

# hi-fi

FEBRUARY 2005 UK £3.40

## WORLD



DIY SUPPLEMENT NO.81

### CLASSIC HI-FI SPECIAL ISSUE:

Sixties vs. Eighties: Garrard/Quad & Linn/Naim  
then and now: Epos ES14 & M22 'speakers  
Sci-Fidelity: futurist audio designs  
Technics SU-C2000 preamplifier  
Marketplace: used audio mart  
SME M2 tonearm: retro cool  
Quad 303 supercharged!  
buying vintage kit

### VINYL DEMAND

2005 MARANTZ TT-15S1  
TURNTABLE

SCOP



marantz

### CLASS A-CT

1980 MARANTZ MA-5 MONOBLOCS

ONKYO C-1VL CD PLAYER

DENON DVD-3910 DVD PLAYER

CYRUS / EXPOSURE / MUSICAL FIDELITY / ROKSAN

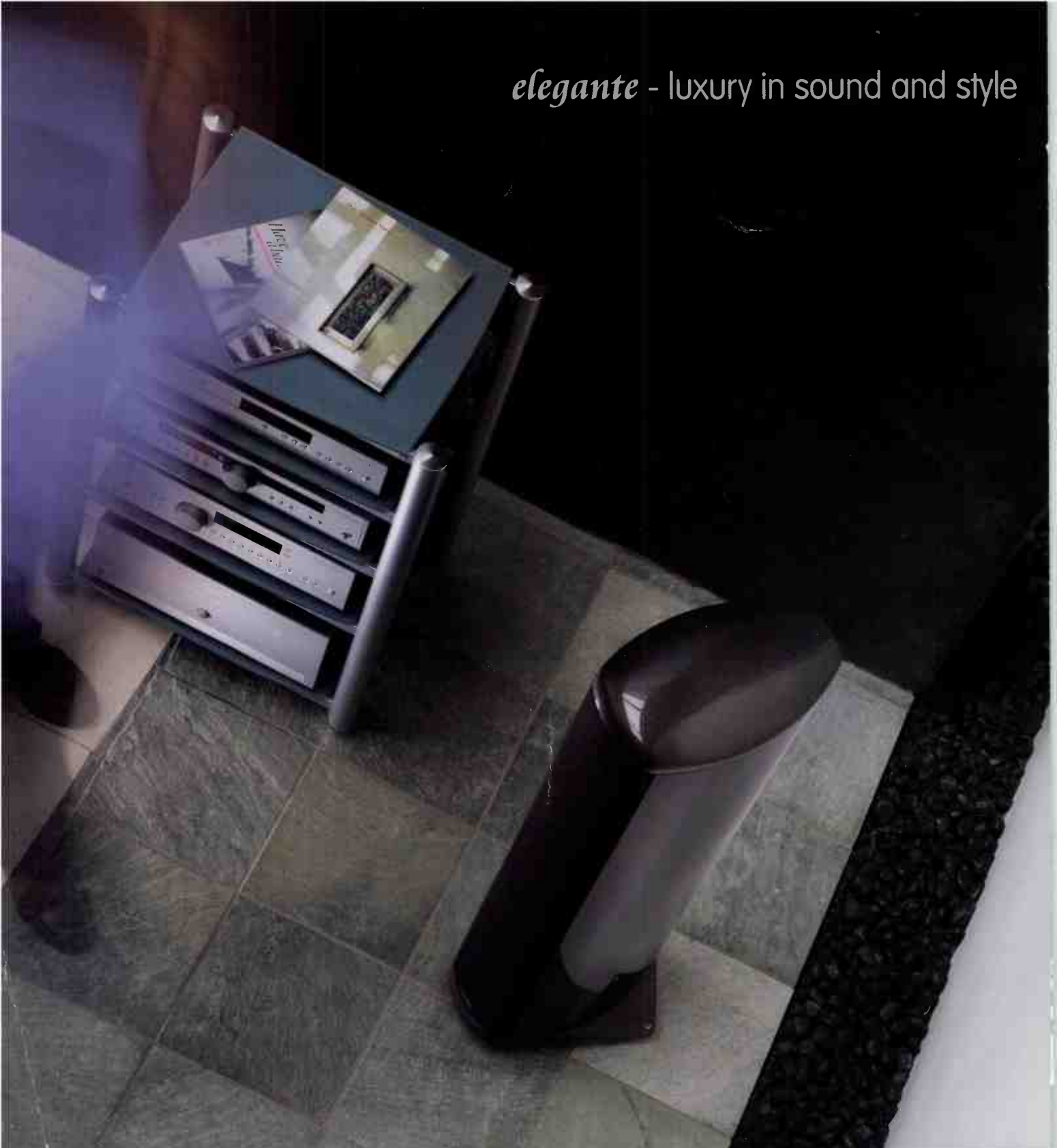
PRE-POWER AMPLIFIER SUPERTEST

FEBRUARY 2005



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# welcome

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Things can't only get better. To be brutally frank, manufacturers often replace their product ranges more for reasons of cost, component supply and marketing – than to selflessly bring us, the customer, something better cheaper...

So quite why so many magazines pretend that today's new CD player, amplifier or loudspeaker is inevitably 'better than ever' is beyond me - or it would be if I didn't know that old publishing adage that *new products sell magazines...*

The upshot is that Joe Punter reads the rave review of what's just replaced his beloved hi-fi and – after painful deliberation – gets his credit card out and picks up the telephone. What often follows is a brief period of elation (well, we all love splashing out on ourselves), and then growing despondency, then a feeling of being cheated...

*Hi-Fi World* doesn't preach the mantra of 'new is best', but when we find something modern that's really special, we shout about it. Of course, we have 'more than a passing interest' in classic hi-fi - stuff that's lived on in people's affections beyond the warranty period – but also a craving to seek out new, future classics.

February's issue focuses on just this: You'll find a wealth of illustrious products from hi-fi's past (from Garrard, SME, Quad, Linn, Naim, Epos, Technics, Marantz, etc.), plus new designs that will one day achieve classic status, like the marvellous Musical Fidelity X-PRE v3/X-P200 from this month's pre-power amp supertest, and the beautiful Marantz TT-15S1 turntable on the front cover. Enjoy!

**David Price, editor**



## testing

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

## verdicts



**OUTSTANDING**  
**EXCELLENT**  
**GOOD**  
**MEDIOCRE**  
**POOR**  
**VALUE**

simply the best  
extremely capable  
worth auditioning  
unremarkable  
seriously flawed  
keenly priced

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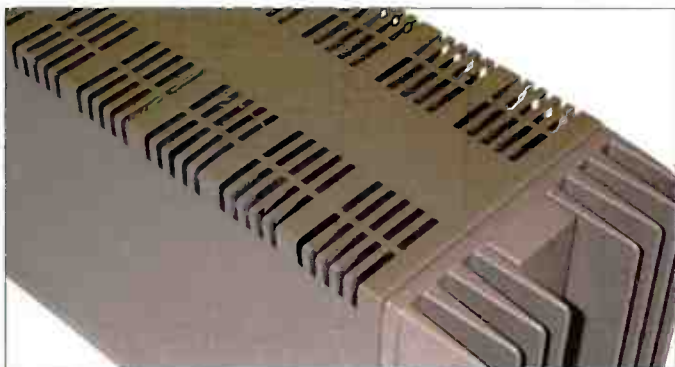
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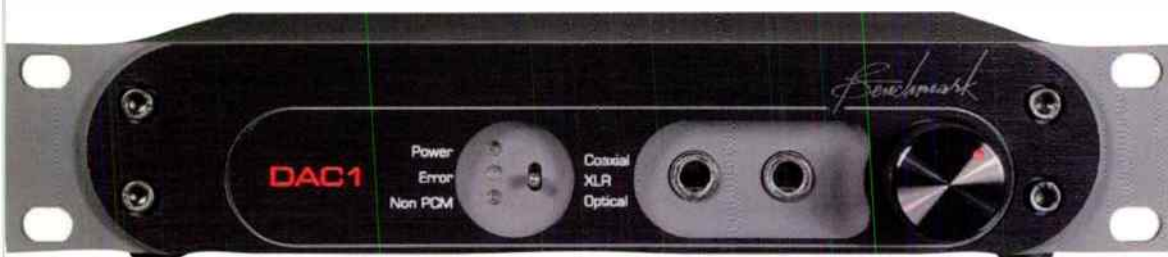
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# news

## PURE ELEGANTE

Mission's new Elegante range consists of three unique loudspeaker systems, each designed to complement the decor of any room in the house. The styling is influenced by the flagship Pilastro, featuring a gently curved profile, with luxurious Grania cabinets that optimise sound dispersion. All speakers feature a seven-layer, highly polished, hand-lacquered anthracite finish with black cloth grilles and are available in 5.1 and 6.1-channel home theatre configurations, with a simple option to upgrade to 7.1-channel. Comprising of stylishly profiled loudspeakers and a powerful subwoofer, each system is said to 'effortlessly deliver all the power, thrills and excitement of the latest CD, DVD, DVD-Audio and SACD releases', no less. Prices start at £2,490 for a 5.1 system.



## BENCHMARK PRODUCT?

Following Hi-Fi World's preoccupation with finding great sounding pro-gear that's cheaper and/or better than so-called domestic hi-fi, get this: Benchmark's DAC1 is reputedly a superb sounding digital-to-analogue convertor, made in The States, and retailing here for £938.83 inc.VAT. A two-channel, 24-bit, 192-kHz design, the manufacturer claims it to be "perhaps one of the more significant recent advances in digital audio conversion technology", no less. THD+N is an astonishing low -106 dB (0.0005%) measured at 0 dBFS, at any playback frequency, at any sample rate, with any degree of input jitter – thanks to its jitter free UltraLock™ technology. Additional features include auto-processing of pre-emphasized digital audio and our latest HPA-2 headphone amplifier technology. This technology features distortion levels of 0.0003% under load. The audio output levels may be controlled from the front panel by the same gain control that feeds the headphone amplifier or it may be preset to a precise level with multi-turn trims. See next month's *Hi-Fi World* for an in-depth review...

## NATIONAL INFRASONIC

Wilson Benesch has been awarded a Department of Trade and Industry 'Smart Research' grant for its forthcoming Precision Bass Infrasonic Generator (nee subwoofer). Set to premiere at February's Bristol Show, it claims 'for the first time, world-class performance for music and home theatre combined with huge power delivery, true subterranean frequencies and upgrade capability, all in a relatively small and elegant package', no less. It sports an ultra-rigid Carbon Kevlar diaphragm which weighs less than 100gms and is strong enough to support the weight of an adult. There is no dynamic drive unit in the conventional sense, the gold-plated structure at the centre is one of the two push-pull motors and as gold is the best of conductors, this is not just cosmetic. This unique solution is claimed to eliminate all the problems associated with conventional dynamic driver, MDF box subwoofers. At the heart of the design is a massive 10 kilo metal core, earthed to ground via a substantial steel base plate, all the forces and reactions take place in this over-engineered component. Unlike any other sub, the modular digital electronics driving the PB are housed in an elegant separate enclosure and are completely isolated from vibration. For more on this, call Wilson Benesch on [01142 852 656](tel:01142852656) or click on [www.wilson-benesch.com](http://www.wilson-benesch.com).





## ARCAM BUYS ITSELF

A management buyout has been announced at Arcam, with a new team to lead the company into the future, investment in R&D to be ramped up and some innovative new products to be launched at January's CES show in Las Vegas. The new management team comprises Charlie Brennan (the current Managing Director), Michael Sheridan, Operations Director and Alan Wylie, former Financial Director of Tannoy. They will continue to work with Jacky Cross and founder John Dawson to build on the progress that has been made in recent years. Charlie Brennan, Arcam's Managing Director commented that 'Arcam is one of a very few specialist companies in the UK that has the ability to design and manufacture world-class home cinema and hi-fi products... We have a team of exceptionally talented people in place right across the company, and we have spent and will continue to spend heavily on new products and new technologies that will capture the imagination of all those who love music and movies. I and the whole team here at Arcam look forward to the future with confidence.' See: <http://arcam.co.uk>.

## NEW LITTLE PINK THING...

Tivoli Audio has announced a new addition to its popular Model PAL line-up of rechargeable portable radios with the introduction of a pink-finished model! Aimed at the female market - although not exclusively [...? - Ed.] - the £130 Pink PAL joins a range of no less than ten finishes to choose from. With a small footprint the PAL can be sited almost anywhere and the custom designed 2.5" magnetically shielded driver and rubberised cabinet are weather resistant, making the PAL useable in all conditions. Inside there's an environmentally friendly rechargeable Nickel Metal Hydride battery pack, which provides up to 20 hours of playback from one charge. The intelligent small green LED on the front serves as both a power and battery status indicator. The PAL borrows the same geared-down 5:1 ratio analogue tuning dial as used in the critically acclaimed Tivoli Model One table radio for accurate tuning. Also on tap is an auxiliary input to connect a CD, MP3 player, or other device, and a headphone socket, which provides full stereo output for private listening. This same output also serves as a recording output, or allows the PAL to be used as a high-quality outboard tuner for a hi-fi system. The tuner features Automatic Frequency Control (AFC) which locks on to the centre of the station for best reception and lowest distortion, while the adjustable telescoping FM antenna extends and rotates for best FM reception (there is also a built-in AM antenna).



## DTS STOP PRESS

The news that DTS has been chosen as mandatory audio format for both Blu-ray and HD-DVD might not be such a surprise, but the new DTS-HD should be. The new format uses DTS's advanced extension technology which embraces DTS 6.1 Discrete, DTS 96/24 and now for the future DTS Lossless. It's optional for both formats, and is the only lossless audio technology selected for BOTH disc formats. As a mandatory technology in the next generation standards, this means that a DTS decoder will be built into every HD-DVD or Blu-ray Disc player. One single DTS-HD datastream on a disc can carry everything from standard DTS 5.1 playable on all existing 280 million plus DTS decoders, all the way to DTS Lossless for next-generation systems. For more information, click on <http://www.dtonline.com>.

## SLAPPA IPOD IN THIS...

Ipod cases are ten a penny, but when Slappa - which manufactures some of the very best CD storage we've tried - comes up with one, it's worth mentioning. Total Impact Industrial Ltd's new SLAPPA HardBody iPod case claims to be a bit different from what is currently available. As with all their products, it has an emphasis on protection, while maintaining sleek and clean styling. It's currently retailing on the website [www.slappa.com](http://www.slappa.com) for \$29.99.





## EAR AND NOW

Sennheiser's new MX 450 (£14.99) and MX 550 (£24.99) in-ear headphones are an important new release for fans of music on the move – be it from CD, MD, cassette or digital audio portables. They're significant because almost all the 'earbuds' bundled with Walkman-type devices are of very poor quality, with (the lowest possible) price being the key criterion for their inclusion. These Sennheisers are genuinely engineered for performance, whilst still retaining fine value for money. The excellent MX 500 stays in the range at £19.99, while slotting underneath is the new MX 450. It

boasts a balanced 'basswind' system for powerful stereo sound, metal mesh grilles over the transducer capsules, flexible cable protection collar and a 'cord rewind' protective case. The new Sennheiser MX 550 boasts all this, plus a volume control – very important for iPod people, as current iPods have no remotes included. The editor has tried a pair for over a month, and reports superb sound (with cleaner and more incisive bass and midband compared to the MX500) and improved comfort and finish. If you can't afford £240 for a pair of Etymotic ER4-Ps, then the MX500 is the one for restless listeners. For details, call [0800 652 5002](tel:08006525002) or click on <http://sennheiser.co.uk>.



### CLICK HERE:

THE VINTAGE KNOB  
[www.thevintageknob.org](http://www.thevintageknob.org)

An amazing assemblage of some of the sweetest seventies kit, this 'online audio museum' isn't quite complete yet, but makes a great read all the same. Great stuff guys - we classic audiophiles salute you!

## WONDERFUL WORLD...

January 4th 2005 is a special day for music lovers up North as **turntableworld!** opens its doors offering an extensive range of analogue products to satisfy all pockets. There are selected items from nearly all of the best known and most respected manufacturers in the UK marketplace including a good selection of cartridges permanently on demonstration. Full support for virtually any deck new or old is available, a record cleaning service plus a selection of vinyl related accessories including digital scales from £29. Run by a man who collects turntables for fun, **turntableworld!** (tel: 01325 241888) can be found at **hifisound, 30b Larchfield St, Darlington.**

## IN PHASE

Terratec's new Phase 24 is a powerful external 24-bit/192-kHz audio interface for studio quality recording sessions and notebook-based applications. The FireWire device claims to offer the perfect solution for recording sessions and notebook-based applications. It claims 'outstanding technical specifications', including two balanced analog inputs/outputs, digital and MIDI I/O as well as a FireWire connection. The package also contains the software package 'Traktor DJ' from Native Instruments and Steinberg's 'WaveLab Lite', featuring full 24-bit/192-kHz resolution. The two analogue mono inputs/outputs are professional-quality and standard with 6.3 mm (1/4") balanced jack plug connectors. The headphones that serve as a variable stereo output provide a permanent means of monitoring the sound, which is said to be crisp and engaging, courtesy of the excellent 24/192 analog and digital signal processing and 111 dB signal-to-noise ratio (at the converter). The TerraTec Producer PHASE 24 FireWire is available now - call +44 (0)1252 870726 or click on [www.terratec.co.uk](http://www.terratec.co.uk).



### LOW PRICED

Saitek's Laptop Subwoofer is a clever, compact external subwoofer designed to boost the bass of laptop PC speakers. Plugging easily into the USB port and requiring no external power, it's easy to use and costs just £20 from good computer retailers.

## next issue

March 2005's *Hi-Fi World* is all about loudspeakers. We use standmounters from Mordaunt Short, Spendor, Wharfedale, Quad, Mission and Castle to compare different cone materials from metal to polypropylene. We audition Wilson Benesch's stunning carbon fibre clad Curve floorstanders, and try a full range REL/Quad 989/Townshend Maximum combination that's flat from 15Hz to 100kHz! We examine the cult of Deep Cryogenic Treatment of cables, and recommend a brace of interconnects to tune your speakers up. Factor in other goodies like Benchmark's DAC1 digital converter, Musical Fidelity's new A5 CD player, Naim's NAC112x/ NAP150x pre-power - and much, much more - and it's another unput-downable issue! Get it from Monday 31st January 2005...

# Walrus

11 New Quebec St, London W1



This ad features a few new products we're excited about, as well as a couple of old favourites (which we're still excited by even after all this time!) From top right, going anticlockwise, first off are the Anthony Gallo Reference 3 loudspeakers (£2400/pr). You can't tell from the picture, but these are actually very compact (about 3 feet tall) but have the most amazing bass extension and a very open sound. Next, the brand new

Musical Fidelity A5 series amplifier (250W/ch) and CD player, at £1499 each, are superb value. They are designed to be better, and cost less, than the popular 308 series, and don't even feel embarrassed in the company of the famous Nuvista and Trivista series. The CD even features a valve output stage, just like the late lamented Trivista DAC! The Duevel Bella Lunas (£3160 to £4160/pr dependent on finish) need no introduction. This superb Omni design, featured at the recent Heathrow Show, should be on everyone's shortlist. Origin Live's new Sovereign turntable (£3850 plus arm) sets new, even higher standards for this already envied manufacturer whose decks already receive huge acclaim from the press. Next up is something we thought we'd never see - a valve / transistor hybrid power amp from Tom Evans, famous for their

Groove phono stage and Vibe preamp. The Linear A (£3999) is a truly innovative design which draws on the strengths of both technologies to give transistor speed and control with valve naturalness and texture, another milestone for Tom! Many people will still remember the success we had with the Magneplanar MG 1.6 speakers at the show. These flat non-electrostatic panels with ribbon tweeters produce the most amazingly believable soundstage, all for the direct import no-middleman price of £1500/pr. The new Duevel Shuttle-Disk rechargeable battery CD player (also £1500) is on permanent demo - bring your own CDs and be pleasantly surprised! Lastly, we had to squeeze it in, what we regard as probably the finest all round (pardon the pun) turntable in the world, the Brinkmann LaGrange with the Brinkmann 10.5 tonearm

(£8395 in total), a truly staggering combination.



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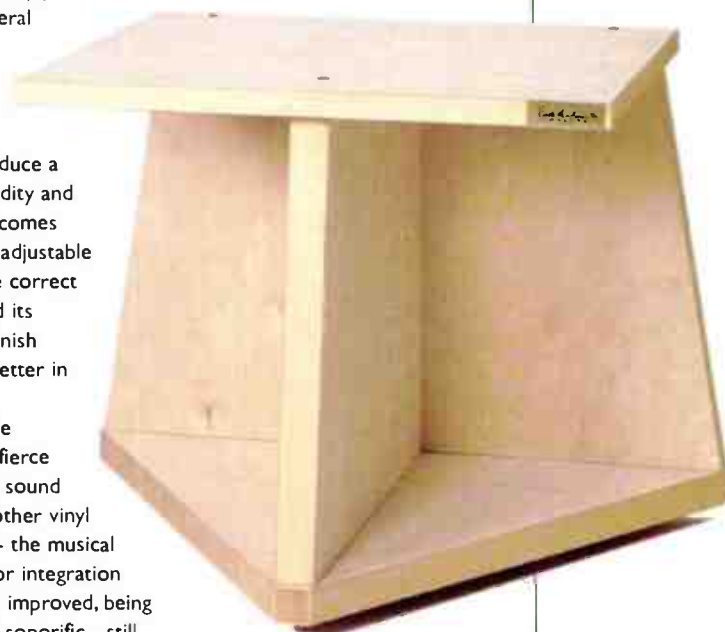
## RUSS ANDREWS

### TORLYTE STAND

£480

As anyone who's ever owned a Rega will know, turntables are sensitive to where they're placed. Suspended subchassis decks try to obviate this with clever suspension systems, but while they may be partially successful, they never work completely – and you can bet that the older the deck is, the less likely it is to excel in this respect. As for non-suspended designs such as the aforementioned Rega – or practically every Japanese design ever made – positioning is absolutely critical. For example, a perfectly located Planar 3 will sound better than most £1,500 CD player, but put it on the floor and the chances are that Radio 5 Live on Medium Wave will whip it... Russ Andrews' Torlyte Stand is a dedicated piece of hi-fi furniture designed solely for the noble purpose of isolating vinyl sources. It uses a proprietary sandwich timber construction consisting of a

honeycomb matrix and ply outer skin taking several hours to assemble, where all the panels are glued and cured in a vacuum press to produce a panel of extreme rigidity and low mass. The stand comes equipped with three adjustable spiked feet to ensure correct level and stability, and its delicate light wood finish actually looks a lot better in the flesh than in a photograph. Using the Torlyte brings a less fierce but ultimately better sound than practically any other vinyl support we've tried - the musical structure has superior integration with vocals definitely improved, being less strained, yet not soporific - still vital and communicative. It is the type of improvement in sound quality that lasts, it is not sudden or subtle, but simply a wholesale change for the better. Musicians play fluidly yet excitedly, the complete sound is compelling yet composed, highlighting the mixture of complex vocal harmonies and the intricate



instrumental arrangements without emphasising any one aspect over the other. If you're serious about getting the best from individual hi-fi source components, this is an essential audition.

[www.russandrews.com](http://www.russandrews.com).

## BLACK RHODIUM

### POLAR RHYTHM

DCT £135/M

When Black Rhodium's Graham Nalty discovered Deep Cryogenic Treatment in 2003, he was bowled over by the results. The process is carried out in a specially built chamber, cables are placed in the enclosure and gradually the temperature is reduced for over forty eight hours until the temperature reaches -190 degrees Celsius, which is maintained for a while before the slow reheating process starts. DCT realigns the structure of the cables so the wire allows the voltage to flow more smoothly. It also de-stresses the molecular structure again affording voltage an easier path to flow down. There seems to be only one downside to DCT, which is the extended running in period, which

can be up to 50% longer than non-treated cables. Polar Rhythm DCT is terminated with very well built Black Rhodium RCA phono plugs. Insulation is PTFE; the core of the cable is silver plated copper, which is configured in a single ended type of structure - in other words the cable can be described as coaxial. The difference between non-DCT and DCT versions of this cable is staggering. The former is a good, open, crisp performer that's very competitive at its £45/m price point, but the latter boasts much tighter grip, far superior bass extension, more weight and better recovery time – giving this cable a wide, tall stereo image and extremely smooth treble to midrange balance. Non-DCT Polar Rhythm is a fine budget cable, but the frozen version is leaps and bounds ahead, making it one of the most impressive interconnects at the price – and a seriously cool cable.

[www.blackrhodium.co.uk](http://www.blackrhodium.co.uk)



# tt ace

It's been a long time since Marantz sold a serious hi-fi turntable, but the new TT15S1 is here at last. David Price puts it through its paces...



**A**s I write this, news comes that CD has just had its best ever year. Strange then, that I'm sitting here, reviewing Marantz's first turntable aproper since Compact Disc was invented, the brand new £999.95 TT15S1... How so? Well, when large multinational companies like Marantz start marketing turntables again, then you can be sure that there's real demand for vinyl.

It's no secret that one man behind Marantz's success – Ken Ishiwata – is something of an analogue addict. Sadly, if you chat to many high-ups in big hi-fi companies, they'll happily admit to either not owning a turntable or (at best) having it sat up in the loft boxed since the days of Margaret Thatcher, shoulder pads and red braces. As both a vinylista and an audio mover-and-shaker, KI is almost in a gang of one.

His own turntable is a Marantz

TT10000 (his own variation of the classic late seventies 'Esotec' TT1000 – with a production run totalling, ermm, one...) To this you can add a Koetsu Rosewood Signature cartridge (*de rigueur* with vinyl aficionados, inevitably) and his own assorted home-made tube and solid-state phono stages. Despite being behind some of the very best sounding CD spinners ever made, analogue is his reference – and his digital gear is assessed by how it performs relative to this, not the other way round). With this in mind, surely a new record deck from Marantz was only a matter of time?

Well, the backroom boys at Marantz were sceptical all the same – this is not traditional Marantz territory (not in the modern age at least), especially in the UK where the company is still associated (wrongly, in my view) with budget CD players. As a result, the TT15 was more of a leap of faith for the company's top brass than you might

think. To wit, they weren't prepared to tool up for a completely new design, and instead opted to do what Marantz does (very) well, which is to tweak another manufacturer's design...

## IN DETAIL

Clearaudio's entry-level Emotion was the deck that KI decided to cast his spell upon – and why not? It's a well conceived bit of kit; simple and elegant, well made at the price and sounds good to boot. The TT15S1 isn't simply a rebadged Clearaudio though – there's a considerable number of changes.

The TT15S1 is a non-suspended sub-platterless design with an 420x137x360mm Acrylic plinth and platter, the latter driven by an endless silicon belt around its rim (Michell-style) by an AC synchronous motor – total weight is 8.8kg. Unlike the original Clearaudio, the 3mm platter boasts a thick felt platter mat – an interesting choice,



as the trend in recent years has been away from this. To ensure record stability, a 'Clever Clamp' is included – a very simple but effective plastic dished affair. The polished, hardened steel and sintered bronze main bearing feels a quality item, its spindle sitting very tight inside the bearing housing. The company claims a signal to noise ratio of 80dB and a wow and flutter figure of 0.07% RMS (DIN) – not great by superdeck standards, but decent enough.

The tonearm is also a variant of a Clearaudio design (the 'Satisfy'), a multi-pivot type with wolfram bearing shafts, its polished ends running in sapphire watch bearings. The arm's vertical bearing is of long life ceramic. The anodised aluminium armtube is straight, with Clearaudio OFC 'superwire' used inside. The counterweight screws on and then fastens with a tiny locknut, and bias adjustment is magnetic rather than the more common (at this price) weight and pulley arrangement. The supplied Clearaudio Virtuoso Wood MM cartridge is a nice touch, as it makes the Marantz a neat, and complete, package – precisely what this product is all about.

There's no doubt that when assembled, the TT15S1 seems an extremely pleasing turntable. It looks gorgeous, and feels it too. Best of all is the fact that it's an all-in-one package – you get a motor unit, tonearm and cartridge, all of which are quality items designed to work synergistically with one another. However, as turntable packages go, this is a fiddly thing to build up. We're not in Rega P5 territory, where everything comes bolted together and all you have to do is put the platter on, plug in and cue up. Rather, the Marantz comes as a big Meccano kit that you have to build yourself. Now, it's possible that your friendly local Marantz dealer can do it for you, but as many audio emporiums these days seem to know more about composite video than cartridge compliance, I wouldn't be too sure... So my first quibble is that – whilst not being an evening's work like, say, a Michell GyroDec, this is no plug and play design...

Essentially, once you've pulled all the bits out of the foam packing, you have to put on the supplied white gloves (nice touch – it reduces the risk of you sullyng the plinth's

beautiful matt white Acrylic finish), squirt a dab of oil into the main bearing housing, insert the spindle, screw in the tonearm (after having installed the cartridge first), wire in the earth lead, connect up the motor, fit the platter, balance the arm, align the cartridge, tighten up all the bits, fit the belt and err, that's it. Piece of cake (to me, but not to someone who's getting back into vinyl after twenty years away – or worse still, who's a newcomer!)...

### SOUND QUALITY

When assessing the sonics of this deck, it's important to remember that the bundled cartridge is worth a good £200 of anyone's money, and that there's also a fine tonearm too. Essentially then, it's up against the likes of Rega's P5 (with Super Elys) and Michell's TecnoDec/TecnoArm (a) with, say, a Goldring G1042. Oh dear! These two aforementioned machines define the state of the 'affordable audiophile turntable' art – both are exceptionally good packages, with real engineering innovation and superb build and finish. They might lack the sophistication of £1,500 machines (with which they share

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some DNA), but they come surprisingly close in performance terms for a lot less money... The new Marantz TT1551 has something of a fight on its hands.

Having a Rega P5 to hand, I initially didn't fit the Clearaudio cartridge, so I could get an accurate gauge of how the two decks performed with a Shure V15VxMR on board. It was fascinating how different the two performed. If you remember last month's review of the Rega, you'll recall that it's an extremely musical and engaging deck with a somewhat two dimensional soundstage and rather a small palette of tonal colours available to it. Well, the Marantz isn't any of these. Rather, it's quite an 'analogue' – and in some ways – traditional sounding device, with a warmer, fuller tonality and a more enveloping recorded acoustic.

Kicking off with ABC's 'The Lexicon of Love' (appropriate, I thought, considering it's just been remastered on silver disc), the TT1551 presented a very pleasing sound. It's obviously more capacious than the Rega, with instruments hanging back and projecting forward more easily, and the left to right soundstage is expansive too. In fact, it does that clever trick of making the loudspeakers seem to 'disappear' – something that not even SACD can do as well. As the slow orchestral intro morphed into the song in earnest, those eighties Linn drums crashed with gusto and the song got into its groove. The TT1551 sounded like it was loving every minute – engagingly musical, dynamically expressive and with no shortage of *joie de vivre*, it proved a real hoot to listen to.

Although in some ways less 'emotionally constrained' than the Rega, and better able to let the rhythms flow in an organic and unfettered sort of way (in a sort-of Thorens TD160 style), the P5 did prove to have more precision and grip. This was particularly obvious on the leading edges of notes; attack transients were more accurately carried on the Brit deck, meaning that the musicians' individual accents and inflections (i.e. the phrasing) was slightly more explicit. This meant with long, deep, intricate groove-based pop such as 'Date Stamp' from the same album, the Rega was more able to convey the song's reason for being. Still, the Marantz was certainly no slouch, it too could be extremely quick of the mark, its sense of effortlessness making up on the swings

what it lost on the roundabouts.

New Order's 'World in Motion' on 12" showed the TT1551 to be an extremely satisfying listen, with oodles of pace, punch and power. Bass is surprisingly fulsome for a deck with such a basic plinth design (although me putting it on Audiophile Furniture Base SP01 platforms certainly didn't hurt), and in this respect it made the Rega sound just a tad lightweight. Sequenced basslines were fast, full and fluid via the Marantz, while the Rega made them sound a tad lighter, tighter and more 'joined up'. Neither presentation was obviously better; both proved very enjoyable and left me musing about how different analogue can sound (with any two classy £1,000 CD players, the differences would be far less explicit and more nuanced!)

Moving to Lonnie Smith's 'Think', and the Marantz proved obviously more at home. The Rega is a fairly 'technical' sounding machine, working very much in the domain of time rather than space. The Marantz is the opposite, and given a nice 'broad canvas of sound with which to work – such as the huge recorded acoustic on this classic sixties BlueNote recording – and it flies. The Rega sounded two dimensional ('spatially constrained') by comparison, but there was no doubting its superiority with rhythmic accenting of the music. It was as if the Marantz swayed smoothly in time with the groove, while the Rega pogo-ed like its life was at stake. Still, the superior depth perspective of the TT1551 helped convey the atmosphere of the live event better, and gave that all important sense of being there that vinyl is so famous for.

Bolting in the supplied Clearaudio Virtuoso Wood moving magnet was an interesting experience. Tracking at the recommended 2g, this is a fast, lithe cartridge in the Audio Technica/ Linn mould, and as such is a superb synergistic match for the Marantz. Now, the TT1551 was never going to have as full, strong bass as the likes of a Michell Orbe, Clearaudio Reference or Marantz TT1000, so it's not like it had to give the '15 a huge fillip in the treble department, but what it does do is provide a little bit of 'pep' which makes for a wonderful package. Simple acoustic music, such as the sublime sixties strains of John Coltrane and Jonny Hartman's 'Lush Life', is where this turntable shines. If you ask too much of it – for example to cut through the complex mix of Rush's 'Distant Early Warning' – then

it shows its budget roots, but given a rich analogue recording with simple production, it shines. Tonally, the TT1551 is excellent at the price, making the Rega sound somewhat grey, if not 'black and white'.

## CONCLUSION

The Marantz's rich tonal palette, allied to its natural musicality is to many people what analogue is all about. In a sense, if you want metronomic precision and 'analysis uber alles', some would sagely suggest you knock on digital's door. So for those wanting the joys of vinyl without having to mix and match, and/or spend an arm and a leg, the TT1551 is an excellent product. It's a very big hearted and engaging machine which runs rings around any equivalently priced CD, DVD-A or SACD machine (even with the best hi res stereo remaster), yet is simple to use and cool to look at. Only its inferior detail retrieval compared to Rega and Michell price rivals keep it off the very top spot – that and the fact that many of its intended audience will find it a chore to set up and/or find a dealer who can do it for them. A great re-entry into analogue for Marantz then – but I'm afraid it begs the question: when will we get a TT15 KI Signature...?

## REVIEWER'S NOTES

- the deck isn't brilliantly isolated from the outside world, so proper placement is vital to get it to give of its best; ideally a wall shelf should be used
- with 4mV output, the supplied ClearAudio Virtuoso Wood should drive any MM input with ease; we'd recommend a full sounding device such as a Graham Slee
- the tonearm, although a budget device, is finished to a very high standard and is decently adjustable too – it also gains cred points for not being a Rega RB250 (or derivative)!
- speed stability is good, but not up there with a Rega P5 with offboard motor PSU; it's a shame there's no option for this on the TT1551; the KI Sig perchance...?

## VERDICT

Consummately musical sound, superb build and finish and a great bundled cartridge make this a brilliant package at the price.

**MARANTZ TT1551 £999.95**

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## THOUSAND CC

Twenty one years ago today, £999 would have bought you this – the legendary Marantz Esotec TT1000 turntable. When a Linn LP12 cost £374 then this beauty cost big money, which allied to the UK hi-fi press's state of collective denial about the superior quality of Japanese high end direct drives, meant that few sold in this country. Germany, the USA and Japan saw better sales, but to be honest, time was not on the Marantz's side, as everybody was talking about Compact Disc, and vinyl was suddenly yesterday's news. Shame, because it's an exquisite design. Boasting a stunning looking plinth of two 15mm glass layers sandwiching an 8mm aluminium alloy interlayer (weighing no less than 25.3kg) and a glass disc topped 3.4kg balanced aluminium platter, it used the (then) obligatory (for a Japanese deck) direct driven, quartz locked motor aspirated by an external power supply housed in a classy wood veneered box. Despite the massy platter, 0 to 33.33RPM took just 1.5 seconds, showing the superb torque characteristics of the motor which turned in sub 0.05% DIN peak weighted wow and flutter numbers. Like all the very best Jap direct drives, the TT1000 sounded incredibly stable, unflappable and completely in command – offering CD's attributes of pitch stability and image solidity, but with the obvious analogue benefits of dimensionality, tonal quality and musicality. In short, it was a stunning listen and would have any of today's £2,000 belt drive superdecks on the back foot if properly sited and fettled.



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**Cyrus, Exposure, Musical Fidelity and Roksan are highly respected British brands with a legacy of affordable audiophile amplification stretching right back to the eighties - indeed, some of their designs have already become classics. So we thought we'd put their latest pre-power amplifier combinations against one another, with the ever-stringent Dominic Todd doing the listening...**

**W**ere this 1985, *Hi-Fi World* would be raving about the Mission Cyrus 2/PSX, Musical Fidelity A1 and Exposure VII/VIII amplifiers – and just about to taste the delights of the forthcoming Roksan Xerxes turntable (and accompanying electronics thereafter). These would all be newish brands that were fast winning new friends and influencing people...

Twenty years later, and these companies' obvious success has made them almost over-familiar to British audiophiles. It's easy to take them for granted, such are their high sales volumes and consistently competitive designs. What we forget however is that they're quintessentially British, not just in the way they sound (which is voiced very shrewdly to our tastes) but their respective blends of form and function. Button-festooned Japanese super-integrations they're not; indeed – they're all minimalist two box designs, something which, all those years ago, was the sole province of super-fi for the super-rich.

Still, despite all their obvious similarities, they're wildly differing products. Probably the most conventional is the Roksan Caspian Pre and Power combo. One box does the pre-amplifying and the other two, in this case, do the powering bit – it's simple, and just the way pre/power amps have been for years. Mind you, it may be traditional in format, but there's nothing old-hat about the Caspian. Recently updated with tidier looks, the new power amplifier has been thoroughly re-worked to offer ultra low distortion and wide bandwidth compatibility. The dual mono configuration of the pre-amp is also bang on the money and, if this trio is anything like previous Roksan amps', should offer a lively and

involving sound.

Most similar to the Roksan is the Musical Fidelity X-P200 and X-PRE v3. Sadly, these two X-products have lost the distinctive tubular casings that used to be part and parcel of the X-series. Still, they still look a little unconventional and, like the Roksans, certainly show signs of plenty of 'bangs for the bucks'. At 120W, the X-P200 is rated as the most powerful amplifier here. The addition of a mono switch also bestows the ability to push that power up to a serious 250W, once another unit has been added. The preamp claims to use a similar circuit to the glorious Nu-Vista, only this time the valves have been replaced by solid state transistors.

Following the two-box line, but in a rather more unconventional way, are the Exposure 2010S and Cyrus 8vs/PSX-R. The Cyrus is the only amp' here with an upgraded power supply. Furthermore, the PSX-R supply runs only the preamp section of the 8vs, and not the power amp. That said, as Cyrus and others have shown, paying attention to a preamp's power supply can work wonders with the sound. Like the Cyrus, the Exposure uses an integrated amplifier at its heart. Rather than upgrade via an additional power supply, though, Exposure proffers the addition of the 2010S power amplifier. In contrast to the PSX-R power supply, this has the effect of freeing up the integrated's power supply to simply run the pre-amp side of things. Although using a different method, the effect of twin power supplies should create similar benefits.

Four amps with three different approaches, then. In this test we first look at the pairings together and then, in the case of the pre/power amps, evaluate the units separately. For this, a familiar Quad 99/909 was used as a reference...



**EXPOSURE 2010S INTEGRATED/POWER £1,098**

**L**ike the 2010 CD player reviewed late last year, Exposure has been busy revising the 2000 series amplifiers. Although neither the integrated nor power amp' feature the extent of changes that Exposure undertook with the CD (bespoke transport and all), the new S models do feature the same cosmetic tweaks and a number of internal changes too. The all-aluminium casing is 20% thicker and the integrated's remote is improved – although still a little plasticky... Both units have a pleasing, understated, style about them, and the thicker metal casing can certainly be felt. For those of you who prefer black, incidentally, it's still available and surely the more traditional Exposure finish.

For a relatively basic integrated amplifier, the (£599) 2010S has a decent internal spec. The circuit board is of good quality and uses short signal paths. A reasonably sized toroidal transformer supplies the juice, with the MOSFET transistors placed beneath the main circuit board. A slab of aluminium, connected directly to the casing itself, provides cooling for these. Component quality is generally high, with polystyrene capacitors and solid aluminium electrolytic capacitors throughout.

Both the volume and selector knobs are decent quality ALPS models. The main output transistors are, unusually, laid on their sides, and isolated from the board via a dense,

foam pad. Whether this is designed to improve the sound or simply to make them fit within the 2010 casing is unclear but, either way, it's a neat bit of engineering. Although not as extensive as with the CD player, there are a few tweaks inside with the S version. Both the power supply and output devices have been updated. This should give a more dynamic sound, and the ability to handle wideband sources with greater ease. The additional benefit of the 'S' upgrade has been a 25w power increasing, taking the 2010S up to a healthy 75w.

Featurewise, the 2010S, like all the amps' here, is on the minimalist side. There are five line level inputs, a single tape loop and a pre-output. Two sets of 'speaker terminals are provided (designed for bi-wiring with thick cables), but no headphone socket. Although technically a system remote control, the Exposure's is nothing like as comprehensive as that supplied with the Cyrus. For this market, however, the Exposure's feature count, or lack of, will rarely be seen as a hindrance.

The (£499) 2010S power amplifier is, unsurprisingly, more basic still. It also features the 2-sets of 'speaker terminals, but has only a single input, with no loop through option. Crucially, Exposure has provided a stereo/mono switch. This gives the listener the opportunity to double the power output by adding a second amp' for monobloc-ing. As the

2010S is an integrated rather than a preamp, there is also the option of bi-amping. This, with bi-wirable 'speakers, allows for one amp to run the treble whilst the other runs the bass. This can work extremely well although, for a harmonious sound, the design of amps' used for both bass and treble should really be the same – as is the case here. The internal specification pretty much exactly mirrors that of the integrated. Both amps' feature IEC mains cables that can be upgraded, and also good quality 'speaker connections. It's worth noting, though, that whilst these aren't the annoying BFA connectors that Cyrus uses, they won't accept bare wires.

### SOUND QUALITY

The 2010S is one highly impressive £600 integrated. With Peter Cincotti, the Exposure showed great presence and vitality. Even without the additional power amp', the vocals benefited from the sort of body and resonance that one simply wouldn't expect from a solo amp' of this price. Complementing this was a piano timbre that was ideal – not too weedy, but not overblown either. In contrast to some of the others, yet rather like the Cyrus 8vs, bass response was lean, but not so dry as to suck the warmth from the music. If one was being super critical then it would be possible to criticise the 2010S for adding a little extra sibilance to the vocals, but not to the point of it becoming intrusive.

Separation, staging and sheer drive were all well above what would usually be expected from an amp' of this price.

Fine timing and rhythm were qualities that worked well with 'The Healer'. Again, bass wasn't the weightiest here, but it was well integrated and taut. The percussion had decent attack without becoming harsh. In isolation, B.B King's vocals sounded natural and well focused but, against the reference, weren't quite as well focused as they might have been. Once again, though, in the context of a £600 amplifier these criticisms seem somewhat churlish. The only significant criticism I could find of the 2010S was with female vocalists. Claire Martin's vocals were reproduced with just a slight edge and not quite the smoothness of some. Pitched directly against a Class-A amp', for example, you'd certainly notice a little glare. With sharper sounding ancillaries, this would be a characteristic to keep an eye on. Otherwise, though, with neutral or warm sounding partners it's not likely to be a major concern.

Although ultimately a little lacking in weight and authority, the 2010S displayed surprising scale and dynamic clout with Prokofiev. The introduction was dramatic and tense, yet managed not to lapse into harshness. Even more impressive was the fact that, whilst conveying all the drama and excitement of the piece, the basics of musical realism were still there.

Perhaps it was as a result of the basic 2010S sounding so good, but adding the power amp' didn't have as great an effect as I'd hoped. Having said that, there were still improvements. Listening in traditional pre/power mode, the Prokofiev showed a gain in control and articulation. The introduction was projected into the room with more vigour and a little extra weight and body. More tangible still was an improved brass timbre, which, whilst not exactly lacking before, now had an even greater sense of pizzazz. Claire Martin's vocals were articulated with greater precision, although the basic characteristic of sounding a tad edgy didn't change. That said, the extra body given to the sound had the effect of balancing some of the forwardness. The closely recorded percussion showed improved definition and was typical of the power amps effect

in general – subtle, but present nonetheless, once one started to listen closely.

With 'The Healer', B.B King's vocals certainly benefited from superior focus. Rather than being positioned vaguely between the 'speakers, they now resided within an exact, central, location. Otherwise, the extra weight, although marginal, did help to drive the track along with even greater conviction. Of all the tracks it was with Peter Cincotti that I noticed the least difference. This wasn't a poor reflection upon the performance, though, as it still proved thoroughly involving and, yes if you listened closely, there was still a little extra weight to the sound. Switching to bi-amping showed some marginal, but nevertheless, distinctive differences. In it's favour, bi-amping produced a wider and less constrained soundstage. Against this, however, some of the weight and scale of sound that was added by the power amp' was now no longer apparent. This actually gave the best results with female vocals, but proved to be no more dynamic than the integrated when it came to thunderous crescendos. Picking the right combination really boils down to matching components and personal preference.

In many respects, what is true of the Cyrus combination is the exact opposite here. On it's own, the 2010S is a cracking integrated and, whilst

adding the power amp' does improve the sound, it doesn't transform it. At £600 the 2010S is a class leading integrated. It may not have a great deal of features, but most people aren't going to feel particularly short-changed in this department. In terms of build quality and finish it is every bit as good as the opposition, which is something that couldn't be said of Exposures of old.

Yet it's in terms of sound quality where the 2010S really impresses. Aside from a slightly "chilled" perspective with female vocals the baby Exposure is near flawless. There's plenty of presence, excellent realism, and tight, focused timing. Short of a Naim Nait 5i or Audio Analogue Puccini Settanta (which are £100 and £375 more expensive) it would be my choice of transistor integrated under £1,000. Although impressive, the 2010S power amp' doesn't bring a great deal extra to the party. There are improvements to be had but, whether bi-amping or pre/power splitting, the gains are usually only subtle. As a solitary power amp' it also faces tougher competition at this price point. Nevertheless, with neutral or warm sounding ancillaries, this combo would provide a thoroughly involving sound that strikes an excellent balance between precision and realism. On the evidence of this, and other recent products, Exposure are back, and how!

## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

At 78W per channel the 2010S integrated amplifier has plenty of output, this figure rising to 120W into 4ohms. Since most bass drivers are 4ohms these days, this is closer to what you get in practice.

Distortion was low in the mid-band but rose to 0.1% at 10kHz, at all output levels. The distortion characteristic was fairly stable, so even though odd-order in structure I would expect the amp to sound just a little brightened, but clean. The 2010S power amplifier produced much less distortion but is the same in nature.

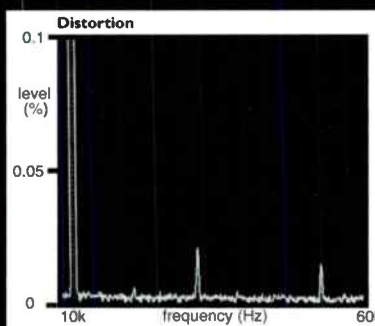
Sensitivity of the integrated was high at 0.24V via CD input. There was little noise too, but D.C. offset was higher than usual at around 35mV.

The independent 2010S power amplifier delivers identical power and performance, much lower D.C. offset of 3mV or so and a bandwidth reaching 35kHz (-1dB), little different from the integrated.

