

HI-FI CHOICE

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The 1996 British Hi-Fi

AWARDS

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24 Pages Of Winners!



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Big Speakers To Play LOUD

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**Our Experts Pick The Best Hi-fi!
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DEMONSTRATION**

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Blinkhorns	01295 259859
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Norman H Field	0121 622 2323
Richer Sounds	0121 643 1516
Superfi	0121 631 2675
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Boston Hi Fi	01205 365477
Bromsgrove	
Spains	01527 872460
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Grange Hi Fi	01283 533655
Cambridge	
Cambridge Hi Fi	01223 67773
University Audio	01223 354237
Chesterfield	
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Frank Harvey	01203 525200
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Editor's Notebook

Stan Vincent ushers in a special Awards issue, explains a new-look Directory, announces a new columnist, and spies erasable CD. Cor!



Welcome to this special edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*, which is bulging with treats for hi-fi fans of all persuasions. I am particularly proud that in this issue, we reveal the winners of the British Hi-Fi Awards, as voted for by real-world hi-fi enthusiasts. Voting forms appeared in this magazine, our sister title *Home Entertainment*, and others including *Gramophone*, *Q* and *Mojo*. In addition, voting forms were distributed to dealers across the UK, meaning that anyone who cares about hi-fi has had a chance to cast their vote.

To cover the Awards in full, we've printed an extra 24 pages within the magazine, starting on page 41. There you'll find full details of all the exalted products — which include home cinema items, surround-sound fans!

This is the first year that we've added our reputation to that of hi-fi industry body, the British Federation of Audio, in sponsoring these awards. However, regular readers of the magazine will know that we are no strangers to the glitz and glamour of hi-fi awards ceremonies, as we are now entering the fourth year of our involvement with the European Imaging and Sound Association, a grouping of specialist magazines from the whole of Europe, whose annual awards celebrate top-class hi-fi, video and photographic products, from Great Britain to Greece. *Hi-Fi Choice* and its sister title *Home Entertainment* are the sole British representatives on EISA's European Audio Panel.

I'm really excited that *Hi-Fi Choice* now works on two levels to highlight the best products one can buy. With the British Hi-Fi Awards, we represent grass-roots opinion

within the UK. At the EISA Awards, we take forward those grass-roots opinions as the basis of four votes for the finest hi-fi in Europe, in conjunction with magazines from Norway to the Netherlands.

Why do we go to all this trouble? Well, I believe it means we are better placed than any other UK hi-fi magazine to give readers a balanced, informed opinion on hi-fi's good, bad and ugly, not just in our special Awards issues but also in our reviews from month to month. Oh, and don't forget that there will be full coverage of EISA's European Awards in the October issue of *Hi-Fi Choice*, which will be available from Friday 30th August.

On test this month

In this month's big test we've gathered together 11 CD players, costing between £400 and £1,000. (The report begins on page 88.) These components represent some of the best single-box players you can buy, and it's been fascinating to compare so many different designs from so many different companies. I've been particularly interested to note that some of the best-sounding players were the ones employing relatively outmoded digital technology. However, let's not get caught in a Luddite cliché trap. No matter whether a CD player's chips are hot out of the factory or merely simmering in the parts catalogue, if the circuitry in which they're implemented is poorly executed, the most advanced silicon counts for *nada*.

Even now, with at least 13 years' experience of CD, the more we learn about it, the more we realise how much we don't know!

Our new Buyer's Guide

Long-term readers of *Hi-Fi Choice* will have noticed gradual changes in the 'directory' pages at the back of the magazine. This month they've changed again — for the better, I hope. Here's a brief explanation of what we've done. First there was The Directory, a listing of products that *Hi-Fi Choice* had reviewed. Next, in March 1994, came an additional listing of all new products that one could buy, but it overlapped somewhat with existing entries in the Directory. In November 1995 we introduced a combined Buyer's Guide/Directory, but the best laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley, and soon we realised that our latest iteration, while comprehensive, was less than 100 per cent user-friendly. Hence the all-new listing you'll find at the back of this issue, which combines the approachability of our original Directory with a punchy, brief list of all new products available. The fun starts on page 120.

Hello and goodbye

This month I am very sad to say goodbye to Barry Fox's '21st Century Fox' column. Barry has been keeping us up to date with leading edge technology every month for a number of years, but now that next-generation CD formats are taking shape with such alacrity, I've asked him to direct his energies towards regular updates on tomorrow's silver disc.

At the same time, however, it's a big *buenos dias* to Technical Editor Paul Miller, who starts his new column, 'Oasis of Sanity', on page 25. Every month, with endless rigour, Paul will dispel hi-fi hype and lay bare the secrets of sound quality for all to understand.

And now, this...

During a recent seminar, Philips revealed plans to roll out the 'fourth generation' of recordable CD. This will be an erasable disc (CD-E), which means that to all intents and purposes it behaves like a cassette tape. While the current media buzz surrounds new digital video discs, I believe CD-E will be of much greater significance to hi-fi fans. It will come to prominence first in the computer market, but because of this its price, will soon go down. Some exciting months ahead!

Stan Vincent

New readers start here!

If you're new to *Hi-Fi Choice*, and you have bought the magazine because you're thinking of buying some hi-fi, I've written a special new feature just for you. Entitled 'You Can Buy A Hi-Fi System', and starting on page 118, it gives essential advice for taking the plunge into the exciting and extremely rewarding world of separates hi-fi. Once you've experienced the thrill of hearing Bach and Bachman Turner Overdrive as God intended them, I'd wager that the nest-egg you were saving for a rainy day will soon find itself in gainful employ. Whether you choose to spend £500 or £5,000 on hi-fi equipment, you can be sure it'll be one of the best investments you'll ever make!

HI-FI CHOICE

The small print...

● QUERIES AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Accepted by letter only to the fax number, e-mail or postal addresses given below. We deeply regret that we are unable speak with readers on the telephone.

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We welcome information on all new and upgraded products. In all instances manufacturers should contact the editorial department on the telephone numbers below. However, the Publisher respectfully points out that the magazine is obliged neither to review nor return unsolicited products. The Editor-in-Chief is always pleased to receive ideas for articles, but does not accept responsibility for unsolicited copy.

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We cannot supply photocopies of articles that are out of print, but do try our Factsback service (p.116).

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CONTENTS

JUNE 1996

ISSUE 155



88 CD players catalogued!



78 Pre/power amps parsed!



12 Aeon's novel Signet speaker: just one of the goodies in Sessions.

THE FRONT END

7 Update

We shout about new sounds around. What will be the big noise in audio next year?

12 Sessions

Jason Kennedy frolics gaily through the happy valley of hi-fi. Gambol on, elf-dude.

27 Write on!

Simply write, fax or e-mail us about all things hi-fi, and win a polo shirt for your art.

28 Help!

Our panel of specialists is waiting to solve all of your problems. Well, *hi-fi* problems...

34 Instant Systems

Alan Sircom upgrades a mid-price hi-fi system to the max. How far will it go?

39 Statements

Alan Sircom weighs in with a new high-mass, high-end aspirant: the Silverado loudspeaker.

76 Inspirations

Stan Vincent gets steamed up over an ultra high-end system – with a taste of the Orient...

OPINION

3 From the Editor's Notebook

Stan Vincent introduces this year's British Hi-Fi Awards, then opines lugubriously, at length.

17 Ear Waxings

Jason Kennedy still seeks the ultimate microwave oven, but finds a frisbee instead.

19 Personal Messages

Paul visits Scotland to see one of Britain's largest speaker companies: Tannoy.

21 The Jimmy Hughes Experience

Jimmy Hughes names the recordings that prove how "mono is marvellous"!

23 21st Century Fox

As the sun sets slowly in the West, we say farewell to Barry's column with a look at DSD.

25 Paul Miller's Oasis of Sanity

Paul Miller debunks the latest fads in audio. This month: what is a jitter-buster?

154 Ultra Vivian Scene

David Vivian dons polo-neck sweater and shades, in praise of all things jazz. G-r-r-reat.

118 New Readers Start Here!

Thinking about buying hi-fi, but don't know where to start? Here's the feature just for you! Discover the secrets of buying great hi-fi, and choose the system of your dreams in our brand-new Buyer's Guide.

REVIEWS

70 Rock'n'Roll Speakers

Adam Rayner frightens his neighbours with big, heavy, loud loudspeakers!

78 Pre/Power Amplifiers

Malcolm Steward looks at four of the latest mid-price pre/power amplifiers.

88 CD Players, £400 - £1,000

Alvin Gold and Paul Miller check out 11 players — which ones cut the mustard?

AWARDS!

41 The British Hi-Fi Awards 1996

Your chosen hi-fi products, revealed at last! Will your favourites go home with a gong?

READER SERVICES

26 Subscriptions

Have *Hi-Fi Choice* delivered to your door by post, and never hassle the shopkeeper again.

113 Readers' Classified

Pick up a bargain and buy, sell or exchange some of the finest pre-owned, pre-loved hi-fi.

116 Factsback

The ultra-quick way to access classic *Hi-Fi Choice* articles and reviews.

153 Next Month

Don't miss our bumper double issue when waxing down your surfboard.

SPECIAL OFFERS

105 Mail Order

Our mail-order trolls are at the end of the phone to shower you with top hi-fi goodies.

THE NEW BUYER'S GUIDE

117 The Price Guide/Directory

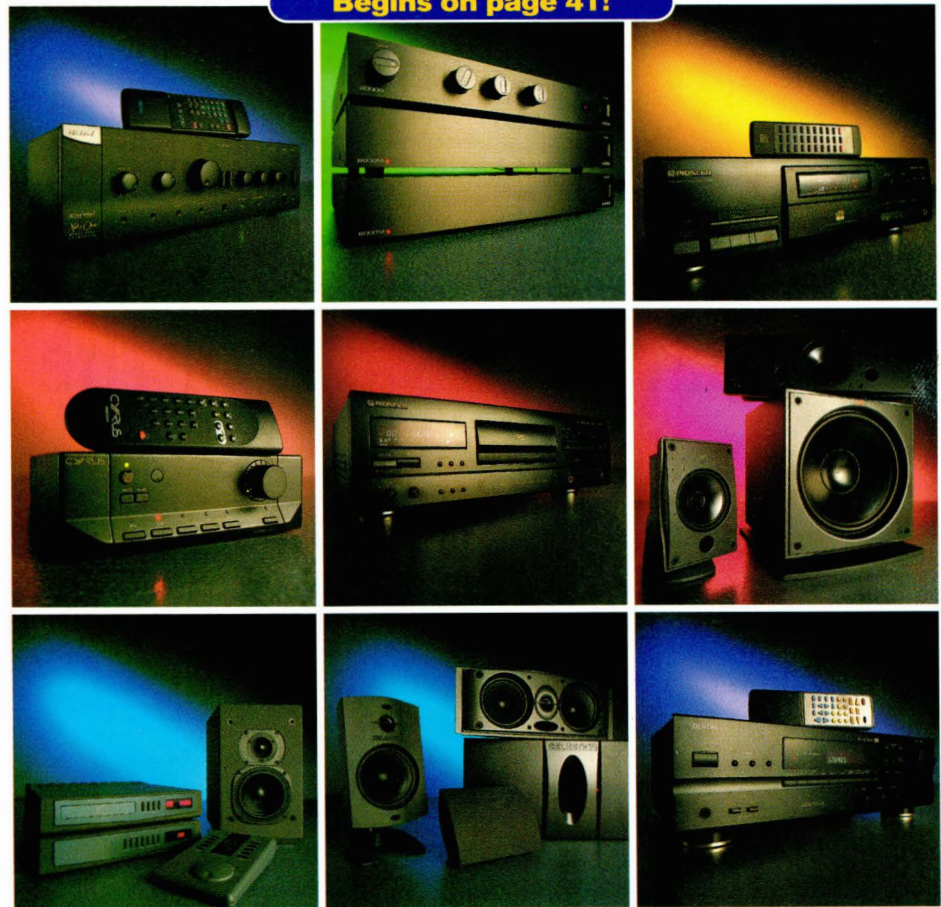
A list of all new hi-fi products on the market, and an easy-to-use listing of every component we have reviewed.



The 1996 British Hi-Fi

AWARDS

Begins on page 41!



84

WIN! WIN! WIN!
£3,000 worth of amazing Quadraspire tables and custom made furniture must be won!



With Cinema DSP, you'll be amazed at what comes out of the woodwork.

Bats screech overhead. Wolves howl in the distance. And footsteps crunch across your living room floor.

No, it's not your imagination. You're hearing sounds placed around the room, just as the director intended.

All courtesy of Yamaha Cinema DSP. The home theatre technology that gives dialogue more definition. Music, more dimension. And sound effects, more graphic detail.

Only Yamaha Cinema DSP creates phantom speakers that fully replicate the experience you get in multi-speaker movie theatres. It sounds so real, in fact, you'll swear you hear sounds in places that you don't even have speakers.

As you might imagine, a breakthrough like this is no small feat. It's accomplished by multiplying the effects of Digital Sound Field Processing and Dolby Pro Logic.[®]

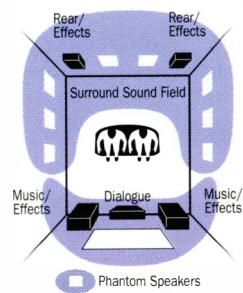
Digital Sound Field Processing is Yamaha's unique technology that electronically recreates some of the finest performance venues in the world. And Dolby Pro Logic is the technology responsible for placing sound around the room, matching the dialogue and sound effects with the action on the screen.

Together, these two technologies allow Yamaha to offer a complete range of home theatre components that outperform other comparatively priced products on the market.

Stop by your local Yamaha dealer for what could be a very eerie demonstration. Maybe we can't talk you into a system, but that doesn't mean we can't scare you into one.

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Only Yamaha Cinema DSP creates phantom speakers. It sounds so real, you'll swear you hear sounds in places you don't even have speakers

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Update

MALCOLM STEWARD, OUR INVETERATE NEWS-HOG, SNUFFLES OUT THE LATEST AUDIO TRUFFLES FOR YOUR DELECTION

Brave new world of Technics



Technics takes thinner tape technology thorward!

As exclusively previewed in Stan Vincent's *Editor's Notebook* last month, Technics has announced two new revolutionary cassette decks, with high-tech playback heads developed from DCC technology.

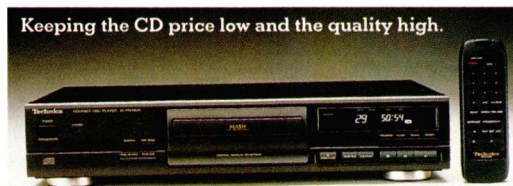
Both the £299.95 RS-AZ7 and £229.95 RS-AZ6 offer the new 'Amorphous-Z' head, developed using thin-film techniques. Unlike conventional tape heads, the new type responds directly to a tape's magnetism, rather than just changes in magnetism. This, claims Technics, allows Amorphous-Z to deliver low bass without need for equalisation, which in turn boosts signal-to-noise ratios and makes for an extended, flat frequency response. In practical terms, this should mean greatly enhanced playback of pre-recorded tapes.

Other features include two-motor drive with high-

speed fast-forward and rewind; automatic tape calibration; plus Dolby B, C and HX-Pro. On the AZ-7 there are the additional benefits of a 'straight-through' Play Direct option, Virtual Battery Operation and MASTER-series electrolytic capacitors.

Technics also has grand plans for its new range of budget-conscious CD players: the £119.95 SL-PG580A, the £139.95 SL-PG480A (tested in Sessions, p. 12) and the £159.95 SL-PG580A. In common with their acclaimed more expensive siblings, all three claim to be built like tanks, offer one-bit MASH d-to-a converter chips, and Technics's proprietary 'Super One-Chip LSI', in which optical servo control, signal processing and conversion silicon are grafted onto one wafer rather than three.

☎ (0990) 357357



Myriad options



Multiply your Myriad!

More than just an upgrade for the *MI120* integrated amplifier, the 60W Myriad *MA120* power amplifier is the basis for a host of multi-amplifier configurations. In the simplest arrangement, an *MA120* could partner an *MI120* to bi-amplify suitable speakers. Both amplifiers carry a full bandwidth signal but the *MI120* has increased power supply capacity.

Thanks to a daisy-chain connection system, it's possible to run up to ten *MA120*s from a single *MI120*, for multi-room, multi-amp systems. Power amplifiers can be controlled simultaneously using the built-in 'My-link' communications channel. To make this possible the *MA120* has a Standby mode that leaves its power supplies charged but disables low-level input circuits to mute the audio signal path and reduce current consumption.

Styled to complement the *MI120*, with a natural anodised aluminium fascia, the new power amplifier sells for £449.95. ☎ (01705) 265508

Energy fools the magician

Acoustic Energy has announced a new floorstanding loudspeaker, the *AE109*, as the second model in its 100 series (*AE100* reviewed Sessions, HFC 150). Priced at £329.95 per pair, the *AE109* is aimed at the 'mid-fi' and home cinema markets.

The cabinet is made from 18mm-thick MDF, fully braced internally, and claims to be a low resonance design. It sports a 25mm soft-dome tweeter and two magnetically-shielded 100mm mid/bass drive units. Of the latter, the upper unit is loaded by twin front-firing reflex ports, while the lower unit addresses a 'high-power' flared port. The speaker may be biwired.

Additional mass is factory-fitted to the base of the cabinet, to bolster a plinth with 8mm, high-tensile spikes.

The floorstanding *AE109* is available in black-ash or rosewood finishes.

☎ (01285) 654432



AE stands tall with AE109.

In brief

The Rumour is a new loudspeaker cable from the Chord Company. Using Teflon insulation and multi-strand, silver-plated copper conductors, it's a twisted pair design that sells for £7.95 per metre. Termination costs are £30 for single wire and £40 for bi-wire. ☎ (01722) 331674.

NVA has a low-cost, 15W amplifier, the *AP10*, designed for use with personal stereos. It claims to drive headphones or high-efficiency speaker systems in the 90 - 92dB range or above. Available with a black chrome or Perspex front panel, it costs £160 ready-built, or £130 in kit form. The four-input *AP10X* costs £200 assembled, or £150 in kit form. ☎ (01763) 272707.

Silvertek 1 is the first interconnect from Heortech Soundlabs. The cable uses virtually pure silver conductors, silver-soldered to gold-plated plugs. Prices from £67.50 for a half-metre pair, to £129.50 for a three-metre set, with post and packing adding £1.50 to the bill. Heortech will also supply custom built cables. ☎ (01429) 86742.

