAVEBANDS:** FM – (VHF), M – MW, L – LW.
- **PRESETS:** Number of station frequencies that can be stored.
- **RDS:** (Radio Data System) was originally designed for in-car applications. RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, traffic news and other information about broadcasts.
- **REMOTE CONTROL:** Infra-red control handset supplied.
- **SIGNAL STRENGTH METER:** Indicates strength of signal from aerial – useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation.
- **ROTARY TUNING KNOB:** Experience has shown that this analogue throwback is ergonomically far superior to the button-based approach.
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Tuners

SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
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STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
AMC T7	130	Performance adequate but price is sharp, especially with remote control. Some hum	FM, M	30	●	●	●	●	1945	166
Arcam Alpha 7	230	Indifferent RF performance but a touch of audiophile sound quality with clean, strong signals	FM,M,L	24	●	●	●	●	1946	166
Arcam Alpha 10 DRT	800	The first DAB tuner and arguably still the best, but the system's still not perfect	DAB	7	●	●	●	●		199
Cambridge T500	180	Very capable tuner suited to good and less good reception conditions	FM,M,L	64	●	●	●	●		193
Creek T43	399	Quality UK-made tuner offering classy sound in all areas at a very fair price	FM,M,L	64	●	●	●	●		193
Cymbal C-DAB 1	1,000	The first 'high-end' DAB tuner, although format is the ultimate limitation. Gorgeous finish	DAB	8	●	●	●	●		199
Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM,M,L	40	●	●	●	●		193
Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	1947	166
Denon TU-1500RD	250	A well balanced and clean sound with good bass and treble extension	FM,M	40	●	●	●	●		184
Magnum Dynalab FT11	499	All-analogue tuner: receives weak or tightly packed stations but loses out on noise and sonic neutrality	FM	3	●	●	●	●		184
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
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 NAT01	1,730	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM		●	●	●	●	1254	142
Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance; slightly disappointing sound	FM,M	40	●	●	●	●	1949	166
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	300	Lots of features, plus a sound that's low on noise and high on communication, adds up to a good value package	FM,M	40	●	●	●	●		184
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
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

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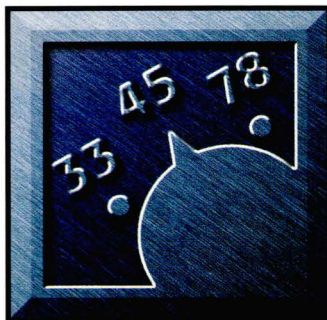
Tuners

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS PRESETS RDS REMOTE CONTROL SIG. STRENGTH METER ROT. TUNING METER FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING METER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Sony STS-B9205	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-GT1000	500	Handy tuner that combines DAB, FM and AM in one unit and substantially lowers the price bar for DAB entry	DAB,FM,M	97	●	●	●	●		199
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 rhythmic timing taken for granted by serious turntable users. Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Because turntables are mechanical devices, designed to retrieve micron-small modulations engraved into vinyl, engineering quality is of paramount importance. This is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do, and require the finest equipment support systems.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MANUAL:** You do all the work.
- **AUTO:** The record player does all the work.
- **SEMI-AUTO:** You put the needle on, the turntable lifts it off at the end of the record.
- **SPEEDS:** In RPM to correspond with long-playing records or seven/12-inch singles.
- **SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS:** Spring suspension to minimise structural interference.
- **EXTERNAL PSU:** Outboard power supply, generally indicative of higher-quality performance.
- **SUPPLIED WITH ARM:** Many turntables do not come with a tonearm fitted, but if this category is checked, the deck is already thus equipped.
- **SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE:** If a turntable comes complete with arm and cartridge.
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Turntables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUAL AUTO SEMI-AUTO SPEEDS SUSP. SUBCHASSIS SUPPLIED WITH ARM SUPPLIED WITH CART. FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NO.