The Exposures will likely have a light sheen, but should be clear and clean. NK

Power	78watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	11Hz-35kHz
Separation	88dB
Noise	-104dB
Distortion	0.1%
Sensitivity	240mV
dc offset	38 / 32mV

Disc	
Frequency response	Hz-kHz
Separation	dB
Noise	dB
Distortion	%
Sensitivity	mV
Overload	mV



### VERDICT ●●●●£

Beautifully punchy, articulate and convincing – and that's just the integrated. Adding the power improves the sound, but the difference is subtle...

**EXPOSURE 2010S  
INTEGRATED/POWER £1,098**  
Exposure  
☎ +44 (0)1273 423877  
www.exposurehifi.com

#### FOR

- highly articulate
- timing and integration
- subtle, solid build

#### AGAINST

- limited features
- glassy female vocals

**CYRUS 8vs/PSX-R £1,198**

Unlike the others here, the Cyrus 8vs and PSX-R isn't a pre/power combination in the traditional sense. Instead, the combination consists of Cyrus's £800 integrated 8vs with the £400 PSX-R power supply unit. The Cyrus 8vs is the latest incarnation of a familiar 'shoebox' design; despite the familiar shape, much has changed over that time and, with the latest tweaks Cyrus have ventured further from the norm than ever before...

The 'vs' modifications are the result of a little lateral thinking on behalf of the Cyrus engineers. Essentially, large value capacitors in the signal path have either been removed or bypassed and a 'virtual servo' has replaced the existing servo amplifier. There are actually fewer esoteric components than before – something that Cyrus used to make great play of with their 'military spec' electronics – but more attention paid to board layout and the use of close tolerance components. Otherwise the 8vs is business as usual – which means a substantial toroidal power supply which helps to deliver a solid 70W per side.

The internal finish is also neat,

with star earthing used throughout. As with all Cyrus amps since the 3, there is a digital protection circuit should the listener become carried away with the volume. Another Cyrus custom for some time has been the use of a ferrous metal-free chassis. Instead of metal, it's actually fashioned from a polymer composite but, thanks in part to a die-cast magnesium outer case, avoids feeling plasticky. Sadly, the same can't be said of the remote which, given the price, is a disappointment. The good news, however, is that it does at least control an awful lot!

Whereas the old remote would control only Cyrus CD players and tuners, as well as the amp' of course, the new one will operate a far wider variety of Cyrus products, including their DVD players and Surround decoders. As before, balance, input sensitivity and muting operations are all available via the remote control.

Sadly, the wonderful ledge upon which the input sockets used to sit, on Cyrus amps of old, has long since gone, but the socketry is at least comprehensive. In addition to the PSX-R and headphone sockets, there are bi-wirable BFA, 'speaker terminals and six line-level inputs. Only one tape loop is standard, but there is a handy

pre-out and an MC-BUS output which allows the 8vs to form part of a full surround sound system. Despite being compact, there is generally enough space around the back of the amp' to fit larger cables. My only dislike, was the BFA speaker connectors which, because of their male design, preclude the use of standard banana plugs. Although well finished and undoubtedly well engineered, the Cyrus didn't have quite the luxurious feel of some of the amps here. In addition to the remote control, the plastic buttons and insubstantial-feeling, digital, volume control shoulder the blame.

Unlike previous Cyrus power supplies, the PSX-R powers just the preamp section of the 8vs, and not the entire unit. The reasoning for this, was that Cyrus found far greater sonic benefits in providing a purer power supply to just the pre', rather than the entire amp. Adding the PSX-R regulates the power supply and should dramatically reduce mains-borne noise and ripple. It connects to the 8vs via a short static cable, meaning they can't be placed too far apart, and is, barring the front panel switching, cosmetically identical. As mentioned previously, the PSX-R is not a power amplifier, and

neither does it boost the standard 70W power output on paper, but it does have quite an effect in practice.

## SOUND QUALITY

Those familiar with previous Cyrus amps' will probably instantly recognise a distinct Cyrus-sound from the 8vs. With Peter Cincotti's 'On The Moon', delivery was typically bold and powerful, but also rather lean in the bass. There are certainly amps here that will go far lower and have a greater bass depth. The upside of such a taut bass response, however, is fine timing and a smooth, progressive reach into the mid-range. Although undoubtedly muscular in its portrayal, I did feel that occasionally the 8vs could just over-reach itself. At higher volumes, a degree of hardening set in, which spoiled the vocal purity and could grate with brighter 'speakers. Other than that, I found the vocal, and instrumental, timbre to be faithful and accurate. Whilst the staging wasn't as broad as some, it was well focused and cohesive.

Santana's 'The Healer', with John Lee Hooker, was next up. The 8vs offered up a convincing acoustic with plenty of space around the guitar with exactly the right balance of rawness and refinement. Each note was finely etched and possessed a greater level of detail and decay than the average £800 integrated could muster. Hooker's vocals were, correctly, set back within the mix, although could have benefited from sounding a tad more distinct. Timing was, once again, better than average and the whole song had a good sense of flow and integration.

Claire Martin's 'Monk's New Tune' brought out a degree of splash from the cymbals. Although this may not be so noticeable on some systems, metal domed tweeters are likely to emphasise it. Whilst it wasn't an especially serious fault, it was noticeable after listening to rivals, which offered more control in the treble. Martin's vocals had fine presence and articulation, but some could interpret the precise balance as rather too clinical. No such criticism, however, could be made of the double bass which was perfectly portrayed – full bodied, yet never over-blown or wallowing. Similarly impressive were the Vibes which, for this price of amp', showed a superb level of realism and decay.

Prokofiev's 'The Montagues and the Capulets' provided a

Classical source for the 8vs. Generally it performed well, although not in a wholly convincing manner. The introduction was a little fierce although, it could be argued, that this is exactly how it should be – there certainly was no lack of transient attack. In full swing, the piece did lack a little oomph in the lowest registers although, by class standards, the 8vs is not deficient here. Like its predecessors, the 8vs is still a dynamic performer and well up to handling complex and loud passages, just as well as quiet, subtle passages. It might not have had quite the beguiling fluidity of a pure Class-A design, but it handled subtler sections with grace and dexterity nevertheless. Although I have some issues with the 8vs's slightly forward balance and occasional lack of grip in the treble, it's generally a very well sorted design. For vocal and instrumental articulation and musical cohesion it ranks as one of the best in its class.

Listen to the Cyrus 8vs with the PSX-R, and you could be forgiven for thinking you were listening to an entirely different amplifier altogether. It's as though Cyrus knew every weak link in the 8vs design and set about eliminating them one by one. With the Prokofiev, there was a great deal more clarity during the complex sections, which had the effect of making the piece sound freer-breathing and less compressed. In short, it sounded as though it wasn't trying as hard which, in this case, was a good thing, as the sound came across as far less fierce. At all volumes, but especially higher ones,

I found the PSX-R added a good deal of refinement to vocalists. Claire Martin lost the previous 'edge' to her voice, whilst Peter Cincotti was given a less constrained gait. With all the tracks I noticed significantly superior soundstaging. Although not particularly larger, instruments within the stage were a good deal more focused and distinct. Best of all, was that this increased level of refinement didn't come at the expense of the 8vs's sparky enthusiasm. Delivery was just as muscular as before and every bit as crisp and finely etched...

## CONCLUSION

The Cyrus 8vs and PSX-R are not the everyman products you might first suspect them to be. Despite the professional finish and decent feature count, they are not as universally pleasing as some of the local competition from down the road from their Cambridgeshire headquarters. That said, the combination of 8vs and PSX-R does give one of the most focused and musical balances in its class. Imagine a blend of Naim-like rhythm and control, with the focus and refinement of an Arcam, and you're not too far wide of the mark. Best of all, the combo is simply musical, which allows the listener to forget about the hi-fi and get on with enjoying the music. All that I would say is that to buy the 8vs without the PSX-R would be doing a grave disservice to the potential of the 8vs. Just as much as any of the pre/power combinations here, this is an inseparable pairing.

## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Under measurement the compact Cyrus 8 delivered no less than 82W into 8ohms and 144W into 4ohms, huge amounts of power considering the small case dimensions. The small heat sinks heated up rapidly though, so this isn't an amplifier to be run hard for long periods. Rather, it's best thought of as a medium power amp with plenty of overload reserve. Since reasonably efficient modern loudspeakers need little more than 5W-10W continuous the Cyrus 8 is powerful enough for most purposes.

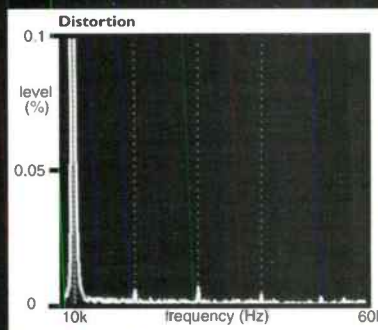
Distortion levels were very low, as always from Cyrus. Total harmonic distortion measured just 0.007% at 1W output, 10kHz, a low value. There was no sign of crossover artefacts, suggesting smooth treble free from grittiness.

This is a wideband amplifier, with a response stretching from 3Hz-54kHz, -1dB, so it suits DVD-A and SACD.

The Cyrus 8 measures well in all

areas, like previous versions. It should sound smooth, open and easy. NK

Power	82watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	3Hz-54kHz
Separation	88dB
Noise	-93dB
Distortion	0.004%
Sensitivity	250mV
dc offset	1/3mV



## VERDICT ●●●●£

A brilliantly detailed and musical combination with the PSX-R, although it loses the edge slightly without.

CYRUS 8CVS/PSX-R £1,198

Cyrus  
 (+44 (0) 1480 435577  
 www.cyrus.co.uk

## FOR

- iconoclastic packaging
- etched, yet musical sound
- flexibility

## AGAINST

- can sound untidy without PSX-R
- plasticky remote

**MUSICAL FIDELITY X-PRE v3/ X-P200 £1,699**

In 1995 Musical Fidelity launched the X-10D. It was an unusual product in an unusual casing. Although the idea of an outboard tube gain stage never really caught on, the unusual styling heralded a whole range of highly regarded, and best selling X-range products.

Since then, we've lost the quirky cylindrical boxes, but kept a number of other cues that keep the style original and distinctive. Both the X-PRE v3 and X-P200 are housed in the standard 'X-box' of the day, which means a half size, Cyrus type case that's as well finished as ever. What MF aficionados will notice, however, are the four hex bolts on the front panel and the brushed metal front with black casing – both features of the X-series from day one. MF can actually take some credit for inspiring others with this particular colour scheme. When it was first launched, nearly ten years ago, there weren't a great deal of products around with this combination of silver face and black body. Now, three out of the four pairings tested in this group test feature just such a finish...

The (£799) X-PRE v3 is something of a favourite of Musical Fidelity's boss, Antony Michaelson. He claims that this £800 preamp is good enough to see off rivals at twice the

price and beyond. Whilst this may be a little optimistic, we were very impressed with the sound when we tested it back in November 2004. Key to the X-PRE's ability is the circuit layout. This is a transistorised version of the highly acclaimed Nu-Vista, which should equate to low distortion and wide bandwidth. Unusually, the X-PRE v3 is also fitted with, what is claimed to be, a decent quality MM phono stage. Other than that, though, features and inputs are on the sparse side. There's a tape loop, but only two other line level inputs. For most people this should be enough but this, and the lack of system links, means that this is never going to be an amp, like the Cyrus 8vs, which can be used as the heart of an AV or multi-room system. Still, like the others, a remote control is standard. It's also good to see that lovely volume control once more. It may sound like a small thing, but MF have got the feel and calibration of this ALPS unit spot on.

In contrast to some of MF's other power amps, there's nothing particularly mad about the (£899) X-P200. Still, at 120W, it's comfortably the most powerful here. Like the Exposure, it's also bridgeable, which then takes the power up to an even more serious 250W. Usefully, it has two line inputs and an output that

allows for looped systems. Like the preamp, it follows the practice of a dual-mono layout internally.

Considering the power output, the toroidal power supply actually appears to be quite small. On the other hand, twin 10,000µf output capacitors, per channel, should be ample to provide sustained power and transient attack. Like the Exposure, the X-P200 has no heat sink as such; instead the four transistors per channel are mounted directly onto the sides of the case. For this reason the casing is ribbed to improve the cooling surface area, but is also rather hot to the touch! It's a point worth noting that, particularly with two of these power amps, there needs to be a reasonable amount of room around them for cooling – they're not the sort of things you could stick in a cupboard with books piled on top! Then again, with the MF's classy good looks, you probably wouldn't want to anyway...

### SOUND QUALITY

As DP said last November, this is a superb sounding combination. Kicking off with Peter Cincotti, I found a greater immediacy and sense of power to the track than with any of the other amps here. Vocals were well textured and refined, yet not overly

so. Indeed, this was yet another amp' in this group test that appeared to have got the vocal balance thing pretty much spot on. Bass was sustained and deep – the most impressive here indeed. With an easy 120W to hand, this wasn't so surprising, but what was, though, was the intricacy of the treble detail. Barring a hint of splash, the level of treble detail trivial was akin to some far more expensive products. Some of the percussion detail that was picked up upon, I hadn't even been aware of with the other amps', which shows just how transparent these amps' are.

Moving to 'The Healer', and the MF combo sounded supremely confident. Rather like the old Rover V8 car engine, one always felt there was plenty of torque to hand. It drove the piece along with such an expansive, relaxed nature, that it would be hard to think of a 'speaker that would phase the X-P200. The vocals weren't quite as finely etched as some of the others, but this was made up for, to some extent, by the sheer scale and presence of them. Despite the broad soundstaging, vocal and instrument placing were also hard to fault. What it seemed to bring to the music was a real dimensionality that made the others sound somewhat constrained by comparison.

Although not warm in the sense of Musical Fidelity's old A1 amp', I did find the X-PRE v3/X-P200 combo to be, at times, a little more laid back than others. This quality proved a godsend with Claire Martin's 'Monk's New Tune'. This time, she was portrayed with a greater sense of warmth and body than with the other amps and, as such, lost that slightly clinical edge. Treble performance impressed me again, with the cymbals showing a fine sense of decay, and the snares intricately picked out. It has to be said, however, was that over-riding all this was the sheer sense of fun to had. Despite a superbly judged balance, the MF combination was still happy to get down and boogie with the best of them.

The introduction of Prokofiev's 'Capulets and Montagues' actually came as something as a surprise. Where I was expecting to be pinned to my seat I, instead, found a rather more gentle and reserved take on the piece. There wasn't the sheer attack of the Exposure or Roksan, although there was a

good deal more subtlety. I felt that decay and timbre were emphasised over sheer dynamic scale. Turning the volume up, of course, brought back the drama, but it's worth noting that to get the same intensity as the others, a higher volume level would have to be selected. In return, the musical realism of the piece was the best here.

Adding a second X-P200, and mono-blocking, brings exactly the sort of benefits you'd expect. Fortunately the tone and balance of sound are unaltered. In other words, vocal and instrumental timbres are just as finely portrayed, and the sound still leans toward the warmer side of neutral. What does change, however, is the staging and dynamic power. Whilst neither of these qualities were exactly lacking before, the additional X-P200 takes them into a whole new realm. The bass has greater impact and even more staying power. The soundstage opens up to a truly vast level (given the price), and it begins to create that 'walk-around' soundstage that is usually only the preserve of truly esoteric equipment.

When used with the reference pre/power, it became clear that it is the power amps that are the real stars here. The preamp, it has to be said, is 'merely' excellent. Judging by ultimate

standards I found the preamp introduced a small degree of smear to the sound and, whilst offering excellent treble detail, could just prove to be a little loose or imprecise. Bear in mind, however, that by the standards of £800 pre-amps' this has to be one of - if not the - finest designs around. The power amps' proved near faultless. Yes, more expensive designs would offer greater grip and control, but these are hardly qualities that are lacking in the X-P200s. With excellent tonality, wide, dynamic response and fine timing these surely have to be the finest in their class.

## CONCLUSION

Bought individually, you'd be highly impressed by this pairing. Put together, though, and this combo is truly bewitching. In terms of presence, staging and treble detail this is the best amplifier combination here by some margin. An expressive midrange mates together a powerful and sustained bass with a surprisingly detailed treble response. Faults are few, but it could be said that it doesn't quite have the focus of some, although the warmer female tonality is perhaps a beneficiary of this. Rarely do I find hi-fi so complete as this but it looks as though, this time, Musical Fidelity has struck gold.

## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Each stereo power amp delivers 100W per channel into 8ohms and 170W into 4ohms, a lot for their relatively small size and reasonable weight. Pressing a front panel button switches to bridge mode, where the two channels act in 'push-pull' as it were, to deliver no less than 242W into 8ohms. So the XV200 power amplifier has plenty of punch, in spite of its compact dimensions.

In conjunction with the preamp, frequency response has been tailored to suit modern sources, bandwidth stretching to 76kHz (-1dB) via the normal inputs. With high sensitivity of 190mV, low noise and good channel separation the Musical Fidelity combo will accept all sources, old and new.

Distortion levels were minimal across the audio band, from low to full power output, as usual with Musical Fidelity amplifiers. The worst case figure was 0.01% at 10kHz, near to full output, a grueling test. There will be little audible coarseness from these amps.

The preamp's phono stage was accurately equalised and reaches down to 10Hz within 1dB limits. There's no warp filter, so warped discs will cause cone flap, but conversely LP will have extended bass.

This is a neatly configured system

that measures well, offering high power from a compact package. NK

Power 105watts

CD/tuner/aux.

Frequency response 5Hz-76kHz

Separation 91dB

Noise -96dB

Distortion 0.006%

Sensitivity 190mV

dc offset 1/22mV

Disc

Frequency response 10Hz-40kHz

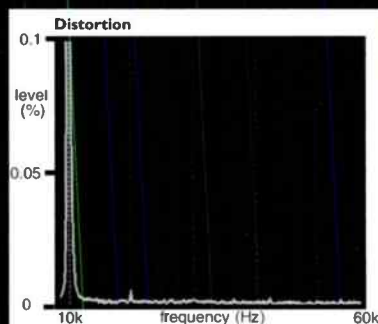
Separation 81dB

Noise -73dB

Distortion 0.008%

Sensitivity 1.7mV

Overload 85mV



## VERDICT

Smart styling, solid build quality and class leading sound quality means it would be churlish to ask for anything more!

**MUSICAL FIDELITY X-PRE V3/X-P200** £1,699  
Musical Fidelity  
☎ +44 (0) 208 900 2866  
www.musicalfidelity.co.uk

## FOR

- styling and build
- treble detail
- power and control

## AGAINST

- plasticky remote
- some smear from X-PRE

**ROKSAN CASPIAN PRE-POWER £3,450**

**L**ike the Exposure and Cyrus, the Roksan Caspian family is a familiar sight. Yet, also like the other two, the Caspian range has recently undergone a comprehensive update. With the £1,250 preamp, Roksan has shown a marked attention to detail with the power supply. By preamp standards, the toroidal transformer is huge! This feeds the logic and control sections of the amp separately, and goes on to feature fully regulated power rails for each section. A nice touch is the mains inlet filter, which should allow the, already decent, power supply unit to really make the most of the mains supply. It's just as well the power supply aspect of the preamp is so impressive, as other areas of the internal construction are less so...

This is undoubtedly the least well finished of all the amps here, which considering the price is disappointing. Although the quality of the components is fine, just as good as the others in fact, the way they're assembled isn't. I was surprised to find no lid damping, wonky capacitors, skewed fuse holders and a general lack of professionalism with the Roksan's internal build quality. Whilst it isn't especially poor in this regard, the others here all

demonstrate superior finishes, which if nothing else, boost customer confidence in the products. Lost ground is made up, however, when it comes to socketry. Although a phonostage costs extra, the Roksan is otherwise well provided for. There are no fewer than three pre-outs, five line level inputs and an additional tape loop. As with all the others, a remote control is also provided. The styling is also pleasing enough, and the controls feel weighty and well damped. The slimline cases have been redesigned to offer improved ventilation and, thanks to the tapered edges, are less visually bulky than the Exposures – the only other full size units here.

The power amps' supplied for the test were Roksan's £1,100 monobloc designs. This made for an ideal comparison with the Musical Fidelity X-P200s in mono mode yet, with a power output of 100W each, although up on before, are still down on a stereo X-P200's quoted figure of 125W, let alone the 250W in mono mode! Interestingly, should you opt for the stereo version then you'll find that power output doesn't halve. In fact, at 85W per channel it's very close to the monoblocs, which suggests a completely different design of the power supplies, at the very

least. As with the preamplifier, a great deal of work has gone into the power amps' power supply. They too, feature mains filters and also oversized toroidal transformers. The circuit design is fully symmetrical with a split power supply utilising two sets of high speed, high efficiency bridge rectifier diodes. There are also two sets of 10,000uF capacitors, which is just like X-P200 when used in mono mode. Unlike all of the others, the Caspian's utilise a conventional heatsink. Rather than using the casing to dissipate heat, a centrally located sink is installed which, if nothing else, should ensure a cool casing! Although heavy enough, and unobtrusive looking from the outside the internal finish is, like the preamp', not the best here. What can't be denied, however, is the visual gravitas of when all three units are stacked up. It might not be the most powerful amp here, but it certainly looks as though it is!

**SOUND QUALITY**

True to form, this Caspian trio provided exactly the sort of sound we've come to expect from Roksan for some time now. With the Santana track, the Caspian's provided a highly focused, highly precise sound, with bags of intensity given to both guitar and vocal. Although separation within



the sound stage was probably the best in the group, the actual size of the stage took second place to the Musical Fidelities. Whether you prefer a tighter, but narrower stage to a broader but slightly loser one, is really a matter of personal choice. What couldn't be faulted was the taut, punchy bass response. Along with the Exposure, it was probably the paceiest here, and really drove the music along. Despite the wonderful vocal articulation and separation I did find that Hooker's vocals weren't quite as smoothly presented as the X-P200s. Listening to the Caspians in isolation, you'd find it hard to fault them, but I couldn't help but feel they sounded slightly clinical when put alongside the MFs.

With Peter Cincotti, the Roksan's balance reminded me of a more powerful version of the Exposure. There was immense precision to the vocal – almost too much in fact. If your other ancillaries are sonically forward, then the Roksan's transparency is going to expose that fact, making the Caspians perhaps not the most system-friendly combo. That said, the upside of this is a level of control and lucidity that's rare at this price. Given the power rating differential it came as no surprise to find the Caspians couldn't match the X-P200s in terms of bass weight. Yet, what they could do was grip a bass note and sustain it like none of the others here. At the other end of the scale, the treble proved well integrated and fairly detailed. I say "fairly", as although fine in isolation, again, against the MF I did notice some of the subtle detail simply being masked. Transient attack was never an issue, and the level of drive would be ideal for anyone with "lazy" speakers.

Monk's New Tune didn't turn out quite as I'd expected. The excellent timing and crisp percussion came as no surprise. What did, however, was the vocal response. Instead of the chilled perspective that I'd been preparing myself for, there was a warmer balance that was second only to the MF in terms of realism – or at least favoured realism. Although staging was good, there wasn't that 'walk-in' feel that there had been with the Musical Fidelities. Nevertheless, the vibes had a suitable resonance to them and the piece hung together with conviction.

The Prokofiev returned the Roksan combination to

character – like the Exposure combination plus 15%! As with the 2010 combination, the Caspians provided a rousing introduction that could pin the listener to a chair, at high volumes, with its ferocity of delivery. The sense of tension was palpable and, although not as powerful as the MFs, it was at times like this that it certainly sounded the most dynamic. Ultimately though, it still left me a little cold which is difficult to describe why as, technically, the amps performed well. As well as the brilliant control, there was also an accurate instrumental representation. This was yet another amp to strike an excellent balance of both string and brass tones. I feel that where it missed out is in the finer areas of detail. Cymbal decay and delicate movements of a solo violinist's bow, for example, weren't as clearly detectable as they'd been with the Musical Fidelity. It was this and the lack of the latter's sheer depth of sound that somehow made me want for more from the Caspians.

Just as with the Musical Fidelity, under independent testing, it's the power amps' that turn in the more impressive performance. Used separately I found the preamp to give a good, clean response, and fair transparency. It pretty much told it how it was, which is what you often want from hi-fi. What was a disappointment, though, was the slightly constrained soundstaging. There are certainly other preamps about with a more expansive sound, and greater depth. Of the two types of components, I also found that it

was the preamp', as is usually the case, that was the responsible for the Caspian's occasionally mechanical sound. Although sonically similar, which means fast, dynamic and transparent, the power amps somehow made a more convincing case for themselves. Not the most powerful about, true, but the way they could hold a bass line or punch out a drum role could convince you otherwise. Like the preamp, they lacked any added sense of warmth, but they still seemed to go about their business in a less clinical, less mechanical manner.

## CONCLUSION

In isolation, this Roksan trio is a highly impressive performer. With the possible exception of Naim, few in its class can match the sense of attack, pace and sheer precision that the Caspians bring to music. Yet this is no roughneck. When the timbre and vocal inclination matter, then the Roksans are ever bit as informative as the best here. So, like I say, an excellent combination in isolation. Unfortunately for the Roksan though, this is a group test, and the Caspians weren't reviewed in isolation. Throughout the review, the Musical Fidelities kept cropping up as something of a sticking point for Roksan. What they exposed in the Caspians was that, there were times when it simply sounded uptight. Music didn't flow as effortlessly as it should, and staging was somewhat constrained. This, and the rather disappointing finish spoil what is very close to being an unbeatable amp...

## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Roksan has a stiff power supply that wilted little under load. As a result it nearly doubled power into 4ohms compared to 8ohms, delivering 144W and 84W respectively. Roksan amps invariably sound solid in bass delivery and this is part of the reason. There's plenty enough power here for most domestic situations.

Distortion levels were low, hovering around 0.006% at all power outputs, right across the audio band. There was a small rise into low 4ohm loads, but at 0.012% it wasn't significant.

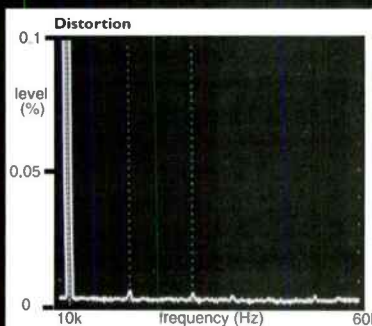
Input sensitivity was low at 500mV. This is fine for CD and modern sources, but not for old tuners and cassette decks that typically give 300mV out.

Frequency response measured 5Hz-63kHz within 1dB limits, normal enough and sensible for DVD-A and SACD. Separation was high and D.C. offset low at just 1mV.

The Roksan measured well in all

areas. It will sound solid and clean. NK

Power	84watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	5Hz-63kHz
Separation	89dB
Noise	-105dB
Distortion	0.006%
Sensitivity	500mV
dc offset	1/-1mV



## VERDICT

Not the most beguiling of sounds, but first rate in terms of control, dynamics and transparency.

**ROKSAN CASPIAN PRE-POWER** £3,450  
 Roksan  
 (+44 (0) 208 900 6801  
 www.roksan.co.uk

## FOR

- transient attack
- focus and precision
- flexible socketry

## AGAINST

- internal construction finish
- can sound clinical

# conclusion

**W**hat soon became clear with this group test was that the contenders neatly fitted into two groups of two. If nothing else, it was price that dictated a twin head-to-head test, but also configuration, too. I know it's a well-worn cliché these days but it's again true to say that there are no poor amplifiers here. Better than that in fact, if you were to listen to any of these individually, you could easily believe that they were all the best you could possibly buy!

The first stand off, then, is between Cyrus and Exposure. These two are long-term adversaries, and both have plenty to prove with their revised models. Looking at the integrations alone I would say that the 2010S is unquestionably the better value. In some areas, such as timing and pace it actually betters the Cyrus 8vs, and in others runs it so close for the differences to be negligible. At a £200 saving over the 8vs that makes it a bargain pure and simple. Things become more complicated, however, when it comes to the addition of the second unit. With the PSX-R the Cyrus really comes into its own and leaps ahead of the standard 2010S. Adding a 2010S power amp' doesn't improve the sound of the integrated to such an extent.

The upshot is that, in two-box format, these two really are neck and neck. It comes down to the Cyrus being a tad more refined whilst the Exposure is just that bit more exciting to listen to. Both, in my opinion, look great, so the final decision may welcome down to the Cyrus's extra features. It may also come down to size. Both are beautifully built, but the Cyrus is undeniably more flexible when it

comes to accommodating the boxes. So that I'm not accused of sitting on the fence here, if it were my money, I'd take the Exposure, but I wouldn't criticise anyone for taking the 'half width' route...

Good as the Exposure is, though, it has to play second fiddle to the Roksan. Given the price differential, this is perhaps to be expected. In many respects the trio of Caspians reminded me of the Exposure 2010S. They have a similar precision and great dynamic authority and attack. Yet, it's not the Exposure that Roksan needs to concern itself with here, but

don't quite, however, make the Musical Fidelity perfect. It's the preamp that can just smear the sound occasionally and, especially against the Roksan, there are times when the sound appears to be just a touch out of focus. Tables are, however, turned once again when it comes to build quality. Side by side, there is simply no contest. Whilst the Roksan is okay, alongside the Musical Fidelity, it looks crude, especially when you lift the lid. It does have more socketry in its favour but, then again, you have to pay extra for a phonostage that's standard, and of

“the Musical Fidelity is one of those amps' that comes along every so often that just seems to create a remarkable synergy of technical proficiency and emotional appeal...”

Musical Fidelity. Even with just a single power amplifier, there were times when I preferred the sound of the X-P200 and X-PRE v3. Given the price differential, that's quite remarkable!

But then, the Musical Fidelity is a remarkable combination. It's one of those amps' that comes along every so often that just seems to create a remarkable synergy of technical proficiency and emotional appeal. It reminded me of that other *World Award* winning amplifier, the Audio Analogue Puccini, only much better still. Then you add the second power amplifier, and it's like selecting 6th gear in a Porsche 911 Turbo and flooring it along the autobahn. There's effortlessness to the performance that the others can't hope to match and, as you turn up the volume, that margin of superiority simply widens further still.

Wonderful lucidity, vast sound staging and excellent dynamic control

decent quality, in the MF combo. As impressive a combination as the Caspians are, and by most standards they are, they simply can't match the all encompassing might of the Musical Fidelities.

If I had £600 to spend on an amplifier the Exposure 2010S would be my first port of call. It's an absolute cracker, and has a charm that's well beyond what is usually available at this price point. At over a £1,000 I'd be sorely tempted by the Cyrus 8vs/PSX-R. Yet once I'd got this far, for me, the allure of the £1,700 basic Musical Fidelity combination would probably be just too much. Just as the 2010S is probably untouchable for £600, so this is for around £1,700. Add an extra power amp' and it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that you'd be in possession of one of the finest amps' under £3,000. In this highly competitive market place, praise comes little higher than that.

# Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION



## CHRISTMAS OPENING

**SUNDAY • 19 DECEMBER**  
MOST STORES OPEN

### CHRISTMAS DAY

ALL STORES CLOSED - HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

### BOXING DAY

ALL STORES CLOSED

### NEW YEAR'S DAY

ALL STORES CLOSED - HAPPY NEW YEAR!

**SUNDAY • 2 JANUARY**

MOST STORES OPEN

Due to local variations, please call your local store or visit our website to verify opening hours before travelling.

## SUNDAY OPENING

Many of our stores are open on Sundays during December and January.

For up-to-date information, please call your local store or visit our website.

# WINTER SALE

STARTS 11 DECEMBER 2004

We have hundreds of unmissable bargains available in our fantastic WINTER SALE.

For information on all the latest offers, call your nearest store or visit our website.

[www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk](http://www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk)

## NEW STORES



## ABERDEEN

We are pleased to announce our new exciting Aberdeen store opened on the 30th October.

Situated on Crown Street, which is only a short walk from Union Street, the store has three fantastic demonstration areas where you can audition the very best in home cinema and hi-fi.

Easy parking available at the rear of the store.

57 CROWN STREET  
ABERDEEN  
01224 252797



## EALING

The long-awaited store in Ealing is now open.

Part of a newly developed parade in the heart of town close to Ealing Broadway tube and on the fringe of the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre, the store offers an unrivalled experience to shoppers searching for the best in audio and video equipment.



24 THE GREEN  
EALING  
020 8579 8777



## SWINDON

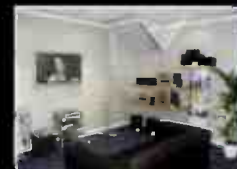


We're back.

The Swindon store has reopened after a short break with an improved range of the best in hi-fi and home cinema. The excellent facilities and quality of service remain the same.

The store is located in Commercial Road, close to the town centre with parking nearby.

8-9 COMMERCIAL ROAD  
SWINDON  
01793 610992



STARTS 11 DECEMBER 2004

"A perfect combination of early Arcam refinement and subtlety, combined with new-found vitality and freshness." *DIVA CD192*

**Arcam DIVA  
CD192 CD Player £849.95  
A90 Amplifier £849.95**



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**Pro-ject  
Debut III Turntable (Black) £ SALE  
(Colours) £ SALE**

"Building on the Award-winning design of its predecessors, the new Pro-ject Debut III delivers a thrillingly good sound for the money... Products like this should really reinvigorate your interest in hi-fi."



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
BEST TURNTABLE UNDER £250  
Pro-ject Debut III

**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £200-£400  
Cyrus 8vs



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
CD PLAYER  
CYRUS CD8

**Mission m31i  
Speakers  
£119.95**

"Overall, the little m31i speakers are great, and the team at Mission should consider this upgrade job well done. The 'i' in the model name stands for 'improved' and these speakers fully deserve the suffix."



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**Marantz  
CD5400 CD Player £119.95**

"This is a remarkable player for the money, with superb sound, looks and feel, which give you no clue as to the budget price... A very solid buy - and a lot of fun."



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**Cyrus  
8vs Amplifier £799.95  
CD8 X CD Player £999.95**

Cyrus has been developing high performance hi-fi systems for over 20 years. Today their upgradeable, modular product range includes multi-room systems, home cinema and some of the world's finest hi-fi systems. The new 'VS' preamp circuitry, incorporated in the 6vs and 8vs amplifiers, has dramatically improved their performance while the CD8 X is a heavily revised version of the CD8.

"Here's a machine that advances the ability of its excellent predecessor by an almost absurd degree. The Cyrus 8vs is an absolute superstar."

"The added 'x' factor brings a level of CD playback previously unheard at this price." *CD8 X*



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**REL Quake  
Subwoofer  
£349.95 (Brittex Black)**

Bass reinforcement for both your hi-fi and home cinema system.

"It's such a capable subwoofer - it handles both music and movies exceptionally well. The Quake delivers bass with both power and finesse."



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**PM7200 Amplifier £239.95**

"This is one of the most powerful amps in its class, at 95w per channel, and it sounds it with anything from dance to a big orchestral work, offering a delicious combination of poise and impact. Stick with fast, dynamic speakers such as B&W DM601 S3s or KEF's equally capable Q1s and the results will amaze."



**WHAT HI-FI? 2003 AWARDS**  
Best Buy 2003

**Roksan Kandy  
CD Player £649.95  
Amplifier £649.95**

"The Kandy CD player offers a great array of talents - team it with its amp stablemate and you have something close to the ideal visual and sonic combination."

"The result is a breathtaking Best Buy amplifier that betters its competition with ease." *KANDY AMPLIFIER - AWARDS 2003*



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**Pure Digital DRX702ES  
Digital/Analogue Tuner £269.95**

"This tuner sounds superb... The overall balance is powerful, clean and crisp, making this a fine tuner by any standards, and a superb buy given its excellent flexibility."



**WHAT HI-FI? 2003 AWARDS**  
Product of the year 2003

**Cyrus 6vs Amplifier £599.95**

"A significant upgrade to what was already an impressive amp - Cyrus' new entry-level integrated is a peach"



**WHAT HI-FI? 2004 AWARDS**  
★★★★★

**Harman Kardon TU970  
Digital/Analogue Tuner £249.95**

With Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) capability, this high-quality tuner delivers more stations and offers pure, distortion-free, CD-like sound, while providing useful radio and data services. Combining ease of use with interference-free reception, Harman Kardon's TU970 features the newest digital technologies from one of the oldest hi-fi names.



**CLAIM UP TO**  
**25%**  
**ACCESSORIES FREE**

When you purchase any product from the following brands:-  
**ARCAM • B&W • CYRUS • ROKSAN • REL • ROTEL**  
 Choose Accessories From **QED • GRADO • SOUNDSTYLE** etc

**CLAIM 10%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£250**  
**CLAIM 15%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£500**  
**CLAIM 20%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£1000**  
**CLAIM 25%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£2000**

\*PERCENTAGE APPLIES TO ACTUAL SPEND ON BRANDS SHOWN ABOVE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION.  
 PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL TO CHECK AVAILABILITY BEFORE TRAVELLING.



**KEF**  
**Q4 Speakers £ SALE**  
**Q Compact Speakers £ SALE**

The Q4 floorstander, is one of the latest additions to KEF's acclaimed Q Series.

Featuring KEF's Uni-Q driver array - an arrangement that makes the speaker much easier to place in the room. This has been combined with a dedicated 130mm LF unit for extended bass output which belies the size of its diminutive cabinet.



KEF Q COMPACT



**NEW**  
**Musical Fidelity A5 SERIES**  
**A5 Amplifier £ SALE**  
**A5 CD Player £ SALE**

Musical Fidelity has introduced the new A5 series CD player and integrated amplifier. The amplifier delivers 250 wpc and is capable of reproducing proper dynamic range into all but the most inefficient loudspeakers. The CD player is, according to Musical Fidelity, "the best player ever made." Visit your nearest store for more more information and a demonstration.

**X-SERIES**  
**X-80 Amplifier £ SALE**  
**X-150 Amplifier £ SALE**  
**X-Ray<sup>3</sup> CD Player £ SALE**

The 40 wpc, **X-80** and the 80wpc **X-150** amplifiers are part of Musical Fidelity's revamped X-Series. Both models feature a dual-gang analogue volume control and high-output transistors for each channel. The X-150 also includes a high quality phono stage.

The **X-Ray<sup>3</sup>** CD player, replacement for the legendary X-Ray, uses the same DAC and upsampling principles as the acclaimed Tri-Vista SACD player.



**Wharfedale Diamond 9.1**  
**Speakers £ SALE**

"The overall balance of the speakers is their finest characteristic. Thanks to near-perfect driver integration, music sounds wonderfully natural and transparent... This is a bar-raising effort from Wharfedale: these are ridiculously good speakers at the budget price level."



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004  
 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
 BEST STEREO SPEAKERS  
 (MONITOR & SUBWOOFER)

**Quad**  
**99 CD-P CD Pre Amp £ SALE**  
**99 Power Amp £ SALE**  
**11L Speakers £ SALE**

This system package includes the multi Award-winning 11L speakers combined with the exceptional 99 CD-P CD player and 99 power amplifier.

"So, we have three talented pieces of kit and the result is...excellent."



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004  
 BEST STEREO SPEAKERS  
 £150-£200  
 Quad 11L



**Roksan Caspian M Series**  
**CD Player £1099.95 Amplifier £999.95**

"A real class-contender, the new M Series-1 is a canny piece of kit and well worth the money." M SERIES-1 CD PLAYER

"A fine piece of equipment." M SERIES-1 AMPLIFIER



**Preamplifier/2 x Monoblocks £3449.95**

"This Roksan is an excellent buy that puts most of the opposition to shame when it comes to sonic ability... If you want the most honest-sounding amp you can get for your money, this combo can't be ignored."

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004  
 BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER  
 OVER £2000

**PRICING POLICY**

We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to our store managers' attention.

**FINANCE OPTION\***

Spread the cost of buying. 0% finance option is available on the majority of products we stock.

\*Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

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\*ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 13/01/05, E&OE.

STARTS 11 DECEMBER 2004



## Rotel 10 Series RA-1062 Amplifier £594.95 RCD-1072 CD Player £594.95

"At the heart of the 60-watt RA-1062 is a toroidal transformer and a power supply, which Rotel claims, helps the amp maintain performance even at high volumes... Crank up the volume and, as promised, the Rotel keeps its composure and balance... If you want a £600 integrated, be sure to audition the RA-1062.

First impressions of the RCD-1072 are excellent. This is the slickest machine in this group: the casework feels solid and the finish exceptional at the price... On its own terms it remains an enjoyable and informative CD player."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION • SEPTEMBER 2003

## Acoustic Energy Aelite Three Speakers £ SALE

"Acoustic Energy's new Aelite Threes weigh in at a hefty 18kg a piece, and their curved, real wood finished cabinets both look handsome and make good acoustic sense... So how do they perform... Give them a big room and position them in free space and they'll deliver great things... If you want a big sound for sensible money, don't hesitate to audition the Aelite Threes."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★



## CD RECORDERS



## Yamaha CDR-HD1300/II £479.95

New replacement for the Award-winning CDR-HD1300. Now includes a larger hard-disk for extra storage.

## Pioneer PDR-609 £199.95 LIMITED STOCK AVAILABLE



"Features include 24-bit/96kHz digital-analogue-conversion plus manual recording level controls, ideal when making compilations to standardise levels. All this means you get great copies from the Pioneer... and remarkable value."



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST HI-FI MICRO-SPEAKERS OVER £200  
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII

## Monitor Audio

## SILVER S6 Speakers £499.95

"These are rather magical speakers, with a poise and grace that belies their ability to turn on the power when required. Pair them with a good CD player and suitably accomplished amp, and you won't go far wrong."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★



## GOLD Reference 20 Speakers £ SALE

"Monitor Audio has made an immensely accomplished pair of speakers in the GR 20s. In sonic and physical terms there is little to criticise; even the price is highly competitive. We have no choice but to recommend them highly."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★



## BRONZE B2 Speakers £179.95

"Monitor Audio's Bronze B2s sound much more expensive than their £200 price tag would suggest. In fact, they sound superb... In the competitive world of budget hi-fi, speakers don't get much better than the B2s."



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
BEST BUY 2003

## B&W 704 Speakers £1399.95

The 704 speakers are part of B&W's new 700 series. These floorstanding, two-and-a-half-way, vented box speakers are available in a variety of attractive finishes. In a recent What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision group test the 704 offered "Remarkable openness and clarity that is unrivalled at this price."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★



## Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII Speakers £ SALE

"The legendary AE1 lives on in this groundbreaking third version... The Mk IIIs are worthy of the AE1 name, taking small-speaker performance to another level.."

## Denon DM31 UD-M31 CD Receiver £189.95

"The D-M30 was exemplary, as its three What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards clearly show. The D-M31 is even better, making it phenomenal value for money."

NB • DENON DM31 PRICE EXCLUDES SPEAKERS

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST HI-FI MICRO-SYSTEM OVER £150  
Denon D-M31



PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL BEFORE TRAVELLING.

\*ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 13/01/05, E&OE.

**CLAIM** UP TO  
**25%**  
ACCESSORIES **FREE**

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When you purchase any product from the following brands:-  
**ARCAM • B&W • CYRUS • ROKSAN • REL • ROTEL**  
Choose Accessories From **QED • GRADO • SOUNDSTYLE** etc

**CLAIM 10%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£250**  
**CLAIM 15%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£500**  
**CLAIM 20%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£1000**  
**CLAIM 25%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£2000**



## SUGGESTED HI-FI SEPARATE SYSTEMS

Sevenoaks has carefully chosen four hi-fi separate systems. Selected for their performance, reliability and compatibility, these systems offer superb value for money with massive savings on the individual component prices. Simply add speaker and interconnect cables and other accessories from our extensive range available in-store.



**Rotel**  
RCD-02 CD Player  
RA-01 Amplifier  
**Monitor Audio**  
Bronze B2 Speakers

£649.95 SAVE £££s

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

HI-FI SYSTEM 1 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

1  
Hi-Fi SYSTEM

## ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

The right accessories can make or break your hi-fi or home cinema system. Our carefully selected range will ensure you get the very best performance from your system.



### QED CABLES

- Audio & Video Interconnects
- Speaker Cables
- HDMI Cables
- Component Video Interconnects
- Comprehensive Custom Cable Service

### GRADO HEADPHONES

Range includes the Award-winning SR60 and highly-acclaimed RS1 plus the world-famous Grado Cartridges



### SOUNDSTYLE RACKS & STANDS

The all-new Soundstyle range of Equipment Supports and Speaker Stands offer the discerning enthusiast an unsurpassed combination of leading-edge styling, outstanding finishes, modular flexibility and class-leading sonic performance



**Arcam**  
CD73T CD Player  
A80 Amplifier  
**KEF**  
Q4 Speakers

£1149.95 SAVE £££s

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES

HI-FI SYSTEM 2 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

2  
Hi-Fi SYSTEM



**Roksan**  
Kandy KD1 MKIII CD Player  
Kandy KA1 MKIII Amplifier  
**Monitor Audio**  
Silver S6 Speakers

£1499.95 SAVE £££s

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES

HI-FI SYSTEM 3 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

3  
Hi-Fi SYSTEM

## PRICING POLICY

We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive.

In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to our store managers' attention.