Three new sites related to hi-fi and music have appeared recently on the World Wide Web. You'll find loudspeaker manufacturer Allison Acoustics at <http://members.aol.com/ralabseuro/ral.htm> and dealer Moorgate Acoustics at <http://www.demon.co.uk/moorgate/>. At the Allison site you can download the company's *Bestplace* program, which tells you where to position your speakers for optimum performance. Also new is *Modified Online*, which brings live, four-track audio mixing to the Web. Dial into <http://www.compulink.co.uk/~modified> but note that you'll need Netscape Navigator 2 and

NEW

Audiolab 8000S

Stereo Amplifier



Imagine an amplifier which offers the simplicity of an Integrated Amplifier and the flexibility of a separate Pre-Power Amplifier. It is the new Audiolab 8000S Stereo Amplifier.

At the turn of a switch you can use it as an Integrated Amplifier, as a Pre-Power Amplifier together with the Audiolab 8000P Stereo Power Amplifier in a bi-amplified system, as a high performance stand alone Pre-amplifier, with an external surround sound processor, or with a sub-woofer. It has remote control and outstanding sound quality. We couldn't think of anything else an Amplifier needs to do!

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- 8000C Pre-amplifier
- 8000P Stereo Power Amplifier
- 8000M Monobloc Power Amplifier
- 8000T Tuner
- 8000Q Pre-amplifier
- 8000PPA Phono Pre-amplifier
- 8000CDM Compact Disc Transport
- 8000DAC Digital-Analogue Converter
- 8000S Stereo Amplifier



Audiolab 8000A

Audiolab 8000C/P

Audiolab 8000CDM/DAC

Audiolab 8000T

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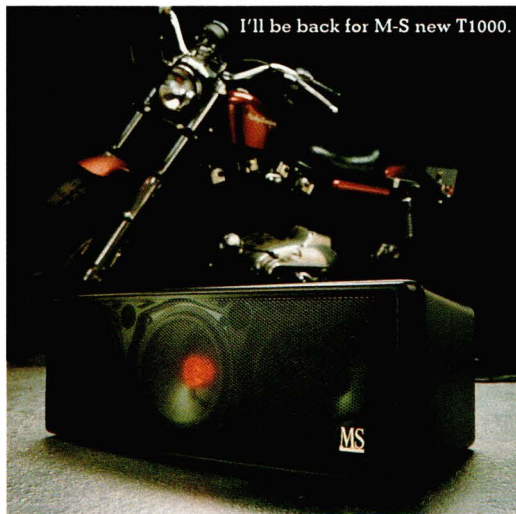
Telephone 01480 52521
Fax 01480 52159

Hasta la vista M-S!

Mordaunt-Short announces its new *T1000* home-cinema loudspeaker with a press release beginning "The survivors of the nuclear fire called the war Judgement Day"... In case you haven't guessed already, the company reckons it has come up with a speaker system worthy of *Terminator 2* in all its explosive glory.

Aimed at the serious home-cinema enthusiast, the £229.99 *T1000* draws on technology used in Mordaunt-Short's flagship hi-fi models. Its cabinet is constructed from a composite based on ResinRock material, which is found in the *Performance* range (see HFC 146); and its drivers use the MCS cone technology featured throughout the company's *Music Series* speakers.

Designed for horizontal or vertical alignment, the ten-litre speaker comes with wall brackets and mounting points for *CS7-10* stands. It uses two fully-shielded 110mm bass drivers, and a 25mm ICT tweeter in a three-way configuration. High (92dB) sensitivity and a six-Ohm impedance should ensure that it works with low-powered AV amplifiers, while its 200W peak power handling suggests this Cosmos grey enclosure ought to handle the worst that Arnie can throw at it. ☎ (01705) 407722; <http://www.mordaunt-short.com/>



Keswick moves to Milano for its latest floorstander.

Italia 96

Keswick Audio Research unveils its new *Italia* series, designed to perform with equal aplomb in a hi-fi or home cinema rôle. Of particular note is the novel facility to interchange front panels to suit a customer's taste. These panels are available in a selection of satin-wood finishes, or in polyester piano-lacquer as offered on KAR's existing *Figaro* and *Alto* models. All cabinets are finished in black-leather crackle as standard.

There are two floorstanders, a bookshelf-size unit and an active subwoofer. In the vanguard you'll find the £999 *Milano*, a three-way design featuring KAR's custom-designed, long-throw, 255mm bass unit, embodied in a 22mm-thick MDF box. Next up it's the *Torino*, again a three-way, but this time using a 200mm long-throw driver, in place of the 255mm unit. High efficiency and 90db sensitivity are claimed for both.

The £459 *Palermo* is a stand-mounted design, while the £299 *Centrale* is a dedicated dialogue speaker. Bringing up the bass is *Pompeii*, the active subwoofer, which packs a 15-inch drive-unit and a 'cool-running' 120-Watt amplifier.

☎ (01977) 671823

GRAAF-ic designs

UK Distribution has added more prestigious Italian products to its expanding portfolio. The latest arrivals are GRAAF valve pre and power amplifiers.

The £2,100, 50W, class AB 5050 power amplifier is a push-pull design using the latest *KT88A* power valves with gold coating. Using specially designed output transformers, the 5050 claims to provide similar sound quality to that of a good single-ended amplifier, but with the benefit of additional power. The £1,100 *WFB Two* pre-amplifier is a zero-feedback design using 6922 double triodes and incorporating a MOSFET phono stage that caters for moving-magnet and moving-coil cartridges. The pre-amp provides seven inputs (phono, tape and five at line-level) and three sets of outputs (one tape and two main pre-out connections).

Along with the £1,895 *WFB One* pre-amplifier and the £3,895 *GM13.5B* balanced pre-amplifier, GRAAF also offers the 100W, fully-balanced, £4,450 *GM100* and the highly praised, output-transformerless, 200W, £8,000 *GM200* power amps. ☎ (01753) 654531



HI-FI CHOICE

AV sans compromise

Rogers reckons it has identified a gaping niche in the market. The new *Quintet* package is the company's prescription when "dish-of-the-day" decibels have given rise to compromised sound quality. *Quintet* aims to satisfy more serious music and home cinema enthusiasts, being designed to offer a perfectly integrated presentation where the transition from bass to treble is seamless.

The five-piece system consists of *LS1* near-field monitors for the rear channels, with *LS33s* handling front left and right duties. Bass comes from a pair of *AB33* subwoofers, which also double as supports for the *LS33s*. (See also this month's Sessions, page 12, to read more about the *LS33/AB22* combination). Centre channel information comes courtesy of the *C33*, which is a shielded, dual-bass version of the *LS1* monitor.

The cost of having a *Quintet* playing film music in your living room is most reasonable, at just £999. ☎ (0181) 640 2172

In brief

◀ Macromedia's *Shockwave* plug-in to tinker in the virtual studio.

Thomson, the world's fourth-largest consumer electronics group, is coming to the UK, where its sales will be handled by Ferguson. Initially its range will consist of eleven televisions and three VCRs, but this will grow to include other products, including DVD players. ☎ (0181) 344 4448.

Musical Images in Covent Garden is now a stockist of QED *Systemline* multi-room components. ☎ (0181) 958 8777.

Townshend Audio has updated prices for its Credo range of amplifiers. The *IMP702* integrated, rated at 70W but claiming to deliver 200W peaks, sells for £689. The *IMP703*, which is effectively an *IMP702* with one of its five line-level inputs converted for MM/MC phono use, costs £799. The *CMPO05* pre-amplifier, offering six line-level inputs, three outputs and remote control, comes in at £1,287, with the optional *FMP003* MM/MC phono amplifier selling for £419. Finally, the *PMP154* power amplifier, which claims to deliver 150 class AB Watts per channel, costs £2,415. ☎ (0181) 979 2155.

Jamo's first home theatre speaker package consists of two pairs of *Cornet 20s*, one *Centre 40* dialogue speaker and an active subwoofer, the *SW400e*. The £549.99 package represents a £60 saving over buying the speakers individually. ☎ (01327) 301300.

Grundig says its *UMS2* micro is one of the most advanced systems available at the price — £299.99 — as it boasts full RDS, 25W per channel and a spectrum analyser. It also has a top-loading CD player and an auto-reverse Dolby B tape player, as does the £279 *UMS1*. ☎ (01788) 577155

Ixos has added six new AV interconnects to its roster. Called the *170 Series*, these phono-to-phono leads complement the Scart-to-phono cables in the *Home Theatre Performance* range. All the new leads use Ixos *110AV* cable, which contains six cores individually shielded with Mylar in a Teflon ▶▶

UNLIKE MOST SPEAKER COMPANIES, WE BUILD SPEAKERS. WE DON'T BUY THEM.

My, my. Things nowadays are not always what they're cracked up to be. We're almost positive it all started with the egg-free egg. Yum. Then came caffeine-free coffee, with the taste gone, too. In a matter of days, the conscience-free politician followed, who within moments was justly run over by his own badge-engineered car. And now, here comes the ultimate horror: The Dynaudio-free Dynaudio speaker.

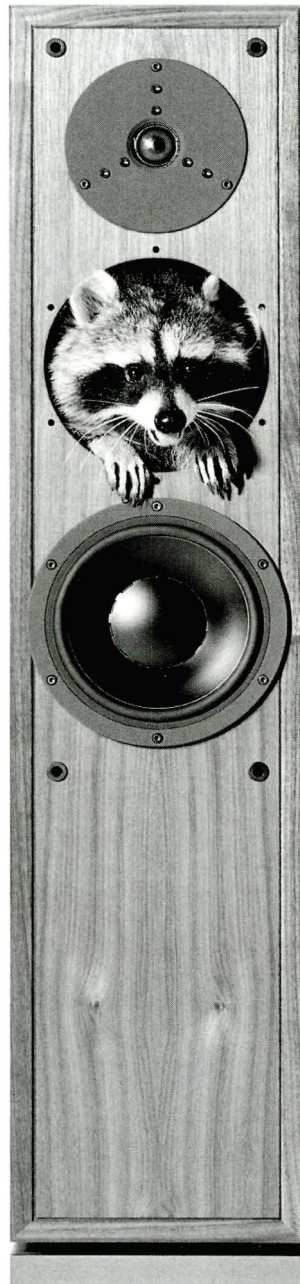
No way! Just kidding! In fact, it's just the other way around; 90% of all other high-end manufacturers do not painstakingly develop and build their own speakers at all. Instead, their designers tend to use our justly famous Esotar and Esotec tweeters, only to sell them to you, the truth-loving American public, as their own most expensive creations. We, being true Danes, still believe in a 100% in-house production.

Every single part of our beloved Contour 1.8 (the one our works raccoon Knudsen is just checking for alien intruders) is still meticulously hand built by our dedicated Danish master craftsmen.

With our legendary oversized voice-coils, our incomparable first-order crossovers, the flat driver membrane geometry and the minimization of phase problems. From truly superior materials, in extremely limited numbers. To create beautiful, true music. And nothing else.

If you want to experience the original (!) Dynaudio effect, please call us at (847) 288 1767 or fax us at (847) 288 1853 for a free copy of our inimitable "Book of Truth". You'll love it. Because unlike most speaker companies, not only do we build our own

speakers. We write our own ads and brochures, too.



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DANES DON'T LIE.™

Yamaha's prêt à porter

Yamaha's Spring and Summer collection will see a host of new hi-fi and AV models strutting along the catwalk. The new AX-390 integrated amplifier builds on the success of the AX-380, and includes a revised circuit layout with a new output stage, giving 60W per channel. Arriving in August, it will sell for £169.95.

At the same time you should expect the £249.95 RX-395RDS receiver, which promises excellent sound quality and full Yamaha system remote-control facilities. The TX-590RDS, which should be on sale now for £179.95, offers RDS functions and a 40-station preset memory.

Three new cassette decks join the line-up: at the top there's the KX-690 flagship model, which sells for £399.95 and provides three-head, three-motor operation with Dolby B, C and S. The Dolby B and C KX-490 offers play trim and auto tape-type tuning for £199.95, while the KX-390 is an entry-level starter machine at £149.95.

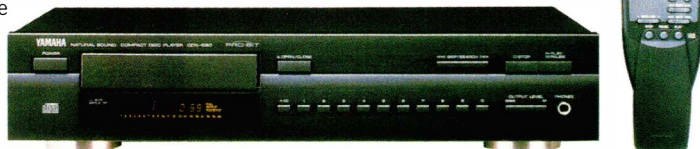
There are also four new CD players in the range. The UK-specified £349.95 CDX-890 and £229.95 CDX-590 both

feature Yamaha's Pro-Bit DAC, while the CDX-490 and CDX-390 come in at £169.95 and £129.95 respectively.

On the AV front, Yamaha has a new Dolby Pro-Logic amplifier, the £899.95 DSP-A990, which provides 75W to each of the front channels and 25W to each of the four effects channels. The company also has an expanded range of AV speakers including two new subwoofers (the £279.95, 120W YST-SW150 and the £179.95, 85W YST-SW80); three new centre channel models (the £109.95 NS-C150, £79.95 NS-C105 and £59.95 NS-C60); and two matching effects speakers (the £109.95 NS-E105 and £79.95 NS-E60).

☎ (01923) 233166

Yamaha's latest CD supermodel, yesterday.



Harman's air-sea rescue

If you're looking for a tuner with 'sensible' discrete circuitry to optimise sound quality, but also want the user convenience of full RDS operation, take a gander at the £199.99 TU950RDS from harman/kardon. It provides thirty presets for each waveband — FM, MW and LW — with ten direct access keys for each.

A bi-directional shuttle wheel is used for navigation, and an AF button automatically scans six alternative frequencies for the same station, looking for the best reception. RF mode and IF band controls are included to improve FM reception in busy locations.

RDS functionality also features in harman/kardon's new AVR21 AV receiver. £499.99 buys you the above tuner mated with a Dolby Pro-Logic surround sound amplifier delivering 50W to each of the front three channels, and 25W to each of the rears. The AV150-like amplifier stage provides 60W per channel in stereo mode, and has inputs for two line sources, two tapes, moving magnet phono and two VCRs. ☎ (0181) 207 5050.



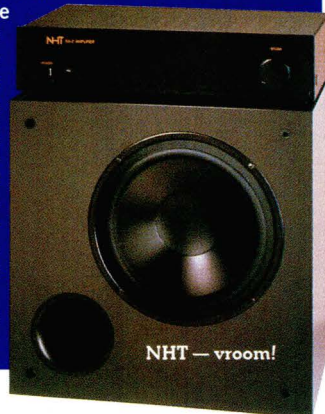
Shoulders to the navigation wheel with h/k.

Ace of bass

NHT has a new powered subwoofer, the SW-2pi, which as you might guess is an updated version of the SW2-p. However, as far as the spec sheet reads, the i-prefix doesn't relate to fuel injection, as the SW-2pi still uses four Weber 45 DCOE carburettors (Er... Ed). The new model, designed to take full advantage of modern technologies, improves upon its predecessor by offering increased output and new convenience features. To do this it uses a 120W amplifier and a new, ten-inch, high excursion polypropylene driver, mounted in a vented enclosure. Claimed extension is down to 27Hz ± 3dB.

The sub features high and line-level inputs and outputs for optimum matching with satellite speakers. It also has a continuously adjustable low-pass filter, a selectable high-pass filter, a phase reversal switch, defeatable auto-standby mode, and five-way binding post connections. All this can be yours for £689.

☎ (01235) 555622



NHT — vroom!

In brief

extruded sleeve. The cables are available in two- and five-metre lengths and their respective prices are: three-core 171 (2m) £29.95 and 172 (5m) £39.95; four-core 173 (2m) £34.95 and 174 (5m) £49.95; six-core 175 (2m) £49.95 and 176 (5m) £59.95. ☎ (01494) 441736.

Ruark's £289 *dialogue one* speaker breaks the centre-channel mould with its off-centre, fabric-dome, 28mm tweeter. Though most centre speakers have their tweets bang in the middle, Ruark's design team found that an eccentric position staggers reflected soundwaves. They claim that this enables the all-important 'presence' frequencies to be reproduced more smoothly, thus leading to clearer speech on screen! The package also includes two magnetically-shielded 140mm drive units with doped, felted-fibre pentagonal cones — the unconventional shape is said to dissipate vibrations in a controlled manner. The *dialogue one* offers a claimed sensitivity of 90dB, six-Ohm impedance, bi-wiring option and hard-wired cross-over. It is available in dark 'video' grey, with the option of rosewood-effect side cheeks.

☎ (01702) 601410

US high-end amplifier specialist conrad-johnson has announced the new £3,995 *Premier Fourteen* preamplifier. The new line-level pre combines c-j's respected zero feedback, all-valve design with the convenience of remote control. There is also a *Premier Fifteen* mm/mc all-valve phono preamplifier in the pipeline, which is expected to cost £3,995, too. ☎ (0181) 948 4153

True Dynaudio Dealers.

HiFi Experience, 17 Coniscliffe Rd, Darlington, 01325-481418
 Music Matters, 351 Hagley Rd, Edgbaston, Birmingham, 0121-4292811
 Music Matters, 93-95 Hobs Moat Rd, Solihull, Birmingham, 0121-7420254
 Harrogate Hifi Centre, 15 Commercial St, Harrogate, 01432-504274
 Cornflake Shop, 37 Windmill St, London, 0171-6310472
 Nichols Hifi, 430-432 Lee High Rd, Lewisham, London, 0181-8525780
 Performance Hifi Systems, 5 London Rd, Sevenoaks, Kent, 01732-740425
 Worthing Audio, 20 Teville Gate Precinct, West Sussex, 01903-212133
 Music Matters, 156-157 Lower High St, Stourbridge, 01384-444184

Holburn Hifi, 441 Holburn St, Aberdeen, 01224-585713
 W.M. Coupar, 8-12 Wellmeadow, Blairgowrie, 01250-872436
 W.M. Coupar, 33 Reform St, Dundee, 01382-229588
 W.M. Coupar, 9 Scott St, Perth, 01738-634809
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Choice sessions

JASON KENNEDY WRITES SESSIONS THIS MONTH, AS A PLEA BARGAIN OUT OF A TEN-STRETCH IN CHOKEY

Aeon Acoustics Signet

An Aeon may be a long time, but it is also the originator of the Signet, a truly amazing loudspeaker with an unlikely cone design.

£850

The Signet may seem like another weird speaker appearing out of nowhere, but it's not a complete stranger to *Hi-Fi Choice*. Take a close look at the mid/bass drive units and you'll see a zig-zag tube in the cone. A couple of years back, in issue 123, I described a design for a speaker cone with a spiral tube in it that came from the same Simon Carrington who now fronts Aeon Acoustics. The tube in the 'tube-cone' acts as a pneumatic delay line, or spring, which makes the cone stiffer without adding mass. The same think-

Aeon Acoustics Signet — not just another weird-looking speaker!

Reson's RS1A — here's one I tweaked earlier!