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSP. SUBCHASSIS	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART.	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NO.
Audio Note TT1/ARM1	594	Simple and unpretentious, it delivers a real taste of true high end performance at an affordable price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	203
Avid Acutus	4,995	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings, don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	194
Clearaudio Reference	3,990	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail, but can sound bold	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1328 144
DNM Rota 2	5,600	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on its own table	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1328 144
Dual CS 455.1	220	Neat record player with automatic convenience (and 78rpm), but doesn't match simpler manual rivals sonically	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45/78	203
Dual 505-4 UK	250	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	103
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,950	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	91
Linn LP12 Basik	1,100	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc. still top rank	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33	103
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	91
Michell Gyrodec	875	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	55
Michell Gyro SE	775	A stunningly desirable combination of looks, solidity and sound make this a tempting turntable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	190
Michell Orbe 'SE'	1,725	A Superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	192
Moth Kanoot	329	Rather coarse-sounding deck that requires decent isolation and comes with a Rega RB300 arm	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1907 164
NAD 533	220	Sonically a little crude, but musically satisfying results at a very modest price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	203
Noits Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	750	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	159
Pink Triangle Tarantella II	850	A turntable that looks unlike any other, with rare ability too. Quirky, but sound is immensely likeable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	192
Pro-ject 2	300	Remarkably effective at the price, with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1907 164
Pro-ject Classic Cherry	450	A great looking turntable with a generous and dynamic sound, but lacks something in overall coherence	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	203
Pro-ject Perspective	750	Flexible facilities and competitive package, but performance of turntable alone is behind the best	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	192
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	850	Don't think of this as a deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Oracle Delphi - it's that good	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	138
Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	48
Rega Planar 3	274	Sounds musical in a balanced manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1907 164
Rega Planar 2S	619	Great looking turntable has a silky smooth sound with exceptional midband coherence	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	203
Reson RS1	600	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	159
Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant-looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	159
SME Model 10A	3,333	Elegant and extremely capable design with Series V309 hybrid arm, superbly built	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	195
SME Model 20.2A	4,863	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45/78	186
Thorens TD166 V/UK/RB	400	Refined, solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM/MC budget cartridges	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	103
Thorens TD146 VI	550	Tonearm not quite up to turntable's potential; this semi-auto is much pricier than manual TD166	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	203
Thorens TD2001	700	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	159
VPI HW19 Junior	650	A notably large and handsome turntable with good sound quality and considerable upgrade potential	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	203
Well Tempered Record Player	850	Intriguing and challenging. Musically not ideal, but its limpid quality and lack of artificiality set standards	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	1180 136
Wilson benesch The Circle	795	A beautiful turntable with a sumptuous sound, all at a very reasonable price - a clear Best Buy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	33/45	192



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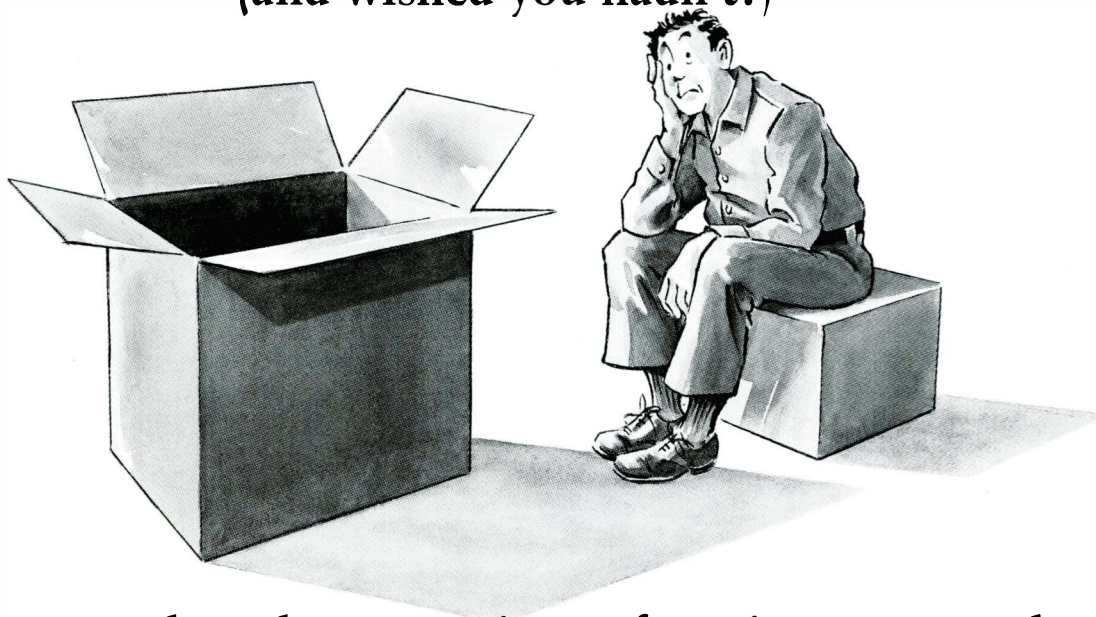
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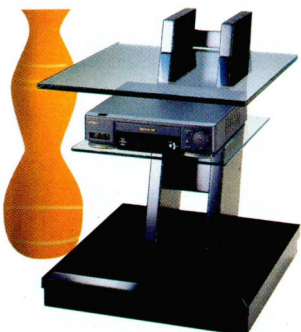