**Musical Fidelity**  
X-Ray<sup>v3</sup> CD Player  
X-150 Amplifier  
**Monitor Audio**  
Gold Reference 10 Speakers

£1999.95 SAVE £££s

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

HI-FI SYSTEM 4 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

4  
Hi-Fi SYSTEM

## TURNTABLES

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

<b>Goldring GR1</b>	£129.95
<b>Michell Gyro SE/RB300</b>	£ SALE
<b>Michell TechnoDec (Ex Arm)</b>	£ SALE
<b>Project Debut Phono SB</b>	£ SALE
<b>Project Debut III (Black)</b>	£ SALE
<b>Project Debut III (Colours)</b>	£ SALE
<b>Project 1 Xpression</b>	£189.95
<b>Roksan Radius 5 (Wood)</b>	£749.95

## TUNERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

<b>Arcam DVA T61</b>	£229.95
<b>Cyrus FM X</b>	£499.95
<b>Denon TU260L MKII</b>	£99.95
<b>Harman Kardon TU970 DAB/AM/FM</b>	£249.95
<b>Marantz ST4000</b>	£99.95
<b>Pure DRX 701ES DAB</b>	£189.95
<b>Pure DRX 702ES Analogue/DAB</b>	£269.95
<b>Roksan Kandy KT1 MKIII</b>	£549.95

## CD PLAYERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

<b>Arcam DVA CD73T</b>	£399.95
<b>Arcam DVA CD192</b>	£849.95
<b>Arcam FMJ CD33T</b>	£1349.95
<b>Cyrus CD6</b>	£599.95
<b>Cyrus CD8 X</b>	£999.95
<b>Cyrus DAC X</b>	£1099.95
<b>Denon DCD485</b>	£119.95
<b>Linn Genki</b>	£ SALE
<b>Linn Ikem</b>	£ SALE
<b>Marantz CD5400</b>	£119.95
<b>Marantz SA11 S1</b>	£ SALE
<b>Musical Fidelity X Ray</b>	£ SALE
<b>Musical Fidelity A3.2</b>	£699.95
<b>Musical Fidelity A5</b>	£ SALE
<b>Musical Fidelity A308</b>	£1399.95
<b>Quad 99 CD-P</b>	£ SALE
<b>Roksan Kandy KD1 MKIII</b>	£649.95
<b>Roksan Caspian M</b>	£1099.95
<b>Rotel RCD02</b>	£379.95
<b>Rotel RCD1072</b>	£594.95

## CD RECORDERS

<b>Pioneer PDR609 CD-RW</b>	£199.95
<b>Yamaha CDR-HD1300/II</b>	£479.95

## AMPLIFIERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

<b>Arcam DVA A65 Plus</b>	£389.95
<b>Arcam DVA A80</b>	£599.95
<b>Arcam DVA A90</b>	£849.95
<b>Arcam FMJ A32</b>	£1199.95
<b>Cyrus Gvs</b>	£599.95
<b>Cyrus Gvs</b>	£799.95
<b>Cyrus Pre X vs Pre</b>	£1099.95
<b>Cyrus Mono X Power</b>	(Each) £1199.95
<b>Denon PMA355</b>	£169.95
<b>Linn Kolektor Pre</b>	£ SALE
<b>Linn LK85 Power</b>	£ SALE
<b>Marantz PM4400</b>	£139.95
<b>Marantz PM7200</b>	£239.95
<b>Marantz PM11 S1</b>	£ SALE
<b>Musical Fidelity X 80</b>	£ SALE
<b>Musical Fidelity X 150</b>	£ SALE
<b>Musical Fidelity A3.2</b>	£699.95
<b>Musical Fidelity A3.2 Pre</b>	£699.95
<b>Musical Fidelity A3.2 Power</b>	£699.95
<b>Musical Fidelity A5</b>	£ SALE
<b>Musical Fidelity A308</b>	£1399.95
<b>Quad 99 Power</b>	£ SALE
<b>Quad 909 Power</b>	£ SALE
<b>Roksan Kandy KA1 MKIII</b>	£649.95
<b>Roksan Caspian M</b>	£999.95
<b>Roksan Caspian M Pre</b>	£1249.95
<b>Roksan Caspian M Stereo Power</b>	£749.95
<b>Roksan Caspian M Monobloc Power</b>	(Each) £1099.95
<b>Rotel RA 01</b>	£249.95
<b>Rotel RA 02</b>	£349.95
<b>Rotel RA-1062</b>	£594.95

## SPEAKERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

<b>Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One</b>	£129.95
<b>Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three</b>	£249.95

<b>Acoustic Energy Aelite Two</b>	£ SALE
<b>Acoustic Energy Aelite Three</b>	£ SALE
<b>Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII</b>	£ SALE
<b>AVI Neutron IV</b>	£ SALE
<b>B&amp;W DM601 S3</b>	£249.95
<b>B&amp;W DM602 S3</b>	£299.95
<b>B&amp;W 704</b>	£1399.95
<b>B&amp;W 705</b>	£899.95
<b>KEF Q Compact</b>	£ SALE
<b>KEF Q4</b>	£ SALE
<b>KEF XQ1</b>	£ SALE
<b>Linn Katan</b>	£ SALE
<b>Mission m311</b>	£119.95
<b>Mission m34i</b>	£279.95
<b>Mission 780SE</b>	£ SALE
<b>Mission 782SE</b>	£ SALE
<b>Monitor Audio Bronze B2</b>	£179.95
<b>Monitor Audio Silver S1</b>	£299.95
<b>Monitor Audio Silver S6</b>	£499.95
<b>Monitor Audio Silver S8</b>	£799.95
<b>Monitor Audio Gold Reference 10</b>	£699.95
<b>Monitor Audio Gold Reference 60</b>	£1999.95
<b>Quad 11L</b>	£ SALE
<b>Quad 12L</b>	£ SALE
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<b>Ruark Epilogue II</b>	£ SALE
<b>Ruark Talisman III</b>	£ SALE
<b>Ruark Sutra III</b>	£ SALE
<b>Wharfedale Diamond 9.1</b>	£ SALE
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## HI-FI SYSTEMS

<b>Denon 201 Ex Speakers</b>	£479.95
<b>Denon DF101 Ex Speakers</b>	£299.95
<b>Denon DM31 Ex Speakers</b>	£189.95
<b>Linn Classic Music Ex Speakers</b>	£ SALE
<b>Teac Legacy 600 Ex Speakers</b>	£199.95

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<b>Denon ADV-M71 Inc SC-M51 Speakers</b>	£449.95
<b>Denon DHT-500SD Inc 5.1 Speaker Package</b>	£429.95
<b>Denon DHT-550SD Inc 5.1 Speaker Package</b>	£ SALE
<b>Jamo DV950/A305PDD Inc Speakers</b>	£ SALE
<b>Jamo DVR50/A355PDD Inc Speakers</b>	£ SALE
<b>KEF KIT100 Inc Speakers</b>	£ SALE
<b>Teac Legacy 700LS-L800 Inc Speakers</b>	£799.95

## MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

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<b>Cyrus Linkserver 250</b>	£3499.95
<b>Cyrus Linkport</b>	£649.95
<b>Cyrus Linkwand</b>	£199.95
<b>Yamaha MusicCast MCX A10</b>	£599.95
<b>Yamaha MusicCast MCX 1000</b>	£1799.95

## DVD PLAYERS

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<b>MAKE &amp; MODEL</b>	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
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<b>Arcam DVA DV79</b>	£999.95	£999.95
<b>Arcam FMJ DV29</b>	£1599.95	£1599.95
<b>Cyrus DVD8</b>	£1199.95	£1199.95
<b>Denon DVD-1710</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Denon DVD-1910</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Denon DVD-2200 Universal</b>	£339.95	£349.95
<b>Denon DVD-2900 Universal</b>	£489.95	£499.95
<b>Denon DVD-2910 Universal</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Denon DVD-3910 Universal</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Denon DVD-A11</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Harman Kardon DVD22</b>	£199.95	£199.95
<b>Harman Kardon DVD31</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Marantz DV4500</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Meridian G98</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Pioneer DV370</b>	£69.95	£79.95
<b>Pioneer DV575A Universal</b>	£119.95	£129.95
<b>Pioneer DV668Av Universal</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Pioneer DV868Av Universal</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Toshiba SD240E</b>	£59.95	£69.95
<b>Toshiba SD340E</b>	£69.95	£79.95
<b>Yamaha DVD-S550</b>	£119.95	£119.95
<b>Yamaha DVD-S1500</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE

## DVD RECORDERS

<b>MAKE &amp; MODEL</b>	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
<b>Panasonic DMR-E55 DVD-RAM</b>	£199.95	£219.95
<b>Panasonic DMR-E65 DVD-RAM</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE

<b>Panasonic DMR-E75 DVD-RAM</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Panasonic DMR-E85 DVD-RAM</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Panasonic DMR-E95 DVD-RAM</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Panasonic DMR-E500 DVD-RAM</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Pioneer DVR-220 DVD-RW</b>	£199.95	£219.95
<b>Pioneer DVR-320 DVD-RW</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Pioneer DVR-420H HDD/DVD-RW</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
<b>Pioneer DVR-520H HDD/DVD-RW</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE
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<b>Pioneer DVR-920H HDD/DVD-RW</b>	£ SALE	£ SALE

## AV AMPLIFIERS

### RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

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<b>Arcam AVR300 AV Receiver</b>	£1299.95
<b>Arcam AV8/P7 AV Pre/Processor/Power</b>	£5749.95
<b>Cyrus AV8 AV Processor</b>	£1099.95
<b>Denon AVC-A1SRA AV Amplifier</b>	£ SALE
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<b>Denon AVR1705 AV Receiver</b>	£199.95
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<b>Denon AVR3805 AV Receiver</b>	£799.95
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<b>Marantz SR4500 AV Receiver</b>	£299.95
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<b>Pioneer VSX-D814 AV Receiver</b>	£249.95
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<b>Pioneer VSX-A43 AV Receiver</b>	£ SALE
<b>Pioneer VSX-2014 AV Receiver</b>	£799.95
<b>Pioneer VSX-AX5 AV Receiver</b>	£999.95
<b>Pioneer VSX-AX5Av AV Receiver</b>	£ SALE
<b>Rotel RSX1056 AV Receiver</b>	£1199.95
<b>Rotel RSX1067 AV Receiver</b>	£1799.95
<b>Rotel RSP1066/RMB1075 AV Pre/Power</b>	£1799.95
<b>Rotel RSP1098 AV Processor</b>	£2294.95
<b>Yamaha DSP-AX750SE AV Amplifier</b>	£ SALE
<b>Yamaha DSP-Z9 AV Amplifier</b>	£ SALE
<b>Yamaha RX-V550 AV Receiver</b>	£299.95
<b>Yamaha RX-V650 AV Receiver</b>	£369.95
<b>Yamaha RX-V1400RDS AV Receiver</b>	£629.95
<b>Yamaha RX-V1500RDS AV Receiver</b>	£ SALE
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## AV SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

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<b>Acoustic Energy Evo 3B</b>	£679.95
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<b>KEF KHT1005</b>	£299.95
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<b>Pioneer PDP435XDE 43"</b>	£ SALE
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<b>Screenplay SP4805 DLP</b>	£1299.95
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<b>Screenplay SP7205 DLP</b>	£ SALE
<b>Sharp XV Z91E DLP</b>	£1499.95
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<b>Yamaha DPX1100 DLP</b>	£ SALE

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2005

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# old school

**We'd all like a hi-fi system that sounds better than anything available today and goes up in price too - and it's possible if you buy classic. But there's a lot of tat around that's touted as classic when it isn't, nor will it ever be. So here, Noel Keywood teaches you how to sort the classic wheat from the old chaff...**

**P**ay safe, follow the herd and don't gamble on the unknown unless you are experienced. For an item to have value there must be demand for it. Expect to have to pay; the idea isn't that the goods will be cheap; it is that they will retain their value or, with luck, increase in worth. If this happens then you are being paid to enjoy music!

Let's start with loudspeakers. There aren't so many to consider, because most have not withstood the test of time. Big Tannoys are popular, but don't expect modern standards of clarity or low colouration. They are sturdy floor shakers, with a big, relaxed sound. Also, very easy to drive. Otherwise, Quad ESL-57s are popular and not always so expensive. Like old Tannoys they need space, but unlike them can better modern product in measured performance and sound quality - quite a feat.

Both Leak and Quad valve amps are popular, Leaks being preferable for sound quality and ease of use. There are many models but all are becoming rare, since Leaks have been on the 'most wanted' list for a decade at least. Valve Quad 22/11s are popular and solid state Quad 33/303 combos are gaining popularity, but don't expect top sound quality unless renovated extensively. Quad have all spares, except ESL-57 panels, but Classique Sounds can fit these. Radford STA15s and 25s valve amps are another good bet, but rare.

Valve tuners usually need repair and re-alignment to work as intended. They also need a lot of signal from the aerial; use with outdoor arrays, not indoor wire. When working properly they can give fantastic sound from VHF/FM. Usually, modern stereo decoders are paired with them, because early

decoders were poor. Buy Leak or Quad.

With turntables, Garrard 301 and 401, Thorens and EMT are popular, as are SME tone arms. Cartridges are more difficult, since wear and tear usually compromise

condition, and a worn cartridge can cause damage. Also, bear in mind modern cartridges are very good, not easily surpassed.

Don't forget unusual items, like quality open reel tape decks, Sony Elcaset decks and tapes, Strathearn turntables, Akai and Nakamichi auto-changing cassette decks, all Nakamichi cassette recorders, especially CR-7E and ZX-9, and the Transcriptors Reference turntable. These are all highly collectable and will retain value.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Price will depend upon working condition and history, as usual. Top price goes to items in 'as new' cosmetic condition, with original packing, purchase receipt and known history. These really are museum pieces, hardly for casual, everyday use unless very carefully maintained.

A step down you should find good condition items worth considering. Best to avoid anything in poor condition; most external cosmetic parts like fascias, knobs, trims etc are unlikely to be obtainable and market value will be low. Some people strip, re-paint and re-build, but the item is then unoriginal and unlikely to be worth

much on the open market.

Prices will vary enormously. I've seen good working condition Quad ESL-57s advertised for £120, whilst an 'as new' renovated pair will cost £800 or more. Here's a very difficult decision. Originals are likely to have

“expect to have to pay - the idea isn't that the goods will be cheap; it is that they will retain their value, so you're being paid to enjoy music!”

been overrun, have panel damage and may arc when volume is turned up. Good condition originals will give fair results, but don't expect miracles, with limited volume level, mid-band mugginess due to mid-range panel felt lining and ageing parts. They have no overload protection either. Re-



*They look good and sound good. Garrard 301 and 401 turntables are popular and not too expensive. A good chassis will cost around £250. A good plinth is obligatory though*

building the electrostatic panels is a difficult business few can do properly, but specialists like One Thing exist in the UK. Fully renovated ESL-57s can outrun modern loudspeakers quite easily, but these are much improved over the original and not strictly



**Quad 33/303 were beautifully styled and nicely made. Not the best sound quality - warm and wooly - unless heavily renovated. Inexpensive but becoming popular right now**

pukka if you insist on originality. The choice is yours.

A similar trade-off between originality and functionality exists with most old items and raises the issue of Renovation versus Restoration. By and large, restoration to absolutely original form isn't a realistic option for domestic use; it's for static display pieces. Whilst original old parts can be obtained for Restoration projects - nowadays they are recovered like old bricks - for safety and performance its best to use new components and Renovate. Especially, this means new electrolytic capacitors, and often new non-polarised capacitors too. Most traders will renovate - it's safest and gives the best sound. However, the Japanese, for example, prefer Restoration, for total originality.

On the issue of safety, whilst a renovated valve amp is 'safe enough' perhaps, by modern standards it isn't especially safe.

Earthing should prevent parts becoming live, but burn out of cathode resistors is always a possibility if a valve fails. Insulations age and can fail, especially in mains transformers, which then burn out. Smoky, smelly and dramatic!

Valve amps generally need electrolytic capacitors replaced and old, high value power supply types, like 32uF+32uF 450V, are all but unavailable today. If someone has fought it out with the spiders to recover a batch for sale, they'll be expensive. To maintain value it's best if transformers are original. Dealers may be able to scavenge an original part from a wreck. If you have a pristine and valuable Leak TL/12, say, it may be good to try and buy a scrapper as a source of parts.

Tuners should, ideally, be re-aligned after repair. It's an expert job requiring specialised test equipment. Worth checking whether this has been done before buying. Expect hiss and noise unless you use an external aerial, since old tuners are insensitive. When in good working order, properly aligned and fed a suitably strong signal a valve tuner in particular can give amazing results.

There are plenty of user groups on the internet for advice. If you don't want to get involved, a dealer is your best bet. Many have an in-depth



**Tannoy GRF - rare and valuable. An alternative is this repro cabinet from Octave Audio Woodworking of Bristol, to which you fit your own drive units**

knowledge of product problems, as well as sources of parts for repair and renovation.

It's unrealistic to think this whole area is an unexploited gold mine waiting for you to jump in; quite the reverse. Japan has been buying antique British hi-fi by the container load before the British even realised a market existed. But if you do see an antique appear in a local jumble, car boot sale or notice board, my advice is to flash the cash, grab it and run - and hope lady luck smiles on you. You may have a valuable classic.

## GOING UP...

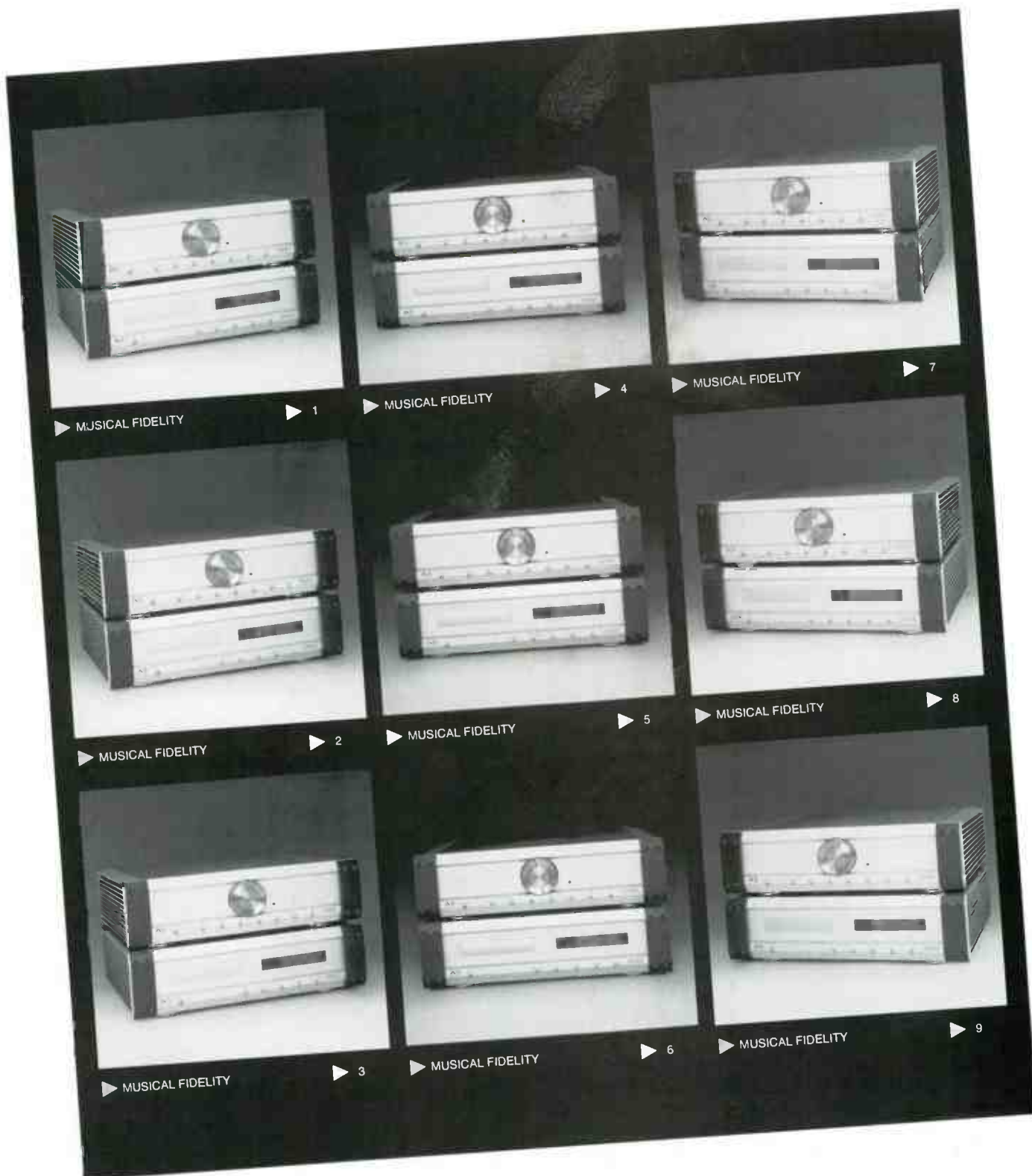
Here's a system that sounds better than most today - and is likely to go up in price! Prices are approximate for good condition second-hand or renovated:

Garrard 401 turntable on quality plinth	£550
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<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>£2,000</b>
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Quad ESL-57 loudspeakers fitted with One Thing treble panels	£1,475
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[prices are at the top end of the scale. Fully refurbishing Quads costs £475 for example, if you already have a pair or have bought an old pair]



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## PARTS FOR SALE

When it goes "poof" your troubles have just started, but there may be a good ending. Replacing failing parts can improve the sound. Best to give this matter some consideration first though: be prepared.

Quad tell me their famous service department is running healthily and all products can be fully repaired, with the exception of ESL-57 panels (the jigs were sold to Germany). This means you can buy any vintage Quad item and still get parts for it. Restored ESL-57 panels are available from One Thing, or via Classique Sounds. Parts for Leak, Radford, Rogers, all of whom are not now trading, are rarer.

Highly prized are NOS parts, short for New Old Stock. This means original stock that's unused, as its been sitting on a shelf somewhere for the last thirty years or so. NOS valves appear constantly, but NOS transformers do not, because of their weight and bulk; most have been binned. If an output transformer goes up in smoke, a custom replacement can cost £50 or so, assuming it is a reasonably well understood item, like a

KT88 push-pull output transformer. Mains transformers cost up to £100 or thereabouts, or more if wound specially.

It's cheapest to lay in spares before your amp sends out smoke signals. Second hand untested transformers may cost £10 or so. Nowadays, used original resistors and capacitors can be bought, perfect for restoration. Just beware that old capacitors can leak and if used for coupling to the output stage can burn out both the output valves and transformer - an expensive and dangerous mistake. It's safest to use new electrolytics, available from Maplins for example. Ideally, audio grade Cerafines or such like are best. If possible use audio grade polypropylenes as non-polarised capacitors or, better, paper-in-oil. Dealers such as Classique Sounds use parts like this and know that to get sonic balance some mix'n'match is needed. Generally, modern carbon film resistors are fine.

These days there's a reasonable supply of parts, generally sufficient to get a classic up and running again after its deposited a small ring of soot on your ceiling.



*Today's audio grade components, like the new Elna Tonerex capacitor, are higher quality than original components and can improve the sound*

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**GT AUDIO** (Graham Tricker, Bucks)  
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**AUDIOLAB** (Phil Pimblott, Leeds)  
Renovation, repair and restoration of a very wide range of equipment including all specialist valve hi-fi, radio transmitters, cinema amps, etc. Kit building, including World Audio Design, upgrades, repair.  
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Specialists in electrostatic panel manufacture and repair. Can refurbish ESL-57s and 63s, as well as Leak Troughlines and Quad IIs. One Thing make their own, improved treble panel for the ESL-57, which delivers amazing results. Don't phone them, they're too busy! Send an e-mail to:  
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## WHAT'S A CLASSIC?

You can see vintage hi-fi in terms of monetary value. Placing a monetary value upon something is fine; everything has a value and that value is determined by what people are prepared to pay (not necessarily the ticket price). These days good money is available for classic items, but there are some pre-conditions here...

Few mass-market items have lasting worth. If you want to sell a Sony music centre and think it's a classic, think again. Because something is old doesn't mean it's a classic. You can by all means fish old kit out of the loft and hope it will sell when called labeled 'classic', but you will join hundreds of other hopefuls, all doing the same. Nostalgia may well induce someone to buy, but the odds on this are low.

So what then is a classic? Pre-conditions are good styling, that's either strongly representative of its time - think 1956 Cadillac Convertible - or perhaps Quad 22/II. Both are classic 1950s, highly stylised and both idiomatically distinct. By looking at them you know they are from the 1950s - they speak to you - and you know they represent the best of the 1950s in terms of entertainment. Again they tell you this by both their nature and their appearance. In other words, they are iconic. A music centre is not.

Then there's build quality. Most classics are pretty well built. Often not perfect and perhaps prone to rust, corrosion and wear and tear. But usually they will have lasted long enough in their own time to have established some sort of reputation and have had an impact in people's lives. That's why, much later, they can be resurrected. You can't resurrect something that didn't once establish itself. A lot of modern, expensive hi-fi falls into this category. Often called "a classic" by its manufacturer the day it is launched, this is a tell tale sign that really it isn't and will likely never be.



**A 1956 Cadillac Convertible. A true classic, highly stylised in a 1950s idiom, with allusions to aeronautics and rocketry.**

Expensive, low volume items rarely have a presence in the collective consciousness. They represent little to anybody, therefore carry little intrinsic value. There are a few exceptions, like the Strathearn turntable. If you saw the tale about the De Lorean car on television recently then you'll know what I'm talking about. Items like the Strathearn are exceptions though and only for hard core historical collectors.

is or isn't classic and, if it is, what's it worth. The reason, I suspect, is down to television shows that use experts to place a value on items "from the loft". Incredulous owners gasp in surprise when they're told that the piece of tat left by granny is in truth a Ming Dynasty vase worth a small fortune.

Having sorted out what an old classic is not, you can more easily determine what it may be. I mention all this because we are continually asked whether something is or isn't classic and, if it is, what's it worth. The reason, I suspect, is down to television shows that use experts to place a value on items "from the loft". Incredulous owners gasp in surprise when they're told that the piece of tat left by granny is in truth a Ming Dynasty vase worth a small fortune.

There are no equivalents to the Ming vase in hi-fi. Most of it is tat after fulfilling its intended function of providing entertainment. Even if it is still limping along after 20 years, that still doesn't make it a "classic". It's just a statistical survivor. For classics to have a market value they must be valued by a market, it's as simple as that. An obvious candidate is the Quad 33/303 amplifier, which I'm happy to see rise in popularity. But before you rush out to buy, be aware that even in its time the 33/303 combo didn't have a reputation for top notch sound quality. What has helped revive interest in the 33 pre-amp in particular is the discovery, by enthusiasts, that a re-build with good quality capacitors works wonders with the sound. At present Quad 33s are going cheap; they're unloved. But to get good sound from them expect to shell out some more or spend hours on a re-build.

The easiest way to secure a re-saleable classic is to buy it, with some proof of renovation, from a specialist dealing in such items. Liken it to buying a car with a full service history from a main dealer specialising in the marque. This way, value comes built in. In the long term it is highly likely the market for classics will hold up. Constant upgrading is a wearisome process and disposal of old goods is becoming a political issue too. There's little chance all this will change. Additionally, we are becoming ever more appreciative of our past. Old cars, aircraft and hi-fi, not to mention old buildings of course, can have tremendous value. So the outlook for classic hi-fi is good.



**Braun LE-1 electrostatic loudspeaker. It was a modified Quad ESL-57 built under license in the 1960s. Braun made only 500 pairs. Price of this rare German classic is sky high - around £5000. It's Bauhaus styling is distinctive and instantly recognisable, helping make it a true classic.**

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# new old stock



**In a DVD-driven, 'post stereo' world, a bespoke mid-price CD player seems a curious thing for a big Japanese brand to do... but done it Onkyo has! Dominic Todd goes back to two-channel with the C-VL1...**

**A**ny trip to the High Street isn't complete without a saunter into your local Dixons. Where once was a goodly selection of affordable stereo separates, these days it's home cinema this, multichannel that, DVD everything. Why then has Onkyo suddenly come up with an £800 'ye olde' unreconstructed audiophile CD player?

Well, two reasons: first, if you look beyond the end of your nose, you might sense that multichannel is no longer the flavour of the month, and – in serious audiophile territory at least – there's a renewed interest in stereo separates (remember them?) Second, as DP has pointed out, Onkyo's UK image might be a tad hazy, but in its native Japan, the company is seen as something of a specialist, enthusiast-driven hi-fi brand (it doesn't make rice cookers and heated toilet seats, unlike many of its domestic rivals!). So although Onkyo has concentrated mainly on multichannel in the UK of late, they produce a good deal of high-end stereo equipment for Japan.

Although the C-VL1 is an old fashioned conceit (Red Book CD – how quaint!), there's a good deal of cutting edge stuff inside, like the 192kHz/24bit Wolfson DAC. These were initially used in DVD and SACD players, but are now finding themselves increasingly in the 16bit domain. Although a 24bit DAC can't improve upon the 16bit resolution of CD, it does allow for subtler, less intrusive filters to be used downstream. Another cue is a high precision clock – not new to the 16bit world, as the likes of Meridian have, for a long time, expounded

upon the benefits of accurate clock locking, but it is receiving more attention these days.

The signal paths are nicely short, and the internal layout both neat and consistently populated with high quality components. Superior Elna capacitors are plentiful, and supplement other carefully selected electronics. Complementing this is a toroidal power supply with separate feeds to both digital and analogue sections. Onkyo has even resisted the lure of a DVD-ROM transport and, instead, gone for a tried and tested Sony design. Closer inspection reveals several damping methods have been used to tweak the transport. This was obviously a key concern for Onkyo as, looking over the rest of the player, it's clear to see similar combinations of Black-Tac, reinforced tape and gel type materials.

The lid, casing, PCB and even capacitors all feature damping tweaks. The casing itself is rather conventional, albeit well made and solid in typical Onkyo fashion. It's constructed around a pressed steel chassis, with the addition of aluminium side cheeks and front panel. I would have imagined these to be largely cosmetic, although Onkyo does claim improvements in rigidity. It's good to see that although both coaxial and twin optical outputs are provided, they can easily be switched off. Audiophiles will also approve of the high quality phono sockets and detachable mains lead. The C-VL1 is a painless enough machine to use, if slightly bland. Although build can't be faulted, it lacks the tactile quality of something like the Naim CD5i or MEL Audio Rechav II.

## SOUND QUALITY

Most 192/24 designs sound open and detailed, and the C-VL1 is no exception. With Blondie's 'Happy Dog', vocals sounded especially transparent. Bass response wasn't as deep or earthy as some of the competition, but it was at least well integrated and benefited from a fine sense of timing. The guitar struck a good compromise between rawness and refinement that, in general, was how the rest of the piece was portrayed. Apart from a lack of serious grunt, the only other bugbear I had here was a slight edge to Harry's vocals that did just undermine the otherwise fine level of refinement shown by the C-VL1. With Dr John's 'Chickee Le Pas', there was once again excellent detail retrieval, although vocals could have used a little more body and impact. Ironically, percussion had plenty of both of these, and depth too, which only further served to emphasise the lack of body from the bass. After a while, I was longing for some of the rich refinement offered up by the likes of the competing Arcam CD192.

'See It In The Boy's Eyes' by Jamelia offered similar pluses and minuses. Vocals were portrayed with a supreme articulation, with every breath and intonation clear to the ear. Yet, such crystalline insight did appear to come at the expense of flow. Timing was rather stilted, and the realism of the performance wasn't helped by the metallic edge of the vocals. These flaws are all the more regrettable as, in other respects, the C-VL1 actually performed very well – soundstaging was pretty much as good as anything

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else in the class, with excellent instrumental placement and clearly defined layering of backing vocals. A certain unevenness of sound became apparent when listening to Schubert's, Polonaisc in B-flat Major. In most respects, the lead violin was possessed of an accurate and convincing timbre. Crucially, it didn't sound constrained or veiled, and

**THE RIVALS**

The £800 CD player market is one that has changed little of late. It's therefore refreshing to see Onkyo challenge the status quo. In this case, that status quo consists of the Arcam CD192 (£850), Cyrus CD8x (£800) and Naim CD5i (£825). The Arcam, like the Onkyo, uses upsampling 192/24 technology. In some respects it sounds similar to the C-1VL - it's detailed and revealing. Yet it's also the epitome of refinement and understatement. In short, it's ideal for the Classical music listener, and should give long-term listening enjoyment. For a more upbeat presentation, then you should take a look at the Cyrus. Recently updated, the 'x' version offers a confident, effortless sound with real energy. It's the only one here with an upgradeable power supply, too. With the £400 PSX-R added it comfortably outperforms the rest here. Its only weakness is that it can, occasionally, sound a little too forward. One to match carefully. As usual, the idiosyncratic choice is the Naim. Unlike the others here, it uses a very basic Philips UDA1330 DAC but matches it to a decent VAM1202/12 transport, and an even better power supply. Naim believe in the importance of power supplies, and the dynamic, speedy and textured sound will have most listeners convinced, too. As a bonus, it's more refined than previous Naim CD players and, in most systems, would be my choice.

there was always a sense of space surrounding it. Yet, there were times when it, and the rest of the strings, lacked both warmth and body. Again, it lead to the feeling that the Onkyo was simply going through the motions of reproducing

music, rather than putting any soul into it. With the whole performance sounding especially transparent, this lack of involvement came as a particular disappointment. It was as though the listener was encouraged to listen closely, but then not offered the musical meat to make them want to stay. In short, it wasn't hard for the listener's concentration to wane and musical engagement to fail. The final track, Nina Simone's 'In The

obvious ability in many areas, the Onkyo's faults proved especially frustrating.

**CONCLUSION**

Bland styling aside, the C-1VL hardly puts a foot wrong when it comes to presentation. It's certainly one of the most solidly built players at its price. It's also worth noting that, if previous experience is anything to go by, reliability should be class leading. Clearly, Onkyo has put a great deal of thought into engineering the C-1VL and, in some respects, the efforts have paid off. The sound boasts great precision and insight, its clarity almost startling at times, and instrumental timbre first rate. The problem arises, however, when it comes to consistency. Yet this silver disc spinner can appear rather cold and mechanical in its presentation. With a bit more body and richness, it would get a glowing recommendation, but right now it's just a tad too analytical - as per much high end Japanese fare - to merit our top score.

“Onkyo’s image might be hazy here, but in its native Japan, the company is seen as a specialist, enthusiast-driven hi-fi brand”

Morning' only went further in illuminating the C-1VL's nature. Whilst it generally coped better with uncomplicated music such as this, the lack of body and richness in Simone's vocals made for a rather sterile and clinical performance. The very essence of music such as this is soul, and that was precisely what the Onkyo lacked. Contrasting against this was an excellent piano timbre and a deeply textured percussion that both went some way to rescue what would have been a rather unconvincing performance. With such

**VERDICT** ●●●£

A CD player in the classic high end Japanese mould - extremely detailed and incisive, yet rather mechanical sounding for UK tastes. Superb build and finish will attract many - it's a lot of machine for your money.

**ONKYO C-1VL** £800

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  - build quality
  - supplied interconnect

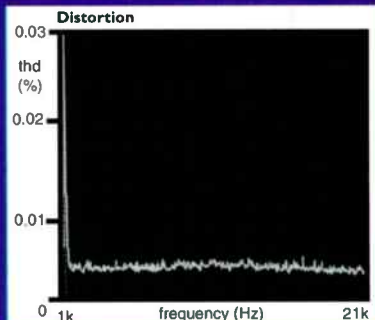
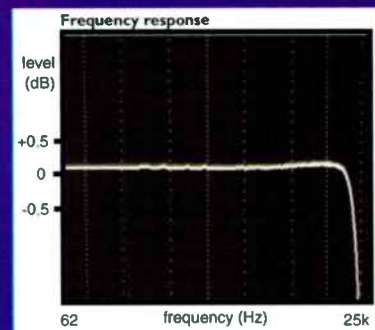
- AGAINST**
- mechanical sound
  - bland styling

**MEASURED PERFORMANCE**

The Onkyo C1 VI has a distinctive measured response, affected by deeper filtering than usual to reduce unwanted out-of-band signals. Measured frequency response reaches 18kHz, compared to 21kHz for most players, so the C1-VL is measurably different from the norm. A small lift at high frequencies, clearly shown by our impulse analysis, will impart a slight sheen to the sound, and perhaps a little glassiness - or it may just improve detailing, depending upon other factors. One of them is distortion and here the Onkyo was up with the best, suggesting it will sound clean and not too hard in delivery. There's little sign of quantisation noise in the distortion analysis and EIAJ Dynamic range was very high at 112dB.

The C1 VI will have a distinctive sound, bright in basic balance. It will likely also sound detailed and open. NK

Separation	
1kHz	123
20kHz	109
Noise (IEC A)	-107dB
Dynamic range	-112dB
Output	1.93V



Frequency response	4Hz - 18kHz	
	left	right
Distortion		
-6dB	0.0007	0.0008
-60dB	0.28	0.3
-80	2.9	3



# back to the future?

With legacy audio playback (that's 'CD' to you and me) allied to great versatility and a degree of future-proofing too, surely Denon's DVD-3910 DVD universal player has everything? Channa Vithana listens in...

**D**enon's latest universal player replaces the long running and successful DVD-2900. It boasts 'audiophile' 24bit/192kHz DSD 1796 Burr-Brown DACs to all stereo and multichannel outputs (for PCM DVD-A) along with an analogue FIR filter (for DSD SACD) playback. Denon's AL24-Processing-Plus is featured for PCM. There's also a bespoke "Gigabit Denon Link 3 Digital Audio Out", so you're not limited to its internal DACs. This second edition of the Denon Link is presently for uncompressed digital PCM up to 24/192 resolution, although the 3910 will be able to output DSD signals in the future pending rights approval and an upgrade to the 'Denon Link 3rd Edition'... Finally for videophiles, there's also HDCD, Dolby Digital/DTS as you'd expect, plus Faroudja PAL Progressive Scan and a 12bit/216 MHz Video DAC.

Further connections include two IEEE 1394 Firewire for DVD-V/DVD-A and SACD, RS-232C Port, Remote IN/OUT, DVI-D (HDCP) digital video

and final spec HDMI video and multichannel audio. Standard connections include Scart, composite, component, S-video, Toslink and S/PDIF, and separate high-quality stereo phono sockets. It also has a programmable 'Pure Direct Mode' for audio, shutting down selected or all unnecessary display/video functions. As well as hi res audio formats it can play CD, MP3, Windows Media Files, DVDR/DVDRW, VCD, CD-R/CD-RW and JPEG images.

Measuring 434x137x403mm, it's an imposing proposition on a shelf or table, and a 100mm gap both behind and above the unit is required for heat dissipation. The transport is well built; Denon states it is similar to the one used in the high-end DVD-A11. It has the machined mechanised look and feel of a laboratory instrument, to be found in the best recording studios, with precision buttons and smoothly damped drawer loading. The finish on the front plate profiled section is a fine titanium /dark aluminium colour, and the folded groove running just below the

drawer lends a business-like sobriety.

Internally it has isolated compartments providing improved separation for analogue, digital, video, transport and power supply sections. The supplied Instruction manual is comprehensive and very nicely laid out with annotated drawings showing exactly what button to press and what screen you should be on during set-up – just as well considering the complexity of this thing!

## SOUND QUALITY

A DVD-universal player has to be the jack of all trades, and master of some, so I kicked off with its most obvious audio application, that of playing ye olde Compact Discs. Elton John's 'Your Song' proved agreeable considering this was the remastered version on his recent greatest hits package, as it can sound shrill in bright or revealing systems. So it was a good choice because the R852s and the SR7400 AV amp are both exuberant components, emphasising mid/high frequencies over bass. The opening chords rolled out in familiar shuffling fashion with Elton's vocals



high in resolution, reach and expression. Switching over to the Planet CD player was interesting, inasmuch as this Denon was better in some areas regarding CD than the dedicated Rega! It produced a stronger rhythmic thrust and finely explicit musical whole, where the vocals shined with a clarity and brilliance. The music was propulsively played through the Denon and henceforth arrived powerful dynamics, textural vocal qualities containing separated and articulated varying pitch and range without strain. Conversely the Planet sounded grey, dry and less involving.

The audacity of the Denon was not short lived. Abba's 'Name Of The Game', complex vocally and lyrically is also an awkward piece in that it appears to have plodding rhythm tracks within its musical envelope. So some systems can centre on this at the expense of lyrical and vocal contribution, ruining a very clever song. The Denon however, kept this ponderous rhythm track in check as a part of the music rather than highlighting it. It handled the varying range of the female vocals meticulously, because this song goes from sad lament to soaring crescendos that weaker players stumble upon with stridency.

Moving to DVD-Audio and SACD (in stereo), the Denon faced the £1,200 Marantz DV8400 universal player. Pink Floyd's 'Dark Side Of The Moon' on hybrid SACD showed there was very little in it between the two players. One characteristic that did come through from the CD sessions is the Denon's articulate and structural expressiveness with music while still being rhythmically deft when called for. So the panning of the drums during the beginning of 'Time' was handled solidly with a nicely rounded timbre. The guitar solo near the end of 'Time' is loose and wild, however the Denon handled this with ease, letting the textural qualities come through without excessive coloration as the solo peaks. A favourite track 'Us And Them' strongly epitomises a Floyd trait of cyclically progressing from lullaby to blazing psychedelia while steeped in sharply defiant lyrics. It was inspired through the Denon, conveying dynamism and grasping control. The Marantz was characterised by a softer presentation but with superior silken treble and more atmosphere.

It was DVD-Audio that provided key distinction. I used Fleetwood Mac's 'Say You Will' because it is well recorded and musically intricate

## DENON LINK

This direct digital hi res audio output was evaluated against the player's separate analogue line level phono outs. The supplied 'Denon Link' cable is a nondescript affair, neither substantial nor flashy in comparison to the solidly constructed WBT attired Kontak Link 507s I used for the analogue signals feeding Denon's own £1,000 AVR 3805 AV receiver. The analogue signal provided upfront immediacy, fuller bass and a more euphoric sound with the 'Say You Will' DVD-A. Using 'Denon Link' revealed a less obvious sound, quietly understated though ultimately superior, essentially neutral with slightly leaner, more tuneful bass. More important is the minimising of glare via Denon Link - highlighting a forced 'edgy' sound via the analogue connectors. Thumbs aloft then, for keeping it digital!

accompanied with multiple vocal harmonies fading in/out. The Marantz edged well ahead of the Denon here because the music presented was superior, sweeter and of higher resolution. Fluid and silky smooth yet not losing out on the vitality I crave when evident in a recording. The Denon - as a consequence of enthusiastic mid-forwardness - had a slight chromium tint to its treble. On DVD-A/ SACD Multichannel, the DVD-3910 excelled structurally, giving a full account of the tuneful body within compositions while the Marantz was a little diffuse with both 'Dark Side Of The Moon' and 'Say You Will'. The Denon had a really good grip on 'Say You Will' where the timing, melody and chorus were kept tight, neglecting the clinical delivery. The Marantz had no problem with timing either, and its treble remained silkily superior, however where it didn't do so well is dynamically, failing to entice enthusiastic bass and drums in multichannel mode compared to the Denon.

## CONCLUSION

This fully loaded beast of a player boasts a vast array of features, flexibility and inputs. It is beautifully put together, if not necessarily beautiful to look at, and refreshingly easy to use considering its versatility. Sonically it's very impressive; particularly capable on CD with an upfront, spry and propulsive sound. If you prefer exuberance, resolution and leading

edges, this is your player. Rival machines, such as Marantz's DV8400, offer more finesse and silkiness - especially with hi res discs when it really pulls away. The Denon Link is a brilliant touch, offering true future-proofing too. Obviously good value for money, this is a worthwhile audition, but we have reservations about its measured performance with hi res discs - see below:

## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The new DVD-3910 turned in a normal enough set of results from CD. Frequency response, shown in our analysis, runs ruler flat from 4Hz to 21.1kHz. Distortion levels were low down to -80dB and in consequence the EIAJ dynamic range figure was up with the best, measuring 111dB. In terms of distortion SACD also measured well, but frequency response was suspiciously curtailed in comparison to this model's predecessor, the DVD-2900 (which is a fine machine).

It's common, with current circuit implementations, for SACD to start rolling away smoothly around 48kHz to reach -15dB at 100kHz. The 3910 rolled away rapidly above 40kHz our measurements showed. Distortion levels were as low as expected. Switching in or out the SACD filter made no difference.

Distortion levels with DVD-A (24bit/192kHz) were peculiarly high and frequency response again curtailed to 40kHz, irrespective of user settings.

Denon Japan advised I alter the user settings to DIRECT, but all modes were tried including DIRECT and it made no difference. Paul Miller told me he encountered identical drawbacks with a different sample, but neither of us had a problem with the earlier DVD-2900. Paul's believes the 3910 does not handle MLP discs properly and that DSD of SACD is converted to PCM before conversion to analogue, explaining the response problem.

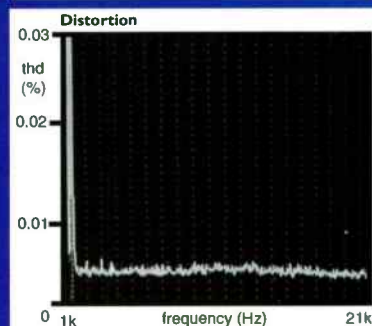
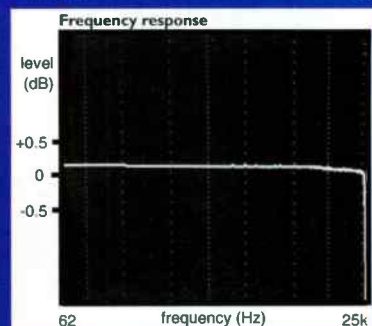
The DVD-3910 seems to have problems other players do not have. Neither DVD-A nor SACD measure as well as expected. I suspect we will have to re-visit this player testing another sample and after more

discussion with Japan. After the success of the DVD-2900 the behaviour of the 3910 is baffling. NK

Frequency response	(-1dB)
CD	4Hz -21.1kHz
DVD-SACD	A 4Hz- 40kHz 2Hz - 55kHz

Distortion	CD	DVD	SACD
-6dB	0.0003%	0.0005%	0.0005%
-60dB	0.2%	0.3%	0.03%
-80dB	1.6%	9%	0.35%
-100dB	-	27%	2.7%

Separation (1kHz)	138dB
Noise (IEC A)	-112dB
Dynamic range (CD)	111dB
Output	2.1V



### FOR

- rhythmical ability, insight
- build, aesthetics
- value for money

### AGAINST

- hi res measured performance

audience



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# decade

**What a difference ten years make! These days, Technics is associated with DJ turntables, but a decade ago it was making audiophile preamps like the superb SU-C2000, says Dominic Todd...**

**T**hroughout the 1970s, '80s and '90s, Technics produced some surprisingly high-grade components that were more than able to take on the established esoterica, such as the SU-C2000 pre-amp you see here – but try and find information on it and you'll struggle. It was only sold in the UK for a limited time in the mid-nineties and, with the matching power amp, commanded a price of around £1,600. Instead, it was the £600, SU-C/A1000 combo that tended to sell over here. The more expensive unit sold far better in Germany and, thanks to common voltages from the early '90s, will work perfectly well over here, making an import a fine buy. Just out of interest, an official UK version will be prefixed by the code EB, whilst continental European models are labelled EG.

Whichever model you're looking at, you're still guaranteed a cracking spec. The most intriguing feature was the Virtual Battery Operation. With mains electricity being a less than clean source of power, noise can get through from the power supply to the transistors. Technics designed a new transistor and a gate system that allowed the capacitors to be charged by the PSU, and then isolated, by breaking the circuit, when full. The clever thinking continued with the volume control. In a total redesign, Technics fixed the brush whilst letting the resistor rotate – the opposite of how volume controls usually work. This reduced the metal contact points, and should produce a cleaner sound. As with many Technics designs

of the day, the base plate was constructed of a triple layer of steel, rubber and then steel again. Lifting the lid also reveals a twin-core transformer, output capacitor damping, and the use of high quality components that you wouldn't usually associate with that of a mainstream Japanese manufacturer. One aspect of the design that you would associate with the brand, however, was the wide range of features. Everything you could never want is there with, fortunately, most of it hidden by the, 90s *de rigeur*, flap. Having said that, the remote control is handy and, rumour has it that the MM/MC phono stage was also pretty good. To see how good, I lined up a Musical Fidelity X-LP v3 phono stage for comparison. As the matching Technics power amps' of the day were rarely as good, I mated the Technics up to an Exposure 2010S power amp – its clean, consistent sound giving the ideal basis for the Technics to show its true sonic colours...

Listening to this preamp reminded me how some areas of sound have been improved, whilst others haven't. First, the downside. Against more recent designs, the SU-C2000 sounded a little loose and imprecise. Piano notes had a slightly fuzzy quality to them and the sound wasn't as detailed as many, more modern designs. The upside, however, was a depth of sound that still made for an appealing listen, and one that worked especially well with the upbeat Exposure. There was a broad, generous soundstage that reminded

me of modern Marantz amps'. Bass may not have been the tautest, but it was bold, deep and yet still articulate enough not to sound monosyllabic. The rich, warm character made for an immensely involving sound, and a real tonic to some of the leaner designs of then and now. Yet, the best was still to come...

Although no Trichord Dino, it was far closer than you might expect and was certainly good enough to show a clean pair of heels to the X-LP. By comparison to the modern MF design, the Technics demonstrated superior bass weight, depth of sound and even timing. It made a good preamp' sound even more impressive. Best of all, the SU-C2000 managed this without resorting to harshness or a synthetic portrayal of sound. It made music approachable and almost even cosy, whilst at the same time, tidy and in tempo. As an aside, whilst testing the built-in phono stage I did find it to have a particularly decent gain – noticeably higher than that of the X-LP – meaning that even low output MC cartridges should easily be accommodated.

Virtual Battery power or not, the SU-C2000 is no Pink Triangle PIP. It's just too imprecise and woolly to match the best. Nevertheless, the PIP, and other contemporaries, did cost up to £2,700 new, so it would be wrong to expect a fair fight! Find a used SU-C2000 at a decent price – say less than £200 – and you'll have a fine slice of Japanese engineering, with a surprisingly musical balance. Make good use of that phono stage too!