Reson RS1A

Old turntables never die — they just get tweaked extensively, have new motors fitted, and return to the battle.

£675

ing lies behind the shape of the spiral.

When it's installed in a small floor-standing speaker like the Signet, this unusual idea produces excellent frequency extension as well as remarkably low distortion. The Signet is a very clean-sounding speaker, and it shows many hallmarks of a high-quality bookshelf design. Despite standing only two feet tall, it throws up images of the height and width you'd expect from a Totem or an Acoustic Energy AE1, sitting two and a half feet off the floor.

The Signet also prefers free-space placement, which is a little odd for such a small speaker. In the right site, however, it can produce surprising bandwidth and resolution, so much so that when partnering some of the amps I tried, it caused them to sound out of their depth as far as high frequency finesse was concerned. This unlikely box even equals favourites like the Audio Note AN-J for detail, if not for dynamics.

The Signet is a bit of an LS3/5A with transparency, and therefore should work well in refined systems. I'm looking forward to the forthcoming larger model with bigger drive units, which should be more suitable for us metalheads.

Aeon Acoustics ☎ (01765) 604288

If you think this turntable looks somewhat familiar, give yourself a star, for it's a tricked-up Systemdek remixed by Reson, a subsidiary of the DNM brand.

Despite its unassuming appearance there are several important differences between the RS1 and its cheaper forebear. First, there are new parts, starting with a Swiss motor that's identical to the one in the DNM Rota turntable, and continuing with a Mita (née Rega RB250) tonearm, and a Reson *Acio*re moving-coil cartridge.

But the RS1 is not just about better bits; as a ready-tweaked product, it's also about decent set-up. The vertical tracking angle (the angle at which the stylus sits in the groove, which makes significant differences to sound quality) is set carefully using fine washers under the arm base. The arm is decoupled from the deck with rubber 'O' rings, and twists quite easily — this is claimed to give a more open sound. The tracking force and alignment are carefully set, and the former is maintained with a fixing screw in the counterweight. Even the cartridge terminals are treated





with *Licon* contact enhancer.

The sonic result varies with the turntable support chosen. My sample started off on the *DNM Domo* (£125), a light affair with three spikes top and bottom. On this it sounded lively if a little ragged in the treble, but I was surprised at the coherence of this fundamentally basic turntable. When placed atop a two-tier *Mana* table, sitting on its sprung rubber feet, the *RS1A*'s sound improved in composure and atmosphere, and a decent bass entered the soundstage.

The *RS1A* proves that with a little care and some decent parts, even a basic turntable has great potential.

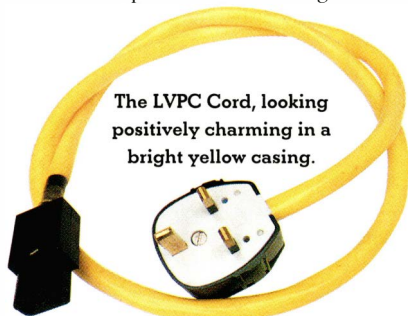
Virtual Reality ☎ (01277) 227355

Living Voice LVPC Cord

The quality of mains power is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven — but only with a special length of wire...

£69

It's surprising that the brand-name Living Voice — familiar to horn aficionados like myself — should appear on a mains cable. However, I guess with speakers as revealing as LV's,



The LVPC Cord, looking positively charming in a bright yellow casing.

you'd become pretty fussy about all aspects of your system...

I tried LV's cord on a DAC and pre/power amps, and compared it with the XLO *Purple* (£125) and *Green* (£61), reviewed in issue 136. The LV performed quite similarly to the XLO, but I perceived subtle differences depending on the equipment it was powering. Compared to XLO *Green* the sound was more focused but less vibrant than *Purple*. Compared to the other British cables the differences were more distinct: the LV reproduced better dynamics and a broader soundstage.

This cable is the sort of thing that makes a serious system better, but how much better depends on your system.

Definitive Audio ☎ (01159) 813562

Monarchy Model 18B

Is it a DAC? Is it a preamp? No — it's a DAC preamp! But can this new product offer the best of both worlds...

£795

It's a DAC with a knob, a knob marked 'volume', no less; for this is a product aimed at the single-source digiphile with a power amp having the right input impedance. Under such circumstances a DAC like the *Model 18B* comes into its own, doing away with the need for a preamp, thanks to its passive volume pot and both fixed and variable analogue outputs supplied via RCA phono sockets.

Input socketry is the usual US-style array of AES/EBU balanced, phono coaxial and Toslink optical; there are no digital outputs. Specifications and build quality are as you'd expect at the price, since it weighs a ton and the case-work is commendable.

Compared to two cheaper British designs — Cambridge *Dacmagic 2* and DPA *Little Bit 3* — the *18B* made a good showing. It had a distinct edge when it came to timing and tonal naturalness, plus it was more dynamic and three dimensional. This made for very enjoyable listening, giving instruments a real sound and allowing tunes to bounce along in an engaging fashion.

I'd have been happy listening to it all day if I didn't have something better on hand — at twice the price. The latter, a Trichord *Pulsar* and *PSU*, revealed the *18B*'s limitations in absolute depth of image and sense of naturalness.

I plugged the *Model 18B* into an ECA *Lectern* power amp, but found coherence was traded for a loss of low-frequency power. It seems successful operation depends heavily on synergy between the *18B* and a power amp.

Wollaton Audio ☎ (0115) 9284147

Trichord Genesis

It may look like a standard CD player, but this new release from Trichord is the equivalent of a hot hatch with wide wheels and side stripes. Vroom!

£549

After three years of modifying *A* players with its *Clock 2* 'heart transplant', Trichord has taken the Cosworth route and started to market a CD player.

Having tried most of the machines on the market with its *Clock*-work, Trichord found that the Pioneer *PD-S503* (now *504*) gave better results than most budget players. The Trichord gang struck a deal with Pioneer, and the result is *Genesis*.

Inside the machine, it's not just the *Clock 2* and an upgraded power supply that have been added — the key extra is analogue output circuitry from the company's *Pulsar* DAC (reviewed issue 144). You end up with a feature-rich Pioneer, including digital volume control and tape-recording aids, with a racing crankshaft, rebore and a massive exhaust pipe!

The *Genesis* uses the existing Pioneer DAC and Legato Link filtering, so some semblance of the original sound remains, but not enough for anybody to tell with their ears alone. It also has a digital output that can be supplied with balanced or BNC socketry to order.

But the question is: does it go round corners at 90mph? Well, for £549, it sounds very good, with the classic Trichord hallmark of a soundstage with sufficient depth and space to allow instruments to breathe.

The *Genesis* can also play tunes. In fact, it's remarkably jaunty, musical and sensitive to the mood of music. There's an analogue homogeneity and midrange emphasis that doesn't exclude nimble but solid bass: it emphasises the feeling of the material. The Pioneer ingredient is apparent in the slight softening of presentation, which should be well suited to less relaxed speakers than my *Sonoliths*.

I tried it with the Rogers combination and NAD amp, also reviewed

Monarchy Model 18B — does this DAC have blue blood after all?

Trichord Genesis — remember to change the cambelt every 36,000 miles. It's a performance car! ▶▶





◀ Technics SL-PG480A — a perky little player for beer budgets.

this month, and found that the *Genesis* did indeed sound sharper. I also tried an Arcam *Alpha 6* amp, which revealed the extent to which the *Genesis*'s sense of spatial coherence and naturalness is ahead of the game.

The Trichord *Genesis* would appear to be a sonic success, but whether the Cosworth approach will appeal to the market remains to be seen. However, anyone shortlisting £500+ CD players would be foolish not to hear this remarkable machine. Trichord Research Ltd ☎ (01684) 573524

Rogers LS/AB33

Here's a new variation on a popular theme from Rogers. Will those stereo subwoofers work their legendary magic once again?

£249/£379

Rogers LS/AB33 — they're better than therapy. Just tell 'em what to do and they do it!

This combination of bookshelf speaker and subwoofer-cum-stand resembles a beefier version of Rogers' *LS3/5A+AB1* combo, which did well in *Choice* last year (issue 143).



Making a speaker stand on top of a subwoofer is a good idea, from both aesthetic and practical points of view, and having stereo subs makes sonic sense to boot — but why not make a floorstander in the first place? I guess it's not house style for Mitcham's finest, and in any case, the *LS/AB33* combo looks pretty cool, presumably gaining some solidity from this approach. Not to mention the fact that the two parts can be purchased and, to an extent, used separately.

The *LS33* is a medium-size, bookshelf design with a 165mm polypropylene bass/midrange driver and a 19mm cloth dome tweeter, while the *AB33* uses the same woofer in a symmetrically-loaded cabinet to extend bass down to a claimed 45Hz. When the two are used together, they are connected in series (with a piece of Audio Note *AN-D* cable), which makes the amplifier's life easier by increasing sensitivity. This makes quite a difference, as demonstrated while using the *NAD 312* amp and taking the subs out of the loop. This system can be bi-wired, but it's not as straightforward as you might think, so, just this once, read the manual.

I bi-wired them, and got it right second time round. The result was an open, yet laid-back sound, which proved sensitive to partnering equipment and software, but not drastically so. With an *ECA Vista HD/Lectern HD* pre/power combination (souped up versions of the pair we Best Bought in issue 145), the Rogers speakers sounded natural if a little lazy, a state of affairs that wasn't improved with the *Aura* amp reviewed here. However, the *NAD*, with its lively exuberance, provoked a more entertaining balance. To a large extent the *33s* do what they are told: if there's image depth coming out of the CD player, it'll be reproduced; and if there's energy floating around the system, you'll know it. These boxes appreciate being driven hard, though, and may just need a bit more running in before giving of their best.

This is a good value combo that, when matched with sympathetic components, should prove rewarding. Swisstone Electronics Ltd ☎ (0181) 640 2172

Technics SL-PG480A

What do you get for a bargain-basement outlay? There are features aplenty in this budget wonder, and sound that is nothing if not respectable.

£150 (TBA)

What sort of CD player do you get for £150 these days? Well, if you go to Technics, you get a multi-function, remote-controlled *SL-PG480A*. This player weighs next to nothing and has a plastic fascia, but in normal use it is probably nigh on indestructible and will last longer than many.

Features include remote volume, peak search and auto cue, as found on most middle-market Japanese machines — unlike cars, even the least expensive Jap CD players are laden down with extras.

In terms of sound quality, the *SL-PG480A* does very well to make any noise at this price, but the fact that it produces coherent music — bumbling along in an enjoyable, if relatively mundane, fashion — is remarkable. It's like a Corolla or a Civic in that it does the job ably but without much chance of grasping the listener's (driver's?) imagination. There's a degree of compression and greyness about it, which tends to restrain musicality.

The *SL-PG480A* is plenty of machine for the money, which is about the least you should spend on a major source component. To be frank, though, those of you who want to sit down and listen, rather than put something on in the background, are going to have to find another £50.

Panasonic Consumer Electronics ☎ (0990) 357357

NAD 312

Could this be a new budget classic from the masters of affordable amplification? Set soft clipping to stun, Mr Sulu!

£199

The *NAD 312* is the latest evolution of a product line that stretches back to a great budget amplifier classic, the *3020*. The price has barely kept up with inflation, but the hallmark switchable soft clipping and pre/power links are still there. It's quite amazing what you can do for next to nothing in an efficient factory these days.

The *312* is nothing if not well equipped. It's got six line inputs and an MM phono stage, defeatable tone controls, two tape loops and a headphone socket. In fact, it has everything but remote control, which presumably has been eschewed in favour of audiophile status, not to mention keeping costs the right side of £200.

THE FRONT END

What you get through your speakers is a gutsy, open sound, which is a little messy by absolute standards, but pretty good by most others. With the *LS/AB33* combo, I enjoyed its enthusiasm after the relatively dour *Aura*, but found that this got a bit too much when the subs were removed, which probably has a lot to do with the extra work-load involved. The 312 is not a power house, and speakers like the *LS33* and *Spendor SP2020*, which require a bit of control, tend to sound brash when you push the volume. However, stick to efficient and conservative-sounding boxes, and you should get a good balance of energy and listenability.

Audio Club ☎ (0181) 343 3240

Spendor 2020

Here's a new model from a classic British brand, designed by the man behind some famous designs. But wait — is that an oval cone I see before me?

£399

The 2020 is the base model in Spendor's new 2000 series of oval-coned loudspeakers, designed by Epos founder, Robin Marshall. Marshall revealed that Spendor had more than half an eye on the home theatre market when it asked him to produce this new range.

Finished in grey vinyl, which for once isn't pretending to be veneer (full marks: let's have some other colours, please!), the 2020 has an attractive arched top, which sets it apart from the crowd. No beer stains on this speaker — but keep an eye out for your carpet.

The oval drive unit is built by Spendor, and is intended to help reduce baffle width without reducing the size of the cone. Also, it dispels some of the problems inherent in round cones, but presumably introduces different complications of its

own. I'm told that the reason for oval cones' scarcity is a lack of suitable models on the drive-unit market, rather than any inherent flaws in the approach. After all, our speaker guru, Paul Messenger, has Rehdeko boxes with oval cones, so they can't be all bad.

The tweeter is a 25mm fabric Morel, with a curved mounting plate, designed by Spendor to match the woofer. It's a neat little speaker with its plinth — almost as neat as its floor-standing brother, the 2030.

In use the 2020 proved quite effective at portraying tonal colour and extracting lyrical meaning, with an even balance that got a lot grunter when it was fed from the *ECA Lectern* power amp. There were times when the plastic nature of the cone seemed to show through the tone of voices and hand-claps, for example, but that wasn't necessarily a result of drive unit material — more likely it was just a character trait.

The 2020 is an attractive and capable loudspeaker. I suspect that previous Marshall designs such as the *Epos ES11* could better it, but the latter isn't shielded and doesn't have the 2020's bass welly.

This Spendor is an interesting design, and one that the hi-fi/home theatre enthusiast would do well to hear for themselves.

Spendor Audio Systems Ltd ☎ (01323) 843474



HI-FI CHOICE

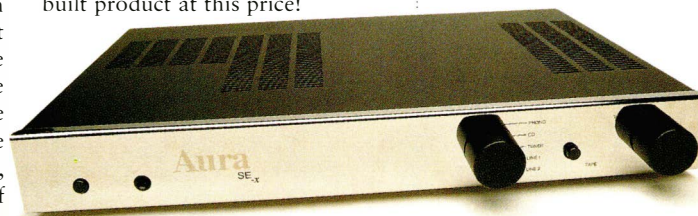


Aura VA-80SE-xC

Do ya think I'm SE-xC? Do ya want my body? Come on Jason try your luck — with a powerful and shiny new wonder from B&W's amplifier offshoot.

£250

A hot, shiny, slimline thing with a silly name, the latest VA-80 is nothing if not cheeky. And its chrome facia is nice, if a little tinny. Crammed into the 50mm-thick case is a 45W integrated amp with phono stage (moving magnet), five line inputs and a headphone socket. Quite an achievement for a British-built product at this price!



Extensive ventilation slots reveal a toroidal transformer, while letting out a fair amount of heat, even when the amp is idling — do not put your chilled lager on this component! I used it with the Trichord *Genesis* CD player and both sets of speakers reviewed elsewhere in Sessions this month.

With the Rogers combination, the *Aura* sounded too laid back, even stodgy at times, but it was encouraged to pick up its heels with some lively material. However, when the *NAD* took its place, things didn't look too rosy. It was only with the *LS33* on its own, and subsequently the *Spendors*, that the *Aura* began to shine. With these speakers the *NAD* started to sound too forward, leaving the stage clear for a relatively calm amp like the *Aura* to do its stuff. Which it did quite proficiently, producing a bit of body in the music and generally maintaining control. It found the tunes and produced some of the stereo, if not the last word in depth, which usually takes a more expensive design.

After a poor start, *Aura's VA-80* finished well, proving that, when in unpredictable circumstances, there's no substitute for power.

B&W UK Ltd ☎ (01903) 750750

NAD 312 — a gutsy little number, but alas no longer costs thruppenny ha'pence.

Aura VA-80SE-xC — where next for acronyms, double-entendre fans?

Spendor 2020 — novelty factor boosted by oval cone; style factor negated by lack of pink polka-dot finish.

MS

Mordaunt-Short

Reach for the stars

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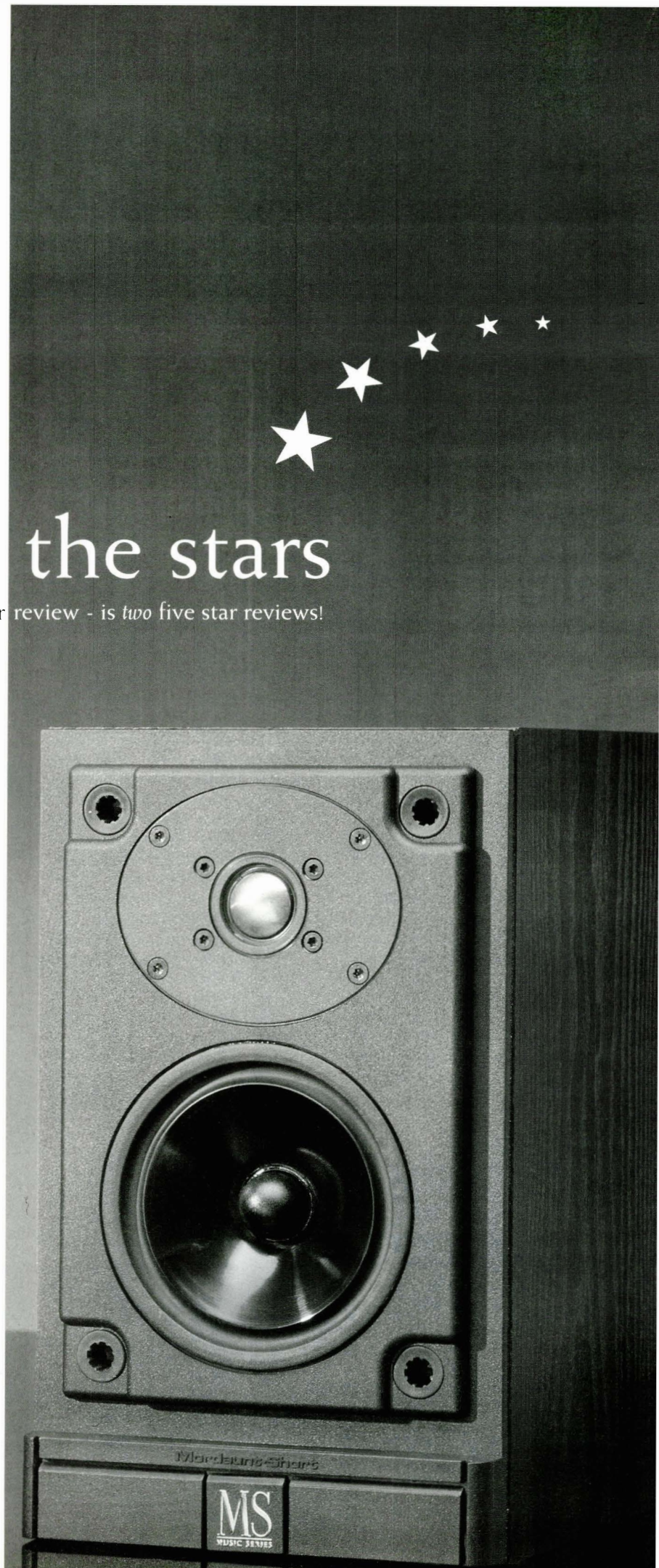
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Ear Waxings

'Sounds of the '80s' is more than a compilation of songs you'd rather forget. To **Jason Kennedy**, it's a science involving your CD player.