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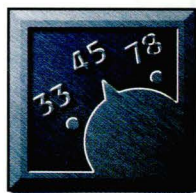
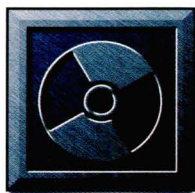
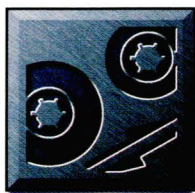
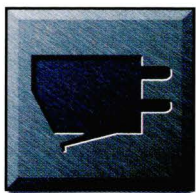
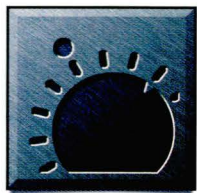


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1988	54-65	Mar, Dec	Very limited
1989	66-77	May, June, Aug, Sept, Nov, Dec	Very limited
1990	78-89	Nov	Very limited
1991	90-101	May, June, July	Very limited
1992	102-113	Mar, Collection	Very limited
1993	114-125	Feb, Dec	Very limited
1994	126-137	Jan, Feb, Mar, April, May, Jul, Oct	Very limited
1995	138-149	All sold out	None
1996	150-161	Jan, April, BBG	Very limited
1997	162-173	May, Dec, BBG	Very limited
1998	174-185	May, Jul/Aug, Oct, BBG	Limited
1999	186-197	None sold out	Good
2000	198-	None sold out	Good

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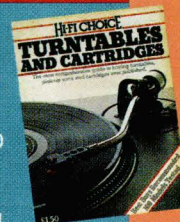
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JIMMY HUGHES

Jimmy discovers that the French have a new angle on cable insulation and cut no corners when it comes to the mains.

If you're talking hi-fi separates, cables are a necessary evil capable of profoundly influencing the final sound. And while it's probably fair to say that even the best cables in the world won't rescue a bad or ill-matched system, having unsuitable or poor cables can ruin the sound of good set up. So it pays to make the right choice. The trouble is – where do you start? The options are many and varied...

PHY-HP cables from France are interesting because they're fabricated using natural materials rather than synthetics. The insulation is cotton rather than a plastics derivative, and the makers claim this results in a truer, more natural, sound. There are two versions – screened and unscreened – costing £120 and £140 respectively. And the standard length is 1.2m, terminated with gold-plated phonos or BNC plugs.

Construction is simple; just single 0.6mm diameter pure annealed silvered copper solid core conductors. A three-wire system is employed; one for positive, one for negative, and a third to act as a drain wire. These are carefully wrapped in cotton insulators, resulting in a light but fairly stiff package.

I tried the unscreened type first, replacing a short set of DNM interconnect. First impressions were of increased smoothness, clarity, and fine detail. Pitch definition was slightly clearer, making individual notes more solid and tangible. At the same time the sound had greater texture; for example, flutes seemed more breathy as though upper harmonics were being enhanced.