# golden years

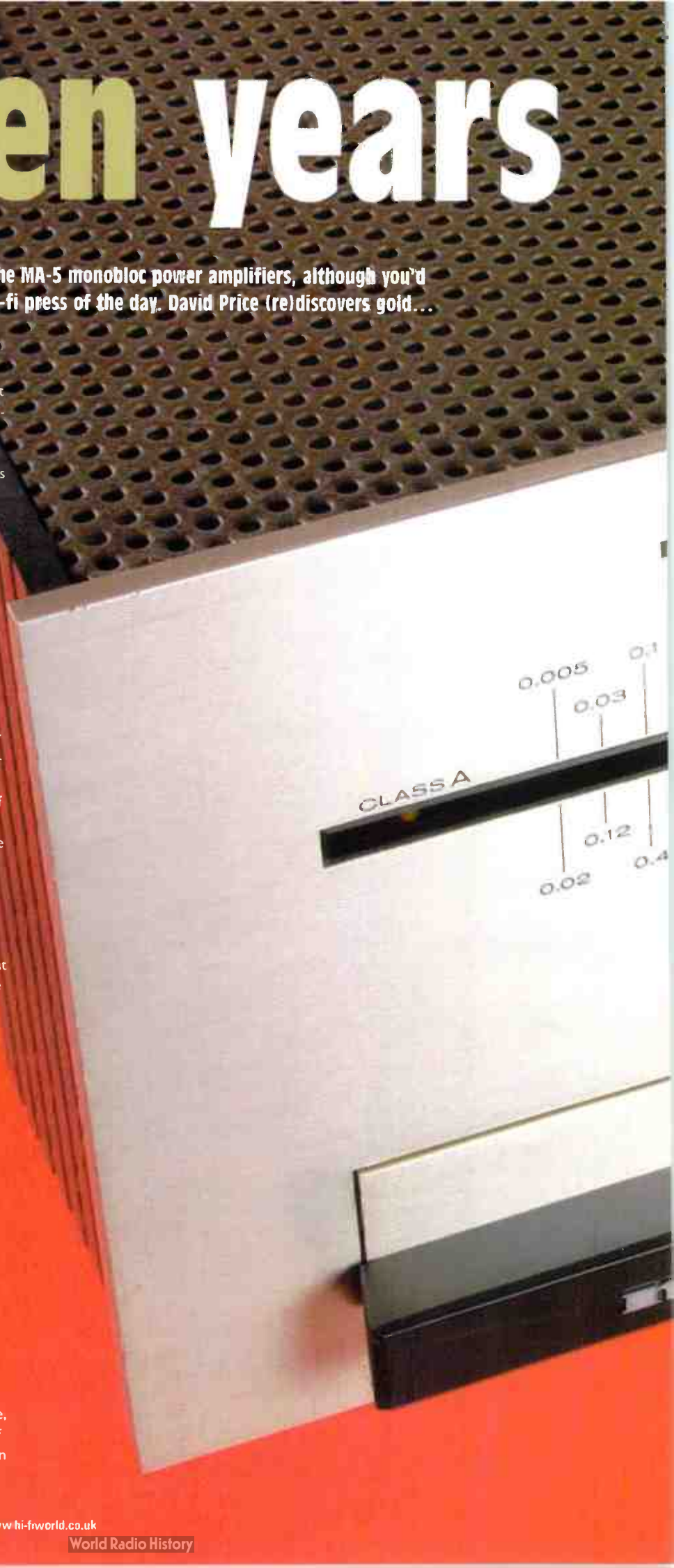
Between 1980 and 1984 Marantz made the MA-5 monobloc power amplifiers, although you'd never have realised if you read the UK hi-fi press of the day. David Price (re)discovers gold...

**H**i-Fi World has a large number of overseas readers, so I'll ask them to kindly skip the first paragraph: Back in 1980, the UK 'hi-fi hegemony' held that alongside your Linn LP12 turntable you needed a Naim NAC32.5/NAP250 amplifier to drive your Linn Isobariks and erm, that was it. To say the British hi-fi press was up its own IEC plug at that time is something of an understatement – there were Naim amps, and these were the only ones that mattered. Of course, there's absolutely nothing wrong with Salisbury's finest (quite the reverse), but British hi-fi hacks chanted this mantra to the total exclusion of anything else. Result: gems such as Marantz's MA-5 monoblocs simply never, ever, ever, got a look in.

Back in the real world (i.e. outside the United Kingdom), the Japanese manufacturers were engaged in mortal combat trying to make the cleanest and most powerful transistor amplification yet devised. Whereas Sony and Yamaha had both recently gone down the V-FET route (with the TA-N7B and B2 respectively) and Pioneer was sticking to Class AB bi-polars with its massive SPEC-2, Marantz was firmly in the Class A camp with a range of new-fangled MOSFET power amps. The MA-5 was the company's premium 'Esotec' monobloc model – the name given to its top ('Lexus') range of products which also included another notable design, the TT-1000 turntable (see p15). Even by the dizzy standards of late 1970s Nipponese high end, these were deliciously well hewn.

Each champagne gold coloured, 'half size' 208x146x334mm box packed 120W RMS into 8 ohms (at 0.01% THD), which in those days was as impressive as the 770W RMS of Musical Fidelity's kW500 is now. But there was a twist – a flick of a rear-mounted switch converted the MA-5 from Class AB to full Class A, whereupon it delivered a not inconsiderable 30W into 8 ohms (at 0.008% THD). Inside, chunky power transformers, 44,000µF of capacitors and a brace of 2SD757/ 2SB717 MOS-FET devices accounted for the not inconsiderable 10kg per unit. Power consumption was 230W per monobloc. At the front, a neat cover pulled out of the chunky brushed aluminium front panel to reveal a hidden power switch and gain control. A row of green LED peak meters, with dual scale calibration (for Class A and Class AB) showed how hard those MOS-FETs were working, and there were LEDs to denote Class A or AB operation too.

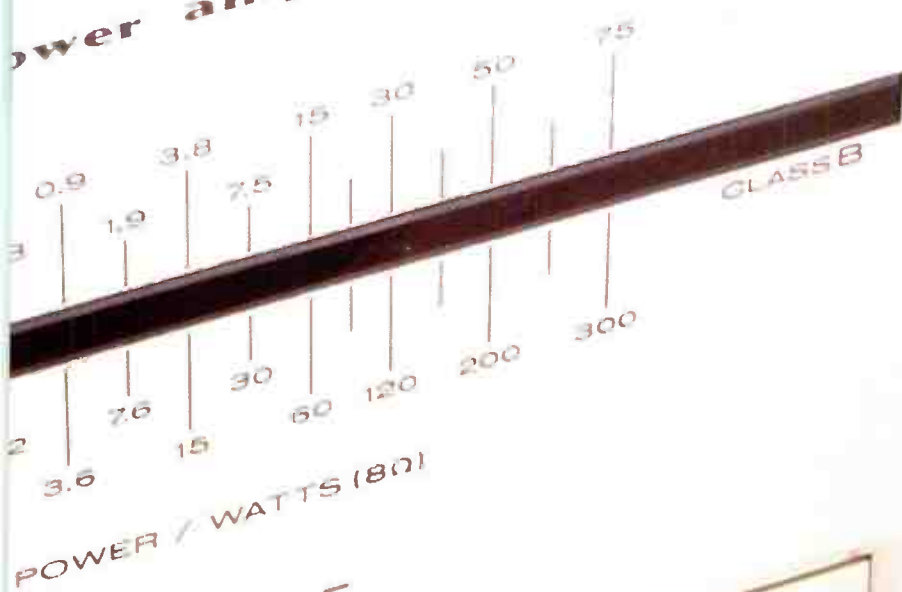
Even by today's high standards, in Class A mode, the MA-5 is a stunning performer. My immaculate review samples found themselves back to back with Musical Fidelity's excellent XP-200s (at £1,600 a pair), which they despatched effortlessly, and then into the fray with my current reference kW500 (at three times the price). Here, they struggled – as indeed they should – for this is one of the very best transistor power amplifiers on the market in many respects. Just like every other, the MA-5s couldn't





**REFERENCE SYSTEM:**  
 Marantz CD63 KI DP compact disc player  
 MF Audio Passive Preamp  
 Quad ESL-989 loudspeakers  
 REL Strata 5 subwoofer  
 Townshend Maximum Supertweeters  
 Chord Company Odyssey 2 loudspeaker cable

power amplifier



MA-5

ESOTEC SERIES

match the kW500's bass – which is all-conquering – and general sense of imperturbability; but they sure as hell hit it hard in the midband. To be frank, there's nothing that can touch pure Class A done properly in this region, and the MA-5s proved exemplary in this department. Put simply, they're just ultra-neutral, fast, detailed and with great tonal colour. Importantly, they're not 'coloured'

(indeed they made even the MF seem a tad vague and foggy in the upper mid), but they're open enough to let any particular instrument's true tonality shine through – be it the guitars on AC/DC's 'Dirty Deeds Done Cheap' or the processed keyboards of The Flaming Lips 'Yoshimi'...

Marantz's MA-5 monoblocs don't sound like a twenty five year old design – they're bang up to date even by today's best standards. Very incisive, transparent and dimensional with real rhythm and dynamic accenting, the only

weak point is that ever-so-slightly light bass and unatmospheric treble. Given that these particular examples haven't been serviced, and are still running the original 1970s capacitors, methinks that a change to some tasty modern audiophile fare would have them right at the very top of the first division. Even as is, the MA-5 is a remarkable product, perfectly able to cut it in today's 'superfi' world, and so by implication they must have been absolutely exceptional in their day. Why, oh why, didn't anybody in this country pay attention all those years ago...?

Had our hi-fi hacks just looked beyond their noses in 1980, then these beauties would be so much easier to come by now...

# time passages

**Newer isn't always better, and sometimes products from yesteryear can be coaxed into performance that blows moderns out of the water. One such design is Quad's 303 power amplifier, says John May...**

**W**hy spend a fortune for a new amp, when you can get a similar level of performance for a fraction of the price from a classic? After all – give or take a few exceptions – amplifier design hasn't changed radically in the last thirty years, while component design has come on in leaps and bounds...

I love classic Quad products, and there's just something about the 303 that screams retro-cool – it did win an industrial design award in 1969, after all! It also had a string of very positive reviews in its day, was used in broadcast and recording studios around the world for monitoring and by home enthusiasts for its sound quality and reliability. There's also the matter of Quad's legendary service department – should you find yourself faced with a problem, it's still able to service this amplifier for a very reasonable price.

With its seminal 'triples' output-stage and well regarded performance, I cannot understand why the 303 is so underrated by many in the hi-fi community today. People go crazy over the Quad II but the little 303 is often unfairly dismissed as way off the pace by today's standards. Well, we thought it was high time the solid-stater received the recognition it deserved...

This example, purchased along with a Quad 34 preamp, was in tatty condition, but was working and only cost £100. Linked up to the 34 the sound was very beguiling indeed. Not particularly impressive at the frequency extremes, but the midrange was deliciously liquid. Female voices (always a stern test of solid state equipment) in particular sounded velvety smooth – there was real emotion in the music being played. When music involves you in such a way it's very easy to forget about the details and get on with the listening. You know the amp is doing its job

well when you find yourself concentrating solely on the performance rather than the amp itself!

Replacing the Quad 34 with a passive pre bought a greater level of ability at the frequency extremes, but kept that all-important liquid midrange which Quad is justly famous for. Amplifiers aren't immune to the ravages of time, no matter how well looked after they are. Electrolytic capacitors do not age well in particular, and carbon film resistors can drift up in value. The net total of all this is that you are no longer listening to a Quad 303, but the effects of the components themselves, as the amp is no longer functioning as the designer intended. Considering the caps in a 303 are probably leaky by now, is it any surprise that the sound of an untouched unit has a reputation for being woolly?

## SOLDERING ON

Not long after I'd bought my 303, I discovered a company called Net Audio which offers a host of equipment upgrades, high quality components, power supplies, CD clocks and so forth. In addition to this they have a whole raft of upgrades that can genuinely transform the performance of the Quad 33 / 303 / 405 for a very reasonable outlay. For example, in addition to offering a complete set of replacement caps for the Quad 303, Net Audio offer a PSU upgrade board the original item. As the PSU is the heart and soul of any amplifier, I thought this would be a good place to start in upgrading my 303.

Fitting is simplicity itself.

Removing four screws from the underside of the Quad 303 allows you to remove the base cover. This exposes the PSU board, as well as the left and right driver boards. You flip the PSU board up, de-solder its four connections, and then solder the new

one into place. The whole process should take no longer than five minutes. The latest incarnation of the PSU board (version 1.1) requires that the output voltage be adjusted for optimal performance. As long as you possess a digital multi-meter this shouldn't present a problem, and Net Audio have kindly provided full setting up instructions on their website which are easy to follow.

A sturdy power supply is not much good if the bridge rectifier then lets the side down. Another website that offer potential upgrades is Avondale Audio. Of use to the Quad 303 owner is their replacement bridge rectifier constructed from four high quality Schottky diodes. The price is very reasonable as well at £26 for a fully constructed unit, using non-ferrous fixings. A lot has been written recently about the deleterious effect of steel in Hi-Fi equipment, and Avondale Audio are particularly keen that non-ferrous components & fixings are used wherever possible in their products.

Electrolytic capacitors are the most likely culprits as far as degrading performance over time is concerned. Net Audio offers replacements for both the components found on the driver boards, and the larger mains smoothing and speaker coupling capacitors. Replacing these is simply a question of de-soldering the old items from the boards using some de-soldering solder-braid or a solder-sucker. The PSU and speaker coupling caps need to be de-soldered, and their capacitor clips unscrewed from the chassis.



The 2200uF PSU capacitors were replaced with high quality 4700uF 100v types from BHC Aerovox. The 2200uF output caps were substituted with a pair of 6800uF 63v audio-grade caps from Samwha. Pushing the boat out a bit, I replaced the caps on the driver boards with a mixture of standard Black Gate types, and Nichicon Muse. Values are 22uF, 100uF and 470uF, all at 50v. For the sake of thoroughness, I also replaced all transistors on the driver boards with modern equivalents, as well as the output transistors hidden from view behind the heatsink [see **Restoration Information**]. Note that replacing the caps on the driver board, and/or the transistors entails adjusting the amplifier bias current. Again Net Audio give clear instructions on how to achieve this.

## SOUNDING OUT

The level of performance once these goodies were installed was way beyond what one would expect from a Quad 303. That natural and unforced quality of the 303 remained, but it has been transformed into an exceptionally dynamic and emotive performer! Transients hammered out of the speakers so fast it was difficult to believe this was a Quad. The bass in particular was a revelation compared to the stock unit. It's thunderous when called for, but also has a wonderfully tactile and organic quality to it. All too often with solid state amplifiers I find that the bass may well go deep, but it has a one dimensional quality, as if it's detached from the rest of the performance, lacking any sense of life. I'm glad to say that the bass was very much a part of the musical-whole in this instance. The higher values of the new PSU and speaker coupling caps are undoubtedly to thank for this.

Another pleasant surprise was that there was seldom any sense that the amp was running out of steam, even on very complex material. One gets the impression that the amplifier has a much better control over the speakers than before, undoubtedly one benefit of Net Audio's new PSU board in tandem with the Avondale Audio bridge rectifier. My only gripe was a very slight 'greyness' to the sound, particularly noticeable with vocals, which running in didn't seem to get rid of. It almost seems churlish to mention it, as the amp was doing so many things right, but it was noticeable after long periods of listening.

The trouble with all this is once the upgrade bug has bitten you, there's no known cure! The new

parts had barely had time to bed in before I realised that I had a pair of 10,000uF Elna Cerafine caps kicking around at the back of my cupboard... A brief exchange of e-mails with Net Audio confirmed that these caps

were safe to use for the speaker coupling caps, and would probably result in a useful increase in sound quality. ten minutes and one burnt finger later, the new Cerafines were in place. Due to their size, the only way they'd fit was by taping them to the PSU caps, not an ideal long-term solution – granted – but it worked. Replacing the fuse-holder with a different 'flat' mounting type, and relocating this on the chassis back-plate was also necessary to allow the large Cerafines to be installed in the somewhat confined space available.

Now things were really cooking! [not literally, I hope? – Ed.] The last remaining hint of greyness was banished. My attention was drawn straight away to the full-blooded and gutsy bass. Given the right program material it can really grumble – wonderful. I was grinning ear to ear for the rest of the evening as I ran through my favourite CDs. The revitalised Quad seemed equally at home with all types of music. It had the balls and clout to do Rock music full justice, as well as refinement and sweetness to bring out all the best in Classical music. Not a bad result for a thirty six-year-old design...

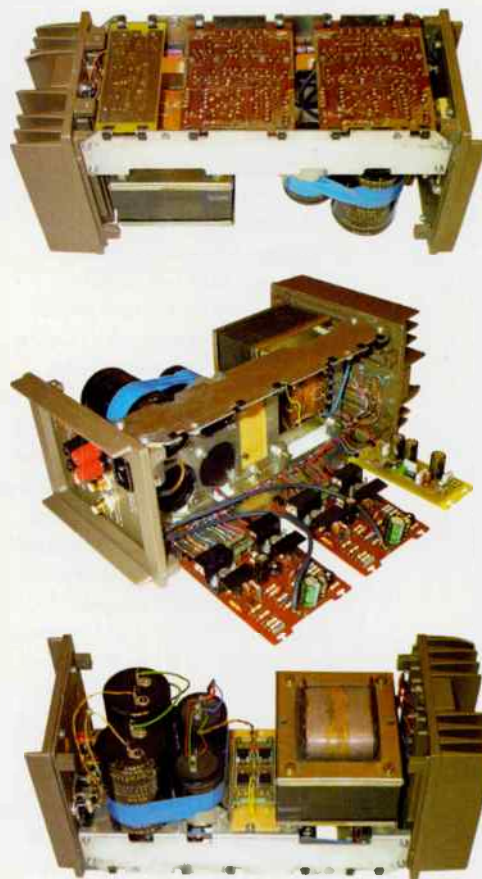
## CONCLUSION

The great thing with the Quad 303 is that you can upgrade it in stages, as and when funds allow. If you're on a budget, it's best to replace the PSU and speaker coupling capacitors first, as these really will be on their last legs. Next stage is the caps on the driver board – these will ensure your Quad 303 is functioning to spec. The next item must surely be the amazing

Net Audio PSU upgrade – surely the greatest mod for the 303 that money can buy? Then the internal wiring could usefully be upgraded as well, and wires re-routed for shorter signal runs. The DIN connectors can be

“the trouble with all this is once the upgrade bug has bitten you, there's no known cure!”

replaced with high quality phono sockets for easier connection to modern equipment. Resistors can be upgraded. The sky's the limit. So for approximately £100 for the Quad and £150 for the upgrades, you have an amplifier that performs way, way above its price band! Factor in its gorgeous looks, important heritage and reliability and it's a no-brainer.



## RESTORATION INFORMATION

Great websites for those considering purchasing and/or upgrading a Quad 303:

[www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Lab/6722/quadequitran.html](http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Lab/6722/quadequitran.html) - fantastic site for all things Quad

[www.users.zetnet.co.uk/avondale/](http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/avondale/) - Replacement Schottky bridge rectifier.

[www.flashbacksales.co.uk](http://www.flashbacksales.co.uk) - great site for those hard to find interconnects for vintage Quad equipment.

[www.rsvwww.com](http://www.rsvwww.com) - for replacement Quad 303 transistors and just about everything else as well

[www.net-audio.co.uk](http://www.net-audio.co.uk) - PSU and capacitor upgrades available here, plus other upgrades.

[www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk) - a plentiful supply of Quad 303's available here, but watch those silly prices!

# ragged glory

**Back in 1986, Epos's ES14 loudspeaker caused quite a stir, its radical design philosophy making most rivals suddenly look as if they were relics of a bygone age. But just how does it sound by today's standards? Dominic Todd put the last remaining pair of factory fresh, boxed (new old stock) ES14s against the company's latest m22 - with fascinating results...**

It might seem something of an oddball now, but back in the mid-eighties, the new Epos ES14 was pure 'future shock'. A two way (when so many speakers were still three pot designs), with a minimalist crossover (just one solitary capacitor to protect the tweeter!), metal dome tweeter (cutting edge stuff) and bi-wiring (what that?), few had seen anything like it when launched at a price of £295...

Unboxing what's probably the last remaining 'brand new', sealed pair of '14s, memories came flooding back. Today, a large stand-mounted 'speaker of this size is very unfashionable - in fact, I can't even remember the last time I reviewed a new 'speaker of these dimensions. That said, the real wood veneer still looked good, its finish is every bit as neat as contemporary Chinese Eposes like the m22 I had for comparison. Unlike many speakers of the day, the ES14s used solid, 18mm MDF, rather than chipboard. An alloy tie-bar further enhanced rigidity, and there's an arrangement of foam blocks to aid bass damping.

As well as pioneering a minimalist crossover and biwiring, the ES14 was also one of a new breed that offered metal dome tweeters. Although several years after Celestion, it still came at a time when soft dome tweeters were still very much the norm. In textbook eighties fashion, the metal dome

tweeter is pared off with a 145mm plastic 'woofer'. Mind you, this one is extremely well engineered. The magnet is huge, and the die-cast frame made most of the pressed steel competition pale by comparison.

Such drive units were rarely famed for their efficiency, so it comes as



dome tweeter is still there, although it's anodised in gold. Of greater surprise is the twin polymer 'mid/bass units' - they certainly appear similar to the ES14 design, although more like the ES11 in terms of size, even down to the phase plug and die-cast chassis. One modern bit of thinking is the venting used by the midrange unit to promote freer movement of air from the rear of the cone. Although also finished in real wood, the m22 is a much taller box and doesn't

said that, they had strong focus, excellent projection into the room, fine timbre and a generally unrestrained air. Less good was the bass, which by modern standards was both soft and slow - blame the heavy plastic bass cone for this. Still, at least it integrated well with the midrange, and didn't detract from the overall balance too much. At the other end of the scale, treble response also showed the typical weaknesses of metal domed tweeters of the day, with a lack of focus and some splash. That aside, the balance was still a good deal smoother than I'd been expecting and, as with the bass response, blended seamlessly with the midrange. Overall, the ES14 was well balanced and composed, but no longer, I felt, a bastion of detail or transparency...

The rather slow bass response was shown up by Daft Punk's 'Aerodynamic', which seemed rather wooden - even with the 'speakers placed on an open framed stand, it didn't go particularly deep. By contrast, the guitar positively excelled. It was articulate, resonant and benefited from the midrange's excellent projection. Soundstaging and separation were generally fine although, considering the size of the 'speaker, I did find the scale of sound to be rather less than expected. The planet Jupiter by Holst also didn't have quite the scale I'd hoped for. During the more bombastic sections, it was actually rather restrained. Again, that ponderous bass response didn't help, which gave neither pace nor authority to the score. Tonal colour from both brass and string sections was good, and certainly far less coloured than many of its contemporaries - it's certainly not hard to see why the ES14 was respected for its even tonal colour in its day.

Although the percussion was generally detailed, treble performance was let down by a lack of focus and some glare, which had the effect of making the violins sound somewhat synthesised. Although far from being unpleasant to listen to, it was curiously uninvolved all the same.

Moving across to the new Epos m22 brought about some significant improvements. Peter Cincotti's vocals actually sounded recessed after listening to the ES14s, yet still possessed excellent definition and articulation and, like the ES14s, very good height, too. If it was even-Stevens with the midrange, the m22

require a stand.

Between the two woofers there is an internal divide that has the

effect of creating a smaller 'speaker above a subwoofer - at least that's the theory. In fine Epos tradition, the m22s are tri-wirable - although this time the crossover circuitry is somewhat more comprehensive!

### LISTENING BACK

The most striking aspect of the Epos ES14 is the midrange presence. With Peter Cincotti's 'On The Moon', vocals appeared emphasised over and above the rest of the mix. Having

little surprise to find that the ES14s usually measured around 85dB sensitivity - even though Epos themselves claimed 87dB [see **MEASURED PERFORMANCE**].

Surprisingly enough, 87dB is exactly the figure Epos quote for the new m22. Yet, looking at the design, it's clear that a good deal of the thinking behind the ES14 remains to this day. The 25mm metal





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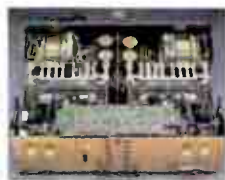
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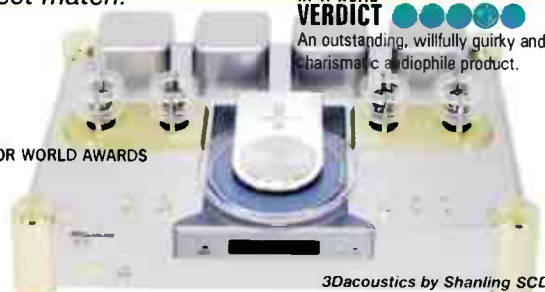


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**David Price Editor - Hi-Fi World**



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definitely had the upper hand elsewhere. Unsurprisingly, the larger cabinet brought about greater bass weight. Yet again, however, they didn't convey the speediest of bass responses, suggesting that partnering electronics would need to be tight and fleet of foot sounding to get the best from the M22s. It's also fair to mention that when there's more bass, as is the case here, you don't expect it to necessarily move as fast as a smaller 'speaker. Treble response, whilst still sounding characteristic of a metal dome design, improved in both detail and refinement. Pulling out extra detail whilst sounding subtler is certainly a neat trick and just goes to show how far metal domes have advanced over the past 20 years or so...

If anything, the differences were even more pronounced with Daft Punk. The balance was far more dynamic here, and more exciting, too. The extra bass weight really told, even though it did plod along at times. The treble gave a far more vibrant sound and radiated an energy that was lacking with the ES14s. The electric guitar, which was already well portrayed by the ES14s, had even more attack and prominence this time around. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, all this extra exuberance didn't come at the expense of refinement. The treble remained smooth, and the 'speakers matched the impressive composure of the older designs, note for note. It certainly made for a more involving listen. The m22

performed slightly disappointingly with Holst. There was certainly a richer bass, giving greater body to the orchestra. Timing was also superior, yet I didn't feel that the m22s would match the best in their class in terms of instrumental timbre. Perhaps this is unfair, though, given that the superior 'speakers, at this level, in terms of timbre and timing would all be smaller in size. Just like the ES14s, though, the m22s steadfastly remained smooth and composed whatever the music.

## CONCLUSION

The point of this test was not to see which 'speaker was better, but things have changed. Fortunately for the consumer, on the evidence here, 'speaker design has changed for the better over the past twenty years. The Epos ES14 still has some striking qualities; midrange has real presence, and the balance is as transparent as many a current design. Where it does fall down, however, is at frequency extremes. Bass is a tad slow and ponderous, and treble a little

## THE EDITOR SAYS:

Whoohah! When ex-Epos MD Stephen M Harris told me he had a brand new pair of unopened ES14s in his attic, then I just couldn't say no... And what an ear-opener they were! I agree with DT, inasmuch as they're obviously more flawed than any serious £1,000 speaker of today – bass is loose and treble fuzzy – so careful matching was (and is) the order of the day. IncaTech's classic Claymore integrated (£345 in 1987) was the budget option, Exposure's 7/8 the high end one... all driven by a super smooth Linn LP12/Ittok/Karma, of course! In a modern system (Michell GyroDec /SME IV/ Ortofon Kontrapunkt C, Trichord Delphini NC, Musical Fidelity kW500), they sounded loose in the bass and fuzzy up top all right – but what a midband! This is why we all loved (or hated) this classic box – only Linn's Kan has a more engaging, communicative, fluid mid – it's a sort of speaker equivalent of a parallel single ended tube amp. It showed me that speakers have got so much better in so many ways, but also that maybe this has made for less charismatic designs. The ES14 excels in one way – musicality, and is middling to poor in all others. These days, no loudspeaker manufacturer would attempt such a formula... DP

unfocused, by today's standards. It still makes for an excellent second-hand purchase, but it's perhaps not the timeless classic that, say, an older Quad electrostatic 'speaker is. The m22 shows just how far 'speaker design has come. It may be built in the Far East, but it's beautifully constructed and sonically superior to the ES14 in almost every respect. The cohesion is retained, but there's now also a sense of scale and drama, that makes this 'speaker that bit more special. The Epos tradition, then, continues with full honours.

## VERDICT

One of the most endearingly musical loudspeakers of the nineteen eighties – off the pace by modern standards, but a seminal design nevertheless.



## MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The ES14 has an unusual response curve, generally quite smooth but with a distinctive lift across the upper mid-band, giving an almost dome like shape. A trend like this will emphasise vocals and speech, projecting it forward. From the loudspeaker, improving intelligibility and a sense of 'closeness' to the listener. The fall off in upper treble will ensure the ES14 doesn't sound bright, yet it will remain satisfactorily detailed.

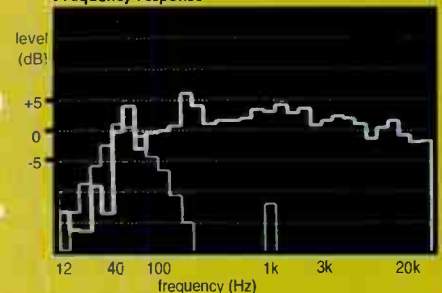
The slow roll over in bass output suggests a well damped free from boominess. However, speakers like this often need some push from the amplifier, plus near-ideal rooming, if they are to deliver fast, tight bass. With a lower limit of 40Hz the ES14s go low enough to possess some feeling of bass weight.

Impedance is very high at 11ohms, and resistive too, so the ES14s will not cause upset through reactive energy storage, however, with an inevitably low sensitivity of 85dB they still need a powerful

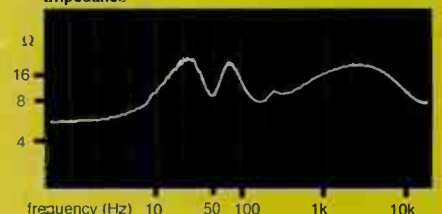
amplifier to go loud.

The ES14 are very distinctive. Likely sounding projective and fast, yet not sharp in their sound, they will work well with the right partnering items. NK

Frequency response

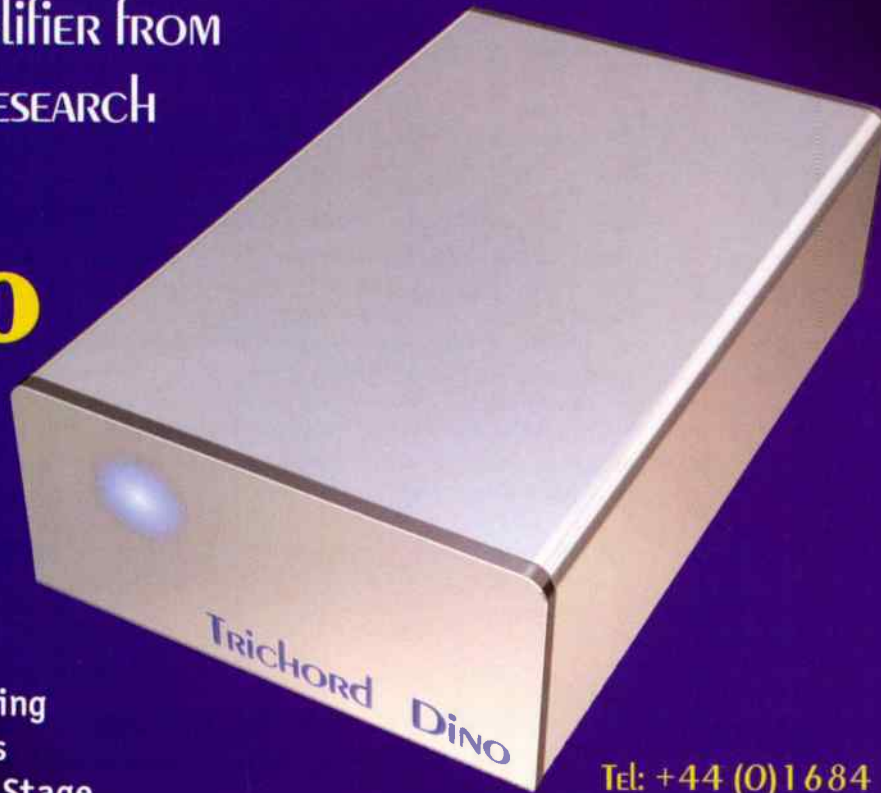


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# two's company

It's not everyday that SME launches a new tonearm – it was over fifteen since the last masterpiece (that was the Series V)! So it was hardly a chore for Stewart Wennen to try the new SME M2-10...

**S**ME's new series of pickup arms was introduced to replace the ageing 3009, 3012/S2 and 3012R designs. The M2 is available with differing effective lengths; as the M2-9 (£612.59) at 233.2mm, the M2-10 (£626.05) at 239.3mm and the M2-12 (£670.33) at 308.8mm. SME has obviously done its research so an M2 pick up arm

## SOUND QUALITY

Essentially the SME has a similar sort of sound to the legendary 3009/S2 [see box] it replaces, which means it's musical and satisfyingly fluid around the midband. With compressed

peaks but impressive microdynamics, music seems to ebb and flow nicely, making the Rega derivatives seem a tad frigid and unwelcoming. However, whereas the old arm can sound harsh and coarse around the upper midband, the new one is smoother and more even. It lacks the S2's warm, euphonic bass however – with the M2 going closer to the tonal balance of the 309. Beethoven piano symphonies were presented with a fairly 'dry' character, as was Pink Floyd and Frank Zappa. In a sense, this is good news, because the new arm is a more neutral and less compromised device than the old, but it's not as characterful.

Indeed, in trying to be all things to all men, the M2 manages to be nobody's favourite. For example, Michell's TecnoArm, beats it for speed and grip at half the price, Origin Live's Silver 250 is almost comprehensively better for the same money. Hadcock's GH242 is obviously cheaper, but sounds less constrained, compressed and polite. The key to this arm is really that [1] it's an SME, with all the finish, build and compatibility benefits that confers, and [2] it has a good 'sensible shoes' sound that's decently musical, even and refined. For many people, this combination of attributes will be more than enough, but for me it wasn't. It's an extremely fine looking piece of equipment which is marred by a sound quality that can at best be described as mediocre for the money. It's better than the 3009/S2, but in today's massively competitive tonearm market, that's simply not sufficient.

can be mounted on virtually any turntable in the world.

The pick up arm featured in this test is the M2-10, with a typical effective mass of 9.6g and 17.3 mm overhang.

All SME pickup arms are of the static balance type. They all incorporate thread and weight bias compensation. Counterbalance weight is applied by rotating the main weight which has a Vernier gauge marked in 0.25g stages. It also is machined from the finest quality materials, as evidenced by the superb camera finish stainless steel arm tube. Unusually, the M2 has a detachable headshell which has been engineered for extreme lateral and horizontal strength. This is to eliminate headshell flexure so improving tracking ability. Damping is incorporated into the arm tube to avoid internal resonances. SME also supply an optional fluid damping kit which can aid performance in extremely adverse conditions, although I did not need this option.

Setting up was tiresome compared to Rega derivatives (but a stroll in the park against the Hadcock!), but made a little easier by the brilliantly written instruction manual. Cartridge alignment is achieved with the aid of a single point alignment protractor. The arm has to be as close to the centre spindle as the adjustable base will allow, then the arm base is pulled outwards until the cantilever is directly in line with the marking on the alignment tool.



## VERDICT

Beautifully finished and extremely versatile, but still can't quite cut it with competition sonically.

**SME M2-10** £626.05  
SME Ltd.  
[www.sme.ltd.uk](http://www.sme.ltd.uk)

## 3009S2 - CLASSIC COMETH

Possibly the best selling tonearm ever, the Series II was still in production until just months ago - four decades on! Its hey-day was the 1970s when it was the arm to fit to turntable motor units, making it readily and cheaply



available second-hand. It's nicely engineered, using a combination of precision ball race and knife edge bearings, friction is low and the arm is easily adjustable for tilt, overhang and height. It's best suited to lowish mass cartridges, although the optional FD200 fluid damper makes the 3009 happier with heavier designs. The trick is using highish compliance magnetic cartridges like the classic Shures of yore as well as the excellent modern Goldring G1042. Also, buyers should look for fixed headshell versions which sound slightly better than the 'improved' detachable shell model. It still sounds quite good - in comparison to the Series V it's best described as lively and fun. Despite far less detail, curtailed low bass, a coarse yet misty upper mid and rough treble, it still manages an engagingly musical performance. Never one to let the recording's nuances get in the way of the big picture, the S2 just bounces along with a fluid midrange and plenty of gusto. Rough around the edges but fun nonetheless, the 3009S2 is a legend – just don't pay silly prices on eBay for it (£200 tops for a mint, boxed, serviced example)!

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# times fly

## the sixties

**There's no shortage of classic hi-fi on specialist dealers shelves, but rarely do you come across such a complete, immaculate period piece as this partially restored Garrard/Quad set-up run by Greg Thompson...**

**D**riving over the Severn Bridge from my home in Bristol, en route to see what its owner Greg Thompson had modestly described as a 'part-restored Quad system', I had little inkling of just how stunning and special it would be. Greg, an electronics engineer by training, had come across this amazing set-up through bereavement, and duly spent a not inconsiderable six months getting it going again – and how!

Being the perfectionist that he is however, it wasn't just a question of running the Quad II power amplifiers up on a variac. Instead, Greg embarked on an odyssey of restoration with the Quad IIs that saw him replacing practically all the passive components (including remanufacturing some himself) and totally restoring the chassis (even going as far as contacting Quad's original paint supplier). The result is a period system, comprising Garrard 301, SME 3009, Decca FFSS, Quad 22/FM1, Quad II and Quad ESL-57s, which is both in rude electrical and mechanical health and aesthetically perfect – oh, and it sounds quite special too...

The system is all the more remarkable because its original owner,

stunning enough, but the way the original owner had installed and maintained them is nigh on unbelievable.

The system came with all the original receipts, showing the story of its purchase from Snell and Sons (21-26 High St., Swansea; "Everything Musical, Everything Electrical, Everything Satisfactory") in various component parts from 1960 to 1964. We see, for example, that on November 2nd 1960, the '301 Garrard Unit' [sic] cost £23.17.4, the TPA10 'Pick Up Arm' £6.3.3 and the 'Diamond Stylus' £4.10. On December 5th 1964, the Quad II power amps cost £22.10 each, the 'V.H.F. Tuner' £24 and the Decca FFSS 'Stereo Cartridge' £13.

### THE SYSTEM

The source component of choice for the sixties audiophile who wanted the best could only have been the Garrard 301. For this, he duly built his own plinth, which is an altogether more substantial affair than an SME, for example. It is made from solid oak, with an independently sprung top plate (his own design), onto which a 78RPM pick up arm is mounted, and also an early SME 3009, and a Dustbug. They're all

“the quality of these classic components is stunning enough, but the way the original owner had maintained them is unbelievable...”

also an engineer by profession, had obviously come from a lost time (and pre-War generation) when any less than the best was not acceptable. That's best as in the best equipment that money could buy (at the time), and best as in the best set-up too. The quality of these classic components is (was)

beautifully well aligned, and the Garrard's platter mat protected from dust by a specially cut piece of polythene. Needless to say, this needed no restoration – even the stylus of the Decca FFSS was mint and spotlessly clean!

The Quad amplification was less



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well preserved. It was mounted in a large oak cabinet, with the Quad II and FMI fascias cut into the front and the Quad IIs sitting discreetly inside.

Unfortunately the rigours of time, and the great heat the Quads generate, had taken its toll on the IIs, and so Greg decided to renovate them. Now, they're immaculate throughout, running either original tubes (or new old stock), and must be the closest you'll find to buying new Quad IIs. The face plates of the Quad 22 preamp and FMI tuner were also resprayed, but the insides left untouched, not requiring attention. Eagle eyed readers will spot that Greg has yet to install a correctly calibrated tuning scale on the FMI!

The ESL-57s weren't touched either. Like the Garrard 301, they were so well preserved that there simply was no need. They look beautiful and work perfectly, although there's a slight smell of hot dust! All the cabling and interconnects were as supplied forty years ago (they look like old fashioned mains cable I used to see in my grandmother's house in the 1970s!) – but Greg wasn't having any new-fangled stuff ruining the system's originality.

### THE SOUND

This was a very special occasion for me. Of course I've heard all these different components many times over in various situations, but I've a feeling that what I've heard hasn't been preserved (or restored) as well as it should. So I was fascinated to hear an original, immaculately well preserved

Garrard/SME/Decca turntable and Quad ESL-57s, alongside Greg's stunningly well restored Quad IIs...

My verdict? Stunning. I was instantly struck by the fact that I was listening to a 301 – rock solid bass, powerful dynamics and an incredibly engaging 'mastertape-like' sound. More impressive was the smoothness and the sense of security that the SME/Decca combo gave – no mistracking here. The Quad amplification was quiet (as in noise and hum-free) and surprisingly powerful – and possessed of a deliciously silky sweet tonality and utterly smooth, open midband. The ESL-57s were wonderfully seamless, super-fast and imaged

"I was instantly struck by the fact that I was listening to a 301 – rock-solid bass, powerful dynamics and an engaging 'mastertape-like' sound!"

superbly; they didn't sound ragged and rough as some unrestored, battle-scarred examples do.

Overall, I was quite disarmed by how modern it all seemed – in the sense that it was rhythmically engaging, dynamically commanding, wonderfully musical (what a bass!) and sweet and open too – yet there was still a touch of that romantic, sepia-tinted euphony that you just don't get from modern stuff (even new tube stuff), but only just a touch! Quite spectacular even today, I think this must have been something akin to a religious experience back in the nineteen sixties!

Greg Thompson has reluctantly decided to sell the system. He'd like to find a dedicated enthusiast to take over custodianship, and doesn't want to hear from dealers, speculators and/or those who wish to break it up. If you're interested, email David Price at [editorial@hi-fiworld.co.uk](mailto:editorial@hi-fiworld.co.uk)

now turn to p62 for a kick up the eighties >>



## the eighties

**Channa Vithana auditions a madcap mixture of classic eighties 'flat earth' and modern noughties know-how in a system that was seemingly randomly put together at great expense!**

astonishing (and costly) upgrade odyssey!

In June 2003 he wanted to improve his twenty three year old LP12, and bought the latest Ekos tonearm and Akiva cartridge from a well-established dealership in London - making the classic mistake of buying without auditioning! He confesses, "I bought solely on the belief that these were the best products for an LP12. Together these were about £3,000. Unfortunately I did not perceive a significant improvement in listening enjoyment or sound quality." To be fair to Patrick, this dealership was not into him trying the Linn upgrades at home over extended periods. So in August of that year he travelled to Walrus systems in central London. Walrus are vinyl specialists and tend to do mostly analogue and valve products for turntable source systems. They suggested he improved the phonostage and he tried both an EAR Yoshino valve model and a Tom Evans Microgroove at home. "I was amazed at how different from the Linto, and from each other, they sounded. I initially liked the warmth of the EAR Yoshino, but quickly tired of it after hearing the clarity and space of the Tom Evans. I preferred both to the Linto!"

Patrick had thus just discovered the joys (?) of hi-fi dems - when the 'wow' factor fades, what are you left with? Also, improving the phonostage was a 'one upgrade at a time' strategy, which is sensible, as you can easily know what has made a difference to the sound quality. So Patrick logically went and acquired the 'The Groove' phonostage at £1,800 instead! "(It) seemed to bring a significant improvement. I wondered whether the Akiva (cartridge) had been too good for the Linto? I was now reasonably

**F**orty five year old Patrick Bateman's formative hi-fi years were the nineteen eighties, when he - like many others - purchased a Linn LP12 turntable.

Amazingly the Sondek is still the heart of his vinyl-only system today, some twenty five years later. In the intervening years Patrick went to university and worked in New York's high-pressure investment sector, recalling many high-octane adventures. After 'making it', he came back to England, got married and finally had time to upgrade his system, which is still quirky though now firmly inhabiting the high-end...

His original system consisted of the aforementioned LP12, bought in 1980, which has been gradually upgraded. In 1990 he bought

Exposure's classic VII/VIII pre/power amp combo second-hand for £300; Exposures of that era were considered to have something akin to the classic 'Naim sound' - expressive and rhythmical with impeccable timing with good current delivery - albeit a little warmer and more forgiving. This was a good move, as Patrick's next important hi-fi purchase in 1995 was a pair of Linn Saras, also second-hand for £400. In 1995, Patrick enhanced his front end with the addition of a previously owned Linn Ittok tonearm for £400, and a new Linn Clyde cartridge for the same sum. In 2002 a Lingo power supply followed for the princely sum of £700 and a Linto phonostage. It was all quiet on the upgrade front for about a year, but then he suddenly embarked upon an

happy...", he adds.

In May 2004 Patrick found Studio, a specialist Naim dealer. They suggested the Saras were "old but good" and would be better off with higher quality amplifiers. So Studio visited Patrick's house and while listening they saw two problems. Though Studio approved of the LP12 mounted on a shelf to the wall (fitted by the Ekos/Akiva dealership), the shelf had the wrong washers(!) The other problem was that the Saras were not functioning to their potential and upon closer inspection some "toddler damaged" cones were revealed. Of the two problems, Patrick solved the easier one and had the washers replaced. He confesses that he was, "amazed at by the improvement – particularly the reduction in bass boom".

One thing I immediately noticed upon visiting Patrick was that the LP12 was mounted without a spirit level! Which can't have been good for sound quality. This is shocking, shouldn't a good dealership install a turntable level in the first place? Studio however lent him a pair of their own Saras, "again the improvement was significant - my old ones had been raspy".

Patrick tried Naim's 282 preamp and 250 power amp with Studio's Peter Coles' own personal LP12, fitted with Naim Aro tonearm, Naim Armageddon power supply, Naim Prefix phonostage and Koetsu Red cartridge. Along with the Studio's Saras, Patrick was able to assess them all at home, "I was blown away". He did a deal with Studio where he would do a straight LP12 swap and purchase a new Naim 282 preamp and second hand 'olive' 250 power amp, while Studio let him keep the Saras. Having previously

learnt the hard way, this time Patrick compared his Groove phonostage against the Naim Prefix and "The Groove won hands down (due to its sense of space and ambience) and I promptly sold the Prefix back to Studio!" He also added 5 Vertex AQ mains cables and four Jaya mains filters bought for £2,200 (from The Right Note in Bristol) without auditioning after reading a review! Patrick when will you learn? This time however he was happy (and lucky), "I felt that this brought significant improvements to imaging and the soundstage."

In July 2004 Patrick experimented with 'active' Saras with two Naim 250 power amps and a £300 second-hand Naim Snaxo crossover. This time Patrick was greeted with a "bigger" sound but was ultimately disappointed as it sounded "coarser", less delicate and bass light. He says, "in short, I never got on with it". His analogy for this is that the active system was akin to a four-wheel drive rally car, being totally direct with good grip - but ultimately soulless compared to a front engined, rear wheel drive sports car. Though, in an all-Naim system with Naim speakers and external (active) crossovers plus power supplies installed, Patrick's system would have been more agreeable, methinks...

October 2004 saw Patrick's Naim (flagship) NAC 552 pre amp/NAP 500 power amp for sale as Studio's ex-demo items. This Naim combo sells new for £23,975 at current list price! However Patrick cannily got them substantially discounted, part-exchanging the 'active' system and reverted back to passive 'rear wheel drive'. We listened to Kraftwerk's 'Computer World' which he bought

in 1980 at the same time as the original LP12, Simon and Garfunkel's 'Bridge Over troubled Water', Pink Floyd and Mike Oldfield. Quite a mixture really, and it was all beautifully done through his 'new' system. I experienced a sound that combined speed, tuneful and extended bass with tangible midrange delicacy. Instruments were startlingly 'in the room' without artifice. For example, the exquisitely delicate transitional melodies when 'Numbers' becomes 'Computer World 2' on the Kraftwerk record were stunning.

## CONCLUSION

I can only agree with Patrick when he now says, "I absolutely love this system. It is still getting better....". It doesn't remove your fillings either like false preconceptions of Naim systems, rather with the use of carefully auditioned Koetsu cartridge and the star of the show - the combo of Groove phonostage and NAC552 pre amp, he has found his level of perfection. He has done this by focussing on the system core – the amplification and source – and getting it right. His unstoppable march into the high-end continues with possibly a pair of ex-dem Naim NBL speakers (£6-7K when new), which should form a good match to the NAP 500 power amp. Also mentioned was a PLUS power supply upgrade for The Groove enabling all his components to use separate power supplies. In the mean time he intends to upgrade his listening room by adjusting furniture and fitting properly levelled supports for his equipment. A truly fantastic system Patrick, richly deserved – considering your outlay in time and money terms!