Why is it that CD players from the '80s, which sounded only tolerable back then, can sound pretty good today? Have we just got used to them, or have we developed amplifiers and, more significantly, loudspeakers, that help rather than hinder the polycarbonate disc? I'm pretty certain it's the latter. In the days when vinyl was king, speakers were designed to make the most of the medium's excellent midrange and natural high frequencies. Bass performance was played down so as not to feed too much energy back into the turntable.

Speakers were developed with gradually drooping high frequency responses, because this sounded more natural than those that carried on flat to 20kHz or more (they sounded positively bright and uncomfortable; I remember this being true for the Rega *Kyte*). In retrospect, however, the problem doesn't seem to lie in the treble, as it would appear, but in the lack of bass. It's rather like a balancing act handled better by CD players than most turntables. So if you added a decent subwoofer to a Rega *Kyte*, it probably wouldn't sound so bright.

To an extent, this follows from what Jimmy Hughes has been saying about REL subwoofers—and in particular the pair of *Q-Bass* subcurrently living in his lounge. He says that the subs affect the high frequencies as much (if not more than) the low, which is an odd result but one that nonetheless has a sense of balance. It's also one of the reasons why the *Sonolith* speakers I'm using sound relatively dull. Some attribute this to the cone tweeters, but I'm more inclined to think it's the prodigious low frequency potential that makes them this way.

Very few source or amplifier components sound bright through these speakers, which is partly because they have a subjectively restrained midrange, but, more importantly, because they are balanced and have a wider bandwidth than average. It's not the sort of balance that everyone likes, however — my tube enthusiast mates hate them, and even my girlfriend says she prefers a decent bookshelf design. I think the problem lies more with the source and amplification than with the speaker. My transport has gone back for further Trichordification and the Michell shad to return

to their maker, so I'm looking for powerful yet agile phaseliner ampsto try. Anyone out there got any suggestions?

Back to the balance question. If you have problems with digital harshness, then this may be a good reason to try a subwoofer or two, or even just a pair of more capable loudspeakers for added bass. Just remember that decent bass brings with it musical cues that are a lot more significant than you might imagine. Bass underpins the performance and gives it an anchor. Notes are no longer floating in the air: they achieve a sense of place, a root in a definite soundstage.

Imet Roy Gandy (Captain Rega) at the blind listening for this month's batch of CD players (p.88) and he told me that the company had recently conducted its own listening tests of similar products. This was in connection with the development of a CD player (he even played us a prototype that was Sellotaped to the inside of a *Planar* turntable lid, and sounded pretty fine to boot). Rega and its panel of experienced listeners had found that even with machines at significantly different price levels, the only consistent variations were found in the tonal balance, which Roy pared down to bright and dull. It's possible that the bass-light nature of Rega speakers (which I presume were being used) could have something to do with this, as could amplification designed to make the most of analogue sources.

Either way, it would be interesting to conduct a blind test using amplification and loudspeakers that are oriented toward phase linearity and bandwidth, rather than a sense of timing and real-worldness—the sort of products most people actually use with a CD play-



One day, all CD players will be made this way.

er from the test price band. A appraisal based on dynamics using SE tubes and *Air Partners* would also be informative, but possibly too much for many players. Ultimately, the end user finds out what a product really sounds like, so there is some justification for us reviewers using the best we can to find out in an hour or so what you'll discover sooner or later.

Systematic evolution

In Sessions this month (page 12), I have reviewed Trichord's first CD player: the *Genesis*. As with the transport I've been using for some time, this is a modified budget Pioneer, which seems like a very efficient way to get a product on the market without massive time and expense. Perhaps surprisingly, Trichord is the first British company to work this way. Apparently, this is the beginning of a complete *Genesis* system: in the pipeline there's rumoured to be an amplifier based on the Pioneer *A-303R* remote-control integrated, with internal tweakery that is presumably similar to Tom Evans' GTE work on the *A-400*.

There's a speaker en route, too, using a single full-range Jordan aluminium driver in an infinite-baffle foam cabinet. Combining low mass (which means minimal energy storage and usually very quick sound) and a full-range driver (which means superb coherence and imaging potential, if limited bandwidth), this could be the sub-£2,000 system to kick the high end into touch. ▲

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Personal Messages

Paul Messenger takes a nostalgic look back to the future of valve amp and loudspeaker design.

Barely recovered from a trip to see Jamo's factory in Denmark (as related in this column last month), I travelled up to Glasgow to spend a few days with Tannoy. The gap between visits was so short and the contrast between these two speaker manufacturers so great that I can't resist drawing on the experience to show just how diverse this relatively small industry is.

Where Jamo is essentially a cabinet builder, Tannoy concentrates on manufacturing drive units, especially the famous dual-concentric examples that are fitted in most of the up-market models. The company designs all of its own cabinetwork, of course, and takes care of final assembly too, but much of the raw woodworking is carried out elsewhere.

If the dual-concentric driver is one of Tannoy's cornerstones, the other is the way the company bridges the two worlds of hi-fi and professional audio. Often enough it's the progress made in more demanding pro applications that subsequently spins off into domestic products.

One of the main purposes for my visit was to bone up on the history of a company that is about to celebrate its 70th anniversary. Even more of a surprise than finding out about Tannoy's age, however, was the discovery that the dual-concentric drive-unit is older than I am. The original first saw the light of day nearly 50 years ago, in 1948, and might be considered the world's first high-fidelity PA speaker (outside the cinema).

In an age when amplification was exclusively through valves, high sensitivity was the key to opening up new types of PA applications, and it also proved an ideal match for the low-powered mono hi-fi systems of the '50s. The move from mono to stereo automatically adds 6dB to a system's loudness capability, while going over to transistors added several dB more. By the late '60s there was far less need for large, high-sensitivity speakers, and the size of speakers has been decreasing ever since.

However, demand for these 'classic' Tannoys is as strong today as it was then. Few are sold in Britain, but the *Prestige* series of repro classics enjoys legendary status in Japan and other parts of the Far East.

How come? I don't think anyone really knows for sure. The nostalgic retro styling is doubtless part of the appeal. But I suspect that the

traditionally high sensitivity of these models might well be the most significant factor in their longevity, and though I admit to a personal predilection for more sensitive designs, I believe there are solid reasons for this success.

Crucially, choosing high-sensitivity speakers gives the freedom to use low-powered amplifiers. The last few years have seen more and more British hi-fi enthusiasts opting to 'go retro', choosing the sweet sound of valves out of personal preference. Turning back the amplifier clock in this way means suffering a substantial drop in available power, and there is, therefore, a strong incentive to make

93dB for one Watt at one metre (93dB/W) should deliver the same sound pressure levels as an 80Wpc amp driving 'average' 87dB/W speakers.

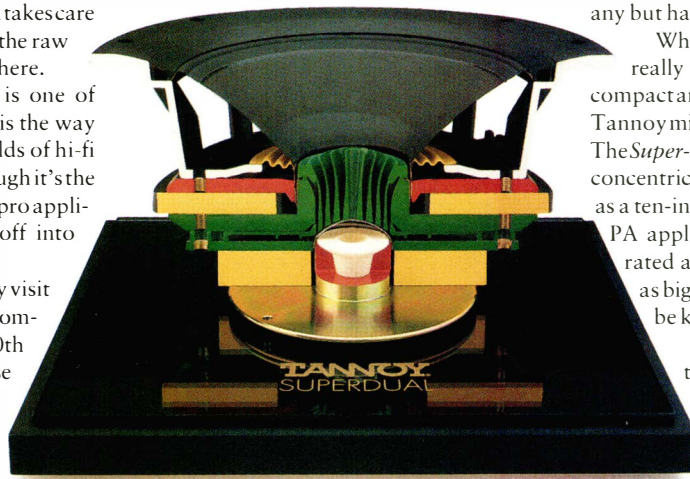
The second phase of the valve revival is the retreat still further into history, back to the era of single-ended triode amplifiers. Although these do sound rather louder than one might expect, they tend to supply only around 3Wpc, so theoretically it's necessary to find a further 8dB or so of speaker sensitivity to compensate.

Trouble is, the only speakers I've measured that beat the 100dB sensitivity barrier are enormous, full-range horn systems. However enticing the sound, the sheer bulk (and expense) involved makes such devices inconceivable for any but hard-core fanatics.

What the single-ended triode revival really needs is something that is both compact and very high in sensitivity. I suspect Tannoy might have come up with the answer. The *Super-Dual*, its latest variation on the dual-concentric theme, was originally developed as a ten-inch mid/treble unit for high quality PA applications, and in this version it is rated at 103dB/W. The magnet is nearly as big as the cone, so credit cards should be kept well out of range.

During the visit to Tannoy, I got to hear a new 12-inch *Super-Dual*, which has traded some of the mid-band sensitivity for a bit more bass extension. Happily, you still get a mouth-watering 98dB/W, while the -3dB bass roll-off is at 70Hz in a 40-litre sealed-box enclosure. There isn't a hi-fi-oriented version around yet, and I reckon that an extra bass driver might well be needed. It's not going to be cheap—the spare part price of a single S300 driver is £995.

Leaving aside these minor problems, the unit is very good indeed. My biggest surprise during a short session listening to the PA version was how extraordinarily sweet the top end sounded. There was none of the spitty directionality of the earlier Alnico/pepper-pot dual-concentrics. This was already much improved in the current 'tulip waveguide' models, but the *Super-Dual* takes another big step forward. Walk across its forward axis and the top end sounds smooth and stays consistent and coherent across a very wide arc. It's all done by computer modelling and precision mouldings, but the end result could be just what the serious anachrophile has been waiting for! ▲



Tannoy's new Super-Dual: a valve fan's dream!

up the deficit by choosing speakers that were designed to be used by low-power valve amps.

The British 'valve retro' movement is still a relatively new phenomenon. Japan, though, was already seriously into valves when I first visited the place close on 20 years ago, and I suspect that other Oriental markets, such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, were not far behind. I've no idea how many hi-fi systems that represents, but I bet a good few of them are using big Tannoy, JBL or Klipsch speakers to help make up for the lack of power.

The first stage of the British valve revival tended to go back to '60s technology, focusing on ultra-linear, push-pull pentodes and the like. These deliver power outputs in the region of 10-20Wpc. Assuming that the impedances match up properly, a 20Wpc amp, driving a speaker with a sensitivity of

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The Jimmy Hughes Experience

Though multichannel systems dazzle with new replay and recording techniques, Jimmy Hughes reminds us that music is more art than science.

It would be easy to assume that major advances in sound recording — stereo and digital, for example — totally eclipsed earlier technologies. Progress is an elusive business, and despite the great strides made in the past forty years or so, the basics were often extraordinarily good — even going back sixty years or more.

Some twenty years ago I was really shocked to read what classical pianist Alfred Brendel wrote on the subject of recording piano music. In his 1975 book *Musical Thoughts And Afterthoughts*, Brendel said: “Why was it so easy to make good piano recordings in the '30s? When listening to the records of Cortot, Fischer, or Schnabel, I feel as if I were sitting in a good seat in a good hall: the timbre of the great pianist is there, the piano sounds homogenous in all registers, dynamic climaxes and hushed tones come over with equal conviction.” The inference is that more modern recordings do not capture these qualities. Back then I thought that this was an extraordinary thing to say; surely it was the advent of LP records and stereo that had finally allowed reproduced music to achieve a semblance of reality?

Around the time when Brendel launched this book, I bought his eight-LP Philips box set of *Schubert Piano Works 1822-1828*. It was a wonder musically, and had some of the best-sounding piano I'd ever heard. So how could anybody not agree that this was in all respects superior to old mono 78s?

As you might expect, I've changed my tune since then. Apart from anything else, modern systems are much better at reproducing historical material than the equipment of twenty years ago. And to my shame, until fairly recently I overlooked Brendel's Vox discs made in the '60s just because they were 'old'. Playing his Vox LPs today I'm struck by how good the best of them sound. Better, dare I say it, than some of his first Philips recordings.

I listen to a lot of piano, and have always regarded it as an instrument that is extremely difficult to reproduce convincingly. Brendel stated that old recordings somehow capture

the individual timbre and dynamic shadings peculiar to each pianist with much greater fidelity than many technically superior modern efforts. It isn't just a convincingly 'realistic' piano sound; it's the artistic essence of a particular musician captured with such fidelity that it couldn't be mistaken for anyone else. Paradoxically, it seems that this quality can be found in old, dated recordings, but not in technically superior modern ones.

If memory serves me correctly, I bought Brendel's Schubert set just before Linn and Naim transformed specialist hi-fi with their moving-coil cartridges, amplifiers that had no tone controls, and the turntable that

recording technology do not lessen the impact of the music or performance, which is how it should be.

This is even further proved by Cortot's 1933/4 recording of Chopin's *Preludes*, which recreates subtle shades of tone colour and dynamics with even greater success, despite its dated sound. The piano is surprisingly firm and full-bodied, and you can hear every nuance, even though the sound lacks the scale and clean dynamics of a modern recording. Interestingly, the LP transfer on EMI References has more of these special qualities than the CD.

What's the secret? It probably can't be pinned down to one particular factor, but many old 78s seem to emphasise the 'presence' region, highlighting midrange detail. That 78 recordings are in mono probably helps too. Even the most diaphanous of Brendel's Philips LPs (like his 1971 Beethoven *Hammerklavier Sonata*) sound noticeably firmer and cleaner when played in mono. Any tendency for the bass to 'spread' is eliminated, making the instrument snap into sharp focus between the two speakers.

Brendel's 1971 *Hammerklavier Sonata* is not technically outstanding, but in mono the piano gains a

homogeneous coherence at all dynamic levels, which allows you to hear how the music is being played. In stereo it's actually less clear, sounding bland and lacking tonal colour and vibrance.

I recently listened to the famous Horowitz/Toscanini recording of the Brahms *Second Piano Concerto* made in 1940, and was surprised again by the crisp piano sound. Horowitz's entry has a clarity that no modern recording approaches. True, the hard, bright, shallow tonal quality of the piano helps, as does the fantastic dexterity of Horowitz himself. But it's more than that...

While I'm not advocating a wholesale return to mono, a part of me feels that musicality and listenability are better served without the excessive directional information that's often superfluous and irrelevant to the music itself. As Sir Thomas Beecham knew, really appreciating music is not the same as merely liking the sound it makes. ▲



Get out the 78s and switch your system to mono for an intimate and realistic concert experience.

sounded better than any other. It's strange, but after a Naim amp and a Linn *Sondek LP12* vastly 'improved' my sound at home, my Brendel Schubert discs somehow didn't sound so good — or at least not as good as I had once thought.

Twenty years is a long time, and at the end of the '80s Brendel embarked on a fresh survey of Schubert's late piano music, recording the work in digital sound for CD. I bought each CD as it came out, and naturally got out my old LPs to hear how Brendel's interpretations had changed. Of course, the new recordings are technically superior to the old, but I'm pleased to say that on my current system the analogue LPs sounded convincing and plausible. The music is totally accessible and the detail of Brendel's playing is clearly articulated. Limitations in

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21st Century

Storing the past for the future can be tricky.

Barry Fox reports on Sony's quest for a future-CD format worthy of its archives.

Fox

Sony has got itself into a fine mess over the new Direct Stream Digital audio system. The surprise side effect has been to remind us all how good analogue recording can be. Supposedly secret demonstrations of DSD were given several months ago to professional engineers in the USA and UK. Not surprisingly, engineers talk to each other. So the news leaked out and the Acoustic Renaissance of Audio posted notices on the Internet warning against the adoption of DSD as a new super-fi audio standard for high density DVD.

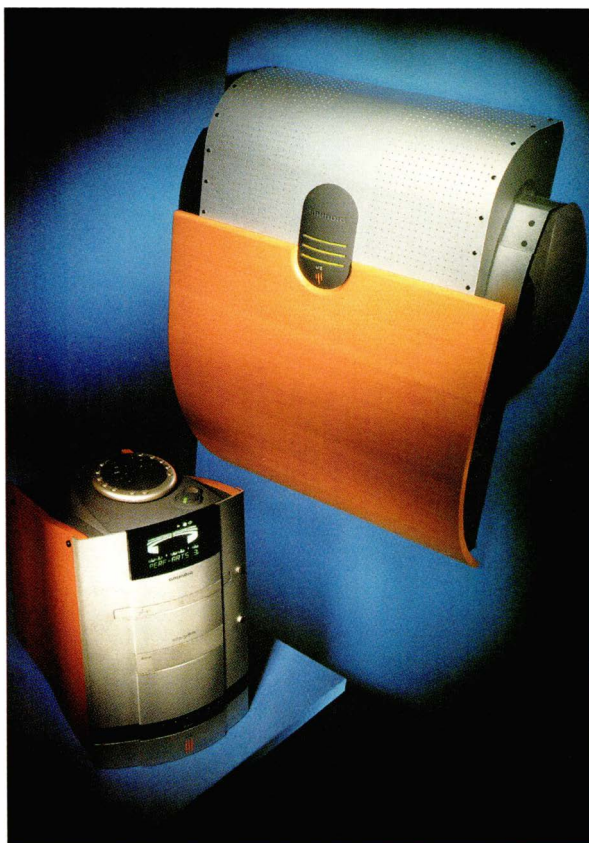
To their credit, Sony Music in London saw the need to communicate, and booked EMI's Abbey Road studios for a press briefing and live-versus-recorded demonstration in late February. But Sony's HQ in Tokyo took fright and vetoed the idea. I was offered a chance to attend the Abbey Road demonstration, but only if I signed a confidentiality agreement. I refused.