I noticed much the same on massed violins; there was more bow rosin audible giving a huskier feel to the sound. But at the same time the sound wasn't clogged or edgy; it had more of that grainy, textured quality one hears live, rather than the euphonic 'hi-fi' sheen that equipment imparts. Tonally,

the PHY-HP cables sounded very sweet and open, with a notable lack of hardness.

Trying a CD of baroque music played on period instruments, there was much less tonal peakiness apparent; less of that unpleasant 'electronic' hardness/forwardness which so often disfigures recordings made using authentic



GTA's mains board has 'naked' PHY-HP inside. But the interconnect is 100 per cent cotton clad.

instruments – characteristics that give strings (for example) a raw edge quality. There was still plenty of sharpness and bite on offer, but not at the expense of the woody, mellow qualities that make acoustic instruments sound believable.

Clarity was enhanced too, with a greater sense of notes starting and stopping. Trying some early digital recordings, ones which have always tended to sound a bit fuzzy and congested, I was pleased to note an increased sense of space around voices and instruments with less treble 'hash'. Even when a little upper-frequency edge remained, it seemed cleaner somehow – more natural (naturelle?) and less synthetic.

The screened PHY-HP cable was also good, but sounded slightly less open than the unscreened version. Nevertheless, I judged it preferable to the admittedly less expensive DNM interconnect I'd been using before; it seemed slightly more detailed and immediate, with increased clarity and a slightly more natural tonal quality.

For situations where the cable is used at line level (between CD player and preamp,

for example, or between preamp and power amp) the unscreened version should be fine. You'd only need to use the screened cable for turntable use where the signal is just a few millivolts or microvolts.

PHY-HP importers, GT Audio, also offers a stunning six-way mains distribution board using high-quality Crabtree 13a sockets, wired with a choice of PHY-HP cables. Most mains distribution boards offered for hi-fi use look distinctly utilitarian; this one oozes class. There's a basic version using 2.5mm diameter copper, but the one I had for testing was wired with 2.5mm diameter copper that was thickly silver-plated. Cost is £299. Meanwhile, for those wanting the ultimate, there's a version wired with 2mm diameter pure silver wire costing £495.

PHY-HP makes a high quality mains lead (1m - £130) that can be used with the six-way distribution board or any hi-fi component fitted with an IEC socket. Before using the distribution board, I tried the PHY-HP mains cable with an Arcam FMJ CD player, replacing a white solid core type – itself a worthwhile improvement on the black stranded mains cable supplied with the player.

Interestingly, the sonic difference produced by the PHY-HP mains cable was virtually identical to that of the PHY-HP interconnect; the sound was more open and textured, with reduced tonal hardness plus greater clarity and fine detail. Going back to the white solid core mains cable, the sound seemed a shade closed in and tonally colder and harder. Altogether a very worthwhile difference!

Using the six-way distribution block with several components (each with their own mains cables) the effects already described were further enhanced. Clarity and separation were definitely better, while at the same time the music sounded cleaner and more dynamic with increased detail and impact. And while such differences would doubtless have increased had PHY-HP mains cables been used for each individual component, there was still a distinctly audible difference using just the mains block.

It's obviously difficult to say exactly why a cable sounds the way it does, and choosing natural materials rather than synthetics for the insulation is only one factor among many. Nevertheless, I do think there's something in the PHY-HP approach, and would strongly recommend those looking for increased naturalness to give these cables a serious audition.

GT Audio ☎ (01895) 833099

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE ...

ZEROS AND ONES

If you're still messing around with hissy old cassettes, make sure you pitch up for next issue's Mega Test. Our experts focus their hard stares on the latest MiniDisc and CD recorders including models from: Teac, JVC, Marantz, Sony, Pioneer and Kenwood.

HIGH VOLTAGE

If you've just spent the better part of your life savings on a pair of the speakers in this issue, maybe you're



Burn, baby, burn! CD inferno!

on the lookout for something a bit more modestly priced to plug them into. Check out our upcoming test of sub-£500 amplifiers which includes the latest from: Marantz, Cyrus, Roksan, Rotel and Kenwood.

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