## SPOTLIGHT: LINN SARA 9

Linn first introduced the Sara in 1978, and ceased production in 1990. It's interesting inasmuch as it boasts an Isobaric driver arrangement within an infinite baffle cabinet (closed box, no port). Philip Hobbs, Linn's Head of Acoustic Design, who designed the final Sara 9 incarnation, describes it as being, "essentially a 2-way loudspeaker based on the (19mm) Scanspeak tweeter we used in both the Isobarik and the Kan, and a modified version (with new dustcap which radically changed the break-up of the driver) of the KEF B200 8" (carbon-loaded polypropylene) bass drive unit". There was a second B200 behind the front one which provided Isobarik loading and since the B200 is round, necessitated a complicated structural foam moulding for the front baffle and a mounting ring for the front bass driver. He adds, "they sounded very good in the right circumstances, very Linn of that period, with fantastic bass for the size: later versions incorporated bi-wiring and some rather elegant crossover alignments".

### QUOTED SPECIFICATIONS:

frequency response: 50Hz-20kHz  $\pm$  2dB  
 impedance: 4 ohms nominal  
 efficiency: 88dB  
 power handling 75 watts  
 dimensions: 425x332x244mm  
 weight: 14.5kg



# sci - fidelity

**D**id I really imagine it - the early Mission power amplifier which spelled out MISSION in big, black blocky letters across its fascia filling an entire shelf at Laskys? Or the Meridian which came in separate, Lego-like blocks, residing on the shelf of a House of the Future in one of Michael Heseltine's inner-city garden projects? How about the Sinclair products, even more modular, and so ridiculously small and cheap that no one (least of all prospective purchasers) ever really believed they would work?

The future used to be different, back then. Like American 1950s rocket-finned cars, and the tower

far away as possible from any other manifestation of civilisation such as telephones, TVs, extraneous plugs — or, quite possibly, running water and indoor plumbing — that age also produced some startling glimpses of alternate hi-fi futures.

The ubiquitous box existed, but

still produce, as we moved towards the futuristic eighties, the enigmatic slab and column of the Lecson pre-power amp, and the desk-calculator shaped Nytech receiver, and the Transcriptors turntable, whilst we'd been making the alien radiator on stubby legs which was and is the

“during the 1970s, there was a time hi-fi thought it knew where it was going, even if that meant it was going all over the place...”

it was a time for new shapes; experiments which would point the way towards the age of jet packs, prismatic lawns and houses made of living crystal which we were all sure lay not far ahead. At a time when turntables were still often measured by how long took for their direct drive motors to reach 33.333RPM, when Watts meant everything, support for you system was likely to mean a white cube or a Habitat coffee table and the heat from the burgeoning plugs was enough to boil a kettle, the future still seemed bright and strange. Some of these visions, like that Mission amp, looked downright threatening; others, such as the ski-slope tape decks, which were admittedly Japanese, have retained their grace.

Music reproduction was emerging from the '60s days of the Dansette, the gramophone, and the DIY subwoofer, into wider, lush pastures. It wasn't just about sliding knobs and quadrasonic sound and touch-sensitive switches. Like the early personal computers, there was still no real sense that anyone had set down a real template for what the hi-fi of the future should look like. Also, and once again much like the computers, we Brits still believed that we could make these things better than anyone, and certainly didn't need any lessons from the Japanese or the Americans. We might not have been able to put any of our chaps on the Moon yet, but we could

Quad ESL-57 since before Sputnik went up...

Where did it all go wrong? Well, the real future arrived in the flying saucer shape of the CD in 1982. And CDs, with the amount of heavyweight new hardware which was then required to play the things could only be spun in large, ugly boxes. They were, from a cursory glance, indistinguishable from the Betamax video players of the same era, and equally ugly. There was nothing to be done. Even the early Meridian players, as the British manufactures, most of which didn't really believe in this new format, began to get in on the act, were based around the same boxes, and looked much the same. And people bought them in their millions. The template was set. To this day, we seem to be stuck with it.

But the future hasn't been forgotten entirely. The ESL-57 might have gone, but listening rooms nowadays are still invaded by Blueroom Minipod loudspeakers. Even with CD players, there are products such as the commendably Metropolis-styled Shanling, but nowadays, and with concern about alienating the punter and business plan to satisfy, such products are all too rarely British. Still the future hasn't gone away entirely. The true flag-bearers of futuristic styling are to be found in what are generally regarded as the most old-fashioned areas of hi-fi. After all, what could be



*Ian R MacLeod's interest in hi-fi goes back to his childhood. As a writer, he has published award-winning novels and short stories. His big Dickensian fantasy, The Light Ages, is currently out in paperback from Pocket Books and its successor, The House of Storms, will be published this spring.*

block dreams of Le Corbusier, and especially during the 1970s, there was a time hi-fi thought it knew where it was going, even if that meant it was going all over the place. For all the developing hair-shirt philosophy which decreed that recorded music was best listened as



**Ian R MacLeod looks back to an age where audio separates looked like they'd arrived straight from the future...**

Dan Dare than a bank of glowing valves? Even more so, the turntable is the lost future's shiny heart. It all goes back, once again, to the Seventies, and that tantalising glimpse of an early Michell turntable in *A Clockwork Orange*. For all the social horrors he was describing, Kubrick never forgot that the future should also be cool.

In the years since, and despite the relatively dull appearance of the seminal LP12, manufacturers such as Pink Triangle and Transcriptors, as well as Michell Engineering, have been prepared to experiment with design as well as function. And there are always new materials — and, indeed, gases, fibres, rocks and fluids — to be tried out, stretched, compressed, layered, or dunked in. A modern display of high-end turntables is about as close to art as hi fi has ever got, and also to that sublime state of engineering when function and design merge. Spikes and spindles glitter. Acrylics and carbon fibres swallow the light. Tonearms hang like space station gantries over spinning wells of starblack vinyl. As these beautiful machines float towards the twilight of analogue recording, they bear the dreams of the future as it might once have been.

**[1] TRANSCRIPTORS HYDRAULIC REFERENCE (1969)**  
It looked like nothing else ever made, and still does. A thing of beauty, and sonically surprising too...



**[3] LECSON AC1-AP1 (1974)**  
Form followed function in Allen Boothroyd's striking modernist pre-power amplifier; nice sound, shame about the reliability...



**[5] YAMAHA TC-800GL (1973)**  
Mario Bellini's masterpiece of modernist industrial sculpture also switched on and played cassettes!



**[7] MISSION X-SPACE (1998)**  
Early NXT panel speaker system was faux-fifties-futurist; baby Quad electrostatic style and sound



**[9] MERIDIAN MCD PRO (1985)**  
Allen Boothroyd's subtle reworking of a Philips CD100 chassis — all tobacco Nextel and multi-coloured LEDs — sounded sublime



**[2] MICHELL GYRODEC (1980)**  
The 'gyroscope' platter and subchassis were inspired by the space station in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, another John Michell design!



**[4] QUAD ESL-57 (1957)**  
Just like David Bache's original Range Rover, these stark planar speakers weren't styled — they simply had to look that way



**[6] MUSICAL FIDELITY A1 (1984)**  
Clean, angular, functional — this Class A integrated was surely the high point of eighties designer chic?



**[8] PIONEER RT-707 (1978)**  
This 'compact' reel-to-reel could have been an early seventies DEC PDP series minicomputer, such were its space-age looks



**[10] PANASONIC SV-SD75 (1999)**  
Fittingly, this MP3 player could have come straight from the set of Gerry Anderson's *Space 1999*...

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# Not for conservatives



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World Radio History

# white magic?

Patrick Cleasby auditions the latest Creative Labs iTrigue L3450 2.1 loudspeaker...



**A**ny trip to *Curries* or *PC World* will reveal a welter of pre-packaged Creative speaker set ups, in configurations from 2.0 and 2.1 to 5.1 and 7.1. These are obviously primarily intended for the owners of what used to be called multimedia PCs. Of course since those days the other computer audio option many may wish to employ is amplified iPod listening and Creative must be trying to tap into that market with the very white L3450 set...

The first giveaway are the icons showing Mac hardware in putative set-up examples in the slim manual. The styling of the satellite speakers themselves is reminiscent of that of one of their main competitors in the Mac market – Harmon Kardon soundsticks. Each speaker has two identically sized titanium drivers and a side-mounted 'Lateral Firing Transducer', reputed to improve the soundstaging. The sub unit also fires sideways with a front port, and is about the size of a Timberland boot box.

Connections are exceedingly simple and idiot-proof, with a heavyweight external transformer plugging into the back of the sub unit, along with a moulded phono pair for

each speaker, which can only fit the correct way round. The wired control pod has two connections and then it is simply a matter of whether you plug your device in with the supplied 3.5-to-3.5mm stereo lead to the sub unit or the control pod. If you're into mixing both play through simultaneously!

The control unit is also white and is simple but useful, giving volume control with surrounding blue power light, and also the vital bass level control. There is headphone output, which cuts the speakers when employed, and for Creative junkies there is also their proprietary M-port connection. The headphone output sounds just like listening directly to the iPod or computer. On the whole this is a well-organised kit, and the purchasing decision is going to come down to whether the Mac bug has got to you to the extent that you want to go all white, and then whether the sound appeals (providing you can find a set to audition).

Of course if they take your fancy the best option to find these speakers at a decent price is to hunt around on the web. The usual variety of prices can be found, but *dabs.com* seem cheaper than most at around the £85 mark. This still puts the price slightly above that *Curries* are selling

some of Creative's older, blacker, more angular offerings at, but you do get a reasonably attractive white shiny finish on the satellites, and a more scuffable matt white on the sub unit. The whole set-up does look in keeping with an iBook G4 or an iPod.

As is often the case with this kind of sub/satellite combination the listening satisfaction can vary greatly according to the material used. It has to be said that with the bass maxed out Bob Marley can be given a very authentic feel. Analogue synth-based tracks like Girls Aloud's latest work well. Accordingly a loud dose of The Killers' 'Somebody Told Me' on MP3 also came across reasonably. Albums with a lighter reggae inflection such as Joan Armatrading's 'Show Some Emotion' also fare well, although some of that highly-paid session man detail goes missing in the midrange somewhere. The imaging on Jerry Donahue's awesome soloing is reasonable but not particularly exact. Overall adjusting the bass level can compensate for some of the shortcomings in sonic finesse.

In summary, worth considering if white is what you're after, not bad for close desktop listening, but these are never going to be room fillers, and do listen to check that you like the sound before ordering...

## VERDICT

Creative obviously have an eye on the Mac market with this all-white set-up. Aesthetics are good, but the sonics lack midrange detail. Worth auditioning all the same.

## CREATIVE LABS

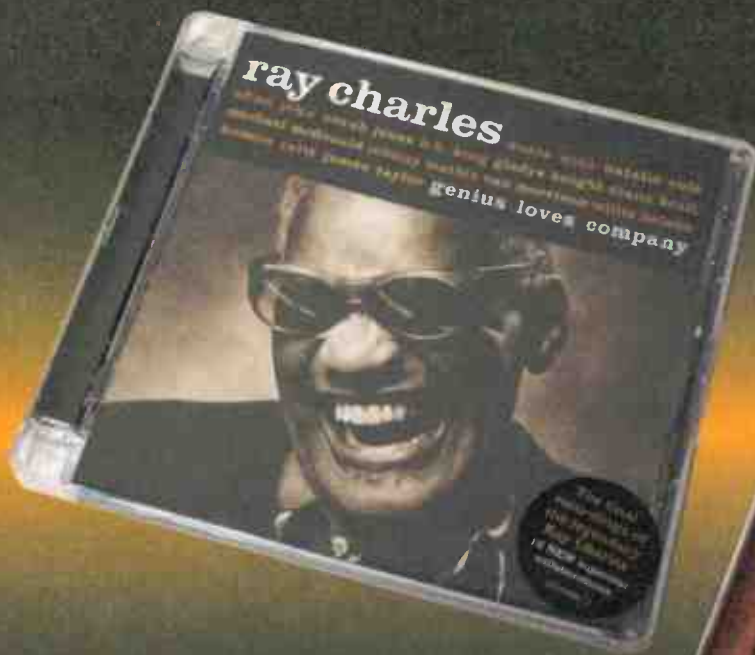
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**RAY CHARLES**  
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 (HYBRID SACD: STEREO &  
 MULTI-CHANNEL DSD)

With the possible exception of our very first Dual Disc (see next) this month's review slate is indicative of the main problem that the High Resolution market suffers from – all four are great titles, but you would only know of their existence by following the specialist news sources assiduously, and I'm talking about the web here, not print journalism. If either format is going to survive this situation has got to be rectified – discs as good as this ought to be able to convince Joe Public. Sensibly EMI in the UK have avoided the market-confusing US move of putting out an SACD in a DVD-Audio Super Jewel Case!

In many ways it's a shame that EMI could not have achieved a simultaneous SACD release of Ray Charles' valedictory effort, or preferably one single inventory release. Al Schmitt's stereo mix is impeccably clean, (listen to the finger clicking on 'Fever' with Natalie Cole), but the effect of the correctly-equipped punter accidentally discovering that the surround mix opens the whole thing out beautifully would have been highly useful in converting the uninitiated. As it is, fans will already have the CD, and will be

unlikely to discover this finely worked surround version, which despite its lack of a specific 5.1 credit is undoubtedly the work of Mr. Schmitt again in his customary surround-heavy style. Of course duets albums are not always pleasant experiences, but despite evidence of Charles's increasing frailty, a long list of stellar collaborators ('the usual suspects') support him ably to produce a pleasingly easy listen. High points include the sumptuous orchestra and delicate guitar of 'It Was a Very Good Year' with Willie Nelson charming as ever, and the closing live take on 'Crazy Love' with Van The Man in attendance...

**NINE INCH NAILS**  
**THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL**  
 (DUAL DISC: 24/48 STEREO,  
 24/48 MULTI-CHANNEL)

After last month's abortive attempts to obtain free copies of Warners' initial Dual Disc releases, the only reliable way to sample the delights of the new DVD-Audio format variant was to buy one. The choice was very limited, (the eagerly anticipated 'Hopes And Fears' by Keane is suffering the familiar slipping of release dates), but having always had a liking for 'Head Like A Hole' from earlier NIN album 'Petty Hate Machine' I decided to give this remixed and remastered album from

ten years ago a spin. We are most definitely not in easy listening territory here – Trent Reznor's world is one of nihilistic self-loathing, and his music has an incredible industrial intensity.

The main relief is that the disc functions perfectly in our Denon DVD-A11 – the CD side plays without a hitch, and the new mastering sounds very good. However the real interest is on the other side. The 24/48 stereo track shows the benefit of mastering an undoubtedly 16bit source (given the vintage) at the greater bit depth, but the difference is not huge. The really revelatory inclusion here is a surround mix which shows that Trent clearly 'gets' how to use the format to maximum effect – both expanding out buried details and lending impact. Potential purchasers should be advised that the US release of this disc was accompanied by a multichannel SACD of the same mix, which obviously lacks the videos, but adds a second stereo CD of rarities. While the Dual Disc is highly unlikely to be released here due to Universal International's SACD-only policy and the ongoing Dual Disc patent disputes, the SACD is imminent. However Universal tell me it has been put back to January – it is a real shame we only get our limited high resolution rations after the Americans



**BRITNEY SPEARS**  
**IN THE ZONE**  
 (DVD-AUDIO: 24/88.2 STEREO  
 & 24/88.2 MULTI-CHANNEL)

As new DVD-Audio releases are thin on the ground I thought I'd make another selection from my recent 'personal imports'. The snobbish may not like this one, but I had heard good things of this disc, and the chance to enjoy the barmy strings of 'Toxic' in surround was too much to resist. I was not disappointed.

Much like the recent Beyonce SACD this is the kind of album where those of advancing years such as myself are going to be unlikely to stomach (or ever listen to) more than the standout tracks. But the first two singles here do the job – 'Me Against the Music', with the assistance of Britney's spiritual predecessor Madonna – is even more mad than the aforementioned 'Toxic', which gratifyingly uses the front and rear soundstages to bounce those strings parts back and forth in time-honoured call and response fashion. Videos with Dolby Digital 5.1 tracks are available for these two tracks, (the disc was released before the later singles), although they would have looked better if they had been presented in anamorphic widescreen rather than letterboxed.

The surround mix was done by Mr. Haynes of 5.1 Entertainment, and is

one of his better efforts. For the technically minded, an informative guide to his modus operandi for this project can be found by searching the ever-reliable [www.highfidelityreview.com](http://www.highfidelityreview.com).

The disc was released in the states in the summer, to disappointingly little fanfare. It really should be made available here, but the nature of high-resolution release schedules means that it would only be eclipsed by Britney's new compilation. If that one ever gets a 5.1 treatment like this, that would be a truly essential purchase! In the meantime pop fans should take advantage of the current exchange rate and pick this one up from the usual place – <http://cheap-cds.com>.

**RICHARD & LINDA THOMPSON**  
**SHOOT OUT THE LIGHTS**  
 (HYBRID SACD: STEREO DSD  
 ONLY)

The standout among these under-promoted high resolution efforts is this new remastering of one of rock's seminal albums. You could be forgiven for not noticing that this disc was released earlier in the year, as the release of remastered editions of the (then) married duo's earlier albums by Island took all the attention, including as it did the previously impossible to find 'Hokey Pokey'. So what is it that makes 'Shoot Out The Lights' such a frequent appearance in critics' all-time-

best lists? First and foremost it is the poignancy of an already-estranged couple dissecting the dissolution of a marriage in song, but it goes much further than that. The quality of Richard's spiky guitar playing is impossibly high throughout, as are all the performances from a band which includes fellow Fairport alumni Nicol Pegg and Mottacks.

The recording is not among the strongest reasons to purchase this album, but you can't miss out on such good songs in pristine DSD stereo, which just about outstrips the CD layer in terms of fidelity. The reason you should all own this record is that it includes songs which are so perfectly formed that Richard regularly performs the searing title track, Kershaw-favourite 'Wall Of Death' and the inestimably superb 'Walking On The Wire' on stage to this day. The well informed high resolution fan will know that Mr. Thompson's brilliant early nineties album 'Rumor and Sigh' is already available in fine 24/96 DVD-Audio form in the states (go to the usual place!). When his current label Cooking Vinyl announced that they would be getting into the world of DVD-Audio earlier this year there was hope that his excellent most recent album 'The Old Kit Bag' would see the light of day in multi-channel form, but things have gone ominously quiet on that front...

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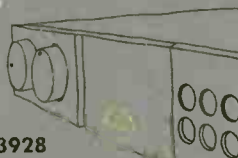
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PMC & Bryston are used during the production of both Harmonia Mundi and Deutsche Grammophon recordings in both stereo and surround. Emmy award winning manufacturers of the highest quality loudspeakers and amplification. Industry standard in Mastering, Film Scoring, Broadcast and Post Productions. (5.1 & Stereo) PMC Products: Compacts, Floorstanders, and Large passive & active monitors. Prices range from £500 to £32,000. Finished in a large selection of exquisite real wood veneers, all PMC loudspeakers are available in horizontal mirrored pairs, centre channels and complementary subs for 5.1 surround systems. Bryston's balanced range of products include R/C Preamps, Integrated, Amp modules for all the PMC range, Mono, Stereo 150W to 800w per ch, 3 Ch, 4 ch and 5 channel THX amplifiers, Surround processors, all with distortion figures and build quality to die for. Every product is available in silver or black backed by a 20 year warranty. PMC Ltd 43-45 Crawley Green Road. Luton, LU2 0AA.  
Tel: 08704 441044 Fax: 08704 441045  
Email: sales@promonitor.co.uk  
Web: www.pmc-speakers.com

## SUGDEN AUDIO PRODUCTS

Designed and manufactured in the UK each Sugden product is hand-built by one highly skilled technician. A full range of pure class A amplifiers are available including integrated, stereo power and the incredible Masterclass balanced monoblocks. Our stunning Bijou system now comes with a single-ended pure class A power Amplifier with optional integral stand. Two analogue tuners have joined the range matching our A21 and Bijou series, offering a digital user interface with excellent facilities. Each amplifier series has a matching CD player with a class A output stage and heavily modified transport. The class A HeadMaster offers a pre-amp with three inputs a fixed and variable output with remote control. The HeadMaster can be used as a control unit in a high quality audio system and excels with headphones. Please contact us for product information, dealer list and brochures. 01924 404088 email info@jesugden.co.uk.

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# PROBABLY THE BEST DIY KITS IN THE WORLD



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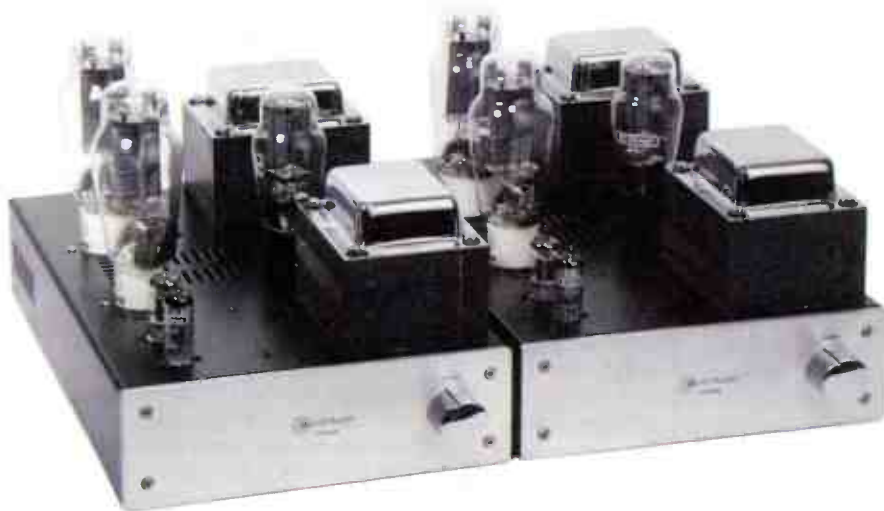
## SINGLE-ENDED PURITY

Our Parallel Single Ended (PSE) power amplifiers offer ultimate sound quality. Each monobloc has two beautifully linear 300B directly heated triodes in its output stage, producing 20 watts into an 8 ohm load. At the front of the circuit we there is a 6AU6 pentode, followed by an ECC82 as the driver valve. This design uses a 5U4 rectifier valve in the power supply, in combination with a 10H choke, giving an extremely quiet supply. Both mains and output transformers are built on high quality E/I pattern cores.

Feedback can be switched in or out whilst running, using a rear panel switch. Complex layered and sectioned output transformers give full output and low distortion across the audio band even without feedback, making such an option possible.

This is one of the few amplifiers in the world so good it will work without feedback - and no feedback is the preference of most buyers. It gives a spacious, relaxed and fluid sound quite unlike that of solid-state amps, all of which use feedback to correct deficiencies.

By operating linearly in feedbackless, pure Class A, single-ended mode these



300B monoblocs are as pure as it gets - and sound quality reflects the fact. Fast, clean and clear in their presentation, at the same time their purity of sound is easy on the ear.

The kit is totally hard-wired; it does not use circuit boards. We can supply without valves, or with the superb Tesla 300Bs, Russian 5U4s and European 6AU6s & ECC82. Our 300B PSE kit bears an affordable price of £895.00 (UK price) excluding valves. Each monobloc weighs 23kgs (50lbs). External dimensions with valves: 25cm(w) x 38cm(d) x 22cm(h) per monobloc.

## PUSH-PULL POWER

For more power, we also offer 300B in Push-Pull (PP) form. The 300B PP monobloc shares the same look and chassis as the 300B PSE monobloc. The 300B PP kit has been created for those who prefer a bit more power. With a pair of 300Bs in push-pull configuration providing 26 watts output, they will drive most modern loudspeakers to perfection. Andy Grove's design is totally feedbackless, using a 6AU6 pentode as the input valve and a 5687 as the phase splitter. The power supply uses a Russian 5U4 for rectification. The kit is constructed by hard wiring, so some experience is required. 300B PSE owners do have the option to buy the conversion kit for £250.00 to turn their monoblocs to push-pull status. Each monobloc weighs 23kg.

**300B PSE MONOBLOC KIT**

**£1197** per pair

**300B PP MONOBLOC KIT**

**£1197** per pair

The PRE-II is a high quality valve pre-amplifier that will drive any power amplifier. It has a gain of x5 which, with CD, enables it to deliver a large 10V output swing. To keep the amount of active amplification low, this pre-amp uniquely uses a line drive transformer to deliver a pure signal to the power amplifier. There are six inputs, a tape monitor and two sets of output sockets. It is powered by the external PSU-II power supply. The volume control uses high quality Alps Blue potentiometer which, with our solid, turned brass, chromed knob, gives a quality feel rarely encountered these days.

**PHONO-II** is a dedicated valve phono stage for MM cartridges, with MC input transformers an option. By using all-d.c. supplies from PSU-II and a case in which there is no power supply, PHONO II is hum free, something that is difficult to achieve with valves. With accurate RIAA equalisation right down to 10Hz (-3dB) PHONO II gives a wonderfully pure, dimensional sound from LP, possessing a sense of life and dynamism quite different to solid-state preamps.

Finally, PSU-II is a power supply unit that feeds both the PRE-II and PHONO-II. Keeping the power supply separate removes hum, often the bane of valves.

Power Supply Unit (PSU-II)	£205.00
Pre-amplifier (PRE-II)	£215.00
Phono Stage (PHONO-II)	£110.00
Moving coil step-up transformer	£77.00



**SERIES II MODULAR PRE-AMP KIT**

# PROBABLY THE BEST DIY KITS IN THE WORLD



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Kel84 is an affordable, integrated valve amplifier for those who want to enjoy the valve sound, but from a simple, easy to build kit. It uses inexpensive EL84 output valves, known for their sweet sound, in conventional push-pull arrangement to provide 15 watts into an 8 ohm load. The output transformers are our own quality Ultra Linear design. Up front, the circuit employs an ECF80 input/phase splitter valve, which contributes to Kel84's extremely smooth sound.

The amplifier has very low hum and for simplicity it is built on a printed circuit board. A strong steel chassis is fronted by a 3mm anodised front panel and attractive brushed aluminium effect knobs. There are five line level inputs, plus one monitor input, with a tape output included, all controlled from the front panel.

At the rear is a mains switch/IEC power input, earth post, phono sockets, and 4mm banana sockets for loudspeakers. The Kel84 will highlight all the intricacies and depth of detail in your favourite recordings whilst retaining a warmth and fullness that is almost exclusive to pure valve amps and is rare at this price point.

Kel84 weighs 10kg. External dimensions with valves are 300mm(w) x 270mm(d) x 150mm(h).



**KEL84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT**

**£298**



Our 6550 series amplifiers are built around the rugged 6550 beam tetrode that's popular in America. This valve is widely available at a good price. Producing no less than 40 watts into an 8 ohm load (available in a 4 ohm version if required) our 6550 is a power house, since valve watts always sound louder than transistor watts!

The difference between our 6550 and most others is that we use valve rectification (5U4) and a choke pi filter, for a power supply that is quiet and free from solid-state hardness. This is a true high-end design from Andy Grove, hard wired. It is a cut above the many other 6550s, with enough power to drive most loudspeakers, including insensitive electrostatics for example. 6550 combines high



power with a top-end smoothness of sound, yet doesn't cost the earth to run, as the valves are inexpensive and have a long life.

The amplifier weighs 19kg. Dimensions are 390mm(w) x 330mm(d) x 190mm(h) with valves, or 220mm(h) with cage.

**KIT6550** - An integrated amplifier with line inputs and volume control. Accepts CD, tuner, tape etc., but not LP.

**KAT6550** - A power amplifier for use with a separate pre-amp. Paired with PRE II and PHONO II (+PSU II), can provide LP reproduction.

**KIT6550 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT**

**£615**

**KAT6550 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT**

**£580**

The Headphone II amplifier is a beautifully simple design using Mullard ECL83 valves, a triode and power pentode housed in the same envelope. It works directly from any source, be it CD, tape, tuner etc., or from an amplifier's tape out or pre-amp out sockets. The circuit uses high specification E/I output transformers that will drive any headphone load from 16 ohms to over 300 ohms depending on how the secondaries are wired up.

The Headphone II is a pure Class A single-ended design with the power pentode wired up in triode configuration for added sonic purity, and it is as quiet as a mouse. Treble has the crispness of the best solid-state, but with the tonal resolution and delicacy associated with valves. Bass is punchy and controlled without becoming artificial.

External dimensions 270mm wide, 275mm deep and 85mm high



**HEADPHONE II**

**£285**

## Reference Books

## Building Valve Amplifiers

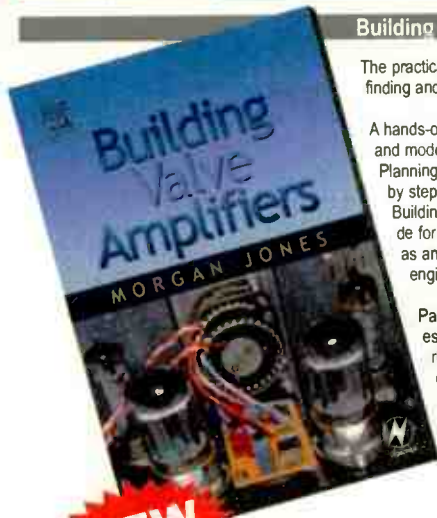
The practical guide to building, modifying, fault finding and repairing valve amplifiers.

A hands-on approach to valve electronics, classic and modern - with a minimum of theory. Planning, fault finding and testing illustrated by step by step examples. Building Valve Amplifiers is a unique hands-on guide for anyone working with tube audio equipment as an electronics experimenter, audiophile or audio engineer.

Particular attention has been paid to answering questions commonly asked by newcomers to the world of vacuum tubes, whether audio enthusiasts tackling their first build, or more experienced amplifier designers seeking to learn the ropes of working with valves.

The practical side of this book is reinforced by numerous clear illustrations throughout.

Price £20 plus £2 p&p



**NEW TITLE**

## Valve Amplifiers

Morgan Jones's Valve Amplifiers has been widely recognised as the most complete guide to valve amplifier design, modification, analysis, construction and maintenance written for over 30 years.

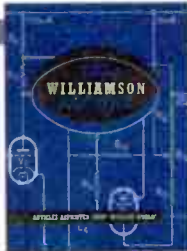
The author's straightforward approach, using as little maths as possible, makes this book ideal for those with limited knowledge of the field as well as being the standard reference text for experts in valve audio and a wider audience of audio engineers facing design challenges involving valves.

Price £30 plus £2 p&p



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## The Williamson Amplifier

The Williamson Amplifier by D.T.N. Williamson.

Offers practical advice on how to build and set up the amplifier for best results.

40pp Paper back

£9.95 + £1.50 P&P



## Mullard Tube Circuits for Audio Amplifiers

Includes full designs for eleven power and control amps, including 5-20, using valves.

Begins with a four chapter tutorial on getting the best sound from valve amplifiers.

£13.95 + £2.00 P&P

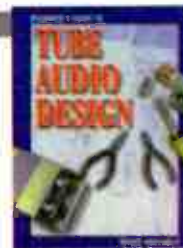


## Glass Audio Projects - 17 Vacuum Tube Designs

This book features 17 valve projects designed, tried and tested by some of the best authors state side

Designs such as a 300B push-pull amp, a 6528 single ended, a 300B parallel single ended amp, a 6C33C-B single ended amp, a 70W KT88 push-pull amp, a 2A3 single ended amp to name a few. All information is provided so most projects can be built from scratch.

£8.00 + £1.50 P&P



## The Beginner's Guide to Tube Design

This book takes a comprehensive look at tube audio design. It explains how vacuum tubes work and how to design with them. Rozenbit covers stabilisation and testing, a description of 13 famous and classic amps and preamps and how to work effectively as a designer.

A hands-on guide to construction techniques, tools and choosing components and tubes is provided. 1997

£15.50 + £2.50 P&P



## Valve &amp; Transistor Audio Amplifiers

This is John Linsley Hood's greatest work yet, describing the milestones that have marked the development of audio amplifiers since the earliest days to the latest systems.

Including classic amps with valves at their heart and exciting new designs using the latest components, this book is the complete world guide to audio amp design.

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## Starting Electronics - 3rd edition

Starting Electronics is unrivalled as a highly practical introduction for hobbyists, students and technicians.

Keith Brindley introduces readers to the functions of the main component types, their uses, and the basic principles of building and designing electronic circuits.

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AMPLIFIER DESCRIPTION	PRICE (inc vat)	PARTS DESCRIPTION	PRICE (inc vat)	PARTS DESCRIPTION	PRICE (inc vat)
KaT6550 with valves	£ 580.00	6550 mains transformer	£120.00	Kel84 PCB	£ 30.00
KaT6550 without valves	£ 450.00	Kel84 mains transformer	£ 60.00	Kel34 PCB	£ 12.00
KiT6550 with valves	£ 615.00	PSU-II mains transformer	£ 40.00	Kel80 PCB (pair)	£ 52.00
KiT6550 without valves	£ 485.00	300B mains transformer 300B	£115.00	KECL82 PCB	£ 25.00
Kel84 with valves	£ 298.00	6550 choke	£ 40.00	Headphone II PCB	£ 20.00
Kel84 without valves	£ 268.00	Kel84 choke	£ 20.00	PSU-II PCB	£ 20.00
PSU-II	£ 205.00	300B choke	£ 40.00	PRE-II PCB	£ 20.00
PRE-II	£ 215.00	PSU-II choke	£ 20.00	PHONO-II PCB	£ 20.00
PAS-II	£ 235.00	6550 output transformer (pair)	£130.00	Tag board	£ 4.00
PHONO-II	£ 110.00	Kel84 output transformer (pair)	£ 90.00	ALPS 50K dual potentiometer	£ 14.00
Headphone II	£ 285.00	PRE-II driver transformer (pair)	£ 80.00	Safety gloves SAFETY GLOVES	£ 25.00
300B PSE with valves	£1197.00 per pair	300B PSE output transformer (each)	£110.00	6550/34 safety cage	£ 80.00
300B PSE without valves	£ 895.00 per pair	300B PP output transformer (each)	£110.00	Step up transformers for MC to use with PHONO-II (pair)	£ 80.00
300B PP with valves	£1197.00 per pair				
300B PP without valves	£ 895.00 per pair				



**These are expert kits, not for the inexperienced. You must be able to solder and read a circuit diagram. The valve kits contain lethal voltages. We cannot be held responsible for any injury or damage arising from the construction of these kits.**



### Jensen Capacitors (630v)

JENSEN Capacitors

PIO signal 0.01uF Aluminium Foil	£10.13 each	£ 36.50 set of 4
PIO signal 0.01uF Copper Foil	£15.29 each	£ 55.00 set of 4
PIO signal 0.1uF Aluminium Foil	£12.50 each	£ 45.00 set of 4
PIO signal 0.1uF Copper Foil	£18.27 each	£ 65.77 set of 4
PIO signal 0.22uF Aluminium Foil	£14.51 each	£ 52.24 set of 4
PIO signal 0.22uF Copper Foil	£22.02 each	£ 79.28 set of 4
PIO signal 0.47uF Aluminium Foil	£16.61 each	£ 59.80 set of 4
PIO signal 0.47uF Copper Foil	£28.94 each	£104.18 set of 4
PIO signal 1uF Aluminium Foil	£19.99 each	£ 71.95 set of 4
PIO signal 1uF Copper Foil	£41.23 each	£148.43 set of 4

Other values and versions available - Please Call. All Jensen PIO signal capacitors are 630V



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Bullet plug - 4 pack	£ 24.00
Silver Bullet Plug - Single	£ 17.99
Silver Bullet Plug - 2 pack	£ 32.90
Silver Bullet Plug - 4 pack	£ 60.00

### Jupiter Beeswax Signal Capacitors

Jupiter  
CONDENSER CO.

0.01uF / 600V	Copper Leads	£ 7.79	Silver Leads	£ 9.49
0.022uF / 600V	Copper Leads	£ 7.79	Silver Leads	£ 9.49
0.047uF / 600V	Copper Leads	£ 7.79	Silver Leads	£ 9.49
0.1uF / 600V	Copper Leads	£ 7.79	Silver Leads	£ 9.49
0.22uF / 600V	Copper Leads	£ 8.39	Silver Leads	£10.00
0.47uF / 600V	Copper Leads	£10.00	Silver Leads	£11.69
1uF / 600V	Copper Leads	£12.79	Silver Leads	£14.49
1uF / 300V	Copper Leads	£12.79	Silver Leads	£14.49
1.5uF / 300V	Copper Leads	£14.99	Silver Leads	£16.69
2.2uF / 300V	Copper Leads	£16.09	Silver Leads	£17.79
3.3uF / 300V	Copper Leads	£19.49	Silver Leads	£21.09

### Valve Amplifier Parts

EL34 Monobloc amp chassis	£43.00
30w Mains Transformer - 410-0-410v / 5v / 6.3v	£56.00
30w Mains Transformer - 375v / 5v / 6.3v	£52.00
PP 30w Output Transformer	£49.00
HT Choke 200mA 7H	£21.00

### How to find us...

Personal callers are welcome to collect their purchases in person or visit our Demo Room but please phone ahead especially if making a long journey as we can't always be there to greet you.

#### By Car

Directions from the M25 London Orbital: Exit the M25 at junction 28 signposted Brentwood and Chelmsford. Take the A12 north bound heading Chelmsford and Colchester. Exit the A12 at the turning marked A414 Chelmsford and Harlow then at the Widford roundabout take the 1st exit heading Harlow A414. At the second roundabout head right towards Writtle. At the T junction head right then left at the crossroads next to the Cock and Bell pub. When you see the village green to your left, take the next left and park up on the road adjacent to the green (near the Inn on the Green). Cross the road you just arrived on and locate Rumsey Row between the chemist and 'Which-Craft' WAD are located in the last unit on the right.

#### By Rail

The train journey from London, Liverpool Street station to Chelmsford takes about 40 minutes, with 3-4 trains running per hour. You can then get a taxi or catch a bus (numbers 45A & 45C) to Writtle Village Green where you will find Rumsey Row between the chemist and 'Which-Craft'. WAD are located at the far end in the last unit on the right.

#### By Air

London Stansted, London's third airport, is only a 35 minute drive from Writtle with cheap flights to many EU destinations. Heathrow and Gatwick are also easily accessible via the M25 (90 minute drive).





## WIN SPENDOR'S HI-FI WORLD AWARD-WINNING S6e LOUDSPEAKERS IN THIS MONTH'S GREAT GIVEAWAY!

### QUESTIONS

[1] HOW DOES DP DESCRIBE THE S6e's DOWNWARD FIRING PORT?

- [a] 'clever'
- [b] 'curious'
- [c] 'cunning'
- [d] 'credible'

[2] WHAT TYPE OF CONE MATERIAL IS USED?

- [a] polymer
- [b] polygram
- [c] polypropylene
- [d] polyester

[3] THESE ARE THE LEAST 'WHAT' SOUNDING SPEAKERS DP'S HEARD?

- [a] showy
- [b] sexy
- [c] sudden
- [d] sublime

[4] HOW DID DP END HIS REVIEW?

- [a] "Superb"
- [b] "Something"
- [c] "Wicked"
- [d] "Wibble"

February Competition  
Hi-Fi World Magazine  
Unit G4 Argo House  
The Park Business Centre  
Kilburn Park Rd.  
London NW6 5LF

**S**pendor is to be congratulated in the way it has voiced this loudspeaker. Oh so many designs sound impressive in the showroom and yet when you get them home it's downhill all the way – yet the reverse is true. Here's a floorstander than sings like nothing else we've heard at or near its £1,495 retail price... and we're giving you the chance to win a pair for free! In January 2005's *Hi-Fi World*, David Price wrote:

"They're robustly put together, beautifully veneered and conventionally shaped affairs, housing a tweeter and mid/bass unit, and a clever downward firing port. The enclosure is extensively and critically braced to minimise panel flexure... It has a much larger area than a conventional tubular port which reduces the air velocity within the port, to prevent 'chuffing' noises. It has the very real benefit of allowing the loudspeaker to be placed close to a wall if necessary. The drive unit complement comprises a 180mm

bass-mid drive unit and 27mm tweeter. The former SD-18A driver sports a new polymer (ep38) cone, claimed to have a high stiffness to mass ratio whilst providing excellent internal damping properties... The Spendor 27mm tweeter sports a brand new Sonolex material claimed to have a very low density whilst providing excellent internal damping properties and highly consistent performance. The crossover boasts low-loss components with OFC copper wire-wound inductors with cores and flanges manufactured from high purity compressed iron powder bonded with small amounts of isolating material. Polypropylene

capacitors and high power ceramic resistors are used.

These are the least 'showy' sounding loudspeakers I've heard that have been designed in the last two decades... Listened to cold, and with little attention paid to matching, placement or set-up, they're simply a tad over warm and lacklustre. Half an hour spent moving them around, getting the cables and/or source components right and the spikes nicely bedded in – and the picture changes profoundly... What they did do was provide an extremely even-handed and open window on the music with none of the dry, acerbic, forward, distortion-fuelled zing of so many other rivals. Nor did they serve up bass boom that apparently adds weight but in truth kills speed – despite their innate warm-side-of-neutral tonality, they never sounded slow or ponderous. What they offer is an unusual – almost unique, even – combination of speed, grip and transparency allied to most 'benevolent' tonality... Here's a brilliant music-making package. It's even, polite, refined balance makes it best with acoustic jazz and classic music – but it's so well designed that it will happily play rock or electronic programme with the same insouciance. Whatever you listen, this is loudspeaker that's capable far beyond its price and should delight all comers. Superb."

*If you'd like to win this superb pair of speakers, all you have to do is answer the following four easy questions and send your entries by 31st January 2005 to: February Competition, Hi-Fi World, Unit G4, Argo House, The Park Business Centre, Kilburn Park Road, London NW6 5LF*

### RULES AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

- ONLY ONE ENTRY PER HOUSEHOLD
- MULTIPLE ENTRIES WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY DISQUALIFIED
- PURCHASE OF THE MAGAZINE IS NOT A PRE-CONDITION OF ENTRY
- NO CORRESPONDENCE WILL BE ENTERED INTO
- THE EDITOR'S DECISION IS FINAL
- NO EMPLOYEES OF AUDIO PUBLISHING LIMITED, OR OF ANY COMPANIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRODUCTION OR DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRIZES, MAY ENTER

entries will be accepted on a postcard only

NOVEMBER 2004 NAIM NAIT 5i INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER WINNER:  
Mr D. Marah of Stanley, Wakefield



# noel keywood

**W**ith hi-fi, time has a way of sorting the wheat from the chaff, often bringing a degree of status and perceived worth to a product that didn't achieve this in its lifetime. Why should a product gather status simply with the passage of time?

It isn't just nostalgia. Often blemishes that were significant at the time are now curable, raising perceived value. The Garrard 401 is a good example; the rumble that plagued it thirty years ago is nowadays curable. Similarly, enthusiasts are finding Quad amplifiers can be renovated with new components and, as we've reported recently, Quad ESL-57 loudspeakers can now not only be fully renovated, but actually improved way beyond their original spec. Some experienced listeners now feel a renovated ESL-57 outperforms all else, something our measurements confirm. With the visibility of Quad as a brand name improving around the world, notably in America, Germany and China since the IAG takeover, with service improving as new panels and parts become available, and with enthusiasts reporting their experiences in detail on the internet, a wide range of forces can act to raise the market value of a product.

Running classic hi-fi isn't all plain sailing though. I've bought, repaired and tweaked up many old classics and am well aware that you can face quite difficult engineering problems before a classic will work really well. Few Leak Troughline tuners, for example, work properly if unserviced in their lifetime. They'll need to be repaired and then re-aligned. Re-alignment is an expert job that needs complex test equipment. It all adds to cost and,

having got such an item up and running it can go 'pop' at any time. Or it may not, such is the unpredictability of valve equipment. This isn't a great problem, since small-signal valves last around 10,000 hours and they're cheap to replace.

**” a wide range of forces can act to raise the market value of a product... ”**

Garrard 401 turntables often rumble, but it's curable with a new idler wheel and solid plinth. Quad ESL-57 electrostatic loudspeakers can suffer a myriad of minor faults, but again nowadays they are all repairable. Better, new improved treble panels and protection circuits (originals have no protection circuitry at all) elevate performance to the best modern standards.

So classic equipment can, nowadays, be brought back to life and made to work well - often so well as to embarrass modern items. This has had a major impact upon second hand values of course, as you must expect.

Another factor driving this market is an awareness of our past, especially our accessible immediate industrial past, that is worldwide. Yes, it isn't just Britain where prices rise and people collect vintage items - in fact, we're late on the bandwagon. America is the place for this, having at least one of everything from the past it would seem. U.S. actor Cliff Robertson - Eagle Squadron leader in the film 633 Squadron - was flying his own Spitfire back in 1965, at a time when Brits considered most old aircraft relics of little value. Americans were in Europe buying old fighters back in 1960s, and the Japanese were

buying vintage British hi-fi from the late 1980s through the 1990s. We might see old Leaks and Garrards as tat in the local jumble, but if in near perfect condition and working well 'tat' is worth a lot in other parts of the world. As a result much of it has already disappeared into collections, and availability of some items, like Radford valve amps is just about zero. Germany's Braun LE-1 electrostatic loudspeaker is another example of a hi-fi rarity with just the right sort of history to make it supremely collectable and therefore very expensive.

I mention old aircraft because I can see many parallels with hi-fi, and with changing outlook and interests in general.

There are some differences though. Hearing a voice recording of Florence Nightingale talking, later in her life, in a documentary recently run on UKTV History channel, brought home to me how important audio can be beyond home entertainment and hi-fi. By recording speech, audio is crucial in capturing the thoughts, views and outlook of people at a particular time, which can now be very different from our own, since recording technology is more than 100 years old. So audio forms an important social record. It brings people to life, which is why I was taken aback to hear Florence Nightingale. I simply hadn't realised we could listen to voices from the nineteenth century.

Forget the Antiques Roadshow approach. There's a lot more to classic hi-fi than "what you'll get for it" - if you're lucky. Instead, think of it like this: 365m Americans, 1,200m Chinese, 120m Japanese and 80m Germans can't be wrong. Classic hi-fi is worth preserving! ●

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# David Price



Living in the Plastic Age isn't easy. Back in the early sixties, when this issue's featured Garrard-Quad system was made, things were so different. Gifted engineers, savvy businessmen and skilled workers came together to make products of a quality which made this country the envy of the world - and rarely ever replaced them. Everything about the Garrard 301/SME 3009/Quad 22/II/ESL-57 on p59 took my breath away - from the technology to the design to the build to the finish. These items were right first time, and needed no spurious makeovers to sell in vast quantities.

The performance of the original, unrestored Garrard 301 had me gobsmacked. Its bass was sublime, enough to blow any LPI2 (Lingo or no) into the weeds, and more impressively, it still showed the technological *tour de force* which is the carbon fibre and acrylic-plattered, DC-motored Michell Orbe how to do it. The original SME 3009 felt as well made - if not better - than the 2003 SME Series IV I am currently listening to as I write this.

Quad could easily have done a cheap and cheerful implementation of a geriatric tube amp circuit for the Quad II power amp (complete with low rent output transformers), or fitted simple 'bass' and 'treble' controls to its 22 control unit, or stuck a couple of moving coil drive units in a ported box to satisfy the need for a loudspeaker to match its amplification - but it did not. Rather, the company brought technology, innovation and above all quality to its products, and even today, forty five years (or more) later, this oozes from the 22, II and ESL-57.