Sony Music has now managed to get the press ban lifted, so we finally know what DSD sounds like and how the company sees it being used. Sony's 'Technology White Paper' on DSD describes how the system works with a high-speed stream of single bits, rather than PCM words of 16, 20 or 24 bit length. To generate this bit stream, the analogue signal is sampled at 64 times the 44.1kHz frequency used for conventional CD. This generates a stream of bits running at 2.8 megabits a second, per audio channel.

Think of each bit as steering the signal slightly up or down. Because the bit stream is so rapid, the audio frequency range can stretch up to 100kHz, with a dynamic range of more than 120dB. In theory at least, DSD outstrips the human ear.

The live-versus-recorded tests were designed to get practical feedback from recording engineers on what differences, if any, they could hear. All this makes very sound sense. If there had been more open demonstrations and discussions on the CD standard before it was set, there would have been less contention over the last ten years.

With hindsight, the CD system could and



To DSD, or not to DSD? The jury's still out on hi-fi CD formats for the future.

Sony bought from CBS for \$2 billion.

At Abbey Road the idea of using DSD for future consumer formats was played down so far as to be barely visible. This follows alarm in the record industry that talking now about future-CD super-fi formats could kill sales of conventional CD. "First press reports in the debate on DVD and high-density disc put the cart before the horse," says David Kawakami, Sony's Director of Sound Technology Marketing.

DSD is a scalable technology, that is to say the full-quality archive or master recording can be down-converted to a lower quality standard for release on any future format, whether CD or super-fi DVD.

If this strategy was so clear and well-considered, why on earth did Sony wait three months to present it?

What shook me, and most people I have spoken to, was the extraordinary quality of the analogue recording chain. Abbey Road engineers who had set up the machine were modestly surprised too. But Sony says DSD is still "work in progress". Apparently,

there is only one prototype. And David Smith of Sony Music in NY confirms that until the DSD system is proven, he is archiving old masters onto analogue tape if their condition is too risky to wait.

"We know the archiving system should not be 16 bit, and not 20 bit. My advice is not to commit to 24 bit, 88kHz. My firm opinion is that DSD is more resolute. It's the best we've seen. But the final decision and evaluation will last nine months to a year," said Smith.

The situation is the same at Polygram in the USA. They hold the archives for several major labels, including Norman Granz's Verve jazz, disco catalogue Casablanca and the legendary Mercury label. That's in addition to the Phonogram and Polygram catalogues, as well as Island archives. Unhappy with any existing digital format, Polygram has now embarked on a five-year project which involves copying its stereo archives onto half-inch analogue tape, at 30 ips. ▲

should have been developed as an upgradable format, with players and discs starting with 14 bit performance and moving up through 16, 20 and 24 bit performance as chip technology progressed. Instead, we have seen a mish-mash of CD improvements, all of which are hindered by the need to maintain compatibility with the fifteen-year-old inflexible standard.

As first presented, and leaked, DSD was primarily a proposal for a new system that could make DVD a super-fi, sound-only carrier. Sony's 'White Paper' on DSD now presents it primarily as a professional recording system, useful for archiving purposes, and "optimal for audio applications in the next generation of high-density, high-transfer-speed media".

The London briefings put the heaviest emphasis on archival applications. The story now goes that DSD was developed primarily as a way of archiving and preserving the quality of over 300,000 master tapes which

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Paul Miller's Oasis of Sanity

Technical Editor **Paul Miller** starts a new column in which hi-fi myths will be shattered!

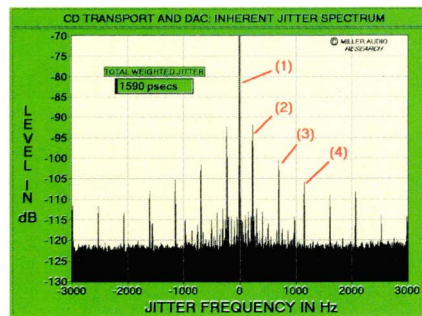
Just when you thought hi-fi was taking another turn for the bizarre, the Ed-in-Chief has charged yours truly with the responsibility for bringing us back to Earth with a comfortable thud.

For our first outing, I thought we should dish the dirt on digital jitter — an unpleasant phenomenon that often adds more than a hint of grubbiness to the clarity of CD players, transports and DACs. We've discussed jitter before (see issue 147 for the full monty), and without it, the life of the digital engineer would be a lot simpler, as the 'edges' that describe our digital codes would all appear precisely on time. In real life, jitter — a type of interference — vibrates or blurs these edges, bringing a degree of uncertainty to their precise position and timing.

If the edges that make up our code are appearing fractionally before or after they are expected, then this causes the reconstructed signal (the music) to become distorted. Using a form of spectral analysis, it's possible to expose this jitter as unwanted sidebands that generally muck up the sound.

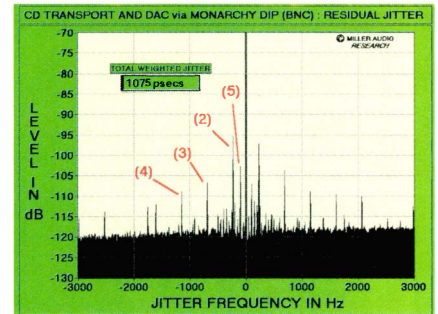
The following graph shows jitter doing its dirty work between a budget CD player and

outboard DAC. The jitter sidebands, or distortion, can be seen radiating out from the 'real' signal (1) as a series of regularly-spaced peaks: (2), (3), (4) and so on. Jitter is measured in picoseconds (million millionths of a second), adding up to some 1590psec on this occasion. This is about ten times higher than we'd like it to be.



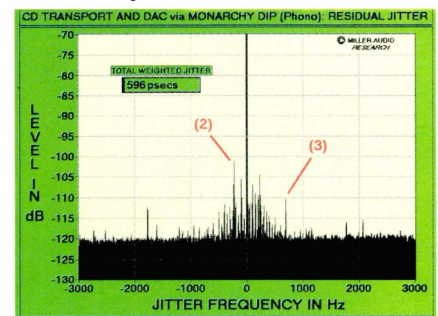
Several manufacturers now produce so-called 'jitter busters': black boxes that intercept your music data as it passes across the interface from the digital output of a CD player (or transport) to the digital input of an outboard DAC. Alvin Gold was impressed with the £245 Monarchy *DIP Super Drive* last month, so I purloined one for testing.

The box has two electrical outputs, either of which may be hooked into your outboard DAC. One, a BNC socket, has the correct 75 Ohm output impedance specified by the IEC958 standard for 'consumer mode' digital audio. As we can see on the next graph, via this so-called "Super Drive" BNC connection, the jitter in our test system is reduced from 1590psec to 1075psec. The distortion sidebands (2), (3) and (4) are now obviously suppressed, particularly on the right hand



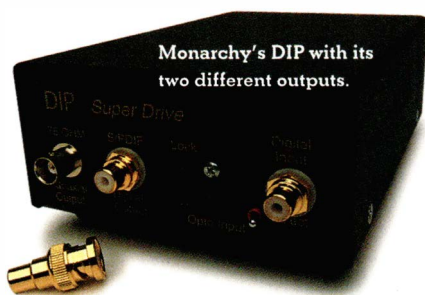
side of the spectrum. Do note, however, that another pair of sidebands (5) have increased in size. This is caused by interference from the power supply inside the DIP.

There is another connection, a conventional phono socket labelled S/PDIF. In truth, both BNC and phono sockets supply an S/PDIF signal because 'S/PDIF' (Sony/Philips Digital Interface Format) describes the type of data used for consumer digital audio. My measurements revealed that this output offers a non-standard 150 Ohm output impedance (75 Ohm is usual) while its digital 'edges' were nearly eight times slower (sloping rather than vertical) than those from the BNC Super Drive socket.



However, as the graph above reveals, despite seemingly having the odds stacked against it, this output succeeds in squashing jitter from 1590psec to 596psec. Why? Because the BNC Super Drive is direct-coupled, which allows interference (jitter) to circulate between the DIP and DAC. By contrast, its phono output is transformer-coupled, effectively isolating the DIP from the outside world and allowing its jitter-busting circuitry to get on with the job undisturbed. More technological exposés next month! ▲

Comments or suggestions for the Oasis can be e-mailed to Paul Miller at 100576.3021@compuserve.com



Comparison Tables for Monarchy Audio DIP				
Digital Output Options	Monarchy DIP Digital Output Level	Digital Output Impedance	Digital 'Edge' Risetime	
BNC (Super Drive)	1413 mVp-p	72 Ohm	2.5 nsec	
Phono output	1144 mVp-p	150 Ohm	19.5 nsec	
Effect of Monarchy DIP on jitter				
Origin	Description	PK-to-pk jitter Original	BNC	Coaxial
PSU Switching	100 Hz	110 psec	346 psec	284 psec
Data	Fundamental	1434 psec	897 psec	424 psec
Data	3rd harmonic	509 psec	320 psec	124 psec
Data	5th harmonic	307 psec	208 psec	75 psec
Data	7th harmonic	222 psec	160 psec	75 psec
Data	9th-11th harmonic	224 psec	165 psec	109 psec
Weighted Total		1590 psec	1075 psec	596 psec

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Akai the noo

Has anybody noticed that separates from Akai have become collectable? Akai, in its infinite wisdom, doesn't import separates to the UK any more; so if, like me, you have Akai's *Reference Series* amp, you need to get the complete set.

Akai's *Reference* system was so good that a friend heard mine and immediately stopped looking so smug about his own Technics separates system.

I have owned lots of different makes of hi-fi in the past, but I can't see past this one. Now I'm looking for the Akai *Reference Series* CD player to replace my bog-standard Akai CD-55. I'm told Germany has some stocks left — but they are marked in German. So maybe someone in Blighty has one they'd part with, to go with my AM-95 Reference amplifier, GX-95 Reference cassette deck and Tannoy *Westminster* loudspeakers!
Jane Smith, Inverness, Scotland

PS Come on Akai, we don't just want portable stereos, we want hi-fi and we don't mind paying for quality!

If anyone owns the Akai Reference Series CD player and is prepared to sell it to make a Scottish lass happy, please write to us at Hi-Fi Choice, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ. Please do not enclose any CD players in your letter.

Happy

I have been subscribing to *Hi-Fi Choice* for nearly four years now (it's the only way to obtain it here in Mid-West USA). It towers above all the audio rags published here in the States. *Hi-Fi Choice* is truly my audio bible. I fully enjoy each informative, knowledgeable page, especially those with any injected humour of your staff. The *Buying Guide* and *Directory* are unsurpassed. Via your magazine, I have been steered to fine components from Rotel, Arcam and Celestion.

I own three systems, and since my pride and joy consists of Acurus pre/power amps, Rotel CD and tuner, and Martin-Logan *Sequels* (my wife still winces at the sight of those babies), I was quite gratified to

read your basic approval of the Acurus combo and 'Logans in your previous two issues.

In closing, a five-star (*surely five-blob* — Ed) thank you to the entire staff at *Hi-Fi Choice* for producing a classic publication. Without question it is the Finest Hi-Fi Magazine in the World. Carry on!

Bill Yanta, Minnesota, USA

Not Happy

Having just received my copy of the April issue of *Hi-Fi Choice*, and having been a keen reader of your magazine since its A5 days, I feel I must put in a strong complaint about the content of this particular issue.

Surely, 95 per cent of the articles would have been better suited to your sister magazine

Home Entertainment, and if people have an interest in AV matters they would be far better off subscribing to this.

Please, in the future can we have a magazine that deals with the subject that its title suggests: hi-fi, and not home cinema!

Robert Allen, Manchester



Hi-Fi Choice is not going to give up on hi-fi just yet. In fact, we have no intention ever to do so, as this hi-fi packed issue will attest. The idea of the April issue was to provide hi-fi enthusiasts (like yourself) with all the knowledge required to take the home cinema plunge without tears. From time to time, we shall cover AV equipment that is significant to hi-fi. Alan Sircom, Reviews Editor.

The beauty myth

Is it just me, or do other readers of *Hi-Fi Choice* agree that amplifiers in so many cases are just plain ugly? It seems that the more money we part with, the more 'biscuit-tin'-like the product becomes. These manufacturers grace amps with poor graphics and printing, plain aluminium facias and knobs, and buttons from the parts bin.

I am not doubting the sonic ability of such products: clearly they are of a very high component quality; sonically, they must be good value for money. But it surprises me that manufacturers who show such brilliance in creating these dynamic works of art choose to house their compo-

nents in casings completely stripped of any design concept.

It seems as if the box is an afterthought. This is an area where manufacturers can and should make improvements. Customers are influenced by the appearance of a product, and do not buy on sonic ability alone. We do not only want to hear the quality — we want to see it too!

Not all manufacturers fall into this category. Some produce very good build quality inside and out, and ultimately it is these manufacturers who will have the greatest success in making us part company with our cash.

Perhaps we have come to expect these high-tech 'biscuit tins' as the norm. But with more imagination from the manufacturers and more discerning demand from the customer, things could perhaps change for the better.

I D Curry, Norfolk

Dressage!



This is our stylish *Hi-Fi Choice* garment, which will be awarded to the writer of the most interesting letter of the month. Available only in capacious, figure-hugging XL size!

OUR ADDRESS

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"We reserve the right to edit all letters that we publish."

Help!

IF HI-FI IS THE ANSWER BUT YOU DON'T KNOW THE QUESTION, LET ALVIN GOLD LEAD YOU TOWARDS ENLIGHTENMENT
Send your hi-fi queries to 'Help!' at the usual address (page 3) or 100433.1130@compuserve.com. We regret we cannot answer individual queries on a personal basis.

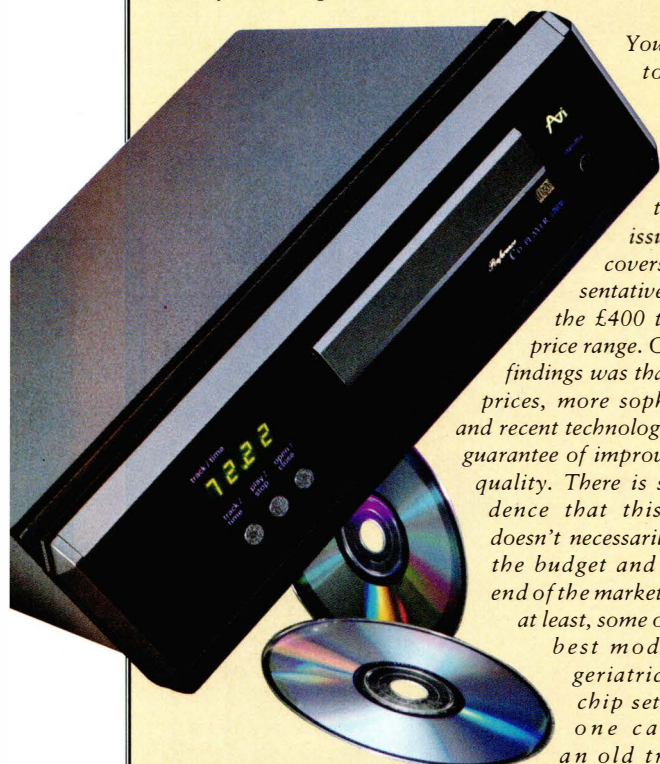
Query of the month

Technologica geriatrica

My system consists of the following: Sony CDP-555ESD CD player, Audiolab 8000A amplifier and Heybrook HB2R loudspeakers wired with QED 79-strand cable.

The CD player is now seven years old and I expect CD replay technology has come on in leaps and bounds since it was made. I also have a Pioneer CLD-2950 LaserDisc player which incorporates the latest one-bit technology, and although it is undoubtedly a touch smoother than the Sony, it comes nowhere near it in terms of sheer musical enjoyment. The Sony goes deeper, the top end is much crisper, its soundstage presentation is wider than the Pioneer's, and the overall sound has more bite. Can you suggest a replacement model?

P McAlpine, Glasgow



You may like to cast an eye over the CD player group test in this issue, which covers a representative group in the £400 to £1,000 price range. One of our findings was that at these prices, more sophisticated and recent technologies are no guarantee of improved sound quality. There is some evidence that this finding doesn't necessarily hold at the budget and the high end of the market, but here at least, some of the very best models used geriatric Philips chip sets, and in one case even an old transport mechanism that hasn't been available for yonks.

You are probably right to suggest that one-bit players tend to sound smoother than multibit — statistically at least, although not necessarily in individual cases. However, it wouldn't be correct to conclude from this that they automatically sound better. In general terms, when discussing serious CD players, the smoothness or otherwise of individual models is rarely the dominant factor. Check out the Trichord Genesis, Orelle CD-100SE, AVI S2000MC and Marantz CD-17.

Your starter for four fifty

Could you please recommend a starter system that includes a CD player, amplifier, and speakers, but costs £450 or less. What sort of sound quality could I get at this price? Or would I have to spend more for decent results?

N Harmes, East Sussex

How long is a piece of string? The good news is that there are several excellent systems that can be put together for the kind of money you're willing to spend. The problem is where to start...

I recently came across a wonderful little speaker from Sony, of all people, costing just £99. It's called the SS-86 and is available from any Sony stockist — Sony Centres in particular. In my opinion, it represents excellent value in today's market; I think it's more than a match for the KEFs and Missions that dominate proceedings up to £150. The Cambridge Audio CD4 CD player (£150, from Richer Sounds) is as good as a bargain, and for a decent, cheap amp to match, shortlist the Denon PMA-250III (£160), NAD310 (£150) and Kenwood KA-3020SE (£200). A bit of QED Qudos speaker cable and Ixos 104 interconnect (or your dealer's recommendation) will get you up and running. Happy listening!

Annexing voltages

I am planning to upgrade my amplifier (a harman/kardon 6200) with one of the following: Cyrus III, Copland CSA14 or CSA18, Exposure XV Super, or Audiolab 8000A.

My current system consists of Mission 753 speakers and a Denon DCD690 CD player with a DPA Little Bit D/A converter.

I like all types of music (jazz, pop, classical and so on), and

assuming that performance — not price — is the determining factor, which of the amps listed about would be suitable for my current system?

Another problem I foresee is that I currently live in a country where the the mains supply is 220 volts (all the above are sold in that voltage), but there is a high probability of moving to another country where the mains voltage is 110 volts. If I use a step-up transformer, would this degrade the sound? Would using an AC filter be sufficient?

Alex Peeress, Hong Kong

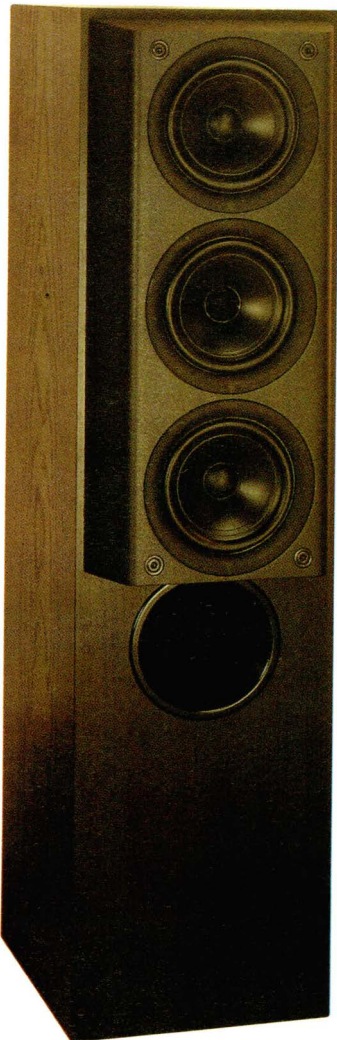
Tackling the second part first: check with your dealer or the manufacturer before committing yourself, to ensure that your choice of amplifier can be switched or readily adapted to 110 volt operation. For your own peace of mind, also ensure that the brand you are interested in has distribution in the country concerned. Avoid using voltage converters of any kind; they invariably do have a significant effect on sound quality, usually by flattening imagery and homogenising detail. AC filters are simply devices designed to wreck sound quality altogether, without doing anything really useful like changing the voltage.

Based purely on sound quality, and throwing all caution to the wind for a change, I don't think there is a shadow of doubt that of the excellent amplifiers you name, the Coplands sound the best. The CSA14, by the way, is a hybrid design with a valve pre-driver stage; the CSA18 — a transistor version of the amp — was never sold in the UK. The latter is about to be replaced by a new solid-state 'entry level' design, the CS8, with a slightly simpler

specification, although I'm told remote control will be added. It is to be sold for under £1,000 in the UK, but I can't say how it will be priced in Hong Kong. The CSA14 will remain available for a year or so, and its latest and greatest incarnation is fitted with Sovtek valves.

Smoke on the tweeter

Last July I purchased a pair of KEF Reference 105/3 speakers and a second-hand Denon PA50, to form the basis of a new system. All went well until I played a particularly demanding Pink Floyd number at reasonably high volume with the speaker covers removed. I was aghast to see what appeared to be a puff of smoke being emitted through the wire-gauze cover of one of the Uni-Q tweeters. The gas did not smell of smoke, but I noticed that the case of the amplifier had become incredibly hot. Using a borrowed, more powerful amplifier, it seemed that the Denon was causing the problem.



From Sweden with valve (inside): Copland's CSA14 integrated amplifier is recommended to Alex Peeress.

My theory is that the amplifier could not cope with the four Ohm load and began current clipping, which caused the tweeter to overheat. The dealer took the amplifier back, but says that if the tweeter is still able to make any kind of sound, then it is working perfectly. My concern is that if the fault caused some ferrofluid to evaporate, this would surely reduce the tweeter's ability to dissipate heat, and impair its performance and reliability. Meanwhile the dealer, who guarantees the speakers, insists that tweeters either work or don't. What do you suggest?
Peter Johnson, Yorkshire

The 105/3 (now discontinued) is moderately insensitive, and has prodigious power handling. In a largish room and/or at elevated volume levels, your 50 Watt amplifier is certainly likely to run aground, especially if it doesn't have a taste for low impedance or reactive loads. I don't know your Denon amplifier personally, but in the words of a KEF engineer I called, 50 Watts is okay, but steady as she goes.

My guess is that you pushed the amplifier into clipping, which caused it to distort and consequently produce a chain of high-frequency harmonics that fried the tweeter. Exactly what caused the smoke I cannot say, but it may have been some of the fluid base of the ferrofluid coolant injected into the voice coil gap.

That said, if the tweeter is behaving normally, I wouldn't worry any more about it. KEF will check it out for you if required, but as your dealer has already said, tweeters tend to either work or not work, and such a check is unlikely to prove cost effective. In the long term, I would advise you to buy

a more powerful amplifier. Meanwhile, your only real claim against your dealer would arise if he suggested that the Denon was powerful enough for all eventualities.

A Bout de Souffle

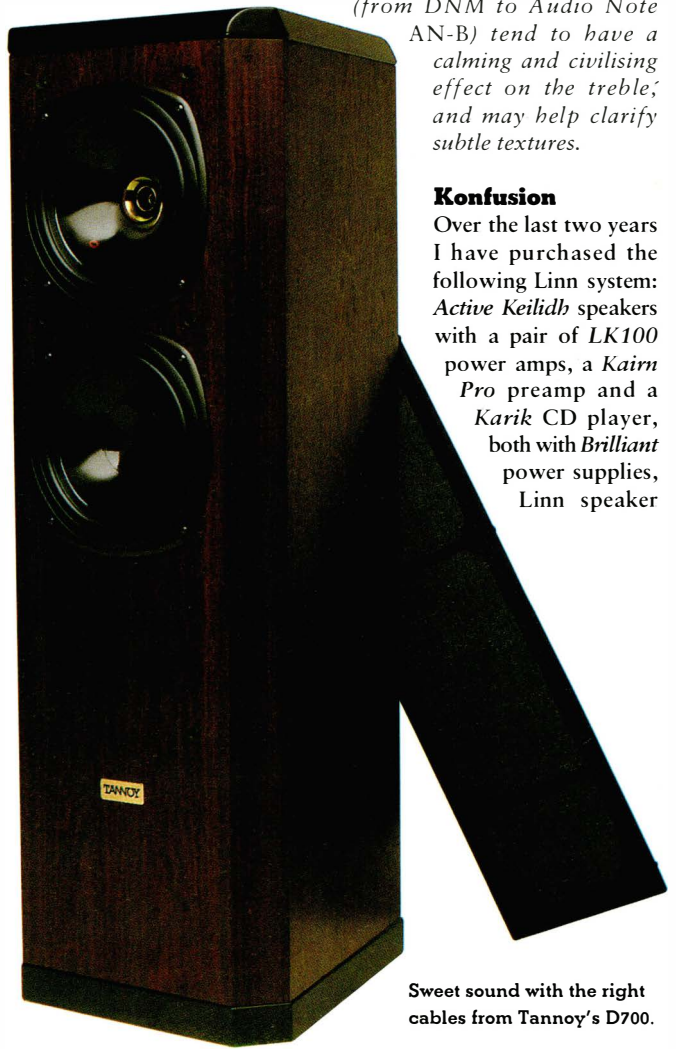
My system includes a Meridian 506 CD player with a Meridian 551 amplifier connected to Tannoy D700 speakers using Cable Talk 3. It sounds good, but the treble is sometimes too obvious. What would be the benefits of bi-wiring, and what kind of cable would you sug-

gest to give a smoother yet well defined treble? Would it be a good idea to use one kind of cable for high frequencies and another for low frequencies?
Claude Troncy, France

Cables can make a substantial difference to systems, but in this case the most likely source of your problem is the combination of the cable and the Tannoy's Dual Concentric tweeter, which sounds just as you describe. It's the price you pay for the other joys of owning the D700. Solid core cables (from DNM to Audio Note AN-B) tend to have a calming and civilising effect on the treble; and may help clarify subtle textures.

Konfusion

Over the last two years I have purchased the following Linn system: Active Keilidh speakers with a pair of LK100 power amps, a Kairn Pro preamp and a Karik CD player, both with Brilliant power supplies, Linn speaker



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← cables and a *Kudos* tuner.

My problem is that together the package sounds flat and lacks depth and warmth. The Linn dealer has been great, but I am beginning to feel that in terms of sound quality I have perhaps paid to support Linn's dealer network and marketing costs rather than top class performance!

My dealer is trying to push me down the *Keltik/Klout* upgrade route again, at a significant cost. I have read your magazine with great interest and wonder whether or not to cut my losses and trade the whole set-up for Audiolab 8000s and Monitor Audio 20SEs. What do you suggest? My musical tastes include Mary Chapin Carpenter and Marc Cohn through Dire Straits to opera and classical, and I listen in a room measuring 24 x 16 feet.
Gordon Stolliday, Berkshire

I cannot understand how you can have invested in a system such as the one you own, without a clear idea of how it performs. That's what the dealer is there for. There is something in your criticism of the Linn equipment: Linn has never majored on stereo depth, and they don't make a 'warm'

sound. I must say I agree with your dealer that Keltik/Klout may be the right upgrade path — not necessarily because it will address your criticisms directly, but because it's so overwhelmingly better in other areas that you simply won't notice the 'faults'. Probably... Your alternative solution may provide some gains, but it's also very likely to involve considerable losses in the areas where the Linn is strong. I wouldn't recommend it. Whatever you do, have a careful listen to the options your dealer can offer.

Jamon Jamon

We recently visited various dealers checking some of your Recommended models, and eventually carried home a pair of Linn *Keilidh* speakers, which were mounted on ceramic plinths some months later. The results were so impressive that we are still discovering 'new' parts of our CD collection. We really love these speakers' tight bass, precise timing and treble.

At present, the *Keilidhs* are driven by an *HK6600* integrated amplifier whose main source is an *HD7600* CD player (both harman/kardon).

¿Bueno estente h/k HD7600, por favor? Sminky pinky!



DEALER DECISIONS

Three hi-fi shops answer a reader's query

The Problem

It was inevitable that I would get into hi-fi, as my dad was a hi-fi nut. Now that I've got the bug, I can't seem to find the sound I'm looking for. My set-up is a Kenwood *KA-550D* amplifier, *NAD 502* CD player and *Mission 753* speakers. I have an old Toshiba turntable and would like to upgrade this as I have yet to hear a CD player that can come close to the sound of vinyl. The sound I'm looking for is like that of good hi-fi in the late '70s, with a bit more detail!

Richard Horton, Leicester

Solution #1

The best part of your system is the pair of *Mission 753s*. If anything, they are too good, as they are exposing deficiencies elsewhere in your set-up.

If vinyl is the most important source, then changing the Toshiba turntable for either a *Rega 2* with a *Rega Bias* cartridge, or better still a *Rega 3* with a *Rega Elys*, will bring about a vast improvement in source quality.

If your preference is to improve your system around CD as a source, the Kenwood amp should perhaps be the first to go. If budget allows, then an *Arcam Alpha 6+* amplifier or a *Rega Elex* would control the speakers far better. However, stretching to a *Naim Nait 3* would pay dividends in the long term, and provide the sound you are searching for.

To improve upon your *NAD* CD player, have a listen to *Arcam's Alpha 5+* and *Alpha 6* CD players, along with Linn's *Mimik* and the *Naim CD3*, both of which are well worth the extra money.

Geoff Coleman, Acoustica, Chester

Solution #2

Not knowing whether your income is that of a lowly audio retailer or the exalted heights of a *Hi-Fi Choice* editor (that's what you think — *Dennis Publishing Pay Corps*), I'll stick to the middle ground.

My first inclination is to change your amplifier for something that would better suit the ability of the *Mission 753s*.

Audition the *Arcam Delta 290* amplifier (with optional phono stage) or the *Cyrus III*. Both units will give you better detail and soundstage.

If the turntable is a stop gap until you find the CD player you like, try a *Dual CS-505-4*, complete with *AT95E* cartridge. With an ever-expanding record collection, listen to the *Rega Planar 3* plus *Ortofon MC10 Super* cartridge, but if you buy a *Cyrus III*, a moving-coil board will be required for the *Ortofon*.

Now, about that CD player you haven't found yet. Indulge your ears to a long listen with the fabulous *Arcam Alpha 6*.

Whatever you do, find a friendly dealer who will let you audition the equipment at your pace, install it in your home and have service support should you need it. We do exist.

Roger Skillman, W Darby & Co, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Solution #3

If you want hi-fi that reproduces your music as it was performed, with the life, energy, dynamics and scale intact, the choices are fairly limited. My guess is that you have a lot of '70s music that you wish to enjoy to its full potential. Good hi-fi should reproduce all music types without preference.

My suggestion would be to get a *Systemdek IIX* turntable, *Rega RB250* tonearm and *Goldring G1022 GX* cartridge to sort out your front end. Improve the clarity, dynamics and tone colour by replacing the Kenwood with an *Audio Innovations Series 700* line integrated and a *P1* phono stage. Finally, sell the *Mission 753s* to a victim of marketing hype and get some scale, life and coherence with *Dali's 104 MS* loudspeaker (see *Sessions*, issue 145).

Kevin Scott, Definitive Audio, Nottingham

Views expressed are those of the dealers concerned and do not reflect Hi-Fi Choice editorial policy.

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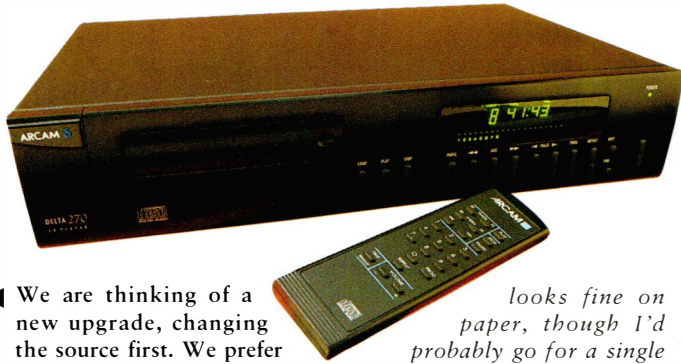
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◀ We are thinking of a new upgrade, changing the source first. We prefer single-box players and require a digital output since a Sony DAT recorder is part of the system. Will £1,200 allow us to enjoy even further our jazz, opera and pop collection? *Claudio & Gaby, Spain*

The HK6600 (now discontinued) was a big, ballsy amplifier, and should work just fine with your Keilidhs. The CD player is probably due for replacement, as you have surmised, and if you want to stay in brand, take a look at the HD7725 at £799 (complete with digital output), which was thought 'impressively bold and dynamic' in issue 124. Also check out the Marantz CD-10 (not yet reviewed by Hi-Fi Choice).

Brilliant Arcam

I have just purchased an Arcam S270 CD player, which is fantastic. My thoughts for the next few steps are to buy a Nakamichi DR2 and a Rotel RC970BX MkII preamp and two RB-970BX MkII power amps (to be bridged). What are your opinions on this so far, and what would you suggest to help choose some speakers? *Rupert Cheswright, London*

Do you mean the Arcam Delta 270 CD player? The system

looks fine on paper, though I'd probably go for a single power amp (unless you have unusual power demands), then add a second amp when the system is up and running, on the basis of a proper comparative demonstration. Asking for help when choosing speakers is a good idea. As I'm sure you will have guessed, the help should be in the form of a specialist dealer with proper demonstration facilities. But use our Directory (p. 117) to make a shortlist.

Back to the wall

Although my living room is 15 x 13 feet, the forced layout of furniture means I have no space left for floorstanding speakers. My present Mission 781 speakers are wall-mounted.

I am very pleased with the sound, but it's time to upgrade. My main source is a Denon DCD-1290 CD player, linked to an Audiolab 8000A.

The speakers I have been keen on hearing are the B&W CDM1s, Matrix 805SVs and the Monitor Audio Studio 2s or 6s. Basically, I am looking for a high-quality, small, wall-mounted speaker in the £600 to £1,000 range, with a big, clean and wide soundstage.

Listening to any of these loudspeakers seems virtually impossible without some prior financial commitment. Can you



Cuddly wall-mounted sound with B&W's CDM1s.

HINTS & TIPS

ARM AND CARTRIDGE SET-UP by Jimmy Hughes

1 Last month we looked at turntable set-up; now let's consider tonearms and cartridges. The adjustment of height, weight and geometry are of vital importance. The stylus tip must be set to play at the optimum pressure and be adjusted for correct geometry. The latter can be checked with an alignment protractor. Most cartridge manufacturers give a range of recommended tracking weights, leaving it for you to decide on the optimum downforce. Set too light, and you'll experience noise and mistracking distortion during loud passages as the stylus desperately tries to maintain contact with the groove wall. Increasing the downforce will improve tracking, but set it too heavy and the sound may become dull and leaden.

2 Temperature and humidity affect the optimum stylus pressure, and most cartridges prefer working at a relatively high temperature — 70°F or higher. Related to tracking force there is also bias, or anti-skate, to consider. This force is applied laterally to the arm to counter its tendency to swing to the centre of the disc. Bias equalises this, but opinions vary as to how much should be applied.

3 Adjusting the bias so that the stylus stays put when placed on a spinning blank disc would seem to be ideal, but this does not take stylus profile into account; by using this method you typically end up with too much bias. With most arms, bias is calibrated with numbers intended to correspond to the playing weight in grams. If your cartridge tracks at 1.8g, try setting the bias to 1.8 and see how it sounds.

4 With some pickups you can get a good idea of the ideal bias setting by examining the stylus/cantilever assembly from the front and looking to see if it is pulled in either direction laterally as the tip touches the groove. If it does, set the bias so that the cantilever stays centred.

5 The height of the arm is also important, as it alters the vertical tracking angle (vta) of the stylus. Start with the arm tube parallel to the surface of a disc, stylus placed in the groove and platter stationary. If the arm height is set so that the tube slopes down to the front (positive vta), the sound will be sharper and brighter, possibly harsh if set to high. Set it below parallel and the opposite occurs. Because LPs vary in thickness, and discs from the '50s and '60s were cut at a 15° angle instead of the 20° angle used in the '70s and beyond, vta setting has to be a compromise, although some keen audiophiles have admitted to adjusting vta for each LP!

6 It's vital to ensure that the cartridge fixing bolts are firmly tightened, although this should only be done with the arm removed from the turntable to avoid stress on the delicate arm bearings. While on the subject of bearings; it's important that these offer minimal friction and are free of excessive play. If you put the arm into balance and then (with the stylus cover firmly in place) see how easily it glides across, this will let you know how good your arm bearings are. Bearing adjustment, however, isn't something that you should undertake unless you really know what you're doing — leave it to the experts.

advise? My tastes in music are a fairly eclectic mix of pop, rock and blues.

J S Logan, Cleveland

None of these speakers is especially suited to wall-mount applications, and if you can place your eventual choice on wall supports that hold them a little distance from the walls, then so much the better.

My personal choice would be for one of the two B&W

designs. The 805 is essentially a studio monitor, which is happiest driven hard and loud, and probably the one of the models named that is comfortable near a wall. The CDM1 is a little more cuddly and domestically proportioned. The MA Studio 2 has not been tested by Hi-Fi Choice, but the 6 has, and it was felt to be good, albeit lacking in vigour and drive. Alas boundary (wall) use is likely to exacerbate this problem.

Instant systems

We take a great system, then make it better. That's the philosophy behind this new series of features, which kicks off as **Alan Sircom** pays a visit to London hi-fi emporium KJ West One.

Over the years, we have noticed that it has become much more important to consider hi-fi systems as a whole. Gone are the days when you could simply divert 99 per cent of your budget to the source and split the last few beans between amplifier and speakers.