The result is a stunning sound, one which - as I listen to £20,000-worth of Michell Orbe/ SME IV/ Koetsu Rosewood, Trichord Delphini

NC, Musical Fidelity kW500 and Quad ESL-989s (and the rest) - still has me remembering its delicious immediacy, gripping dynamics and lightning fast, rock-solid snare drum sound. More amusingly was the fact that when I'd played all my 33.33RPM 'microgroove' discs, then a 78RPM Beethoven Piano Concerto (1929, no less) was just a quick flick of the Quad 22's switch away - and it too

“ **Hi-fi journalists give the often misleading impression that every new product is somehow magically better than the one it replaces...** ”

sounded great!

The sad thing is that, if you believe the various constituents of the hi-fi press throughout the seventies, eighties (and even much of the nineties), then the system I was hearing - one of the most impressive I've ever come across in a way - was little more than an irrelevance at best, and a nasty, fossilised relic at worst. The dissonance between my formative years, reading in the UK press about Linns and Naims, and listening through my very own ears - to the Garrard-Quad system - is startling. I simply don't understand why I didn't become aware of how stunning such an early system could sound via nineteen seventies and eighties hi-fi magazines. What was going on?

And the thing is that I'm not yet wearing slippers and smoking a pipe. But 'pipe and slippers' is how any hi-fi magazine or dealer would have categorised this classic set-up. I love electronic music, powerful rock and have even gone public with my like of AC/DC (well, slightly). I should not be a typical classic Garrard-Quad customer (if you believe the hype). I

played reggae music through this system, for Heaven's sake, and it was ten times tighter than any LPI2 driving a top transistor pre-power! Maybe this is stating the bleeding obvious, but I'd respectfully implore you to question everything you read in hi-fi magazines (of all persuasions, including this!) before you buy. Don't simply let the review of some bit of kit you fancy owning confirm your suspicions that it's just what you always wanted... Hi-fi journalists have to account for the often misleading impression that they (we) give, that every new product is somehow magically better than the one it replaces, and that things can only get better...

This is certainly something most manufacturers would have you believe. Speak to some 'top company suits' and you'd think they'd never made an inferior replacement in their entire corporate lives, so 'on message' are they. It's sadly rare to meet managing directors of respected hi-fi brands, like Exposure's Andy Whittle for example, who tell it like it is.

He'll admit that right across the specialist hi-fi industry, more often than not, products get replaced or 'upgraded' because of component shortages or supply irregularities. The reason, therefore, behind new-fangled 'i' or 'SE' versions of products is more often to do with the manufacturer finding a cheaper supplier of power transistors, mains transformers or CD transports than the pursuit of excellence for its own sake....

So don't let 'product paranoia' gnaw at you - just because you've no longer got the latest bit of kit, it doesn't mean you've not got the greatest. If the original owner of that stunning Garrard-Quad system had, he'd have ended up with a £150 Sony microsystem from Argos, fully remote controlled, you understand... ●

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# Get it right!

# dominic todd



**R**etail, as they say, is detail. Yet, for all the detail in the world, the retail trade has and, indeed is, facing its biggest shake up in years. The challenge, of course, comes from the Internet, and the power it gives consumers to seek advice and shop by price. Yet, despite more people than ever buying over the Web, I didn't exactly notice the high street shops being empty this Christmas. Let's face it, when it comes to shopping, it's often a physical experience, and one that can't be satisfactorily carried out over the Internet. Retailers, however, cannot afford to be complacent, and this is as true for hi-fi separates retailers as it is for any other.

The last couple of years have shown some interesting developments in the world of hi-fi retailing, some of which have been predictable, but others less so. Decreasing market share has meant that hi-fi separates can often no longer justify their shelf space within the larger chain stores. It came as little surprise, but delight to others, to see the likes of John Lewis, Dixons and Currys pulling out of the separates market. The stores left now fall into two camps: The hi-fi separates chain stores, and the independents.

Interestingly I've heard reports from both groups of retailers suggesting that the Internet hasn't had the catastrophic effect upon sales that some had predicted. Initially, many retailers saw the Web as offering a two-pronged threat. The first, was that with a surplus of enthusiast and consumer sites, the customer could get all the product information they could possibly ever need, without consulting a retailer. Secondly, and more worryingly for the retailers, customers could now compare prices across the entire country, using one of the many price comparison websites. As it turns out, what the

more enlightened of hi-fi retailers are doing, is actually using the Internet as a form of advertising, and hoping this will drive people into the stores. This does mean that prices are often more competitive than before, but not massively so.

The opportunity for advertising on the 'Net and the disappearance of hi-fi separates from the larger chain stores should have, for many hi-fi

## “ hi-fi separate consumers have benefited from the Internet ”

retailers, the effect of increasing customer numbers. The fact that, in many cases, this hasn't happened only goes to prove that the sales of hi-fi separates must be in decline. That having been said, the retailers I spoke to have had a relatively fair season, especially those stocking computer audio stuff, such as MP3 players and, it has to be said, plasma and LCD screens.

It hardly needs saying that hi-fi separate consumers have benefited from the Internet. Many products can be bought at a discount by shopping around and even if you'd prefer to simply use your local hi-fi retailer, you may have found that they've adjusted their prices to be competitive anyway. Having said that, it's not hi-fi separates that face the greatest competition on the price comparison web sites. Inevitably, the products, which are discounted the most, are the highest selling and so, hence, it tends to be LCD screens and MP3 players that are really knocked down in price.

Perhaps one of the less expected effects of the Internet has been the disappearance of demo rooms. Even retailers that have retained them are often reporting less usage. It does seem odd that when pretty much all of the retailers I spoke to were

mentioning higher transaction values, they were also doing fewer demos. You'd have thought customers spending more money on hi-fi than before would've been more likely to want a demonstration, not less.

The reasons for this generally boiled down to one of two things. The first was that some retailers simply felt they needed the extra space, especially those who also stocked home cinema screens. Increased price competition has, in many cases, meant reduced margins, and profit has therefore had to be extracted from available space and salespeople's time. Another reason that regularly

cropped up was that more retailers felt customers were happier to take their word. I suppose that when you consider that most retailers offer a home trail, this is less surprising. These days there also isn't the sheer quantity of kit to have to wade through, either. Ten years ago, you could have been looking at a short list of ten £300 CD players, whereas these days it's more likely to be around three. Chances are that of those three, your local retailer will only stock one or two and, therefore, comparison demonstrations become less of an issue.

Although the Internet is still, comparatively, in the Stone Age, we are already seeing established retail patterns emerging. In the case of hi-fi separate retailers, the Web is a crucial form of advertising and market prominence. Many have adapted to increased price competition by either trimming costs elsewhere, or offering extra service products, such as home installation. In other words, the world of hi-fi retail appears stable, at least for now. For the consumer, this can only be a good thing. Unlike buying a CD, buying a hi-fi requires long term back up, and confidence and trust in your retailer. Just don't automatically expect a demonstration... ●

# Ijk setright



**A**lthough I have no wish to be excited – it does so blur the judgement – I did allow myself a frisson of anticipatory pleasure on learning that this issue would be examining the era of what The Powers That Be are pleased to call 'classic' hi-fi, meaning the 1960s, '70s and '80s. It must be admitted that, however little I may know about hi-fi now, I knew absolutely nothing about it in the '60s, though I do recall some protracted arguments with musical friends about the need for stereo, of which I was unconvinced. Maybe this followed my experiences of it in its early days in the '50s, when unmusical friends were delighted to demonstrate their home installations.

These usually took the form of large cylindrical upward-firing 'speakers set in the corners at the extremes of the room's longest wall, and I was supposed to sit enchanted at the sound of the 12:27 from Paddington steaming in at one end and hooting out at the other. I believe that my scorn for the 'imaging' so dear to some modern hi-fi assessors was born then.

It was in the '70s that I learned a lot about such things as 'speaker placement. I realised that there was no need for a lot of physical exertion, heaving apparatus into potential positions. Blessed with two musical daughters of matching height, I simply stood them with their backs to the wall in various likely locations and then walked around listening to them singing the national anthem in two-part harmony, or occasionally producing a fizzing Handelian bourrée on recorders. They were really fiddlers, but the directional propagation of sound from a violin makes it unsuitable for this job, and to a real musician all music is possible.

Then I learned how to hang 'speakers on the wall and make them behave, without need for all the

hideous stands, spikes, groutings and underpinnings that committed hi-fi enthusiasts were already adopting. By the end of the decade I was ready to move into the more serious separates then becoming available, with some names that remain familiar today already established. In the early '80s the accepted route for a tyro was to start with a Rotel outfit, just to acquire some standards and a taste for the real

**“ it was a great time to be learning... most valuably of all, I learned not to trust experts**

thing; then one moved up to Creek, and if one had any sense and taste one jolly well remained with Creek until one could afford a pukkah Linn-Naim outfit. Until reaching that elevated status, loudspeakers were fair game for anybody: in the '70s they had been big affairs, but as the source-priority teaching of Ivor Tiefenbrun took hold, the British went a-whoring after strange little bookshelf gods, and became suspected world-wide of a feckless disregard for bass.

The first serious speakers I bought were big, discovered when I was living in Texas, and they were unusual. They were not very heavy, they contained no crossovers, and they came each with its own test chart, a yard-long strip of paper showing no more than 1dB deviation from flat response in a sweep from somewhere below 30Hz to somewhere around 20K. Chamber music through these Genes speakers was particularly delightful.

How they did it I do not know, but there was nothing like them around when I returned to England and set myself up with a Linn Sondek, an Ittok arm and some Creeks, so I was persuaded to buy a pair of ARC 101 speakers. Unfortunately, neither the vendor nor anyone else told me that

they could be made active. In that form they might have been good enough; instead I eventually joined the bookshelf club. I could not abide the grain and spittle of the acidulous LS3/5A, deplored almost everything else, yet quite willingly succumbed to the seductions of the original Linn Kan. I was learning.

It was a great time to be doing so. Most valuably of all, I learned not to trust experts, but there were many other things. I acquired an abiding suspicion of ported loudspeakers; I began to be haunted by the belief that the industry, with its regimented RIAA equalisations and its warp filters and what not, was playing fast and loose with my music; and I learned the

virtues of system synergy. So, when Ivor Tiefenbrun decided that, dammit, Linn would make its own amplifiers, and the late Julian Vereker decided that, dammit, Naim would make its own speakers, my coast was clear. I never liked the astringency of the old Naim stuff, but I could go for an all-Linn system, and so I did.

And so the '80s ran out, and with them ended the period allotted by The Powers That Be aforesaid to the era of 'classic' hi-fi. Much of what I learned seems negative; what of the positives? Top of that very different list remains my abiding conviction of the importance of radio. It is the source of the best reproduced live music that one can hear. It can provide recorded music to a standard as high as can be found. Moreover, it functions as a sort of super-library where, instead of being a passive store in which you are likely to look only for what you know, it comes at you out of the blue with suggestions for your listening which can transform or at least expand your relationship with audio culture. Only last week a good friend told me that Finnish radio broadcasts from Helsinki a fortnightly news bulletin in classical Latin. Is that not quite simply wonderful? ●

# patrick cleasby



**A**fter a few months of having a gentle go at the beloved but suffering format of DVD-Audio, another missive from a manager has given me the opportunity to stop over in the state of SACD on the way to consideration of the impending high density (as opposed to high resolution!) formats...

Let me make this clear for once and for all – I started out three years ago as a huge fan of DVD-Audio. I love the sound of 24bit PCM (when compared to yucky 16bit). I bought a DVD-Audio dedicated player in the hope that the sensible route forward could be found. At the time it was difficult to see how a format linked to the already hugely successful DVD-Video could fail to take off.

I should have seen the writing on the wall from the previous case of DCC versus MiniDisc. Ten or more years ago the first listening tests revealed that DCC made a decent fist of audio codec compression – MiniDisc sounded atrocious. Guess which way Betamax man leapt? Of course DCC died rapidly and MiniDisc improved, but like many people in the professional arena I felt uncomfortable with getting behind a Sony format. People just hate this constantly repeating cycle of dual-headed format wars and frequently blame Sony for going their own way. Look where we are heading again....

But before we get to that, whither SACD? I felt forced to get into it when the sublime surround 'Avalon' appeared in that format only, but I have always felt that the audible quality of DSD is inferior to high sampling rate 24bit PCM, a belief which has only been endorsed by comparisons of material available in both formats. When I recently spoke

to a reputed mastering engineer who had completed masters for different sides of the Atlantic in the competing formats, I asked him candidly which of the two he preferred. He reluctantly admitted that the PCM sounded better. His words were "there's something going on in the

**rumour is that Sony Music would love to drop SACD, but the hardware division insists that they press on...**

high end of DSD which I don't like"...Enough said.

Increasingly stories are beginning to surface of the various leaks from Sony personnel in private conversations which indicate that at least they, (if not Universal), believe that their struggling format is a dead donkey. The persistent rumour is that Sony Music would love to drop the format, (that much is obvious from their next-to-non-existent release slate), but that the hardware division insists that they press on. How Sony Music's dabblings in Dual Disc, albeit without DVD-Audio content, must irritate the hardware wallahs.

One always has to take such tales with a pinch of salt, but I took more serious interest when a trusted record company/ band management friend told me of a conversation he had earlier in the year. His comment to me went like this: "I was at Sony earlier this year and they just laughed when I mentioned SACD. Their exact words were "it's dead" and that's from the top people at catalogue! What do you think? Any hope?"

Well on that basis I would have to say, "in that case it IS dead"! Of course there are a large number of

specialist labels who will continue to release high quality product in reasonably significant numbers. Some of these are also the kind of set ups who will actually venture into direct to DSD recording, but as far as new mainstream rock and pop recordings the fact has to be faced that due to the ProTools hegemony nearly every major SACD title is PCM of origin anyway. Even legacy albums reworked as surround and released as SACD such as Marvin Gaye's 'Let's Get

It On' frequently bear the tell-tale ProTools engineering credit. Like the probable fate of the SACD itself, DSD recording will always remain a niche speciality – perhaps prevalent in classical recording, but PCM will not be budged from the recording studio or the bedroom...

If Aerosmith's 'Rocks' proves to be one of the last Sony SACDs, and we never see any more Dylan, no Springsteen studio albums, no proper surround SACDs of 'Boston', Journey's 'Escape' or 'Thriller' - then SACD will never, ever become a volume proposition for Sony, which is why they have lost interest in their own baby. The real indicator of their apathy is that there is not even any clear intention to promote DSD as a candidate for inclusion in the specifications for their preferred high density carrier - Blu-ray. This situation could change, although they haven't got long, but this by far the most telling indicator so far that the SACD is on the way out. And I absolutely promise that next month I will finally get around to trying to nail down some of the codec-related issues in the next messy format war. ●



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# diy supplement

FEBRUARY 2005 N

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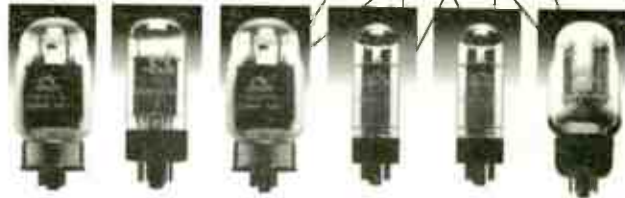
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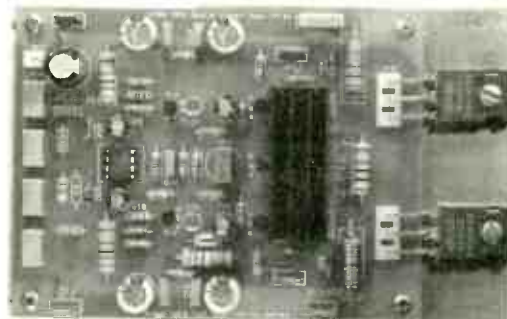
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# diy news



## ROCKY MOUNTAIN AUDIO FEST DENVER COLORADO OCTOBER 2004

It shouldn't be much of a surprise that a show organised by Welborne Labs would have a strong DIY flavour. The show offered the chance to hear products that are much discussed on US based internet forums from established names on the DIY scene like Diy HiFi supply and Welborne Labs. At the same time products from smaller manufacturers like Vivaldi Audio with their tidily finished Lowther horn kits, Hagerman Technology's rapidly growing range of kit amps and Teres Audio's uncompromising turntables all provided a persuasive argument for DIY audio.

Stalwarts of transformer manufacture Electra-Print were showing their range of audio-kits playing through the impressive Hammer Dynamics kit speakers, all the while fielding a steady stream of technical queries from customers and fellow manufacturers alike. Refreshingly the show didn't seem to be just about selling audio gear, Bottlehead gave their room over to offering audiophiles the opportunity to listen to reel to reel master tapes on a special one-off headphone amplifier. Seminars on turntable set-up, system tweaking and room treatments were held as well as a beginners soldering class. Judging by the grin on Ron Welborne's face on the final day the show was a huge success. A full report can be found at:

[www.6moons.com/industryfeatures/Denver/denver.html](http://www.6moons.com/industryfeatures/Denver/denver.html)

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### SUPER SUPRA MAINS CABLE KIT



All you need to make up your own Supra mains cable can be obtained from [www.hifcables.co.uk](http://www.hifcables.co.uk). The company offers a wide variety of interconnects, speaker cables and accessories. You can even buy a DIN to DIN lead for £225 if your hi-fi amp uses that type of connector. Of particular interest to Hi-Fi World readers is the mains cable kit, which enables the constructor to save the cost of assembly. The kit includes Supra Lo-Rad mains cable, an MK Toughplug and a Wattgate 320 IEC connector. A high quality mains cable can be constructed with this shielded mains cable which contains 3x2.5 mm<sup>2</sup> multi-stranded conductors. The cable is shielded via an aluminium foil screen which is in close contact with the semi-conductive insulation of the earth conductor.

Full construction details are included on the website, with many pictures showing (for example) how to modify safely the excellent MK mains plug to take the large diameter Supra cable.

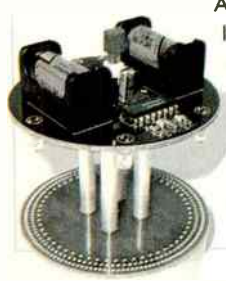
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The UFO half kit costs \$40 US plus shipping from Hagerman Technology LLC, P.O. Box 26437, Honolulu, HI 96825, USA. See [www.hagtech.com](http://www.hagtech.com) or more info.



### SQUIRES GATE MUSIC CENTRE

A regular contributor to *Hi-Fi World* magazine tells us that 'the best record shop in the world' has moved. If the recording you want is available, they will get it for you. The shop also has a CD library which as well as hiring out CDs also offers ex-library CDs for sale. Albert Lee has used this supplier for a number of years and discovered that even those hard to find recordings have usually been sourced for him. It's a bit far for those of us who live near London to visit, but no problem for our northern readers. You can of course order via e-mail or their website. Squires Gate Music Centre is now at 615 Lytham Road, Squires Gate, Blackpool FY4 1RG and their phone number is 01253 405 599. Their website is to be found at [www.lprl.demon.co.uk](http://www.lprl.demon.co.uk) and you can contact them at [customerenquiries@lprl.demon.co.uk](mailto:customerenquiries@lprl.demon.co.uk).

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# A Touch of Glass!

There's nothing like listening carefully to your valves. Neville Roberts tries several of the popular types and reveals the sonic winners and losers.



Fig. 1

**W**hat next? So you've upgraded all your relevant electrolytics with Black Gates, your coupling capacitors with paper-in-oils of various types and experimented with a range of resistors in the signal path. What is left for you to do with the residue of your monthly paycheque burning a hole in your pocket? With the ever increasing range of valve-based audio equipment in recent years, the choice and availability of valves is also growing. Web-based trading has made it even easier to obtain new and second hand items, including valves, from all over the world. The prices charged for a particular type of valve can range from a few pounds to over ten times that amount.

In the DIY Supplement No. 65 published in May 2002, Clive Meakins reviewed a variety of 300B triodes, which I found extremely helpful when it came to selecting the output valves for my WAD 300B PSE. It certainly seems to be a case of getting what you pay for here, but what about the other valves in the audio chain; the small signal valves and even the rectifiers? I therefore set about trying several types of

valve in my power amp (6AU6, ECC82 and 5U4 rectifier) and also the WAD Prell (6922/E88CC) and Phonoll (ECC83).

Armed with a variety of valves that I had accumulated over the years and a few borrowed from friends, I settled down like Simon Cowell to audition the first 'hopefuls' (Figure 1)! Incidentally, all new valves were thoroughly run in for about 24 hours before testing.

## PHONOII AND ECC83

First up were the JJ ECC83s as supplied with the original kit (see Figure 2). When trying to make comparisons of this nature, it is best to have a reference to work to, and the valves as supplied with the kits seem to be a good place to start. Compared with a set of Harma 7025s, the JJs had a bit more life and character to the sound. This was also the case when the JJs were compared with a set of Sovteks, which sounded rather dull in comparison.

Then came the turn of some Mullard NOS (New Old Stock) NIB (New In Box) with the new logo and some used older Mullards with the old logo (see Figure 3). This was a big improvement. The new Mullards had

literally tons more detail than the JJs, giving all the records a clear, effortless detail without any tendency to harshness. Thanks to web-based auction services like eBay, it is now relatively easy to purchase NOS and used older valves, and I was able to acquire some used Mullards with the old shield logo in both the white and yellow print variants – more about that later. Firstly, fitting the white logo versions, the music retained all of the clarity and detail of the other Mullards, but had gained a sense of realism over their modern counterparts. Listening to my copy of 'Lincoln Mayorga & Distinguished Colleagues – Volume III', Sheffield Labs SL5/SL6, which is a direct to disc recording and is the closest one can get to a live recording, the brass instruments simply sparkled. How they managed to move the percussion section into my sitting room, I will never know! Some say that the yellow print versions are superior to the white print valves. I have to say that I couldn't tell any difference between them – they both sounded fantastic and were the clear winner in this section.

## PREII AND 6922 / E88CC

Leaving the Mullards in the Phonoll, I started as before with the supplied Edicron 6922 and then swapped it with a Philips JAN 6922 (see Figure 4). Alas, the Philips sounds rather weighty in the middle and somewhat light at the two extremes. To my ears, it was a rather bland sound. Time to move on! Next came an NOS Russian Navigator 6H23. This valve gave a very enjoyable and musical sound. I felt that the bass was tighter than the Edicron. Overall, the 6H23 was lively and energetic, without any sense of harshness.

Unplugging the 6H23 made room for a Siemens E288CC (Figure 5) complete with its gold-plated pins. Again, the bass was better controlled than the Edicron and the detail was excellent, but there was a greater sense of space and quality. Not a sign of harshness in the upper register, but an open and effortless sound – wonderful. However, there are a

couple of downsides. Firstly, the price tag of around £130 and secondly, it is a taller valve than the 6922 and it won't allow the lid of the Prell to be fitted!

Anyway, moving on and a Sovtek 6922 took the place of the Siemens. It felt as though some of the detail had been removed. It did give a lovely, smooth 'valve sound' which may appeal to some, but on balance, I preferred the sound of the Edicron.

Next, a new logo NOS NIB Mullard E88CC (also with gold-plated pins) was removed from its blue Mullard box and installed. A great sounding valve. Good, controlled bass with detailed and clear top end without any hard edge

## "Another winner from Mullard. Are we detecting a trend here?"

to the sound. Pretty close to the Siemens, but the Siemens pipped it to the post (both in sound and in height!). Finally came the turn of an old shield Mullard E88CC. This was a bargain purchase from eBay. It sounded every bit as good as the Siemens, but with even better, tighter bass. Another winner from Mullard – and at less than a tenth of the price of the Siemens and it fits into the case! Are we detecting a trend here?

### 300B PSE AND ECC82

Moving over to the 300B PSE monoblocks (resplendent as they are with their set of TJ Mesh Premium 300Bs!), it was very easy to swap over the supplied EI ECC82 valve and try a few alternatives. I tried a few variants, including Sovtek and other Russians and ending up with some old and new logo Mullards, with the latter being of the yellow print type (Figure 6). To be honest, the effects were very subtle and required repeated swapping to conclude that, once again, the Mullards had the edge over the competition, with the EIs coming a close second. In the 300B PSE, I could not differentiate between the two types of Mullard that I tried.

### 300B PSE AND 6AU6

The original valve supplied by WAD was an Edicron 6AU6. I obtained a pair of Sylvania 7543s to try instead (see Figure 7). This is a low microphony version of a 6AU6 and, given that it is the first amplifying valve in the 300BPSE, this seemed to be a useful feature. The Sylvania were noticeably more detailed with better imaging than the Edicrons. This

was a definite upgrade, and they only cost a few pounds each new.

I had also borrowed a pair of standard Sylvania 6AU6s and similar offerings from Westinghouse, RCA and Brimar. I also managed to track down some the Mullard equivalent EF94s (Figure 8). The Sylvania 6AU6s were not quite as clear in the top end in comparison to their 7543 relatives. However, the bass was as tight and well extended and the imaging was still better than the Edicrons.

Next to try was the Westinghouse 6AU6s. With this valve, the sound stage sounded flatter front to back and the bass was a little 'woolly'. Further listening

revealed that the top end was slightly muddy in comparison with the others tried.

The Westinghouse offerings stepped aside to make room for the 6AU6s from RCA. These were lovely valves with an excellent depth to the sound and orchestras seemed bigger and fuller. The bass was tight and well extended and the top end was clear with no harshness.

Now it was the turn of the Brimar 6AU6s. Alas, these were not quite up to the job as they showed themselves to be somewhat thin and less controlled in the bass. Orchestras sounded a little 'boxy' and the top end was less clear than any of the other valves tried.

Last in this section was an old shield Mullard EF94 in yellow print, another in white print and a matching Mullard branded 6AU6 white print. All three variants sounded the same and were very similar in character to the Sylvania 7543. They had a great realism with excellent clarity and very tight bass. I did notice that the gain of the yellow print EF94 was noticeably higher than the other two, which skewed the sound stage somewhat. This highlighted the importance of ensuring that used valves are reasonably matched before deciding to purchase them.

It is quite difficult to declare an overall winner in this section as the effect of the different valves in the 300BPSE is quite subtle. The top three are the Sylvania 7543, RCA 6AU6 and Mullard EF94/6AU6. However, for me the RCA just beats the other two with its fuller sound stage and tight bass.



Fig. 2 Three of the ECC83s: Mullard Yellow Logo, Mullard White Logo and JJ



Fig. 3 The Mullard Old and New Logos



Fig. 4 Some E88CC / 6922 Valves: Edicron, Philips, Russian Navigator, Mullard New Shield and Mullard Old Shield Logo

### 300B PSE AND 5U4

The last valve to be auditioned was the 300B rectifier valve. "Why change the rectifier?" you may well ask. What difference can that make to the overall sound? Well, from my experience, a huge one, and this is not unreasonable when you take into consideration that with a single-ended Class A amplifier, such as the 300B PSE, the power supply is in series with the output stage and therefore in the signal path.

At this point, I should mention that I did try some used 5U4Gs, but ended up being rather disappointed. The



Fig. 5 The Siemens E288CC

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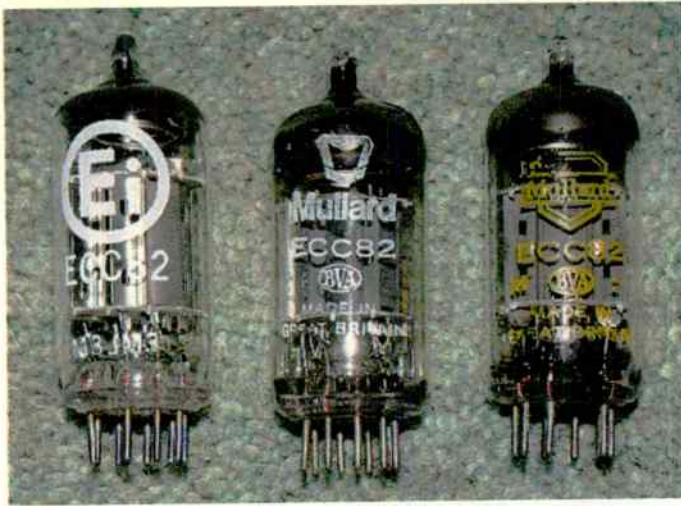


Fig. 6 Ei, Mullard New Logo and Mullard Old Yellow Logo ECC82 Valves

sound was thin and bass light and at higher volumes, strings sounded decidedly harsh. I came to the conclusion that the emissions were down and they simply couldn't deliver the power anymore. The message is simple – don't buy second-hand power valves. Small signal valves go on for ever (well almost), but used output valves and rectifiers should be avoided. You have been warned!

The supplied Edicron 5U4Gs were next replaced with some Russian equivalents. These can be picked up brand new for a song and they did not sound bad at all.

Stravinsky's The Firebird Suite performed by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra on Telarc digital recording DG-10039. The deep and extended drum roll during the opening sequence which is so low in frequency that it is almost felt rather than heard now had a defined pitch. Further into the recording, the 'twittering' of the strings was clear and crisp but not at all harsh.

All in all, this had been a very interesting exercise. To summarize, I would suggest that you get what you pay for with the power valves such as rectifiers, but with small signal valves,

"with small signal valves, you can definitely pick up a bargain."

However, I felt that the Edicrons gave a fuller, more rounded sound.

Unfortunately, a friend with a similar setup to mine had been expounding the virtues of a pair of NOS NIB 5U4Gs made by GEC that he had acquired. I say "unfortunately" because they cost around £75 each and the Russian ones cost only a few pounds. However, a pair of the GECs were obtained and carefully fitted into place. These were brand new and had obviously been lying around for a few years as the boxes were a little worse for wear and bore the date '1943', which can be seen on the box in Figure 9!

The difference was not insignificant. Right from the word "go", the whole sound stage opened up with stunningly accurate image placement. Yes, the bass was tighter and more extended than with the Edicrons or the Russians, but the precise location of instruments in the room was a startling improvement. One of my standard test records is

you can definitely pick up a bargain. That does not mean that one does not need to be careful, as all markets have their share of rogue traders, but with a little common sense, there is plenty of opportunity to find what you are looking for at a reasonable price.

To my ears and for most applications, I really like the old shield Mullards in both the white and yellow variants of printing. However, I have seen some go at auction for silly prices, so be restrained! Don't be put off from buying used small signal valves as long as they have been tested and matched. Also, don't discount some of the Russian valves as they can be picked up quite cheaply brand new and, as with everything, it is also a case of finding valves that work well with your equipment and personal taste. For me, I can't think of a better way of summing up than the use of the well-worn phrase "They don't make 'em like that anymore!"



Fig. 7 The Edicron 6AU6 with the Sylvania Equivalent 7543



Fig. 8 Other 6AU6s from Sylvania, Westinghouse, RCA, Brimar and the Mullard EF94



Fig. 9 The GEC and Edicron 5U4G Valves



# pro-ject arm

How do you make an RPM9 turntable even better? Add a Hadcock arm! Albert Lee shows you how...

One of the difficulties that besets anyone who has purchased a Pro-ject RPM9 turntable is the fact that the record deck comes complete with its own tone arm! In their wisdom the distributors in this country do not supply any of the Project turntables without pick up arm, even though it is available in other countries as an armless assembly. As has been proven in the pages of *Hi-Fi World*, the pick up arm is one of the most important parts of the front end of the hi-fi system. Your overall sound quality will always be governed by the weakest link in the system. Fear not music lovers, Baldrick has a cunning plan to improve any Pro-ject turntable to hitherto unheard of levels of quality that normally would require an outlay of hundreds if not thousands of pounds. The plan is quite simple: replace the supplied tone arm with a specialist pick up arm that is built in the UK. After all we do build the best hi-fi kit in the world...

As the effective length of the arm is 228 mm the choice of replacement is limited. The obvious choice is the Hadcock GH 228. George Hadcock handcrafts all of his arms and as he designed them his quality control is extremely strict. I have used Hadcock pick up arms for over a quarter of a century and have yet to hear a consistently better arm!

Now at this point a lot of courage is required. We have to remove the original tone arm. This requires soldering skill and a steady hand. So let's do it!

We need a clear bench, which is covered with a soft towel. Also a soldering iron, ideally residing in a soldering iron stand. The bench also should be very well illuminated.

First we need to remove the platter and, place the red cap, which should be in the original packing, over the end of the bearing tube. If, like me, you have lost this piece of packing fear not - we can use cling film. Simply wind it round the bearing

tube making sure to seal the bearing assembly. Now place the platter in a safe place. Remember to invert the platter so the bearing tube is pointing upwards!

At this point we need to invert the turntable to allow access to the phono socket box. If we look carefully we will see two Pozidrive screws retain this assembly. Remove these screws and the assembly is then ready to be desoldered. When desoldering any type of joint I have found that by wetting the soldering iron tip with solder aids the speedy removal of components. Another piece of advice is to grip the wires with snipe nose pliers and then touch the pins to release the wires. Repeat this until we have a small bundle of wires and the phono box has been released from the tone arm.

We now need a break, as the next part of this exercise is the most delicate of the whole process. Take your dog for a walk, brush the cat, read the paper and return to the

bench after 10 minutes or so.

Returning from our break the next step is to withdraw the tone arm from the Audio Technica style base. We need an Allen key to release the hex sockets and at this point we gently pull the arm from the pick up arm base. Again we place this assembly in a safe place. The pick up arm base needs to be removed at this point and if we look underneath the turntable base plate we can see three location holes. Inside these holes live three pozidrive machine screws, which we undo. The pick up arm base should fall onto the towel and, so we don't lose the screws, we re-insert the screws into the arm base. All of the components should be carefully wrapped with bubble wrap and placed in a container.

Now we should have a turntable base that has no pick up arm with the mounting holes available for the next stage of the operation.

The next stage is the

with two hole saws. The best types of hole saws are the tools that use an arbour rather than the combination saws. Our selected saw for the outer hole measures 63mm in diameter.

At this point we need to cover, or remove the turntable from the bench, this is so no timber dust comes into contact with the bearing parts. So we are now ready to start the cutting.

**Hi-Fi World can accept no liability for damage caused to the equipment or to yourself. Remember power tools are dangerous! Follow all safety instructions and be extremely careful. It is always better to take your time rather than risk damage by rushing!**

The material I chose was 25mm MDF. An alternative would be 25mm plywood. We need to cut a rectangle of approximately 6 inches square.

'newness in a can') It is important to finish this piece the best we can, as the base is a very prominent part of the RPM9.

After our break we return to the workbench and place the turntable base on the bench. The pick up arm pillar should be inserted into the base, but the retaining nut must only be finger tight. We then offer the new pick up arm plate complete with arm pillar into the hole in the turntable. It may be easier to work with the turntable base inverted and clamped to the workbench. Remember to protect the base with a soft cloth. We need to mark the mounting screw holes; this can be done with a bradawl or use a pilot drill. Attach the base with no.8 countersunk Pozidrive screws. Then we remove the arm plate and tighten the retaining nut. Re-attach the arm plate to the turntable and assemble the pick up arm as George Hadcock describes in his instruction sheet.

# replacement

construction of the new arm base and the installation of the Hadcock pick up arm. I decided to use 25mm medium density fibreboard for the pick up arm base although one could use plywood or any type of softwood. It is important not to use hardwood as this makes the pick up arm contact too rigid. Too much rigidity is deleterious to the performance of the pick up arm.

There is no marking out to do at this point as we are going to cut two holes, concentrically, into the MDF.

This is achieved by the use of a power drill

After we have done this we clamp the timber to the workbench. A pilot hole is drilled through the timber and we next load the hole saw into the drill. This tool should be sunk half way through the timber, the tool should be withdrawn from the work, and then we turn the timber over, re-clamp the work and now continue cutting through the timber.

The next part of preparing the arm base is to cut the hole through which the pick up arm is assembled. So we again clamp the work to the bench and using a 20mm saw cut a hole again only halfway through the timber. Again, invert the work, re-clamp it to the bench and continue cutting until the cut is complete. I took another break after cleaning the work area. Whilst we are

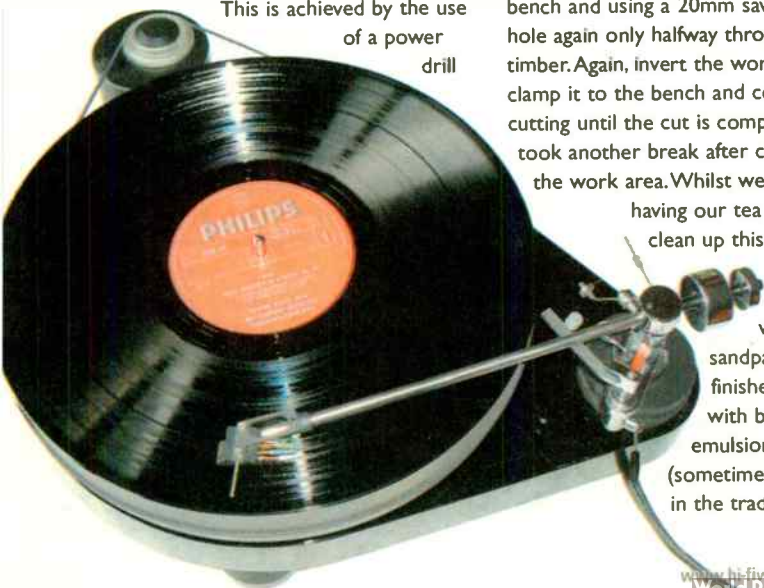
having our tea we can clean up this small

piece of timber with sandpaper. I finished mine with black emulsion paint (sometimes known in the trade as

There is one part of my set up that is different and this involves making sure that the lead out wires are vertically aligned as this improves the performance of the arm considerably.

I decided to use a Goldring 1042 cartridge to test my new Hadcock/RPM9 combination. Aligning the stylus is a painstaking task, but time spent on this part of the set up is time well spent. Remember that the cast aluminium headshell is fully adjustable so spend a little time using this facility.

Now that we have a great looking turntable, place the first piece of vinyl on the platter. The sound that emanates from the record deck will be truly staggering. The size of the image is huge with an image width to die for. The music seems to be projected into the listening space with much more ease. Bass reproduction is very clear and has transient impact. Along with smoothness in the mid to treble this is one modification that is really worth the effort.



The Hadcock arm is available from [www.hiaudio.co.uk](http://www.hiaudio.co.uk)  
The Hadcock GH 228 Export is priced at £407.73  
The Hadcock GH 228 Integra is priced at £675.63

# Rock motor upgrade

Great though Townshend's Rock turntable is, Albert Lee discovers the wonderful effects of replacing the motor with one supplied by Origin Live...



An uncluttered bench is essential.



Remove the platter.



Expose the original motor.

**M**ax Townshend marketed his turntables amid the blaze of the hi-fi press; he suffered their criticism and their praise. This was because he chose to build a turntable which was not a suspended subchassis. It was also damped with a mixture of plaster and glass fibre! The turntable also sported a damping trough, which came with the turntable as standard. As was fashionable at the time, moving the belt to a vacant groove on the motor pulley effected the speed change. At the time Linn products did not offer two speed turntables because they claimed that by altering the speed sound quality suffered! The final insult to the cognoscenti was that the Rock was much cheaper than any of its British rivals.

An Impex motor was used with a very simple voltage dropper with no variation on the speed, so no fine-tuning was available. Enthusiasts who wanted tight extended bass reproduction had to suffer speed fluctuation. Nonetheless the Rock was a seminal design which was head and shoulders better than any British turntable at the time.

My Rock was suffering from a number of motor problems, which could have been rectified with a standard motor replacement, which Max still supplies to this day. What was I to do? Replace the original motor with another from Max Townshend or buy an Origin Live replacement DC Motor kit? I decided after a long conversation with Mark Baker to take the latter option! I was assured that this option would upgrade my Rock tremendously. So I awaited the delivery of the Advanced Kit, the package arrived a few days later and as I feverishly opened the packing I breathed a sigh of relief when I checked that all was well with the content.

I sat down and read and reread the very well laid out instructions with my favourite brew. This replacement seemed very straight forward, almost too easy. I have said that before! The first step is to remove all of the motor drive components, which are self-explanatory.

## REMOVING THE OLD MOTOR

Remove the platter before starting this job, and put this in a safe place, making sure not to drop it as cracked plaster is expensive to have rebuilt. Remove the drive belt, if it is inflexible a new one will have to be

purchased from Max Townshend. Carefully place the drive belt in a zip lock bag and put it out of the way of the work. I also removed the pick up arm and the turntable pulley avoiding damaging these components. Please remember to mop up any lubricant especially from around the main bearing well. At the side of the turntable there are two countersunk machine screws which are easily removed using an Allen key. This enabled me to remove the pressed steel cover. Again put this away. An important point is that the workbench should be well illuminated and free of obstructions. Next we remove the motor by undoing the cap head screws with an allen key, again put these away including the bottom motor plate which supports the Impex motor. I noticed that the pulley would not slide through the hole in the plinth. Don't despair as we will use a precision tool to remove it. I got a 2mm machine screw and gripped it with a pair of electrician's pliers and placed the threaded end on the motor spindle and then wielding a hammer struck the screw a sharp blow. Hey presto the pulley has been released from the motor spindle. Now I have to stand the turntable on its front i.e. vertical. This is so I could gain access to the bottom of the turntable. I then cut the wiring loom with a pair of sidecutters and placed the motor, its pulley and the motor control circuitry into a bag and the bag was

*"I was not prepared for the increase in perceived quality of reproduction!"*

placed in the box along with the rest of the redundant parts. Then I removed the old mains wiring which again I did not need any more. The only part of the motor drive system that remains is the switch, which I will not be using any more!

I now had a motorless plinth so the next step is to carefully remove the paper gasket from the motor well and to cut the debris from the spindle hole to enable the new motor pulley to protrude through the motor plate. Now I loaded a 3mm drill bit into the drill, and using the supplied template drilled one hole through the plate. I then cleaned up the hole using a countersink tool. If you don't have one of these tools a 5mm drill bit will do the job, but be very careful, as you will not want a 5mm hole in the motor plate!

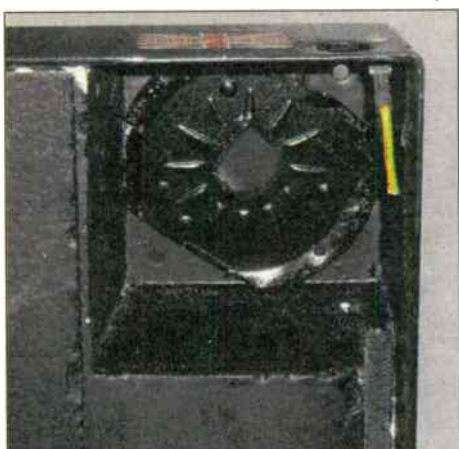




**Remove the motor without losing all those small parts!**



**Cut the wiring loom carefully.**



**Install the new motor.**



**Re-install the belt over the pulley.**

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This is the end of the difficult part of the job and I suggest a cup of strong tea or coffee is needed as well as a short rest. After this break I returned to the Rock and mounted the DC motor using ONE of the three machine screws, which are located on the top plate of the motor. This so I could adjust the drive belt tension to its optimum position. Now I pulled the cable through the hole and dressed it with a strain relief and then locked the new cable in position with a cable tie. The turntable was returned to its normal attitude and the pulley was returned to the plinth after cleaning up the spindle and lubricating the assembly. Don't worry if it takes an age to settle. The bearing is meant to do this! After the main bearing/pulley has settled place the drive belt over the motor pulley and the main pulley and spin the main bearing by hand. This will position the drive belt. If the belt is too near the plinth pull the belt up to the top of the motor pulley and re-spin the bearing the drive belt should not foul the plinth. I was now ready to connect the electronic speed change unit along with the wall wart. Switch on was achieved with no drama; the sub platter simply started to spin. The platter was placed onto the sub-platter and the unit was switched to 45rpm and left for 48 hours to enable the motor to reach optimum temperature and also to allow all of the bearings to settle with the new lubricant.

The next job is to replace the pick up arm and re-align the cartridge. I now set the fine speed adjusters to regulate the speed. This is best done with the cartridge in a groove. The vernier screws should be turned until the speed is stable, according to the strobe disc.

### HOW DID IT SOUND?

I was not prepared for the increase in perceived quality of reproduction! The Rock had much more bass depth and the bass was also much tighter. The stereo image was much wider with much more space between the musicians; the silence was very very quiet! On jazz the Rock gave the sense of 'being there' along with a better sense of dynamics along with a very wide stereo image, and a sure footed bass delivery with a smooth treble to midrange balance. I continued listening to the Rock and comparing this elderly turntable with modern units. There was not much difference, save for details in the stereo imaging.

### CONCLUSION

After all this and spending what seemed to be a fortune on a 25 year old turntable I was extremely impressed by the original turntable combined with the new motor!

I can recommend this modification wholeheartedly and without reservation. There is an enormous number of quality record decks unused in this country. Dig them out and buy one of these kits. You will not be disappointed!



**All finished!**

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## Letter of the Month

### NOT OK, COMPUTER

As an annual subscriber to *Hi-Fi World*, I have become more and more disillusioned with the content of the magazine. For instance, I have just received my copy of the December issue and find that I get to page 38 before finding a review of anything remotely hi-fi. I have concluded that this seems to be an irreversible feature of your publication and I, for one, am not a happy chappie. I realise that there are other things in this world other than hi-fi but if I buy what purports to be a magazine about hi-fi and find it gives over a goodly amount of text to 'music on silicon chips' then I am going to be disappointed. Maybe you can learn by reading your own Mail section; how many people are writing in about iPods and the suchlike, not too many that I can see. No! The interest lies within hi-fi and that is where you should be, or alternatively change the name of the magazine 'Electronic Music Devices' or some such thing. My subscription ends at the end of this year - yes I mean ENDS.

John Clark

Errr... no it doesn't, because I'm afraid you've won another year's worth of 'Music On Chips and Electronic Music Devices World', John.

And I'm not doing it just to annoy you, but simply because your letter - albeit somewhat unintentionally - makes a great point: how we listen to music - and why... Let me tell you a story: I'm friends with a brilliant local Bristol band called Mirima ([www.mirima.co.uk](http://www.mirima.co.uk)), a great bunch of twenty-something guys massively into music. I recently threw a party at my place and the band and their entourage came over. Upon entering my front room, never having seen vinyl in their lives, the guys went straight for my LP collection, and couldn't stop eulogising over how 'cool' those huge album sleeves were. Andy, the singer, is a big Pink Floyd fan, and so I cued up 'Wish You Were Here' on my main system (Michell

GyroDec/SME IV/Koetsu Red, Trichord Delphini NC, MF Audio Passive Pre, World Audio K5881, Quad ESL989, Townshend Maximum) and it stopped him in his tracks. Just two hours earlier, he'd been playing a (superb) live gig, and now he was transfixed with this seminal all analogue 1975 Abbey Road recording. He'd never heard vinyl 'do its thing' before, and soon looked like he was having some kind of religious experience...

Needless to say, we ran the gamut of my record collection, and then he spotted an LTJ Bukem CD he wanted to hear. On went the Marantz CD63 KI DP, and we were suddenly all talking about that disc too. My point is that - while he was enchanted by analogue sound, and full of praise for how you could hear 'this and that' in the mix - he was straight back into his love of music when we went digital again. LP, CD - and to use his logic then, MP3 - were, to this gifted musician, simply ways of letting him hear stuff he loves. He adored the vinyl, but he didn't stop partying when (vast amounts of the audio band suddenly became constrained, compressed and distorted as) we moved to CD. Now, while I like the odd moan about digital, I have to say that the main point of hi-fi is to listen to music, and as soon as we forget this we might as well simply feed our preamp output into an oscilloscope and have done with it. So that's why I want to get the best possible sound, no matter what the source. Whether we like it or not - and in a way, I have to say I don't - a huge amount of music fans are now experiencing it first on iPods, computers and

(eek!) DAB radio. With that in mind, I took the view that we might as well accept this fact and find out how what's the best available. To use a motoring analogy, if high fuel prices mean we're all going to have to drive 1.4 litre shopping trolleys, then we might as well find out what's good and what's not - because you can bet there will be big differences. This is why I think it's valid to devote an issue to computer audio. Don't worry, we're not doing this often - but the new format Hi-Fi World now seeks to get into any particular subject in depth (be it computer audio, classic audio, vinyl, digital recording, loudspeakers), instead of doing 'a little bit of what you fancy' like all the other mags. My hope is that we're imparting real, useful, specialist knowledge to our readers. It may not always be what you're particularly interested in at any given time, but it still makes you better able to assess what's happening - and why. I'm striving to make our editorial an effective antidote to advertising, marketing and PR-speak; something many of the other mags seem to be full of. Hope you understand, and enjoy the next twelve months. DP



forget disco - iPod sucks!