Nowadays you'll often come across systems where the source is king, or where the budget is evenly matched, or even where a particular amplifier or pair of speakers takes the bulk of the budget. However, this doesn't mean that anything goes. Indeed, put together three products by random selection and it's almost a dead cert that you'll be advertising in Exchange & Mart before the warranty runs out. Even products that have received *Hi-Fi Choice* Best Buy or Recommended swing-tags cannot be guaranteed to sound good in combination — assembling a great system is a process of trial and error, but pays dividends in the end.

This is why we've decided to start a new series of features on system-building, where we concentrate on the actual products rather than formulas or theories. Over the coming months, we shall focus on certain systems at particular price points, investigate the perfect upgrade for an existing system, compare packaged audio with separates of similar cost, and even transform mid-fi kits into stratospheric high-end super-products. Each recommendation will be accompanied by alternatives where possible. But to start with, we will look for the ultimate £1,000 hi-fi system, and explore just how far you can expand — and what steps you have to take — before you need to change every component present in your listening room.

THE STARTING POINT

Marantz CD-63 KI Signature	£500
Arcam Alpha 6 Plus	£350
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	£140

Currently, the dealers' favourite CD player is the Marantz *CD-63 KI Signature* — and with good reason. Only recently launched, the superb £500 *KI Signature* has a clarity and versatility that make it hard to beat until you approach the £1,000 mark. Where previously we would have suggested upgrading the CD player quickly after the system began to rise in price, the *KI Signature* stays firmly put.

Like Marantz's star CD player, the £350 Arcam *Alpha 6+* amplifier has become a hugely popular choice among buyers and dealers alike. Although this amp sounded rather average in our blind test last month,

its popularity and strength lie in an ability to produce good results from loudspeakers in the 'matching' price bracket.

That price bracket begins at £140, with the Mordaunt-Short *MS10i* loudspeaker, of particular note when planted on a pair of £70 Atacama *SE24* stands. For those who visited the Bristol Sound & Vision Show in February this year, the very system described above was playing in Mordaunt-Short's own room.

While subtlety is not really on the Marantz/Arcam/Mordaunt-Short agenda, this combination had all the full-on, head-down-boogie potential that a hi-fi newcomer needs. It also had all the clarity, all the drive and all the impact one could possibly use in a small room.

This system comes to life at the sort of levels where most of its price peers begin to pack up and run for cover. Consequently, music



FIRST UPGRADE: £1150
 Marantz CD-63 KI Signature
 Arcam Alpha 6 Plus
 Mission 733



that screams to be played loud hangs together in the room in a manner quite rare at this price level. It favours the exciting, rock-oriented end of the spectrum, making discs like Nirvana's *Nevermind*, Rage Against The Machine's first album and *Exit Planet Dust* by The Chemical Brothers sound stunning. If you hanker after a home PA system, but want something with a touch of class, then this is the perfect place to start.

Strengths and weaknesses

Small speakers like the *MS10i* generally need bass reinforcement, and are best placed less than ten centimetres from a load-bearing wall. Similarly, the Atacama stands need to be filled to the max with heavy stuff (sand, lead shot or steel SoundBytes), then spiked and levelled to prevent any rocking. Blue-Tacking the speakers to the stands is also a good idea. If you are diligent about setting up the system, the rewards can be massive, especially at this level — where any improvement can make the difference between merely good and great.

In fact, this system is far better than it has any right to be, especially if used with the right ancillaries, such as good interconnect and speaker cable, and a decent equipment stand. It may seem stupid to suggest a two-tier Mana table for so prosaic a set of components (such a table costs as much as the Arcam amp), but the improvements are clear even at this level. And it's an upgrade that you don't need to replace when you change the equipment.

However, all systems at this price have their limitations. Despite being impressive, loud and potent, our combination lacks bass — especially at low levels, or in big rooms — and it can be relentless. How to upgrade will therefore become a key question sooner or later: is the CD, amp or speaker at fault, and how do you correct now without unbalancing the system later? Definitive answers will only be forthcoming in a dealer's showroom, so we called upon KJ West One on a bright March morning. Armed with a few discs I played the part of the everyday *Choice* reader looking for upgrading advice.

THE FIRST UPGRADE

Mission 733	£300
van den Hul Clearwater cable	£5.99/m

Swapping the £140 Mordaunt-Short *MS10i* for the £300 Mission 733 floor-stander is a very definite step in the right direction — especially with van den Hul *Clearwater* speaker cable and *The Source HB* interconnect (£49.99 per mtr).

Now, although you can still play at party levels, the system has the grace, space, pace and bass that the *MS10i* lacks at low levels. Best of all, though, there is neither spit nor venom in the treble. Instead, there's a cleanliness and dryness about the sound that is cultured and civilised, yet the system is still capable of rockin' when required.

The Mission represents the second step in a long road of upgrades, and the Marantz/Arcam/Mission combination makes for a very good, basic hi-fi system. It lacks some ultimate vibrancy, is a trifle grainy, and the port can produce a few odd quacks. But the slate is wiped clean by the system's overall bounce and tidiness.

As you move up the price lists, it seems as

THE SECOND UPGRADE

ProAc Tablette 50	£599
or B&W CDM1	£600

The next move would be to change either the amplifier or loudspeaker, depending on requirements. After listening to both options in KJ's studio, the speaker was deemed more significant than the amp at this point. The next stage in the system's development involved moving from floor-standing Mission 733s to heavy stand-mounted £599 ProAc *Tablette 50*s or £600 B&W *CDM1*s. We even tried the £699 ProAc *Studio 100*, but found the system too unbalanced at that point.

Comparing two similarly-priced loudspeakers is never easy, but usually you can find areas where one suits your tastes more than another. In my case, the extra extension and control of the B&W *CDM1* could not compare with the ProAc *Tablette 50*'s sheer presence and stunning in-room imagery. Whatever these tiny speakers lacked in absolute bass, they more than made up for in stunning, three-dimensional images.

On the face of it, the B&W speakers had

SECOND UPGRADE: £1450
 Marantz CD-63 KI Signature
 Arcam Alpha 6 Plus
 ProAc Tablette 50 or B&W CDM1



THIRD UPGRADE: £1749
 Marantz CD-63 KI Signature
 Audiolab 8000S
 ProAc Tablette 50



◀ the upper hand: it is easy to see why they are so popular — and how they won last year's EISA award! A ported, two-way design with a tweeter unit standing proud from the cabinet, the *CDM1*'s styling is distinctive and classy. The sound produced is similarly up-to-date and stylish, with stunning bass from a small speaker and the sort of precision that makes B&W such a driving force in the studio monitor world.

By contrast, the ProAc *Tablette 50* is almost boring in its styling. This is a simple, small and square two-way speaker with a beautiful finish and two small, rear ports. Although it has a very definite, warm, box coloration, the sound produced is completely liberated from the enclosures, creating images that jump into the room.

The difference between the two speakers is clear, but one is not intrinsically better than the other. The B&W is a paragon of analysis, detail and control, while the ProAc has the more rose-tinted view of music and near-magical soundstaging. Consequently, being an incurable romantic, I preferred the ProAc vision of loudspeaker-ness. You may choose differently, especially if you seek an absolutely clear view into the recording studio.

THE THIRD UPGRADE

Audiolab 8000S	£650
DPA Slink cable	£41
or Audion Silver-wire Blue interconnect	£150/m

The next upgrade will start to reveal limitations in the system's electronics. Neither speaker will force the pace of change, but the improvement brought about by another amplifier will make a lot of sense as soon as you hear it.

KJ's next step was to slot in an Audiolab *8000S* in place of the Arcam *Alpha 6 Plus*. A cautious Recommendation in our May issue, the line-only, remote-controlled, £650

8000S was at once more controlled and less sterile-sounding than the classic *8000A*.

In the context of KJ's demonstration, using the Marantz *CD-63 KI Signature* as source and ProAc *Tablette 50s* as transducers, the system became much smoother and softer sounding. The hackneyed 'lifting of veils' analogy suddenly seemed appropriate, as a layer of grain and grit disappeared from the presentation.

Obviously, the extra power and grip bestowed by the Audiolab makes for a tighter focus and the potential to play considerably louder. But more significantly, the entire acoustic space in which the instruments now exist is dramatically increased and far more clearly defined. These improvements make listening much more of a pleasure than it was through the Arcam, even for a set of jaded journalist's ears.

The all-pervading sense of control is especially strong in the upper bass, which is significantly cleaner and tighter than the Arcam's best attempt. While the bass appears

leaner to the newcomer at first, it soon becomes clear that it is, in fact, deeper and more ordered, and what you're hearing is the absence of artificial upper-bass bloom. This makes the whole musical experience a little more wholesome, and creates an in-room presence that is truly excellent.

Another minor improvement at this point was to experiment with different types of interconnect cables. Starting by swapping the vdH cable for DPA *Slink*, the system became a little cleaner and more detailed, but it may prove to be slightly too forward for some tastes. Swapping to Audion's *Silver-wire Blue* cable was a far better bet. It initially sounded softer than *Slink*, but this softness was due less to lack of drive or impact, and more to a cleaner, sweeter treble and more extended bass.

THE FOURTH UPGRADE

Audion Sterling	£699
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Next, KJ's Les Wong replaced the Audiolab *8000S* with an amplifier far more specialised, but no more expensive. Substituting the Audiolab *8000S* for a £699 Audion *Sterling* amplifier brought a superb emotive quality to the music, the like of which is an extremely rare experience outside the high-end.

As with our original system, this combination sounds a lot better than you'd expect. This time, however, there are some very rational reasons why. The amplifier is not an integrated design, but a single-input, single-ended valve power amp with a volume knob on the front. While you normally improve the overall sound by taking a preamp out of the equation, the amplifier becomes very difficult to use for people with more than one source, and using a control preamp (of any kind) will change the sound. In addition, the 11W (on a good day) power output from a pair of single-ended EL34s is not meant to be powerful enough to drive a pair of low-ish efficiency ProAc *Tab 50s*.

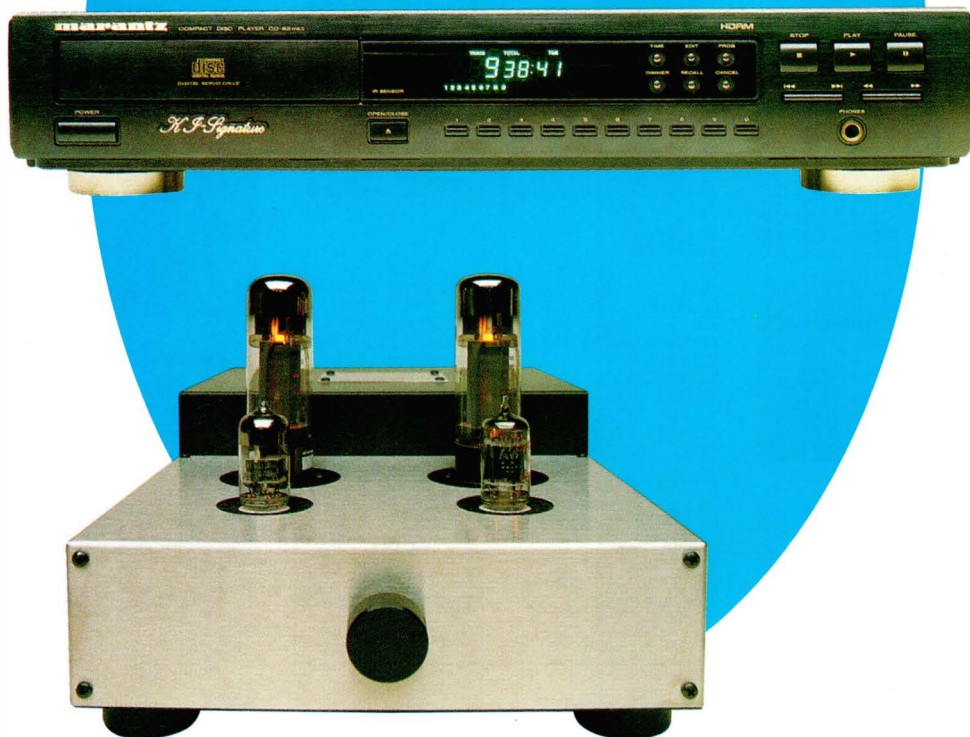
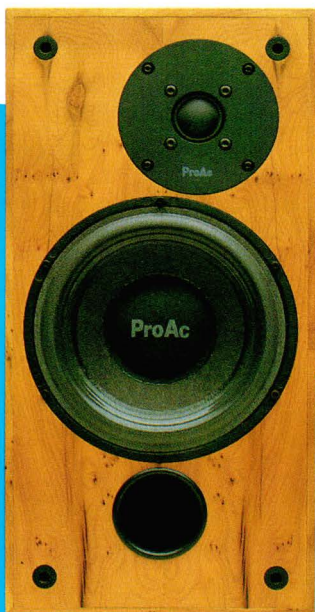
Although you won't experience any

FOURTH UPGRADE: £1798
 Marantz CD-63 KI Signature
 Audion Sterling
 ProAc Tablette 50



FINAL UPGRADE: £1898

Marantz CD-63 KI Signature
Audion Sterling
ProAc Studio 100



heavyweight loudness or find much grunt beyond the volume control's half way point, the sound will have such refinement and grace that these will seem like minor compromises. The amazing coherence, the ability to create pin-point, box-free images, and the excellent unforced detail contribute to make this a system that appears distinctly greater than the sum of its parts.

It bestows the music with a sense of real-world weight and scale, and the dynamic shading on offer almost makes you forget you're listening to hi-fi. The only reservation I have about the sound is that it opts for naturalness over drive and pace. Thus, Metallica and the like sounded aggressively bright, instead of just aggressive. The pace and rhythm kids, raised on silicon pop through transistorised hi-fi, may find this tube stuff a little too mature for their tastes. Those with less rigid preferences will feel that the system sings like a diva.

THE FINAL UPGRADE

ProAc Studio 100 £699

The final step in the chain is a very optional one, given that it involves a very small price difference. However, swapping the ProAc *Tablette 50* for the bigger £699 *Studio 100* adds more bass and vocal projection. It also adds a whole heap of warmth, which might be too much for some tastes — especially if you were considering using a turntable and disc stage instead of a CD player. As the difference in price between the two pairs of ProAcs is only £100, we would not class this as an upgrade *per se* — it's more an option you might go for as you select the loudspeakers. Just keep in mind that the *Studio 100* did not work as well with the Arcam *Alpha 6 Plus*. Thus, since the ProAc *Studio 100* won't shine with a lesser amplifier, perhaps the step is perhaps not as illogical as it may seem. ▲

Conclusions

You'll notice that each improvement, though greatly beneficial, doesn't represent a massive increase in cash. Many of these upgrades could be eliminated within one demonstration, as you might opt for the better system at the beginning rather than cutting corners at the start and regretting it later. If you're wondering why there were no massive price increases, it's because they would normally put the system too dramatically out of balance. As our system stands at the end of this upgrade path, with a Marantz *CD-63 KI Signature*, an Audion Sterling power amp and a pair of either ProAc *Tablette 50* or *Studio 100* speakers, we find ourselves at the point where high-end audio beckons. From here, there are no limits as you take small steps forward at each point. Adding a more up-market CD player would not have made such an obvious improvement before the last few iterations of the system — but now it would be the next logical step. However, replacing the *KI Signature* with something appreciably better would probably cost you at least £1,000 — or more.

Thanks to the sophistication of the upgrade path offered by KJ or any good dealer, at no point does the system sound as if it actually needs an upgrade. Yet, by listening to KJ's alternatives, you realise the potential of every enhancement along the way. This is the sure sign of truly top-flight system-building: if, while you are on the upgrade path, you feel the need to speed the process along, then you're not doing it right. Just like another leisure pursuit practised by men and women up and down the country...

Contacts

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Audiolab: Cambridge Systems Technology Ltd., Spitfire Close, Ermine Business Park, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6XY. ☎ (01480) 52521
Audion: Alema (UK) Ltd, 25 Montefiore Road, Hove, Brighton BN3 1RD. ☎ (01273) 202637
B&W: B&W Loudspeakers Ltd., Marlborough Rd, Churchill Industrial Estate, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 8TR. ☎ (01903) 750750
Marantz: Marantz hi-fi UK Ltd, Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 575-583 Bath Road, Longford, Middlesex, UB7 0EH. ☎ (01753) 680868
Mordaunt-Short: Mordaunt-Short Ltd, 3 Ridgway, Havant, Hampshire PO9 1JS. ☎ (01705) 407722
ProAc: DNA Marketing, Bluefields, Spy Lane, Loxwood, W. Sussex RH15 0SS. ☎ (01403) 753180
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NAD	701	Receiver	Ex-dem	290	260
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Silver Linings

Alan Sircom does the sand dance with a brand new speaker, whose basic principles hail back to Wharfedale's golden years.

Gilbert Briggs was the king of loudspeakers. His legacy lives on in the shape of the many speaker designers who worked under him, but also in their students and collaborators. Occasionally, though, a speaker springs up that has no personal connection to the great Wharfedale designer, but nonetheless has his mark stamped all over it.

Anyone familiar with Briggs's extensive published work will have come across the concept of the beach-filled baffle. As far as Briggs was concerned, the ultimate baffle would consist of a front and back panel separated by plenty of sand. A mass-loaded baffle resonates at a point far outside the 20Hz-20kHz audio band. To improve the imagery of the loudspeakers, the baffle would be unusually wide, so that no nearby edges could break up the sound waves as they radiate out from the drive units.

And so it is, more or less, with the £1,995 Silverado 1 speaker. This is a 25litre two-way ported speaker that is slightly larger than an Epos ES11, but which has double-skinned, sand-filled side panels. The front and rear panels are more conventional single sheets of MDF — but they are some 50mm thick. Even the top and bottom panels are attended to, being mass-loaded with sheets of lead. The combination of this huge, heavy box and custom-made Target stands gives the Silverado the appearance of something like a ProAc Response One 'S' on steroids. The Silverado 1 is finished in a sumptuous black piano gloss, however, or an optional hand-painted

lapis lazuli effect for those who seek a more luxurious look.

The interior of the Silverado 1 is similarly dripping in overkill, with felt and rubber damping sheets applied to all internal surfaces. Conventional internal bracing is abandoned in favour of cross-bracing using coach bolts. If cars were this solidly built, 90mph head-on collisions would barely scratch their paintwork — and a Mini Cooper would weigh about as much as the space shuttle.

As a result of all this work on the cabinets, reviewing the Silverado 1 speaker should merely involve a critique of the Dynaudio drive units, the cables and the crossover network. However, things aren't quite that simple, for the designers at Silverado have managed to overcome the quack that has long been considered inherent to the Dynaudio bass unit.