## SAVE OUR SEVENTIES

Dear David,

Re: the Jan 05 issue - loved your suggested "Save Our Semiconductors" campaign, what a great shame you put it into print three months early... perhaps you could mention an online petition to this effect in your April issue? That would make a lovely news item, in the finest tradition of failing spaghetti harvests, etc.!

Regarding comebacks, yes, Raleigh have brought back the Chopper bicycle, the prog-rock-tastic Deep Purple did reform and have just done a UK tour, but surely not all things '70s should be revived? I'd rather forget British Leyland; IRA Terrorism on the UK mainland; the Three Day Week; platform shoes; power cuts; shoddy build quality for almost everything; The Osmonds... I'll stop there: the distress I must be causing some people! "Nostalgia ain't what it used to be", as someone once said...

The B-2 V-FET amp wasn't a spectacular listen, IMHO, just different, compared with other things I had had at that time. It was, though, the amp Yamaha would have marketed alongside the NS1000M in that era, so on that basis, a decent match!

Finally, re. Paul Clewlow's letter and Noel's reply: have any of you seen the film "Demolition Man"? Not a great piece of cinema (clue: "starring Sylvester Stallone"), but set in about 2030AD, where the Top 40 comprises of the most popular advertising jingles. As a prophecy for the future, I find that far more frightening than DAB or MP3! Myself, I'm still trying to work out what Sandra Bullock uses that third seashell for...

**Rob Coe**

Well, I don't think nostalgia has ever been better – the further away the old times get, the greater they seem. Personally, I'd bring back British Leyland (at the time, the world's largest car manufacturer – how many people at MG Rover now – three?), platform soles (did you ever have to re-sole them?) and the Electric Light Orchestra (terminally unfashionable now I grant you, but they were then too) - and surely the Three Day Week was great for those working it (ask the French)? Still, let's not dwell on concrete cities (Reading) and rubbish turntables (Strathearn) – every decade has its downsides – just look at the eighties. As for V-FETs, well the campaign's already started – check out:

[www.thevintageknob.org/](http://www.thevintageknob.org/).

DP



**ELO, Choppers, V-FETs – life just didn't get any better than the seventies...**

## ALL IS DREAM

I seem to remember reading a letter suggesting that it would be possible to remove the filters from a pair of speakers and place them at the amplifier end of the speaker cables rather than at the speaker end. I have at present a pair of Concordant Quad IIs driving Quad ESL57s with pseudo (?) Mylar type ribbon tweeters, bi-wired. I am considering using heavier capacitors on my ribbon filters and I would like to place these in a box next to my amps, rather than on the backs of the tweeters. Is this a possibility (even an improvement), or could there be a problem of phase to consider, or might this present a load problem to the amp?

**Anthony Hind**

The biggest improvement is to move the crossover out of the loudspeaker, away from vibration. We have noticed a significant improvement in general tidiness and clarity after this simple mod. Tannoy think likewise. You can extend this idea, moving the crossover right up to the amplifier. You will then have more cables to deal with, but the bass and treble runs can be optimised. It's usual to go for surface area for high frequencies (Litz cable ideally) and large cross sectional area (i.e. thick single core) for bass. Conductor materials, insulations and construction are all important. There are no penalties, in either phase or impedance, both of which remain the same. **NK**

## MA MURDER MYSTERY!

I have a pressing need for replacement speakers. Despite being initially delighted with my much modified Monitor Audio 352s, I gradually came to the conclusion that they were still failing to deliver sufficient bass. Strange given the size of them. Anyway, they went back to the chap who modded them and I ended up with a set of Leak 200 Sandwiches. I now desperately need some suggestions for a set of speakers. With a potential

budget of about £200 (I may be able to raise this to £400 once I've disposed of some other surplus hi-fi) I'll be looking at second-hand and they'll have to do some good bass on the end of Naim 32-5/140/HiCap amp. I know the modern trend is for bright sounding speakers, but I prefer a more rumbly bottom end to do justice to some of the Dub and Rock albums I own. They may also help temper the 'Naim Sound'.

**Mike Farrow**

Monitor Audios aren't known for being bass light. It may be that you like really big bass, in which case you may find the balance delivered by today's accurate loudspeakers will never be satisfactory. I'd suggest you get a second-hand REL subwoofer. This will allow you to tune in the bass you require and will certainly give plenty of rumble. For decent main loudspeakers on a budget, I'd suggest Mordaunt Short MS914s. They'll reveal the strengths of the Naim, whilst not over emphasising its vigour (shall we call it!). The two are a nice combination, unless you are a real hard core speed addict, in which case Epos ES14s might be the answer. **NK**



**Mike Farrow's mysterious world – how did his beloved MA352s morph into a pair of Leak Sandwiches he hated?**

## TIP FOR THE TOP

I wonder if one of your vinyl experts could possibly help me about cartridge output being "balanced" or "pseudo balanced"? A cartridge's output pins are denominated 'left hot', 'left ground', 'right hot', 'right ground'. Most arm cable terminations are left RCA and right RCA connectors. But there are also (although very few of them and expensive ones) phono preamps with balanced input, as well as arm cables that can be ordered in balanced mode.

My questions: what happens within the arm tube between the incoming four very thin pieces of wire at one end of the arm and the out coming 'normal' two RCA connectors at the other end of the arm or arm pillar? Are the cartridge outputs 'balanced' or (as I have sometimes been told) 'pseudo balanced' and if so, what does 'pseudo balanced' mean? If money is of no concern, is a balanced (or pseudo balanced) connection from the cartridge to the (balanced input equipped) phono preamp an improvement compared to a 'normal' unbalanced connection?

On cartridge output level and phono preamp sensitivity, how can I know which one of these two MM cartridges gives me the biggest output: cartridge A: 6.5mV @ 5cm/s; cartridge B: 4mV @ 3.54cm/s? My present cartridge has an output level of 4.5mV and my present phono preamp has an input sensitivity of 5mV. To obtain a 'close to the concert' loudness from my system playing back vinyl I have to crank up the preamp volume pot fully clockwise. Although I don't do it very often nor I do it for a long time this is certainly not good for the preamp/lamp combination and perhaps in doing so I'm forcing the preamp/lamp combination to work within a range where distortion (if not clipping) may occur. What do you think?

One day or another I'll have to replace my cartridge. Will I have to choose a new one with a bigger output level as the first criteria (may be at the expense of the 'sound' criteria)? Or should I think of buying a phono preamp with a more sensitive input with more gain (although I was told that 'more gain = more noise')? More generally, what is the relationship between a cartridge output and a phono preamp input? Should cartridge output = phono preamp input, be smaller or greater?

My current vinyl playback system is: Linn LP12/Valhalla Akito/K9. The K9 needs to be replaced. Although I can hear some of you guys thinking "well, he'd better replace the whole lot", my budget doesn't allow me to get a Resolution / Illustrious / Kontrapunkt

front-end so ... I have to deal with what I've got and try, with your help to improve on that!

Back to the cartridge. Being a reader of your magazine, I know that the K9 is not highly praised in your columns and generally you recommend to your readers a change towards the Goldring 1042 (or more recently the 1006 which can then be retipped with a 1042 stylus). I'm more than happy to trust you about the sound quality of the Goldring cartridges: how will they perform in an all-Linn vinyl playback system?

In fact my obvious move should be to replace my present K9 by the Linn only MM cartridge now available: the Adikt. So what should be the best sounding combination for me: LP12/Akito/Adikt (AU\$600) (no stylus replacement update possible) or LP12/Akito/Goldring 1006 (here in Australia, the 1006 is not available but I can buy one via Internet (plus freight) or maybe get one by special order?)/1012 (AU\$369)/1022 (AU\$439)/1042 (AU\$529) (all got the same body but different stylus shapes: 1012 stylus (AU\$254), 1022 stylus (AU\$299), 1042 stylus (AU\$369)

Furthermore, Australia is the native country of the Garrott Brothers & Co, whose reputation is great and famous for re-tipping and repairing cartridges as well as making their own. The K2 at AU\$198 (stylus AU\$148.50), the K3 at AU\$249.70 (stylus AU\$198) and the famous P77 Micro Tracer (being told to be the modern Decca without its drawbacks) at AU\$348.70 (stylus AU\$275). These cartridges being manufactured in Australia are certainly cheaper for Australian people than those being imported from UK and so should have a particularly good sound per dollar ratio for me. So what will suit best my Akito arm on a LP12 turntable?

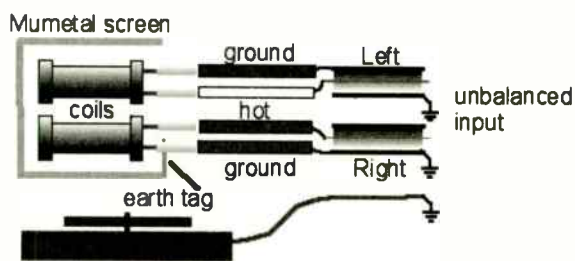
**Jean-Christophe Xerri  
Adelaide, Australia**

A pickup cartridge is a fully floating, balanced source that's best connected, in theory at least, to a fully floating, balanced input to take advantage of common-mode rejection of interference. This suits modern solid-state integrated circuits, which have differential inputs and should give the best sound by quite a considerable margin, input offsets permitting. Analogue Devices have some very interesting data on all this on their website. Go to their Library and search for 'Understanding Interference Type Noise Without Black Magic' and 'Shielding and Guarding - how to exclude Interference Type Noise,

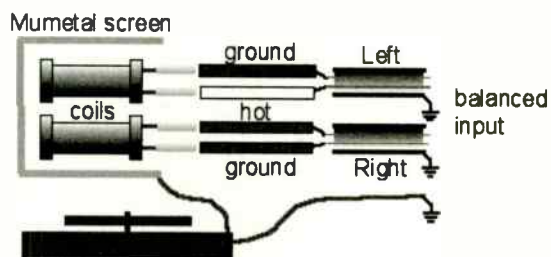
both by the author A. Rich. There's often little appreciation about the effects of low level noise in audio, but these papers underline just what a headache it can be, as well as providing solutions. Also, the best designers pay a lot of attention to reducing noise in amplifiers and, it has been suggested, valve amps sound good because their high impedance circuitry tends not to support noise at high frequencies, as small amounts of stray capacitance act to filter it out.

Trouble is, traditional turntable earthing arrangements don't suit balanced connection. To try it with a balanced input phono pre-amp you must disconnect all earths from the shields (Right Ground and Left Ground, identified as Green and Blue respectively). This usually means disconnecting the cartridge's screening can by cutting a small tag connecting it to the Right ground (Green) pin and right ground shield. Having done this you must then ground the can by other means, which may or may not be easy, depending upon the construction of the cartridge and your dexterity.

You may also have to disconnect the turntable ground and should, ideally, use two twin-and-screen balanced cables from arm to preamp.



## Normal



## Balanced

**Normally, the cartridge screening can is earthed through Right Ground. The turntable mechanism is earthed via a separate green earth wire, as shown, or sometimes through a signal lead ground. For balanced operation, output from the generator coils must be taken to the amplifier through 'twin and earth' signal cable terminated by XLR plugs.**

Some turntables earth through signal cable shields, but most do it through a separate earth wire. My comments about the earth tag apply only to plastic bodied cartridges; metal bodied types - often moving coils - are self-earthing in effect.

It's a lot of faffing around, a complete re-wiring job no less, using special cable. However, nowadays, super low noise pre-amps like the Analogue Devices AD797 and super high quality cables exist for all this, raising it as an issue for high-end phono inputs.

Cartridge A has the greatest output, giving 1.3mV per cm / sec, against 1.13mV for cartridge B. I wouldn't worry about all this too much. Turning volume up on the pre-amp won't damage it or threaten overload, but it does suggest input sensitivity is on the low side for your cartridge and you need more gain (higher sensitivity). Generally, go for an input sensitivity value lower than cartridge output. Overload ceilings are high enough to cope. More gain does equal more noise, unless the input noise level is lower. Noise is usually set by the input device. Nowadays, there are some very low noise devices available. Linn MC pre-amps have always measured out as very quiet in our tests.

Linn's Akito arm accepts most cartridges without serious complaint. A Goldring 1006 would be a fine choice on a limited budget. The latest iteration is superb. I am not acquainted with the Garrots but I trust they are good too since, as you say, the Garrot brothers have a great reputation. **NK**



Goldring 1042 – yes, it's better than a Linn K9, really!

## GOLDEN, AGED

*Would it be possible to find out if anyone has a copy of any of the original recommended cabinet designs for the Wharfedale '10 RS DD Golden' speakers (or any creditable cabinet design from or since that time)? Failing that I'm hunting for the original speaker performance parameters so that I can design the correct cabinet. I don't know what type of cabinet design they were intended for? (reflex/horn/sealed?) I've just bought a vfgood pair in large rear vented cabinets. They sound fine but the cabinets are huge/basic and I may be able to get the same performance or better from the correct design. Any info /contacts would be appreciated...*

**Pat Lindsay**  
Western Australia

## COVER ME!

*Help! I have recently moved house and my much prized turntable was damaged by the removal guys. Yes, I know, the insurance will settle everything but I've had my vinyl player for a long time and really am not into the disposable society... Actually it is only the Perspex cover/lid that has been cracked but such Luxman spares don't seem to be available for what is a long deleted model and believe me I've spent many hours on the web following all leads however tenuous. EBay has the odd example of the turntable, or a similar model, changing hands for truly silly money but all I want is a tidy replacement lid as all else is fine with mine... Having escaped to the countryside, I find that West Wales isn't exactly overflowing with hi-fi expertise and no one seems to understand my desire to repair my faithful old*

*turntable instead of buying some brash new young thing! I will be eternally grateful for any help that you might be able to give me in locating a spare lid or perhaps details of a company that might make a workable replacement.*

**Mark Izzard**

Hi Mark – you could always try a Michell Unicover, which is a neat sub-£50 bit of Perspex that sits over the platter and tonearm, but while you're on the phone to Michell Engineering ([www.michellengineering.co.uk](http://www.michellengineering.co.uk)) you could always ask them if they could do you a bespoke replacement; I suspect they could, and being Michell they wouldn't try to sell you one of their decks while you're waiting, either! **DP**

## THINGS CAN ONLY GET... WORSE

*As an ageing music lover with a system to match, I suppose you get used to what you're listening to. This became a problem in the spring when the bass units in my Castle Howard IIs finally gave up. My system consists of a Linn Sondek LP12, Harman Kardon Citation Twenty one / Twenty Two, and a fairly recently purchased TEAC VRDS 10se. With an open mind and a small wallet I went out to listen to the latest generation speakers including some from Kef and PMC at around the £600 - £800 mark. How much would I have to spend to get a speaker that sounds (to me) as good? I don't have to tell you, nothing can alter the sound of a system more than the speakers, and the change would take some getting used to!*

*But all was not lost - I was informed that Castle can repair any speaker they've ever built, and as Skipton is just up the road I was on the phone in no time, talking to Andy Hill. A nicer man as you could care to meet - he can re-build my bass units and repair one of the tweeters (a phase plug came loose) for a modest fee. I took the units up in early April and he very kindly loaned me a pair of Castle Seven IIses. In the meantime I rebuilt the cabinets. When I went back, albeit several months later, Mr Hill told me he was leaving, and henceforth Castle can only repair speakers up to seven years old. In fact, that day was his last. The end of an era. He supplied me with six bass units, (two spare) and a new pair of tweeters, and now I am back to a sound I am familiar with, for a fraction of the cost of new. With hindsight I should have had the midrange units done at the same time, then my faithful old Howard's would see me out...*

**Andrew Mackenzie.**

That'll teach you not to play industrial drum'n'bass through those monster solid-state muscle amps at your age! Or was it Sly'n'Robbie's finest? I don't know – mature audio enthusiasts these days – they're just not the same as they used to be... What's wrong with a wax cylinder, Leak TL12 and mono Quad ESL57 playing a bit of Matt Monroe softly? **DP**



**Castle Howard SII owners – watch your bass bins!]**

### STATIC IN INDIA

*I have currently have two very good systems in my home in Bangalore, in India. My main system is a Quad CD-P + Quad 99 pre+ Quad 909 power, driving Cadence Amaya ESL hybrid speakers that are made in India, occasionally sold in Europe, with VDH speaker cables and interconnects. Reason for retaining the 99 pre is to use it at a future date for its phono stage, probably with a Rega P7 table, once I lay my hands on a decent collection of vinyl. In the bedroom I have Marantz 6000KI CDP + Unison Unico 80 W hybrid driving Quad 11 L speakers, with Monster speaker cables and Ecosse interconnects.*

*I listen to jazz/jazz vocals/acoustic music only, and intend to continue to do just that. In a quest to upgrade this set up, I am looking for a significant upgrade to the Quad CDP in the main set up, to give me a significant improvement in what I hear, with some of the musicality that I'd get from tubes somewhere in this set up, to add some character to what I listen to. As I do that, I'd also upgrade the 6000KI, with the Quad CD-P taken to the system in the bedroom in its place. Any thoughts on how I can upgrade from the Quad CD-P to a better digital source, with a budget limit of £2,500-£3,000? In addition to some tube warmth, I am*

*looking for a better soundstage in the main system, without losing what I already have today.*

**Kumar Kanetkar**

The obvious answer to this is to buy a Shanling SCD-T200 SACD/CD player with valve output stage. This measured out very well in our tests and fulfilled our hopes in terms of sound quality too. It's fabulous

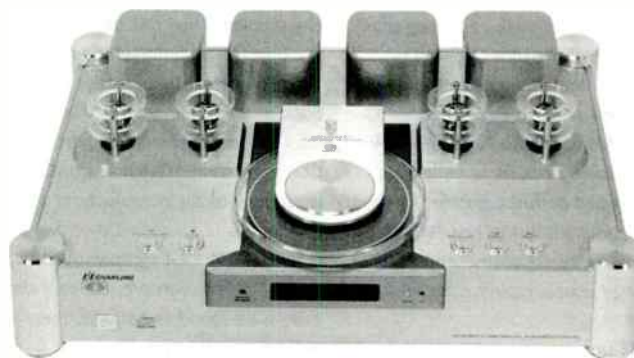
*second-hand purchase and from what I've read and talking to dealers, I understand the sound to be powerful yet lean with a tight bass. I'm wanting to avoid lean, dry speakers and looking for a sound with rich warmth and body, but also fast and open that might work with Chord Odyssey cable.*

*My room is 3.5m x 4m, with a wooden floor. I like to play mostly Indie, Jazz and Ambient music at low to medium volumes. The family in the flat below me are a consideration and for that reason I've ruled out floorstanders with their fuller, sometimes looser bass. My budget is between £500-£700 for new or second hand speakers, including stands. One dealer suggested a pair of PMC DB1+, but I'm also interested in your thoughts on older gems from the likes of Epos, etc. I play CDs on a Cyrus CD7q but would consider a change to Meridian 507 or even a second-hand Accuphase DP55v as source and processor. Will these ideas gel together into a coherent system? I love the magazine for its scope and the way your embracing the new digital technology in such an accessible way.*

**David McCausland**

To get fulsome bass which is at the same time not going to disturb the neighbours below you is difficult, as these requirements are all but contradictory. You're best off with a standmounter that has plenty of upper bass, but not too much below 40Hz. I'd suggest the KEF Q1 in this role, since it is lively and dynamic, but

looking deck of course, which will act as an eye-catching jewel in the system. The Shanling gives you the option of tube or normal output, so is flexible too. **NK**



**Shanling SCD-T200 SACD spinner – hot enough for India!**

### BASS IN FOCUS

*I would appreciate advice on standmount speakers to partner with a Roksan Kandy Mk3 amp and the best way to interface a Mac PowerBook G4 playing iTunes Lossless codec from the digital domain through an MF Trivista 21 or Chord 64 DAC. Also, I'd like tips on soundproofing a room on the cheap. Can I place a platform under the speakers and a removable acoustic panel or screen on the wall behind that would focus and contain bass frequencies? The amplifier is a recent*

*not lean or dry. I'd agree that the Roksan is dry and tight, but it has good bottom end drive and is superbly controlled. Epos loudspeakers aren't, to my ear, a symbiotic match, having a bracing sound traditionally favoured by Naim lovers. They'll give you edge-of-the-seat speed, but little in the way of relaxed enjoyment when paired with the Kandy. An alternative to the KEF's would be the popular and gentle, but detailed Mordaunt Short 912. There's little that can be done to*

damp down bass transmission. A sand box under each loudspeaker stand will provide a firm bass that minimises coupling into the floor. Keep the stands away from the walls insofar as this is possible, to minimise room boom. Otherwise, consider headphones. **NK**

Revolver's R16 would do the job perfectly; very musical (euphonic, even) sub £500 standmounters that would really sing with a good but not seminal source like your computer playing uncompressed digital audio. Then, when funds permit, you could upgrade your Cyrus to PSX-R spec (£399) and even buy a pair of Townshend Maximum Supertweeters – I know this latter mod sounds a tad extreme (considering their £800 retail price) but if you want quality – as opposed to quantity – then these are superb – they transform the midband as well as the treble; which is what you need in your environment). **DP**

### BIASED REPORTING

*I have a getting on for five year-old Copland CTA 402 in which I generally replace the power valves every 14 months and the pre valves every twenty four months or so. Hitherto I have usually used Electro-Harmonix tubes, these giving a tight and detailed if slightly colder sound than the original items. My question is in three parts: firstly, what is the advantage of using matched pairs or quads? Secondly, does the amp need manually re-biasing after replacement of the tubes?(If so how) And thirdly, I have seen reviews of valves which seem to be of superior performance to Electro-Harmonixes. Are these available as EL34 or equivalent tubes? I would be most grateful for your recommendations in this respect. The CTA is driven by a Copland 266 into Sendor SP2/3 for mainly classical material.*

**Mark Geary  
Spain**

The Copland CTA 402 uses EL34s in fixed bias, push-pull arrangement. You should always replace in matched pairs on each channel at least, even though on this amp you must bias adjust. Matched quads will balance channel performance, avoiding old, worn out valves on one channel whilst the others are new. Since EL34s aren't expensive at around £25 per matched pair, fit matched quads if you can. Adjusting the CTA 402 isn't really for a novice. You must first balance current through

each output pair by adjusting the balance pot for identical voltage across each of the two 10ohm cathode sensing resistors. Then grid bias to the pair must be adjusted using a bias pot located near the power supply to get around 450mV across these resistors, which translates to around 45mA through each valve. Watch out for high voltages of course and be careful not to short out the HT! Let the new valves run in for a few hundred hours and re-adjust. You will need a multimeter for this work.

There's debate about which valves sound best, but Svetlana (Svetlana Electro Devices or SED, St Petersburg, Russia) EL34s have a good reputation and now they make Cryogenically treated types. Mullard new production may well be worth a listen too. New Old Stock always commands the best prices and gets most praise, but NOS Mullards and Siemens are expensive. Not being a tremendous fan of the EL34 or fixed bias working (it's the simple, cheap way to get big power figures), I'd not go crazy here. However, some insist I've only heard poor EL34s and that good ones are very good. So let us know! **NK**

### DVD DOWN UNDER

*I need some advice about DVD players used as digital drives. Here is my story: four years ago I bought a stand-alone CD player (worth the equivalent of £2,500 pounds at that time) and it gave me three years of bliss without any problem. Then one day it stopped working. The manufacturer said it was a 'laser' problem. The CD player went back to the manufacturer, then came back to me; it did work but didn't play CDs more than 50 minutes properly. It went back to the manufacturer again and that time I was told that the drive (Philips CDM 12.4 gyropoint) was not manufactured anymore and so if the drive were found to be faulty there's nothing that they can do.*

*Because I live in Australia and the manufacturer is in France it cost me a fortune just with shipping. So before I keep on going spending a fortune in shipping cost and on expensive service that won't give me the certainty of result, I'd like to consult you. Because I was told the 'laser', then the drive were faulty and because both of them are not manufactured anymore I think that the solution could be in a 'always modern' laser/ drive (I mean more reliable and more easily serviced than CD-only drives). And so I am thinking of DVD drives. Do I think right? Some manufacturers (Studer, Meridian among*

*the most famous) make use of CD/DVD computer drives in their CD players. One advantage, I think is that the drive and service will be available for a relatively long time. Some manufacturers use DVD drives as they have (supposedly) a better error correction system and then hooked them on a dedicated DAC and analog output stage to transform the Cinderella drive into a high-end CD player.*

*So my questions are: if I buy a 'quality' DVD player (a Japanese one as I live in Australia and I want the service if needed to be quick and cheap) and a very good digital cable and DAC, can I expect a resulting sound comparable to the one outputting from a very good CD player? I'm not at all interested in video and/or multi-channel so here are some further questions: can a DVD player be used without a TV screen (as I have no intention of buying a TV just to set up a DVD player options!)? Can a DVD output a 24-bit/96k digital signal and, if so, is it worthwhile to get a 24-bit/96k (or more) capable DAC? Are up-sampling (24-bit/96k or 24-bit/192k) DACs hooked to a DVD player digital output worthwhile? As I record live classical ensembles (as well as vinyl records) as a hobby, can I expect to be able to burn 24/96 DVDs (any software capable of authoring 24/96 on DVDs?) and make use of my DVD player/DAC combination to play them? Thanks to let me see a little bit more in a still confusing world for me*  
**Agnes Vitry**

Don't worry Agnes, we're all confused by the many options and permutations - and they just keep rolling. I've just got a new mobile that records video, audio, still pictures, sends e-mail, acts as a notebook, can store as much data as a CD on a tiny card and will dance the Fandango if only you can find the right menu. It's sitting on the desk terrorising me at this very minute.

Computer DVD drives can have fantastic performance, proven to me by a Sony DRU-510 DVD writer I bought that could almost magically read CDs and DVDs unusable on all other drives. I've since become a great believer in top-notch drive technology and, seeing Sony's published R&D on Blu-Ray drives, quite a Sony fan too. You can hook up a CD convertor to a DVD player's digital output to improve sound quality but I for one don't have experience in this. I do, however, often use a DVD player's digital output to feed an AV receiver for best results from CD



and suspect the excellent sound is due in part to use of a DVD drive to read CD.



**The cryogenically treated EL34 from Svetlana Electron Devices, St. Petersburg, Russia is a top contender for good sound quality. Go to [www.svetlana.com](http://www.svetlana.com) for more information on this and an ever expanding range of modern valves for audio.**

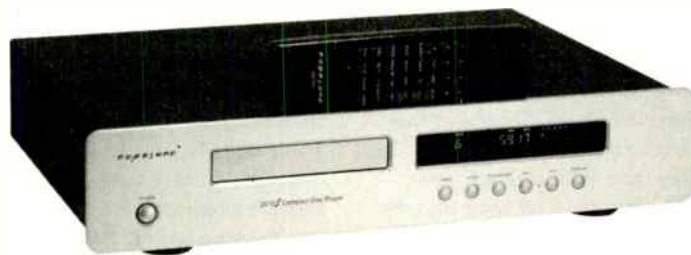
A DVD player will play a CD without any need for a TV, but if you play DVDs you will need a screen to navigate the menus. DVD players do not commonly output 24/96 digital, except through special links direct to a matching receiver. This is to prevent copying. Check out Pioneer, Denon and Meridian for this.

Upsampling of 16bit/44.1kHz CD code does give improved sound quality from CD, but the step up isn't great. If you are struggling to get the best from CD you could consider it. Or you might consider taking the easy route and buying a Meridian 808 CD player, their latest and likely last stab at CD. This is a top quality machine and its technology makes interesting reading.

Err, yes, you can author and burn DVDs, but it's complicated and a tad expensive too. First, you should - ideally - record in 24/96, although you can use 16/48 if you wish (CD quality). For either you will need a good sound card or portable digital recorder. You will also need an editing suite, like Steinberg's WaveLab 5, to process your music and burn it to DVD. WaveLab 5 even provides DVD-A authoring. And of course you will need a recording DVD drive, but these are ridiculously cheap nowadays. Have fun. **NK**

I'd beg to differ with NK. I've not heard a DVD drive that approaches a serious CD spinner. Talk to CD player manufacturers in this country and they're all moaning about the lack of off-the-shelf bespoke Red

Book mechs; the message seems to be that they can - just about - do as well with a DVD mech but it's a struggle. I have two suggestions for you - one is buy a secondhand TEAC VRDS-T1 (a mid-nineties CD transport costing around £600 here) - TEAC CD mechs are superb and I suspect they'll support them longer than Philips, which tends to forget its (often illustrious) history rather fast. AVRDS-10 or 20 would also work well. These TEACs aren't the very best transports ever - a tad warm and woolly - but very good overall and respond well to Trichord's Clock 4 mod, which puts them second only to early eighties Philips swing-armers or late eighties Sonys (high end variants on the CDP-R1 theme). Otherwise, buy a brand new Exposure 2010S CD player, which has - shock horror - an Exposure transport in it! It's an assemblage of OEM bits including a Sony laser - but the point is that none of these bits are set to go out of production soon. Indeed, Exposure's Andy Whittle is currently looking to sell it to manufacturers who are coming up against this very problem of 'vanishing' CD mechs. Again, it sounds very good (especially at the price) and would flail a cooking DVD mech. At the very top of the market, the best CD transport I've heard is Esoteric's P0 from 1998 - as I'm sure you know, Esoteric is TEAC's high end brand (i.e. Lexus to a Toyota). The company is still doing high end CD transports - if funds know no bounds, then go straight out and buy one of these in cash and keep it forever... **DP**



**forget movie mechs - Exposure CD players feature bespoke CD transports...**

### THE X FILES?

I've found a turntable, made in England, and can't find any information on either the manufacturer and the turntable. It is model no. DRS11F4, the F4 refers to the Mayware Formula 4 tonearm. The manufacturer is: Direct (Designs) Ltd., Crawley - Sussex - England. It's made around 1976, I think, because the Matsushita DD motor is build that year, found on the serial number. Is anyone of

your staff able to tell me something about this?

**Jitze de Jong**

Err no... are there any readers who might know the answer? This too obscure even for a sad obsessive like me! Still, if it has a Matsushita motor, it may not be the best around... **DP**

### WEIGHTING FOR HELP

Can you help a sad old timer? I have a prized Mission 774 pickup arm with an A&R p77 cartridge on it. My problem is two fold. First, I have lost the instructions for my cartridge, and I need to rebalance the same with my arm, but do not recall the correct weight to set the arm to match the cartridge? Secondly, the current sound created causes sibilance with the vocals. Is it my setting (i.e. shot in the dark) or is there a mismatch with my pickup arm and cartridge? Please help a very needy case - my life could ones again return to one of sanity and calm!

**Ken Perry**

Hi Ken - I'd give it a go at 1.5-1.8g. There shouldn't be any inherent mismatch - that's a classic combination you've got there! If you still get sibilance, then check the alignment of the cartridge in the arm, and if that's spot on, then it's time to get a new cartridge - the Goldring 1042 would give you a similar tonal balance but smoother and more insightful treble thanks to its modern stylus profile. **DP**

### THE LINN-DEPENDENT

Two years ago you laid on, for free, an LP versus CD demo using Linn

Equipment but I missed it - damn! So, when I heard about another event, also in association with Linn, I made sure I didn't forget and what an unmissable day it turned out to be. The tea was terrific and the sandwiches salubrious, my compliments to the caterer. The AV demo was amazing, proving just how capable modern equipment is and my thanks also to the organisers for slipping in a few classical CD's to cater for my minority taste in music. Linn's latest 'play

everything' machine and associated powered loudspeakers offers a level of reproducibility that is indistinguishable from live performances, provided your bank balance, lounge, spouse and neighbours can accommodate it. I look forward to your next free adventure.

**Peter Wadsworth C.Eng., M.I.C.E.**

...And so say all of us! **DP**



**this 'play everything machine' provided sterling service at our recent 'Linn event'**

#### CABLE TALK

I thought I'd write to you again as I solved a problem I wrote to you about one year ago, and others may find it useful. When I originally wrote I was looking at changing my speakers, as I could not seem to get a decent level of bass from them (Castle Harlechs). I was looking for an older design with a large bass driver (such as Spondor's 711, etc.). You replied that modern speakers were far better than the older designs in this respect – well, I have managed to get that bass I was after without buying new speakers after all.. by changing my speaker cable from QED Silver Bi-wire to Chord Rumour 4. This gave me a big improvement all round, let alone the bass - and I also stopped using those gold plated speaker connectors, I now just screw the cable directly into the binding posts on the amp and speakers, again a good improvement was gained. I think that the best connections are always the ones with the least amount of joins! But the cherry on the top came when I installed the VDH First Ultimate between the CD and amp - absolutely marvellous. Bass is now deep and rich without being flabby, midrange great and the treble is to die for! I know that everyone (including me) looks suspiciously at cables, wondering if real improvements can be made with a different four metre length of copper/silver wire but the combination of the Chord and VDH is superb. Now

all I have to do is to save up to upgrade all the interconnects between my other components!

**Andrew Burtchaell**

#### HANG THE DJ – SLIGHT RETURN

You were kind enough to print my letter a couple of months back. My main point was not to question your appreciation of dance music but to

you have been listening to Techno and House since the 80's then you are surely familiar with DJ's like Jeff Mills who are known for disassembling their decks at live events in order to tweak the pitch settings. Don't forget that most top DJ's are also producers and many would have a great deal of end to end knowledge about all manner of sound origination and reproduction equipment, from the types of cutting lathes used by Ron Murphy in Detroit to the quality of the tapeheads on a WM D6C. As far as Hip Hop is concerned, if you are bored of those 70's samples, I think you need to check out some contemporary East Coast stuff like the work of producer ELP on the Def Juxx label. This should give your NS1000s something to do.

**Dominic Gallagher**

Hi Dominic – well how long have you read the mag? Our own Stewart Wennen was the first to recommend junking the OE Technics arm and fitting an Origin Live modded Rega RB250 several years back – the mod has been so popular that Origin Live themselves have started making an aftermarket armboard for this very purpose! As for Technics rivals and/ or alternatives, without wishing to blow my own trumpet, I think a casual glance at the countless Olde Worldes I've done on Japanese direct drives – and features too – will show that I'm pretty up on that. I'm sure our avid readers (both of them) will back me up on this? Meanwhile, turntable fans, you have a treat coming very soon – another vinyl special; where we'll review all the affordable superdecks (Michell, Roksan, Origin Live, etc.) and even A-B my own GyroDec with this mystery 1970s Japanese classic – with both decks using identical (modern) arms and cartridges. Can you guess what it is? Watch this space for Koetsus at dawn... **DP**

highlight that you should address the fact that there is such a huge amount of interest in vinyl replay in this market. Why aren't you running articles on how to tweak the Technics, since this deck is so common these days? Why aren't you publishing reviews of all the other great decks made over the years which would serve those unable to afford SL1200s? Noel, as you have acknowledged from checking the statistics the majority of the record buying public is treating vinyl not just as a replay source but an editing source. While you may not appreciate this type of music, on a quantitative level you must see that there is no difference between mixing up "breaks" from various records and what people like Geoff Emerick and George Martin were doing with magnetic tape back in the 1960s.

David, you ought to know better. If



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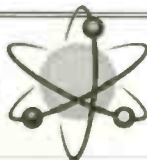
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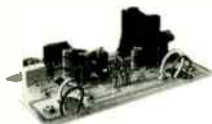
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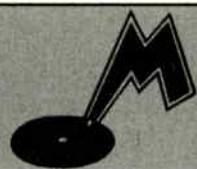


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## AUDUSA EUPEN CSA 2.5 AUDIO AC POWER CORD

**GNLM 05/04 and GNLM 05/2.5 ( CSA 2.5) Cable with FERRITE TECHNOLOGY** - A polymer material mixed with a considerable quantity of homogeneously fine high quality ferrite powder is extruded around the copper conductors. GNLM cables are further protected with a foil shield and a drain wire, specifically manufactured for High End audio use.

**NEW for 2004 CSM Analog, Digital and Video Interconnects, with extruded ferrite - £75 for 1m pair. RCA or XLR**

Power cables are fitted with IEC (Martin Kayser) and MK Tough plug. Cable is also available with our all steel 4, 6 and 8 way distribution blocks. We can internally rewire the distribution blocks with Eupen cable as an extra cost option. Refer to our web site for details.

**AUDUSA – OOM Silverlink OCC balanced speaker cable** stranded, silver on OFHC plus three strands of OCC for improved bass performance. Mylar infill and with designed in protection against RF and EMI.

**LAT INTERNATIONAL USA Analogue, Digital and Video interconnects and Speaker cable better than most at double the price.**

We have developed a cabling (weaving) pattern along with an unusual shielding/filtering system that gets rid of the garbage that contaminates your components. The difference you hear with our cord is astounding. Our power cord takes advantage of silver in its design through use of our proprietary Silverfuse conductors. The conductors are 10 gauge and with PTFE; the best insulation available. Fitted as standard with IEC / MK Toughplug. . 60cm £62, 90cm £75, 1.2m £88, 1.5m £101, 1.8m £112 etc Other lengths available and off the reel. **4, 6 and 8 way all steel mains distribution blocks fitted with UK, Schuko or USA sockets.** CE tested & approved mains distribution units manufactured of heavy gauge steel, finished in black and fitted with highest quality 13amp sockets. It has no filters, circuit breakers, surge protection, transformers, resistors, capacitors, LED's, on/off switches, chokes, regulators, just fitted with 1m of AC-2 mains cable. From £166 for 4 way, £198, 6 way, £229 for 8 way. Interconnects IC-200, IC-100, IC80, IC50, Video Vi-6, VI-6 Component, Digital -DI-20, Speaker SS800 and SS1000



LAT AC-2 Power cord compare with products costing ten times as much, then decide



### GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA2.5)

£48 for 1.0m, £58 for 1.5m, £68 for 2.0m.

### GNLM 05/04

£58 for 1.0m, £72 for 1.5m, £86 for 2.0m. Both GNLM cables are available off the reel and for export.



Small Royal, 60cm aluminium platter, topped with a 6mm acrylic platter and leather mat. Nylon thread belt - weight 25kg, rrp £1280 without tone-arm



Solid Machine Small with 50 cm aluminium platter and leather mat weight 20kg RRP £1095 without tonearm

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amp



Stasis  
pre amp

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<b>KRELL KAV-300ii</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>(3698)</b>
<b>MARANTZ SA-12S1 (unused)</b>	<b>1500</b>	<b>(3500)</b>
<b>KRELL KPS-25sc (latest spec)</b>	<b>POA</b>	<b>(24998)</b>

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Sumo Athena 11 pre amplifier. Line level. Superb.	£ 399	Kenwood KA660D integrated amplifier. Black.	£ 60
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### TURNABLES

STD 305S motor unit. No arm. Nice deck.	£ 100	Thorens TD160 with thorens tone arm.	£ 95
Transcriptors Hydraulic Reference turntable. Nice	£ 799	Garrard 301/401 chassis in various condition from	£ 125
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### SPEAKERS

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Quad ESL57 speakers. All fully serviced with full 3 months warranty. Hear what ESL57s should sound like From £900 pr			
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Marantz CD6's top loader cd player. Collectable.	£ 125	Phillips 101 top loading cd player. Collectable.	£ 125
Trio KT800L synthesiser tuner. AM-FM. Black.	£ 75	SME 3019 tonearms from.....	£ 125
Decca London international tone arm. New. Boxed.	£ 175	Marantz CD52 Cd player. Ex condition.	£ 79
Quad 77 RDS FM tuner. Mint. Boxed. Instructions	£ 399	Nakamichi CDP 2E CD player. Ex condition.	£ 250
Marantz SD275 twin cassette deck. Dolby B/C	£ 49	Aiwa AD-S750 Dolby B-C-SHX pr cassette deck	£ 75
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Rel Strata 3 Sub Woofer (ex-demo)	£750
Revel F30 Loudspeakers Ex Demo were £2995 now	£2395
Acoustic Research 338 Stand Mount Speakers	£275
Elax Floor Standing Liberty 5+ Speakers	£140

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Audio Research LS9 Pre-amp with remote (mint)	£1095
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Audio Research SP14 Pre-amp	£1495
Naim Nac 92 Pre Amp	£350
Exposure 11 & 12 Pre Amp & Power Supply	£650
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**AMPLIFIERS**

Mark Levinson ML432 (400 watt) Power Amp (ex demo, full warranty)	£5495
Audio Note Neiro Mono Amps	£5995
Naim NAP 90/3 Power Amp with MF3A Pre Amp & PSU	£350
Mark Levinson ML33 Reference Power Amps (mint)	£16495
Krell KST 100 Amp	£1495
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Musical Fidelity P180 Power Amps With MF3a Pre Amp & Psu	£695

**CD PLAYERS & TRANSPORT**

CEC DX51 MK2 DAC with CEC TL51 Transport NEW	£1495
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Roksan Attezza CD Transport with ROC DA1 and ROK DS4 PSU	£2095
Accuphase DP55V CD Player (as new)	

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Audio Note AN-S2 Moving coil cartridge Step-up transformer, copper wired (new) (retails £499)	£450
AKG K340 Electrostatic Headphones	£50
Transparent Music Wave + 3m Speaker Cable	£250
Project Phono Box S/E (as new) (retails £125)	£90
Stax 40/40 Headphones (as new) (retails £1195)	£850
Shunyata Aries interconnects 2m RCA (ex demo) (retails £1275)	775
Shunyata Aries 1m RCA (ex demo) (retails £850)	£495
Kondo digital 1m RCA (as new) (retails £1200)	£495
Yamaha DVD Player S795	£145
Yamaha Ct-810 Am/Fm Tuner	£125

**TURNABLES, CARTRIDGES & TONEARMS**

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**THREE WAY  
SPEAKERS**

For almost as far back as I can remember, I have lived with large speakers, and most of them have been 3 way, except for some of the early electrostatic hybrids such as the old B&W DM70, where the electrostatic handled both mid and high frequencies. The only way to get true full range orchestral sound is with such a system, as although you can get excellent results from a good 2-way plus a subwoofer, it's not easy to bridge that gap between the two systems. For years the ATC 50s, in both passive and active form, have done an excellent job, but I now also have the superb Alon Lotus Elite and the Elite Signature from America. In addition the new AVI Trio promises to give excellent results from a more domestically sized speaker than the ATCs. In addition, with the ATC 50SL starting at around £5.5K, the Trios are more reasonable at £3250, with the Alon Elite at £3500 while the dollar is still weak. To hear these superb speakers driven by either the superb AVI laboratory amp at £1500 at the excellent Eslab digital power amp and matching pre-amp at £3300, please ring. A number of excellent turntables on permanent display!

**V'audio** HI-FI Consultants  
36 Druid Hill, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1EJ  
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AUDIO RESEARCH V-70 BALANCED POWER AMP	MINT	£1695
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AVI POWER AMP	EXCLT	£395
ALOIA PST 11.01 2 BOX REMOTE PRE AMP/PSU	EXCLT	£1495
ALOIA BARTOLOMEO POWER AMP	VGC	£895
KRELL KSL PRE AMP	EXCLT	TBA
KRELL KST-100 POWER AMP	EXCLT	TBA
AUDIO RESEARCH LS-2 PRE AMP BALANCED & SINGLE ENDED OUT	MINT	£1095
AUDIO RESEARCH SP-9 MK-11 PRE AMP C/W PHONO STAGE	MINT/BOXED	£995
AUDIO RESEARCH SP-14 PRE AMP C/W PHONO STAGE	MINT/BOXED	TBA
CONRAD JOHNSON PFR REMOTE CONTROL PRE AMP (£3000)	MINT/BOXED	£1795
CONRAD JOHNSON PF-1 PRE INC. PHONO STAGE	MINT	£995
DNM 3-BOX BATTERY POWERED PRE WITH PHONO STAGE (DNM SERVICED NEW BATTS)	VGC	£995
PINK TRIANGLE INTEGRAL 3 MONTHS USE (£4000)	MINT/BOXED	£2495
PRIMARE A-20 INTEGRATED AMP MK-11 (LAST ONE!!)	EX.DISPLAY/BOXED	£450
GRYPHON SONATA ALLEGRO 2-BOX REFERENCE PRE AMP WAS £12000 6 MONTHS OLD	MINT/BOXED	£6495
GRYPHON S-100 CLASS-A POWER AMP	MINT	£2895
MARK LEVINSON NO.38 REMOTE PRE AMP	MINT/BOXED	£1995
MARK LEVINSON NO.23 POWER AMP	MINT/BOXED	£2495
JEFF ROWLAND MODEL 5B STEREO POWER AMP (RARE)	EXCLT	£2795
GAMUT D-200 POWER AMP (£3950 RETAIL)	BRAND NEW/BOXED	£2995
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## VINYL

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LEHMAN BLACK CUBE SE (RETAIL £650?) LAST ONE!	BRAND NEW/BOXED	£450
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"Nothing less than total dynamite"

HI-FI WORLD

If you are the proud owner of any Rega tonearm, you are now in the enviable position to transform it's performance into the league of super arms with our modifications. The OL structural modification at £75 will enable your Rega to perform at a level exceeding that of some arms costing over £1000!! High performance rewiring with high grade litz wire is also offered at an additional £70 and external rewiring is also £70 further increasing the performance.

"I have to say the Rega modifications turn this humble arm into a real giant killer. Gone is the rather grey, sterile sound of the cooking Rega. Instead, tonal colour is fresh, dynamics have great speed and impact, and the sound stage is huge."

HI-FI WORLD ON STRUCTURAL MODIFICATION

Structural modification awarded 5 star rating by



Structural Modification - £75

Internal Rewiring - £70

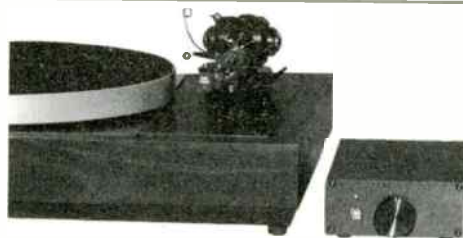
External Rewiring - £70

High conductivity phono plugs £20

Slotted arm tube - £85

If you do not have an arm we can supply the OL1 arm (manufactured by Rega) £124

Arm modifications normally returned within 1 - 3 days



### "The single most important upgrade you can ever make to any record deck

concerns the motor drive...nothing can prepare you for the shock of going DC. In a word, gobsmacking."

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HI FI NEWS

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Standard dc Motor Kit - £199

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Upgrade Transformer - £175

Upgrade DC 200 motor - £129 with kit

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Opera New Capitan M Series, CD, Integrated and monstrous Pre/Monoblocks
Roksan Selected models including the new version of the highly reviewed Antal
Triangle

Table with columns for brand names (Arcam, Meridian, etc.) and item descriptions (Alpha 85E, CD72, etc.) and prices.

Table with columns for brand names (Adcom, AMC, etc.) and item descriptions (2445, SA200, etc.) and prices.

Table with columns for brand names (Acoustic Energy, etc.) and item descriptions (AES05, AE1, etc.) and prices.

Table with columns for brand names (Alchemis, etc.) and item descriptions (Bragi phono stage, Sonata, etc.) and prices.

Table with columns for brand names (Atacama, etc.) and item descriptions (Equipment supports, Electronic stylus cleaner, etc.) and prices.

Like to audition a number of different decks in one place?
Love to compare a modified tonearm with the original on the same deck?
Want to hear a new cartridge for yourself before you buy?
Never found anywhere interested enough to do it for you?

Read on fellow sufferer...

For some time now its been nigh on impossible to make informed choices about analogue products because while reviews are a great start point, no reviewer has your individual listening preferences - let alone your very own personal ears.

We are here to offer every customer the chance to decide for themselves what they like, by offering genuine choice and service in what we call 'turntableworld' From January 2005, our dedicated dem room will be available and filled with selected products from the manufacturers you have come to know and love.

Whether it's time to spend scary money or just the hundred quid starter deck you're after, you'll still be talking to someone who is genuinely interested.

turntableworld has selected items from:

- Audio Technica
Clearaudio
Dynavector
Goldring
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Graham Slee Projects
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Lyra
Michell Engineering
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Free amateur counselling for CD lovers

With part exchange upgrades continuing to be our speciality, you'll also have access to the widest range of used items in the UK - many from manufacturers you'd half forgotten existed, and still supported by our in house warranty of course.

USED ITEMS

Large table listing various audio equipment items like phono stages, amplifiers, and speakers with their respective prices.

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# PROBABLY THE BEST DIY KITS IN THE WORLD

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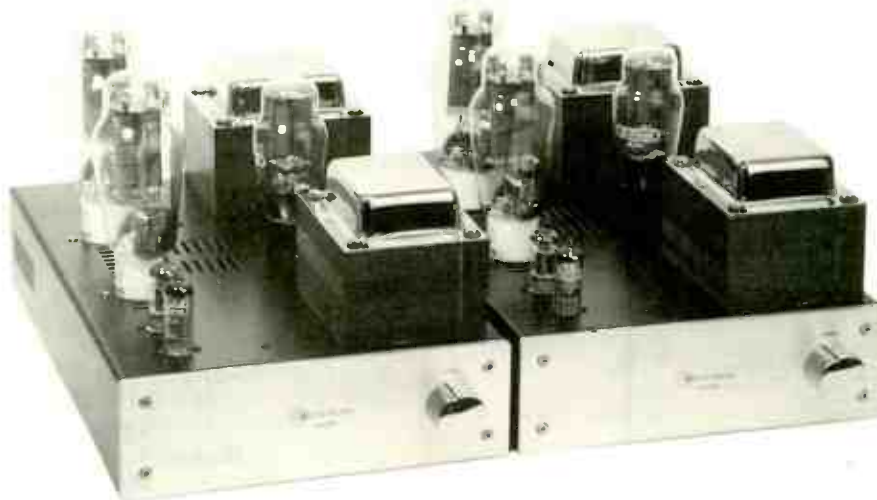
## SINGLE-ENDED PURITY

Our Parallel Single Ended (PSE) power amplifiers offer ultimate sound quality. Each monobloc has two beautifully linear 300B directly heated triodes in its output stage, producing 20 watts into an 8 ohm load. At the front of the circuit we there is a 6AU6 pentode, followed by an ECC82 as the driver valve. This design uses a 5U4 rectifier valve in the power supply, in combination with a 10H choke, giving an extremely quiet supply. Both mains and output transformers are built on high quality E/I pattern cores.

Feedback can be switched in or out whilst running, using a rear panel switch. Complex layered and sectioned output transformers give full output and low distortion across the audio band even without feedback, making such an option possible.

This is one of the few amplifiers in the world so good it will work without feedback - and no feedback is the preference of most buyers. It gives a spacious, relaxed and fluid sound quite unlike that of solid-state amps, all of which use feedback to correct deficiencies.

By operating linearly in feedbackless, pure Class A, single-ended mode these



300B monoblocs are as pure as it gets - and sound quality reflects the fact. Fast, clean and clear in their presentation, at the same time their purity of sound is easy on the ear.

The kit is totally hard-wired; it does not use circuit boards. We can supply without valves, or with the superb Tesla 300Bs, Russian 5U4s and European 6AU6s & ECC82. Our 300B PSE kit bears an affordable price of £895.00 (UK price) excluding valves. Each monobloc weighs 23kgs (50lbs). External dimensions with valves: 25cm(w) x 38cm(d) x 22cm(h) per monobloc.

## PUSH-PULL POWER

For more power, we also offer 300B in Push-Pull (PP) form. The 300B PP monobloc shares the same look and chassis as the 300B PSE monobloc. The 300B PP kit has been created for those who prefer a bit more power. With a pair of 300Bs in push-pull configuration providing 26 watts output, they will drive most modern loudspeakers to perfection. Andy Grove's design is totally feedbackless, using a 6AU6 pentode as the input valve and a 5687 as the phase splitter. The power supply uses a Russian 5U4 for rectification. The kit is constructed by hard wiring, so some experience is required. 300B PSE owners do have the option to buy the conversion kit for £250.00 to turn their monoblocs to push-pull status. Each monobloc weighs 23kg.

**300B PSE MONOBLOC KIT**

**£1197** per pair

**300B PP MONOBLOC KIT**

**£1197** per pair

The PRE-II is a high quality valve pre-amplifier that will drive any power amplifier. It has a gain of x5 which, with CD, enables it to deliver a large 10V output swing. To keep the amount of active amplification low, this pre-amp uniquely uses a line drive transformer to deliver a pure signal to the power amplifier. There are six inputs, a tape monitor and two sets of output sockets. It is powered by the external PSU-II power supply. The volume control uses high quality Alps Blue potentiometer which, with our solid, turned brass, chromed knob, gives a quality feel rarely encountered these days.

**PHONO-II** is a dedicated valve phono stage for MM cartridges, with MC input transformers an option. By using all-d.c. supplies from PSU-II and a case in which there is no power supply, PHONO II is hum free, something that is difficult to achieve with valves. With accurate RIAA equalisation right down to 10Hz (-3dB) PHONO II gives a wonderfully pure, dimensional sound from LP, possessing a sense of life and dynamism quite different to solid-state preamps.

Finally, PSU-II is a power supply unit that feeds both the PRE-II and PHONO-II. Keeping the power supply separate removes hum, often the bane of valves.

Power Supply Unit (PSU-II)	£205.00
Pre-amplifier (PRE-II)	£215.00
Phono Stage (PHONO-II)	£110.00
Moving coil step-up transformer	£77.00



## SERIES II MODULAR PRE-AMP KIT

# PROBABLY THE BEST DIY KITS IN THE WORLD



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Kel84 is an affordable, integrated valve amplifier for those who want to enjoy the valve sound, but from a simple, easy to build kit. It uses inexpensive EL84 output valves, known for their sweet sound, in conventional push-pull arrangement to provide 15 watts into an 8 ohm load. The output transformers are our own quality Ultra Linear design. Up front, the circuit employs an ECF80 input/phase splitter valve, which contributes to Kel84's extremely smooth sound.

The amplifier has very low hum and for simplicity it is built on a printed circuit board. A strong steel chassis is fronted by a 3mm anodised front panel and attractive brushed aluminium effect knobs. There are five line level inputs, plus one monitor input, with a tape output included, all controlled from the front panel.

At the rear is a mains switch/IEC power input, earth post, phono sockets, and 4mm banana sockets for loudspeakers. The Kel84 will highlight all the intricacies and depth of detail in your favourite recordings whilst retaining a warmth and fullness that is almost exclusive to pure valve amps and is rare at this price point.

Kel84 weighs 10kg. External dimensions with valves are 300mm(w) x 270mm(d) x 150mm(h).



## KEL84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

£298



Our 6550 series amplifiers are built around the rugged 6550 beam tetrode that's popular in America. This valve is widely available at a good price. Producing no less than 40 watts into an 8 ohm load, (available in a 4 ohm version if required) our 6550 is a power house, since valve watts always sound louder than transistor watts!

The difference between our 6550 and most others is that we use valve rectification (5U4) and a choke pi filter, for a power supply that is quiet and free from solid-state hardness. This is a true high-end design from Andy Grove, hard wired. It is a cut above the many other 6550s, with enough power to drive most loudspeakers, including insensitive electrostatics for example. 6550 combines high

power with a top-end smoothness of sound, yet doesn't cost the earth to run, as the valves are inexpensive and have a long life.

The amplifier weighs 19kg. Dimensions are 390mm(w) x 330mm(d) x 190mm(h) with valves, or 220mm(h) with cage.

**KIT6550** - An integrated amplifier with line inputs and volume control. Accepts CD, tuner, tape etc., but not LP.

**KAT6550** - A power amplifier for use with a separate pre-amp. Paired with PRE II and PHONO II (+PSU II), can provide LP reproduction.

## KIT6550 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

£615

## KAT6550 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

£580

The Headphone II amplifier is a beautifully simple design using Mullard ECL83 valves, a triode and power pentode housed in the same envelope. It works directly from any source, be it CD, tape, tuner etc., or from an amplifier's tape out or pre-amp out sockets. The circuit uses high specification E/I output transformers that will drive any headphone load from 16 ohms to over 300 ohms depending on how the secondaries are wired up.

The Headphone II is a pure Class A single-ended design with the power pentode wired up in triode configuration for added sonic purity, and it is as quiet as a mouse. Treble has the crispness of the best solid-state, but with the tonal resolution and delicacy associated with valves. Bass is punchy and controlled without becoming artificial.

External dimensions 270mm wide, 275mm deep and 85mm high



## HEADPHONE II

£285

# AUDUSA

## AUDUSA EUPEN CSA 2.5 AUDIO AC POWER CORD

**GNLM 05/04 and GNLM 05/2.5 ( CSA 2.5) Cable with FERRITE TECHNOLOGY** - A polymer material mixed with a considerable quantity of homogeneously fine high quality ferrite powder is extruded around the copper conductors. GNLM cables are further protected with a foil shield and a drain wire, specifically manufactured for High End audio use.

**NEW for 2004 CSM Analog, Digital and Video Interconnects, with extruded ferrite - £75 for 1m pair. RCA or XLR**

Power cables are fitted with IEC (Martin Kayser) and MK Tough plug. Cable is also available with our all steel 4, 6 and 8 way distribution blocks. We can internally rewire the distribution blocks with Eupen cable as an extra cost option. Refer to our web site for details.

**AUDUSA - OOM Silverlink OCC balanced speaker cable** stranded, silver on OFHC plus three strands of OCC for improved bass performance. Mylar infill and with designed in protection against RF and EMI.

**GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA2.5)**

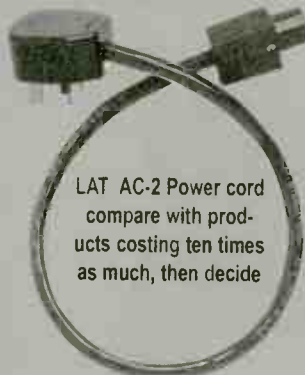
£48 for 1.0m. £58 for 1.5m, £68 for 2.0m.

**GNLM 05/04**

£58 for 1.0m. £72 for 1.5m, £86 for 2.0m. Both GNLM cables are available off the reel and for export.

**LAT INTERNATIONAL - USA - Analogue, Digital and Video interconnects and Speaker cable better than most at double the price.**

We have developed a cabling (weaving) pattern along with an unusual shielding/filtering system that gets rid of the garbage that contaminates your components. The difference you hear with our cord is astounding. Our power cord takes advantage of silver in its design through use of our proprietary Silverfuse conductors. The conductors are 10 gauge and with PTFE; the best insulation available. Fitted as standard with IEC / MK Toughplug. . 60cm £62, 90cm £75, 1.2m £88, 1.5m £101, 1.8m £112 etc Other lengths available and off the reel. 4, 6 and 8 way all steel mains distribution blocks fitted with UK, Schuko or USA sockets. CE tested & approved mains distribution units manufactured of heavy gauge steel, finished in black and fitted with highest quality 13amp sockets. It has no filters, circuit breakers, surge protection, transformers, resistors, capacitors, LED's, on/off switches, chokes, regulators, just fitted with 1m of AC-2 mains cable. From £166 for 4 way, £198, 6 way, £229 for 8 way. Interconnects IC-200, IC-100, IC80, IC50, Video Vi-6, VI-6 Component, Digital -DI-20, Speaker SS800 and SS1000



LAT AC-2 Power cord compare with products costing ten times as much, then decide



### ACOUSTIC SOLID



Small Royal, 60cm aluminium platter, topped with a 6mm acrylic platter and leather mat. Nylon thread belt - weight 25kg, rrp £1280 without tone-arm

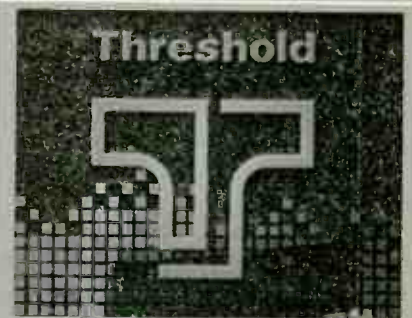


Solid Machine Small with 50 cm aluminium platter and leather mat weight 20kg RRP £1095 without tonearm

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*Bosendorfer, One to One, Acoustic Active Principle, like no other loudspeaker in the world. Models 1, 2, 7, Wall and Centre - finishes include piano black, hand matched veneers, white and with Swarovski Crystals*



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dCS Delius 24/192 DAC Non Firewire S/H	5999	2995	<b>Cables and Accessories</b>		
dCS Purcell Upsampler Non Firewire S/H	2999	1695	Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	550	375
dCS Verdi SACD/CD Transport x-demo	9000	5995	BCD 1000 3 tier stand S/H	1299	699
Meridian G08 CD S/H	2250	1899	Irem Isopower 6 way distribution Black S/H	425	199
Theta Generation V Balanced S/H	6290	2499	Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable new&boxed	319	159
Theta Pro Basic II DAC with Oscom/Balanced S/H	2990	1195	Nordost Silver Shadow RCA 1m Digital x-demo	367	185
			Nordost Optix 1m Super svideo x-demo	136	69
<b>Analogue</b>			Nordost 2m Blue Heaven Single Interconnect RCAx-demo	276	139
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<b>Amplifiers</b>					
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Audio Research VT200 MkII Valve Power Amplifier S/H	9998	6999			
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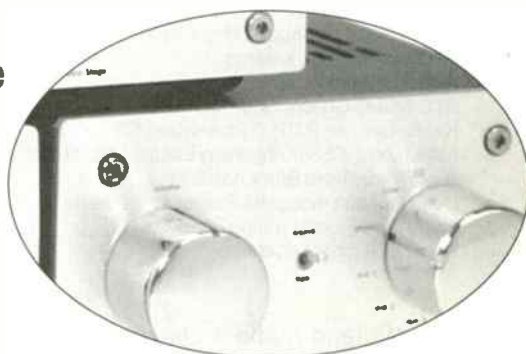
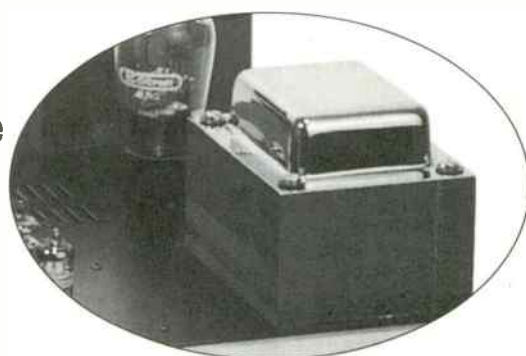
## **PRIZE DRAW**

**Enter our prize draw in  
the WAD room and you  
could win a  
KEL84 amplifier kit!**

As usual Hi-Fi World will be out in force at the annual Bristol Hi-Fi & Home Theatre extravaganza. We will have our own show booth where you'll be able to meet the staff, peruse the latest issue or simply pop in for a chat!

Also, we have a great subscription offer in conjunction with cable specialists The Chord Company. Subscribe to the magazine at the show and you'll receive one of their superb quality Calypso interconnect FREE!

In the World Audio Design room we'll have our complete range of DIY valve kit amplifiers on permanent demonstration. We'll be featuring a range of integrated, pre and power designs, all at remarkably low prices. Come and hear just how good valve amps can sound - these are as good as it gets! Plus, you'll be able to browse through our selection of numerous books on subjects such as loudspeaker and valve amplifier design.



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**PAIR MARK Levinson 436 MonoBloc Power Amplifiers.** £6250.00. Price includes 2.0m Bi-wire JPS Labs Superconductor FX Speaker Cables. 18 Months Old. Transferable Warranty, Cartons, Manuals, Gloves. Collection/Delivery negotiable Tel: 01709 532839 (Feb/1)

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**QUAD ESL63 pair (teak)** one excellent condition, one non-working. £450 ono. Tel: 020 7932 0108 (Evenings) (Feb)

**WANTED: SONY CDP X77ES CD player (Black).** Must be in excellent unmarked condition with instructions, remote and box. Happy to pay a fair price. Tel: Graham 023 92585152 or Email: GrahamSalmon@gwsalmon1.fsnet.co.uk (Feb)

**SPENDOR SP2/2** Monitor speakers, walnut, mint condition, boxed, £275; also Sony CDP-XE210 CD Player, mint condition, boxed, £35. Tel: 01403 255 153 (West Sussex) (Feb)

**VOYD 3 Motor T/T outboard** split phase PSU, inc. Heliosyalene p/u arm Serial No. 0001 SME silver wiring, Lyra Clavis DC Evolve cartridge (250 hours) All in boxes with instructions £2100. Miltek Aurora high output MC cartridge 50 hours since retip. £200. Tel: 01524 62809 (Feb)

**NAIM SALE, CD2 CD player,** Hi-Cap power supply, SBL loudspeakers (cherry), QLN Projekt equipment rack (cherry). All equipment purchased new from Grahams HI-FI in December 1997. Mint condition, very low usage, boxed with manuals. For prices please ring Mark 01708 224 319 (Essex) or 07813 332301 (mobile) (Feb)

**BORDER PATROL Amplifier** just recently upgraded to S10 specification. Dual mono power supplies Weston Electric 300B valves absolutely mint condition. £6000+ new, £4000 ono. Lowther Acousta cabinets without drivers all current Lowther drivers will fit, reasonable offer accepted buyer collects. Tel: 01208 872316 (Cornwall) (Mar)

**MARK LEVINSON 32** Reference Preamp with Phono Modules £9,000. Price negotiable, consider Partex. for 28 or 280. Comes with Manual Cartons Warranty. Collection/Delivery negotiable. Tel: 01709 532 839 (Apr)

**MARK LEVINSON 37 CD** Transport and 360S DAC £5,500. Price Includes JPS SC2 AES Cable And JPS Mains Cables. Manuals, Gloves Collection/Delivery negotiable. Tel: 01709 532 839 (Apr)

**NAIM SUPERCAP with SNAXO 3x6,** very little use, excellent condition, boxed, 1995, £1250. Tel: 07860 513 729 (evenings - if no reply will return message) (Feb)

**CONRAD JOHNSON Premier 11A** power amp £1,550 (£3,800). Sugden Masterclass preamp £1,050 (£2,300). Lowther Accoustas, original PM6A drivers, new surrounds £375. Single PM6A driver £120. Revox A77 £240. Tel: 07767 871928 (Feb)

**QUAD ESL 57s - black cloth,** with stands, supplied 2002 by Classique Sounds with refurbished treble panels, £695 (can demo in West Midlands) -too large to post. Also Audionote 'Snell', J type speakers in black £450 plus carriage. Tel: 01445 712023 or Email: ian@santosa.co.uk (Feb)

**HARBETH HL Compact 7 ES-2** speakers. 6 weeks old, unused, as new condition. Retail at £1499.00. £1195.00 ovno. Contact 01179 246482. mob 07876 766409 (Feb)

**SNELL TYPE A/II, Oracle Delphi RB250** Audio Research VT-100/2 SAEC tonearm JR-149 Technics SP-10-II Thorens TD-166-VI RB250 Teac T-1 Kenwood DP-X9010 Clock-4 Leak Stereo-20 Thorens TD-125-II SME 3009 plinth. Tel: 0117 955 6555 07979 514 450 (Feb)

**ELECTROCOMPANIET 4.7** pre and AWI20DMB dual mono balanced power. Superb sound from hi-end Norwegian brand, £1800 ono, possibly split. Kimber select balanced interconnects 1120 0.5 metre £175, 0.75 metre £225. Tel: 07990 898736 or Email: lamboyl@btconnect.com (Feb)

**KEF REFERENCE 104-2** floorstanders £425. Fisher 400 valve receiver (spare valves) £365. Garrard 401 turntable with plinth £125. Origin Live Silver 250 tonearm. Upgraded Assemblage DAC2 £225. Tel: 01483 838 102 (Guildford) (Mar)

**PINK TRIANGLE Export Rega/SME armboards** £150. Original PT turntable suitable spares £70. 2 spare belts £15. Meridian component pre-amp plus matching Class AA power amps x2 £300. Tel: 0161 456 4590 (Cheshire) (Feb)

**PRIMARE A30.1 (Mk1)** integrated amplifier. Immaculate condition, boxed, £775. Buyer collects. Tel: Mark 07963 740 190 (Staffordshire) (Feb)

**RUARK SOLSTICE,** natural oak, mint, low price for a quick sale. Pick up from Ealing, West London. Tel: 07977 400 606 (Feb)

**E.A.R. 834P** phono stage MM only. Excellent condition. £225. Tel: 01592 772 806 (Feb)

**MISSION FLAGSHIP 777** power amplifier, Hexfet output stage. Mission battery powered 776 preamp with extra plug in moving coil circuit board. Total combined weight 78lb, £650. Tel: 0151 727 0606 (Feb)

**WANTED: GRAMDECK** and control box in good working order to play back our children's voices recorded in the 1960's via one of the Gramdecks peculiar non standard speech speeds. Tel: 01929 551 338 (Feb)

**RAYMOND LUMLEY M150** valve amps Meridian 208 pre amp CD player Acoustat Spectra II 6' floor speakers £1600. Tel: 01730 810 779 evenings. (West Sussex) (Mar)

**SUGDEN P51, C51** and tuner R51 in good condition, £350. Tel: 020 8460 8000 (Feb)

**WANTED: MARANTZ SA1** CD Player. Must be little used and in 'as new'/pristine condition with box, manual and remote control. Tel: 01427 678 558 or 01623 464 272 (Feb)



# private ads

Dealers must not advertise in the Private Classified section. Monthly consecutive insertions will be considered Trade advertising. The Publisher reserves the right to judge submissions.

**PINK TRIANGLE** Pacesetter. Simple retrofit for export including Airpax motor £100. Roksan Tabrizzi tonearm, excellent modifications £150. Spondor SPI bass drivers, cost £260, boxed, hardly used, accept £60. Tel: 01229 871 384 (Feb)

**MISSION 752** black speakers £220. Lehmann Audio Black Cube SE £380 Logic DM101 turntable DC motor Ortofon MC15 Mk2 £300. Audionote ANE/D speakers, suit low power amps £550. All items boxed. Tel: 01395 275 698 (Feb)

**FOR SALE:** AVI Biggatron Red Spot loudspeakers, cherry, mint, boxed. Serial Nos 533/534. £320. Tel: 01903 247 779 (Feb)

**LINN LK100** power amplifier £200. Linn Karik I CD player £300. Linn Numerik DAC £300. Tel: 07889 840 724 (Bromley, Kent area) (Mar)

**WANTED:** QUAD 67 CD Player and 606 Mk2 amp in excellent condition brown boxed and instructions. Phone John after 6pm 01322 528 632 (Kent) (Feb)

**REVOX B261** tuner mint boxed instructions £295. Pink Triangle Ordinal DAC 1307 DeCapo mint boxed instructions £275. Monarchy Audio D.I.P. mint instructions £125. Tel: Mike 01246 209 578 or 01246 570 556 (Chesterfield) (Mar)

**ROKSAN XERXES X** Tabriz ZI tonearm, DSU power supply, rosewood, all boxes, one year old, mint, £1395 (new cost £2350). Kimber Powerkords, 4TC black sheaths, £30 each. Base01 £65. Tel: 01285 862 539 (Feb)

**QUAD ESL63** speakers brown perfect working order. Must part with them reluctantly as moving abroad. £1300. Tel: 01903 505 868 (Feb)

**MARK LEVINSON 37** CD Transport and 360S DAC £5,500. Price Includes JPS SC2 AES Cable And JPS Mains Cables. Manuals, Gloves Collection/Delivery negotiable. Tel: 01709 532 839 (Apr)

**NAIM SUPERCAP** with SNAXO 3x6, very little use, excellent condition, boxed, 1995, £1250. Tel: 07860 513 729 (evenings - if no reply will return message) (Feb)

**FOR SALE:** Marantz CD94KI/DAC94KI £1000, Audiolab 8000M (black) £400, Audiolab 8000C (grey) £150, Creek CD50 £150, Creek DAC50 £100, ALR Note 3 stand mount speakers with tunable ABRs £450. Naim HiCap Olive just serviced £450, NAC72 Olive £300, Linn LPI2 Valhalla £450, Linn Lingo £500, Zeta Arm £250. Tel: 020 8642 6516 before 9pm, no offers. (Feb)

**PAIR MARK Levinson 436** MonoBloc Power Amplifiers. £6250.00. Price includes 2.0m Bi-wire JPS Labs Superconductor FX Speaker Cables. 18 Months Old. Transferable Warranty, Cartons, Manuals, Gloves. Collection/Delivery negotiable Tel: 01709 532839 (Feb/1)

**BORDER PATROL** Amplifier just recently upgraded to S10 specification. Dual mono power supplies Weston Electric 300B valves absolutely mint condition. £6000+ new, £4000 ono. Lowther Acousta cabinets without drivers all current Lowther drivers will fit, reasonable offer accepted buyer collects. Tel: 01208 872316 (Cornwall) (Mar)

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## GUIDELINES FOR BUYING AND SELLING SECOND-HAND EQUIPMENT

### FOR THE BUYER

1. Not everyone is honest - Buyer Beware!
2. **Don't send cash!**
3. Accept no verbal guarantees.
4. Have you heard the item or something similar? If not, why do you want it?
5. Don't pretend to have knowledge - it's your fingers that will get burnt!
6. Is it working? If not, why not?
7. Has it been modified and, if so, have notes been kept?
8. Was it any good in the first place?
9. **Don't send cash!**
10. If you are in the slightest doubt, arrange an audition (see point 5). If it's too far, wait for another time.
11. Either buy it or don't: vendors are excusably impatient with 'consultation' exercises.
12. **Don't send cash!**

### FOR THE SELLER

1. Not everyone is honest - Seller Beware!
2. Make no verbal guarantees.
3. Even 'nearly new' is still second-hand. If the manufacturer's guarantee is no longer in force, your price should reflect this.
4. There is very little intrinsic value in second-hand hi-fi: it's only worth what some one will pay for it.
5. The best guide to pricing is last month's Classifieds: that a 'classic' was worth £xxx a year or two ago is no guide. Values fall as well as rise.
6. Amateur second-hand dealing is not a big money game: you win some, you lose some.
7. Be prompt with despatch. If in doubt about buyer's bona-fides, either wash out the deal or send C.O.D.
8. There will always be time-wasters; be tolerant within reason!

**Hi-Fi World** writers have extensive audio industry experience - from designing the best valve amplifiers, engineering bespoke pro audio installations and mastering digital discs to classic and modern hi-fi retailing. No other magazine has such a diverse wealth of editorial talent. No other magazine is able to combine the new and the old, the classic and the modern, the affordable and the expensive, the raw and the cooked, with such authority:

**DAVID PRICE**

A passion for music from an early age got DP hooked on hi-fi. His writing career began in 1990 with *New Musical Express*, and after writing for *Hi-Fi World* he joined the Doors team at *The Sunday Times*, and now edits the Home Entertainment section of *The Month* alongside this magazine. A compulsive record collector, vinyl is David's favourite tittle, and he's crazy about classic audio too - as his encyclopaedic knowledge of Japanese high end attests.



**NOEL KEYWOOD**

A leading technical journalist, his rigorous reviewing - informed by empirical measurements - has made an indelible impression on the UK hi-fi scene. After editing *Hi-Fi Answers* in the 1970s and contributing to *The Flat Response* and *Hi-Fi Review* in the 1980s, Noel went on to launch *Hi-Fi World* in 1990. His challenging approach has famously seen him expose digital audio's technical failings, and champion the cause of his beloved valve amplifiers and high sensitivity loudspeakers.



**DOMINIC TODD**

Working in hi-fi retailing since 1991 - at all levels including sales, management, purchasing, training and marketing - has given DT a forensic knowledge of modern audio and video equipment. Living at the 'coal-face' makes him brilliantly placed to comment on what kit works best and why, and to explain the politics behind it.



**HADEN BOARDMAN**

His knowledge of classic kit is almost unmatched - doubtless helped by him getting bitten by the hi-fi bug at the tender age of 9! Haden's tastes are very much of the 'valves and vinyl' ilk, his system displaying a welter of British names from the 1960s to go with his 1980s Marantz CD spinner. He's also a keen kit builder, and is not afraid to wield a soldering iron in the noble cause of superior sound.



**PATRICK CLEASBY**

After a stellar career in IT, Patrick's love of music drew him to the field of multichannel music mastering, which is now his vocation. His exhaustive knowledge of digital audio and surround sound theory and practice makes him perfectly placed to assess the latest DVD-Audio and SACD hardware and software alike.



**STEWART WENNEN**

A professional audio engineer since the 1970s, SW is still constantly amazed by the poor quality of kit that some manufacturers foist upon the buying public - but is also delighted when he finds a bargain. His redoubtable experience of designing and building his own turntables, electronics and loudspeakers through the years makes him an ideal *Hi-Fi World* scribe, along with his obsession with music.



**LJK SETRIGHT**

A man whose reputation precedes him, LJKS has had a long and brilliantly distinguished writing career. Most famous for his quarter-century of contributions to *CAR* magazine, he has also had over one hundred books published. A gifted, classically trained musician, his passion for hi-fi comes from an enduring love of music. A keen Radio 3 listener, LJKS's Linn Sondek turntable comes second only to his beloved Krellian tuner in his affections.



**WHAT IS HI-FI WORLD?**

An independent hi-fi magazine of fourteen years standing, founded by Noel Keywood - one of the UK's leading technical hi-fi writers.

**WHY IS HI-FI WORLD SPECIAL?**

Almost all hi-fi and home entertainment magazines are owned by large media corporations that publish anything that makes money, be it caravan, computer or mobile phone titles. But we're different! As the only magazine published by Audio Publishing Ltd., a small independent specialist publisher, hi-fi isn't just a business for us, it's a way of life.

**WHAT IS HI-FI WORLD'S PHILOSOPHY?**

We are the only real world audiophile magazine you can buy. No matter whether something costs 20p or £20,000, we'll tell you if it's worth having - and why. Being independent, we can write what we like, and we do. If it's recommended in these pages, it's because we've lived with it - and rate it. If we don't, then we'll not gloss over the fact for reasons of commercial gain.

We don't print reviews of bad equipment - what's the point? So everything inside these pages is interesting or excellent, and usually both. Yet still we don't pretend everything is fantastic. Not even the best equipment is right for everyone - which is why go to great lengths to explain the respective strengths and weaknesses of each bit of kit. We don't knock stuff, we say why it will work in some systems and why it won't in others - so you can make your own mind up.

Unlike some titles, we don't delude ourselves that we're the ultimate authority on everything, but the huge experience of our team ensures that we're invariably pretty close to the mark. Importantly, we back our subjective findings with technical measurements - which ensures that everything we review is a representative sample, and that we know what ancillaries are best.

We don't pretend that every new product is better than its predecessor. We're happy to recommend classic hi-fi when it's better than modern stuff. This doesn't help our advertising revenues, but it gets you closer to getting a superb sounding system for the lowest possible price.

**WHAT'S THE HI-FI WORLD SOUND?**

Go into your local high street electronics emporium, and you'll hear no end of cheap, forward, hard and showy sound bits of audio kit. As we listen to music hour after hour every day, we're not into this. We go for hi-fi - at any price - that has the ability to communicate what the musicians are trying to say. This means it must be rhythmically engaging and dynamically expressive - but must also be able to recreate a believable soundstage and a wide and varied range of tonal colours. We don't like a hard sound, nor do we enjoy the soft. It's got to be open and organic. Interestingly, there is kit at all price levels that offers this quality - although it often takes some finding. So we're happy to recommend anything from an old, long-discontinued £30 amplifier to a brand new pair of £6,000 loudspeakers - if they sound right!

# trade ads

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MICHELL ORBE £2050, Orbe SE £1800, Gyrodec £1000, Gyro SE £800, Technodec £490, Technoarm 'A' £340, HR £250. All goods brand new, guaranteed. Ian Harrison Hi-Fi Sale! Tel: 01283 702 875 (Feb)

TRANSFIGURATION SPIRIT Mk3 £800, Temper V £1900, Aria £585, Clearaudio Champion Level 2 £1700, Evolution £1050, Reference £3500. All goods brand new, guaranteed. Ian Harrison Hi-Fi Sale! Tel: 01283 702 875 (Feb)

KOETSU BLACK £800, Red T £1275, The Signature £3300, Urushi Gold £2375, Red K Signature £1975, Jade £4750. All goods brand new, guaranteed. Ian Harrison Hi-Fi Sale! Tel: 01283 702 875 (Feb)

DENON DL304 £175, Shure V15VXMR £270, Sumiko Blackbird £490, Trichord Dino £250, Tom Evans Microgroove £350, Groove £1500. All goods brand new, guaranteed. Ian Harrison Hi-Fi Sale! Tel: 01283 702 875 (Feb)

CLEARAUDIO HARMONY £1750, Insider £2350, Insider Reference £3000, Reson Lexe £1050 (these are exchange prices; phone for details) All goods brand new, guaranteed. Ian Harrison Hi-Fi Sale! Tel: 01283 702 875 (Feb)

NAIM CDS1 and CDSPS fully serviced at Naim 2003 - £1300. CD5 perfect condition - £750. SL2 Speakers ex-demo perfect condition - Euros 6000.00. All items boxed, service manuals, remote controls, 6 Months Guarantee  
AINM-AV - NAIM DISTRIBUTOR FOR IRELAND & NORTHERN IRELAND.  
1, Church Road, Swords, Dublin.  
Tel: + 00 353 (0) 1 813 7937  
M: + 00 353 (0) 87 247 0559  
Email:  
peter.williams@ainmav.com  
www.ainmav.com (Jan)

VINTAGE WIRELESS COMPANY LONDON  
Website: www.vintagewirelesslondon.co.uk  
Buy-Sell-Exchange. Vintage wireless and classical audio. Repairs, spares, restoration, modification to all valve equipment. Quad II, Leaks etc, shipped worldwide, best prices, call us at. 17 Bell Street, London, NW1 5BY. Tel: 020 7258 3448 Fax 020 7258 3449 Email: vwirelesslondon@aol.com (Feb)

PURE EARTH and dedicated mains (electrical) circuits design and installation service. Contact MainsDoctor 07989 200 961, Email: mainsdoctor@yahoo.co.uk Website: www.mainsdoctor.co.uk We install for all audio and video applications (Feb05(I))

DRAGONFLY AUDIO. Beautiful handmade surrounds for the Thorens 'TD150' & 'TD160' turntables in various finishes, other accessories such as matching hardwood isolation cones. For details. Tel: 07904 008274. E-mail: Audiotools68@aol.com (Feb)

AMAZING CABLES! Solid silver interconnects from £110, with air/teflon insulation and WBT plugs. Silver speaker and mains cables from £250. Fantastic performance, refund guarantee. Tel: 0115 982 5772 after 7pm, or Email: bob@skydivers.co.uk (Jun)

GRAHAM TONEARMS, Whest Audio, Graham Slee, Denon, Shure, Michell, Transfiguration, Clearaudio, Stax, Sumiko, Hadcock, Harbeth and many more. Sale prices from Ian Harrison. Tel: 01283 702 875, 9am-9pm including Sundays. (Feb)

www.hippo-hifi.co.uk (Feb)

THE MISSING LINK for Very Special Cables. Designed & Hand Built in England by Music Lovers for Music Lovers. "First in the Field" with a Full Range of 5n Pure Silver Cryogenically treated Litz Loudspeaker Cables and Interconnects ... 'The Link Family' where every Cable is individually created using the finest Silver from tip to tip... A limited number of these Cables - as featured at the Heathrow Hi Fi Show - are now available for home demonstration by arrangement... Visit www.the-missing-link.net for details or contact jan@the-missing-link.net or Mark at 0115 8779089. (Feb)

NAIM. BUY, Sell, Cash, P/xchange. Systems, part systems, amps, preamps, CD, tuners, power supplies, speakers, Sondeks, Isobarics, Mana etc. Tel: 01382 819 732 (Feb(I))

BRILLIANCE'S EXPANDED range of Teflon insulated cables now includes Eminent interconnects and speaker cables delivering exceptional performance at very reasonable prices. Demonstration cables available. Contact Mike on 07963 117 341 or visit www.brilliancehifi.co.uk (Feb)

E.M.A.S. REVOX PR99 £550, B710 £400, A77 £250, Telefunken M15A £450, Amcron PB One £350 Studer A810 VU £1200, A80 VU £1200, B67 VU £750, A807 II £750, A710 £450, Uher RM4200 £200. Tel: 01246 275 479 (Jan)

AUDIOREPUBLIC, 78 Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds. 0113 217 7294. Yorkshire's newest Hi-Fi retailer, stockists of Naim Audio, Rega Research, Conrad Johnson, Sugden, Dynavector, (cartridges and amplifiers) and many more. Please call for advice. (Feb)

MICROPHONIC CABLES Clear, open and natural sounding interconnect and loudspeaker cables. Sonically matched for a consistent sound from source to loudspeaker. Interconnect £20 for 50cm, Speaker cable £4 per mono metre. Send orders to 'Microphonic', P.O.Box 3649, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S43 3WV. Find out more at www.microphonic-audio.com (Feb)

WANTED: DAMAGED or non-functioning rack-mounted professional solid-state amplifiers. Any condition whatsoever. Also 'unrepairable' non-functioning Class-A solid-state power amplifiers, eg., Krells, Spectrals, Passlabs etc. Phone Nick Sheldon 07968 264 520 or 01603 662 438 or Email: nick\_sheldon@yahoo.com (Feb)

'AMPS' REPAIRED. Restored, upgraded. - Valves Only - Kits assembled (including WAD). Experienced engineer. Free estimates and fair prices. Tel: 01525 756 935 http://www.dhaen.co.uk/amps.htm Email: amps@dhaen.co.uk (Feb)

HIGHLAND AUDIO, Kirkhill, Inverness, 01463 831 658. Exclusive distributors of AVI audio products. Ecosse Reference Cables - all mono & supermono crystal cable 20% off otherwise 15%. Complete system available for demonstration. Trade-Ins welcome. Email: highlandaudio@aol.com (Feb(I))

www.hippo-hifi.co.uk (Feb)

The most important and expensive components of a valve amplifier are valves and transformers. £200 or £500 for a pair of huge "push pull" output transformers produces good bass + lots of "inter leaved" windings for better high frequency and "stability". Huge £150 mains transformers gives a less "processed" sound. Selected "matched" set of valves cost £50 or £160. If we could achieve the same quality of sound with £10 volume control, £10 wires, £10 capacitor, we could have saved a lot of money !!!

Money back guarantee (less £30 UK or £100 overseas) that you prefer :-

£850 or £1,000 or £1,250 or £1,450 "KT88 Triode Connection" amplifiers to most transistor amplifiers, most transistor / valve hybrid amplifiers, most Single Ended valve amplifiers, most Ultra Linear valve amplifiers selling for £2,000 to £20,000

£850 "KT88 Triode Connection" + high quality £350 "3 way" speakers to "ultra linear" valve amplifiers + £600 "2 way" and "2.5 way" speakers

£700 EL34 valve amplifiers (40 watts + 40 watts) to most transistor amplifiers and transistor / valve hybrid amplifiers costing £1,000 to £2,000

£500 EL34 valve amplifiers (40 watts + 40 watts) to most £700 amplifiers.

Telephone 01634 268662 anytime or 01634 373410 for Mr Andrew Everard's review in Gramophone Magazine and Summary of 21 testimonials from satisfied customers. [www.affordablevalvecompany.co.uk](http://www.affordablevalvecompany.co.uk)

[www.affordablevalvecompany.com](http://www.affordablevalvecompany.com)

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KT88 valves are more expensive than 6550 valves

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KT88 valves are more expensive than 6550 valve

Triode Connection £850 £1,000



Upgradeable to £1,000 KT88 amplifier +£50 carriage +£50 for used valves

£600 £700



## TURBOCHARGING YOUR REGA ARM

"Nothing less than total dynamite"

HI-FI WORLD

If you are the proud owner of any Rega tonearm, you are now in the enviable position to transform it's performance into the league of super arms with our modifications. The OI structural modification at £75 will enable your Rega to perform at a level exceeding that of some arms costing over £1000!! High performance rewiring with high grade litz wire is also offered at an additional £70 and external rewiring is also £70 further increasing the performance.

"I have to say the Rega modifications turn this humble arm into a real giant killer. Gone is the rather grey, sterile sound of the cooking Rega. Instead, tonal colour is fresh, dynamics have great speed and impact, and the sound stage is huge."

HI-FI WORLD ON STRUCTURAL MODIFICATION

Structural modification awarded 5 star rating by



Structural Modification - £75

Internal Rewiring - £70

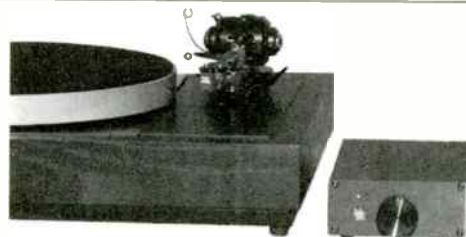
External Rewiring - £70

High conductivity phono plugs £20

Slotted arm tube - £85

If you do not have an arm we can supply the OLI arm (manufactured by Rega) £124

Arm modifications normally returned within 1 - 3 days



## "The single most important upgrade you can ever make to any record deck

concerns the motor drive...nothing can prepare you for the shock of going DC. In a word, gobsmacking." COMMON GROUND MAGAZINE

"It's value is nothing short of tremendous." LISTENER MAGAZINE

"The LP12 remains a classic ...but ..upgrade kits by Origin Live can bring a vast improvement to it's performance" HI FI NEWS

## UNIVERSAL TURNTABLE MOTOR KIT -

No one would blame you for being sceptical of an easy to fit, inexpensive dc motor upgrade. Especially one that improves on the best of other power supplies costing over 4 times as much or your money back. It is simply impossible to imagine the level of improvement attained by eliminating the motor vibration that your stylus amplifies over 8,000 times! Our DC motor kit offers massive improvements to all versions of Linn Lingo / Valhalla, Rega, Systemdeck, Roksan, Rock etc. The kits consist of a drop in replacement high grade DC motor and off-board 2 speed control box. Why not order now? - see web site or phone.

Standard dc Motor Kit - £199

Advanced dc Motor Kit - £339

Ultra dc Motor Kit - £570

Upgrade Transformer - £175

Upgrade DC 200 motor - £129 with kit

ORIGIN LIVE

Tel/Fax: +44 02380 578877

E-mail: [info@originlive.com](mailto:info@originlive.com)

[www.originlive.com](http://www.originlive.com)



# classifieds ads order form

## RATES - ALL ADVERTS MUST BE PRE-PAID

Maximum length per advert is 30 words, each additional word is 50p extra. Telephone numbers and E-mail addresses are treated as one word. Model numbers are treated as one word i.e. Quad 303 = two words.

Please tick the box for the advert required

Dealers must not advertise in the Private Classified section. Monthly consecutive insertions will be considered Trade advertising. The Publisher reserves the right to judge submissions

Private magazine advert	£10 per month	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private magazine advert display black box	£15 per month	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade magazine advert	£10 per month	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade magazine advert display black box	£15 per month	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please write or type your advertisement copy in block capitals with one word per box.

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

WE WILL ACCEPT PHOTOCOPIES OF THIS FORM

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**STEPHEN DUFFY  
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KENNEDY**

*Music In Colors*

1993

**S**tephen Duffy has always suffered the misfortune of being one of the most misrepresented men in popular music. The perils of one-hit-wonderdom are so great that they can be very difficult to escape from. If you add the short-lived stint as a founder member of Duran Duran it is hard to counter the popular perception of him as a minor figure who should stay a dim eighties memory.

Such perceptions are wholly, massively wrong. As the sleeve notes to the useful Virgin years compilation, 'They Called Him Tin Tin' make clear, Duffy was always a folkie, who had just leapt across to electronica with 'Kiss Me' in an act of cynical expediency. Still, many were surprised when Duffy decamped to the country and released four albums of finely turned folk-pop as The Lilac Time, the first three of which are rounded up (with masterful B sides) on the excellent 'Compendium: The Fontana Years'. If you're still looking for reference points, a musical selection of the influences listed on the cover of the 'All for Love and Love for All' single includes Robin Williamson, Joni Mitchell, Nick Drake and George Harrison. For his first album after The Lilac Time, Duffy aimed to release a progressive album, and for it to be on the Harvest label. Finally for this reissue he has succeeded in aim two, as well as aim one! (It was originally badged as Parlophone).

There is one reason, and one reason only, that this great album (which was the first of three solo efforts before he reconvened The Lilac Time) has had the good fortune to see the light of day again. You can say what you like about Robbie

Williams, but the man had the musical discernment to select Duffy as a collaborator due to his appreciation of the superb album which heralded the return of The Lilac Time in 2000, 'Looking For A Day In The Night'. As is the way with Duffy that fantastic record was already being hailed by The Guardian as a lost classic at the end of its year of release. In fact, had 'Music In Colors' not been re-released in 2004 I would probably have got round to eulogising Robbie's favourite Duffy album instead, but 'Music In Colors' is another example of an equally fine and completely overlooked gem.

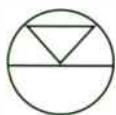
Having seen him on stage at most stages of his career I can tell you that in the flesh, Duffy is every bit as assured, acerbic and funny as he is in the excellent sleeve note here. Duffy has always known how good he is, and he is just waiting for the world to catch up, but in the meantime he is afforded the opportunity to be self-deprecating about his historical lack of success with mordant wit. I am sure the inclusion of a couple of co-written and co-produced tracks on the Robbie compilation (and maybe even his collaboration on Robbie's mooted alter-ego project 'Pure Francis', if that works...) will cushion the blow, at least financially...

This record's florid, ornate string arrangements may be too much for some, but if you have an appreciation of v1.0 The Lilac Time (get

Compendium, and you will do!) this is a natural successor. Song-wise, Duffy spins his customary romantic and lascivious reveries of bewitching girls. His fellow Villa fan Nigel Kennedy supplies some blistering violin work, most notably the outrageous wah-wah soloing on the album's centrepiece, its magisterial title track. The new Abbey Road mastering does not distort the original sound of the record unduly, and does add a vital reduction of digital grain to the important vocals and violins. The bottom end also benefits from greater extension – I would love to hear the 24 bit version of these transfers!

Personally I regret that the opportunity was not taken to include (and re-polish) the three wonderful B sides to 'Natalie' the only UK single taken from this record. However two John Leckie produced demos (one of which had appeared before abroad) are included, along with the video for Natalie. Reissue producer Nigel Reeve tells me this was as per Stephen's wishes, and adds that a decision concerning the re-release of Stephen's pre-Lilac Time albums, which EMI also own, is still pending. Please help sway that decision by investigating a truly different and distinctive progressive-folk-rock-with-violins album – Elton John's surround producer Greg Penny thinks the Robbie connection may even result in some surround Duffy at some point. Bliss! **PC**





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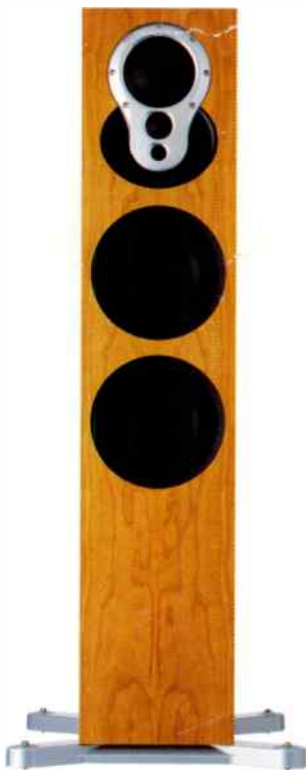
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