The 28mm fabric dome tweeter and 170mm plastic mid/bass unit fitted on the Silverado 1 are almost as thick as the front baffle itself, but any minor worries about drive unit insertion are negated by a pair of external crossover networks. These are simple first-order affairs, using very high-quality components.

The Silverado's tonal balance is hard to pin-point. It's so uncoloured and neutral that it nearly sounds boring, and rockin' timing freaks will want to steer clear as it has no great accent. It could be argued, however, that because of its lack of emphasis on timing, the Silverado 1 is all the more honest.

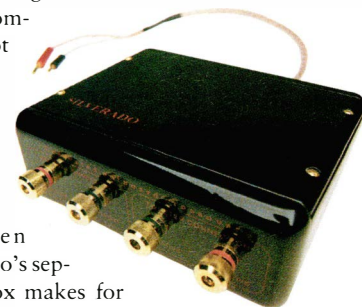
If you're after one hell of a wide image, the Silverado 1 is your box. In a small room, it may sound a bit stretched, but in the size of listening room that can effectively swallow speakers of this size, the image is high, wide and deep. Once again, the electrostatic benchmark springs to mind, especially as there is no spitchiness from the tweeter. Considering the Silverado's size, it gives good, but not bone-crunching bass. In a small room, there will be little problem with bass depth, and — unlike most high-end speakers — it does not overload the room with boom.

Like many a fledgling high-end loudspeaker manufacturer, Silverado has set its sights on the Wilson System V as the reference point to beat. Play a System V and a Silverado 1 back-to-back and the extra bass, vibrancy and transparency will justify the expense of the System V. However, from memory, both have a broadly similar tonal (read natural) balance and insight. The American design offers more insight into a system's shortcomings, but that's not to say that the Silverado's vision is obscured by fog. And when it comes to determining small differences between cables, the Silverado's separate crossover box makes for superior tests.

I believe that the Silverado 1 needs an amplifier with some grunt behind it; without suitable bottom-end muscle, there is a tendency toward lack of control. The Silverado 1 works well with valve amps like the Conrad-Johnson MV-55, however, so this is 'real-world' low-end control — the amplification to go with this speaker does not need to have grip and power in the same way that a Krell does.

There are a lot of good things to say about the Silverado 1. Its coach-building is a sign of uncommon quality. The sound quality — with a few very minor reservations — is first rate and very high-end. At the price, this speaker makes a lot of sense. ▲

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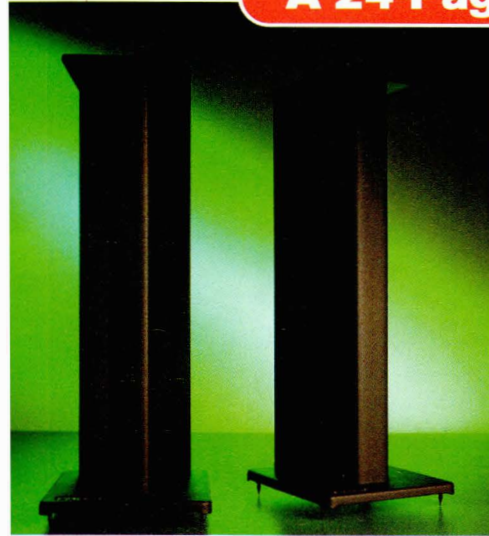
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AWARDS

Welcome to the 1996 British Hi-Fi Awards, unique among other magazines' hi-fi awards because **you, the readers**, have decided which products win!

You'll have seen the voting form in a select handful of magazines over the past few months — including *Hi-Fi Choice*, *Home Entertainment*, *Q*, *Mojo* and *The Gramophone*. Additional voting forms were available in a broad cross-section of hi-fi dealers in order that the public at large could have its say in the voting.

The shortlists were compiled as follows. Manufacturers submitted products as potential nominees to the British Federation of Audio. From these, just three contenders from each category were shortlisted by the editorial team of *Hi-Fi*

Choice. The three nominees in each category were printed on the voting form, and you, the readers, ticked off your favourites. The voting forms were collated by an independent body, and the winning products are displayed over the next 21 pages.

One award was held back for the *Hi-Fi Choice* team. This year we have introduced a new category: the Editor's Award for Outstanding Hi-Fi Product of the Year. This award highlights a trend-setting component that, in our opinion, demonstrates exceptional innovation.

Where possible, we have indicated the original review of each award winner, and you will find further details in our new-look Directory (starting on page 117), which explains how to use our instant fax-back service (page 116). Enjoy!

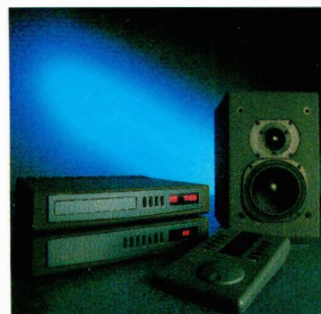
HOW TO USE THESE AWARDS WHEN BUYING HI-FI

Each award-winning product has been selected by your peers as being the finest in its class. However, to fully determine how well these excellent products suit *your own* tastes, you must pay a visit to your nearest dealer for an audition.

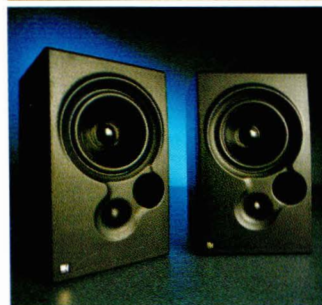
These products are the perfect starting-point for a top-flight system, but putting together prize-win-

ning equipment is no guarantee of great sound.

Use these award-winning products, in association with Best Buy and Recommended components listed in our Directory, to make a shortlist. Then find your nearest specialist dealer (using our Dealer Directory, page 147), and follow the advice given in our special buying feature on page 118.



CONTENTS



CD players below £250	44	AV speaker systems below £750	57
CD players above £250	45	AV speaker systems above £750	58
Tuners below £250	47	Subwoofers	59
Tuners above £250	48	Hi-fi speakers below £200	61
Cassette decks below £250	49	Hi-fi speakers £201 to £500	62
Cassette decks above £250	50	Hi-fi speakers above £500	63
Integrated amplifiers below £300	51	Complete systems below £1,000	64
Integrated amplifiers above £300	52	Complete systems above £1,000	65
Pre/power amplifiers	53	Hi-fi accessories	66
AV amplifiers below £350	55	Editor's Award for Outstanding	
AV amplifiers above £350	56	Hi-Fi Product of the Year	67



CD PLAYERS UP TO £250

Denon DCD-825

The £240 Denon *DCD-825* received a Recommendation back in December 1994. Like earlier models, such as the *DCD-625*, the '825 is Japanese-built in collaboration with UK designers, to give it the 'British' sound.

And what a sound it produces. The *DCD-825* is one of the most colourful performers around, especially at its reasonable price. Its beefy, solid performance will enliven the most bass-light systems, while its zest and vivacity always manage to

capture the thrill of the moment.

Although it uses standard components, as seen in most low-cost Denon products, the *DCD-825* has been dramatically improved in important ways, evinced in the use of special hi-fi hot-rod tweaks like Cerafine capacitors and PMI op-amps. Despite this you'll find that the *DCD-825* is not disgraced in the ease-of-use department: essential convenience features like track programming, display switching and volume control are all present and correct.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

DENON DCD-825

PRICE £240

REVIEWED Issue 137

DISTRIBUTION

Hayden Laboratories Ltd

☎ (01753) 888447

ALSO SHORTLISTED

PIONEER PD-S703 (£250)

Reviewed Issue 137

JVC XL-V284 (£140)

Reviewed Issue 147



CD PLAYERS ABOVE £250

Naim Audio CD3

Rewarding with a Recommendation in this issue, the Naim *CD3* has been receiving praise from all and sundry since its launch two years ago. Designed to fit snugly into Naim's entry-level system, *CD3* has an alarming ability to outperform some seriously expensive CD players, thanks to its uncompromisingly musical delivery.

Naim thoroughly re-engineers every aspect of tried-and-tested multi-bit technology to produce a CD player that is as

distinctive as it is great sounding. Most noticeable is the manually operated, swing-arm CD tray, and the magnetic puck that keeps the CD in place. Add a dearth of superfluous features and DIN sockets, and you've got one iconoclastic player.

The sound quality makes up for any eccentricities. Eschewing the niceties of hi-fi in favour of good, basic, earthy delivery, the Naim Audio *CD3* should be high on the list of priorities for anyone who's more interested in music than audio.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

NAIM CD3

PRICE £950

REVIEWED Issue 155

DISTRIBUTION

Naim Audio Ltd

☎ (01722) 332266

ALSO SHORTLISTED

Arcam Alpha 6 (£600)

Reviewed Issue 155

Meridian 508 20-bit (£1,685)

Not Yet Reviewed



SR 2000 ifi



SR 1000 ifi



SR 909

VIVANCO

Call 01442 231616 for more details

THE INDUSTRY CHOICE



SR 850



SR 606



SR 250

SR 909 "...an articulate midband and the good price win through to make the SR909s a bargain" - *What Hi-Fi?*, Dec '92

SR 1000 ifi "Able to open out the music and bring much-needed depth to listening..." *What Hi-Fi?*, Nov '95

SR 2000 ifi "The sound of the Vivanco's is beautifully crisp and clear with a fast and powerful bass..." - *What Hi-Fi?*, Sept '95

SR 250 "A real bargain and an obvious Best Buy..." - *Hi-Fi Choice*, Mar '95

SR 606 "It sounds open and clean, with warmth and graciousness denied most of its competitors" - *Hi-Fi Choice*, Aug '94

"An excellent buy" - *What Hi-Fi?*, Dec '93

SR 850 "An all-round giant-killer" - *Hi-Fi Choice*, Mar '95

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SR 606

SR 850

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SR 909

SR 1000 ifi

SR 2000 ifi



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THE INDUSTRY CHOICE





TUNERS UP TO £250

Arcam Alpha 5 Plus

The AM/FM *Alpha 5 Plus* tuner is a perfect match for the rest of the Arcam *Alpha* range, but as a quality stand-alone tuner, it is the first choice for those in need of good radio reception. While at £220 it is more expensive than starter tuners, its sound quality and compatibility with less-than-perfect aerials are well above the performance of lower-priced models.

The Arcam *Alpha 5 Plus*, tested in issue 142, offers the radio lover no less

than 24 user-programmable presets, and an LED meter to accurately judge the strength of the incoming radio signal. It also sports a simple yet exceptionally clear display.

And then there's the sound quality, which positively bristles with zest and musical coherence. When you ally these qualities to the superb manufacturing values of Arcam, the whole *Alpha 5 Plus* package remains extremely difficult to beat at the price.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ARCAM Alpha 5 Plus

PRICE £220

REVIEWED Issue 142

DISTRIBUTION

A&R Cambridge Ltd

☎ (01223) 440964

ALSO SHORTLISTED

DENON TU-215RD (£150)

Not Yet Reviewed

ROTEL RT935AX (£160)

Not Yet Reviewed



TUNERS ABOVE £250

Audiolab 8000T

Few nominees had so clear a lead over their rivals as the Audiolab 8000T. In fairness, rivals stood little chance against this unilaterally well-received AM/FM tuner, which achieved a Best Buy from *Hi-Fi Choice* in issue 120. In these days, when the tuner is a more esoteric product than before, the 8000T is arguably the greatest airwave plucker of the '90s.

Brimming with useful functions, such as 39 presets and a large LCD display

resplendent with every indicator the tuner buff would ever need (Radio Data System text excepted), the Audiolab 8000T has still been designed from the ground up with top quality sound in mind. Even the usually perfunctory and largely ignored AM section is state-of-the-art.

Above all, however, the Audiolab 8000T has a superlative sound quality allied to a textbook technical performance, which puts it streets ahead of the rest of the tuner market.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

AUDIOLAB 8000T

PRICE £750

REVIEWED Issue 120

DISTRIBUTION

Cambridge Systems Technology

☎ (01480) 52521

ALSO SHORTLISTED

CYRUS FM7 (£400)

Reviewed Issue 142

ARCAM Delta 280 (£400)

Reviewed Issue 120



CASSETTE DECKS UP TO £250

Denon DRS-640

The Denon *DRS-640* stormed ahead of the runners-up in this category, just as it did in our listening test, when it achieved a very confident Best Buy. Then, this unique deck won over our reviewers with its smooth and well-adjusted sound. Now, the sheer quality of the single-deck, drawer-loading player has proved its worth with the public, too.

A drawer-loading mechanism is rare among cassette recorders, and echoes Denon's ventures into digital audio tape.

From a stylistic point of view, the slim-line design and CD-style drawer makes the *DRS-640* a good match with most CD players and amplifiers on the market.

While other decks in the price range offer three-head flexibility, Dolby S noise reduction or exotic displays, the more conventional two-headed *DRS-640* eschews faddy gimmicks in favour of simple facilities and a very robust construction. Unlike many cassette decks at the price, the *DRS-640* is a player built to last.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

DENON DRS-640

PRICE £210

REVIEWED Issue 140

DISTRIBUTION

Hayden Laboratories Ltd

☎ (01753) 888447

ALSO SHORTLISTED

PHILIPS DCC730 (£250)

Not Yet Reviewed

JVC TD-W218 (£170)

Not Yet Reviewed



CASSETTE DECKS ABOVE £250

96kHz DAT Recorder

Pioneer D-05

The best cassette deck above £250 is not a cassette deck – it's a DAT recorder! It would seem that news of DAT's death in the domestic field has been greatly exaggerated; if anything, the format has blossomed into a high-technology mainstay of the hard-core audio enthusiast. *D-05*, a scaled-down version of the battleship *D-07*, is the budget baby in Pioneer's trio of high-sampling-rate digital audio tape machines.

Pioneer's 96kHz system doubles the

sampling frequency of conventional DAT, leading to a drastic improvement in sound quality. For the dedicated user, this gain more than outweighs the fact that high-sampling DATs are incompatible with lesser, non-HS-DAT machines.

It is not cheap, but the Pioneer *D-05* is an excellent solution for archiving your precious analogue recordings. And if Japan is anything to go by, we're due for an avalanche of bootleg, pre-recorded 96kHz DATs any day now. Hmm...

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

PIONEER D-05

PRICE £900

REVIEWED Issue 152

DISTRIBUTION

Pioneer High Fidelity (GB) Ltd

☎ (01753) 789789

ALSO SHORTLISTED

PIONEER CT-S830S (£500)

Reviewed Issue 146

JVC TD-V662 (£270)

Reviewed Issue 146



INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS UP TO £300

Musical Fidelity E10

Few British companies have made as much impact in the mid-price arena as Musical Fidelity. From the humble and hot *A1* to the basic but ballsy *B1*, Musical Fidelity has made many amplifiers that have bolstered the systems of the audiophile on a budget. Today's *E10* follows in that tradition, as we found in issue 154.

A minimalist amplifier design, with a glossy fascia that is positively bereft of knobs, the *E10* has the sort of soft, warm

sound that is more commonly associated with high-end valve amplifiers.

The *E10* has three line inputs, a moving-magnet phono input, two tape inputs, a headphone socket and a tape monitor circuit. At the same time, it is not laden down with tone controls or the fancy features that often weigh down amplifiers at this price. Finally, and this will be important for those who seek a complete style injection, the *E10* is partnered by a matching *E*-series CD player and tuner.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MUSICAL FIDELITY E10

PRICE £300

REVIEWED Issue 154

DISTRIBUTION

Musical Fidelity Ltd

☎ (0181) 900 2866

ALSO SHORTLISTED

PIONEER A-400X (£300)

Reviewed Issue 138

H/K HK 610 (£200)

Reviewed Issue 149



INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS ABOVE £300

Cyrus III

The third incarnation of a classic amp, the *Cyrus III* is a *tour de force* of both technology and sound. Under the hood you'll find microprocessors and surface-mount components by the score, with full star-earthing as a matter of course. An output of 55 Watts is available, all under the control of an infra-red handset, or a front-panel volume knob that doubles as a balance control. A ring of green LEDs keeps the user informed at all times.

There are four line inputs and a moving-

magnet vinyl disc input for those who still enjoy listening to records. On audition, the *Cyrus III* comes across as a vigorous amplifier, with a naturally balanced, vivid, articulate midrange, sandwiched between firm bass and a delightfully sparkling, sweet treble. With the best recordings it offers surprisingly subtle detailing for an amp of this price.

Designed with ergonomics, long-term reliability and musical enjoyment in mind, the *Cyrus III* should slip effortlessly into a wide variety of quality systems.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

CYRUS III

PRICE £500

REVIEWED Issue 140

DISTRIBUTION

Centralforce Ltd

☎ (01480) 451777

ALSO SHORTLISTED

TECHNICS SU-A900MK2 (£450)

Reviewed Issue 138

NAIM Nait 3 (£550)

Reviewed Issue 154



PRE-POWER AMPLIFIERS

Audiolab 8000Q/8000M

Audiolab's 8000Q preamplifier and 8000M monoblok amplifiers represent the zenith of this reputable brand's range, and their internal design is typically a reflection of the latest in leading-edge technology.

The 8000Q manages to route and amplify signals without using capacitors, thanks to its innovative, proprietary Zq circuitry. Technically speaking, this arrangement dynamically stabilises the preamp's DC offset – in case you were wondering!

The solid 8000M power amps use Sanken transistors to produce 150W per side, and are capable of bursts of 280W into one Ohm. They also feature variable input loading to accommodate a variety of preamps and interconnects.

This combo has a commanding sound, crystallised by an ability to create solid, focused, articulate images. It is best suited to the raw energy of rock, where its authoritative grip over the music transcends all other hi-fi parameters.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

AUDIOLAB 8000Q/8000M

PRICE £2,499.70

REVIEWED Issue 145

DISTRIBUTION

Cambridge Systems Technology Ltd.

☎ (01480) 52521

ALSO SHORTLISTED

MUSICAL FIDELITY F15/F22

(£2,898) • Not Yet Reviewed

ROTEL RC-/RB-970BX2

(£399.95) • Reviewed Issue 144

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AV AMPLIFIERS UP TO £350

Denon AVR-900

Denon's introduction to the world of surround sound is the AVR-900. This complete AV amplifier has everything you need for a home cinema system, yet those in the know reckon it has enough finesse for audiophiles, too – when played at decent volumes.

Unlike many budget multi-channel amplifiers, the AVR-900 offers a beefy 60 Watts power output to each of the three front channels, and still finds 15 Watts for the all-important rear speakers. The 900

sports three separate Dolby Pro-Logic modes, as well as two Digital Signal Processing options for those who have always dreamed of living in a concert hall or 'live' venue.

On the audio side, things are equally rosy. Not only is there a full remote control, but the specification also includes an AM/FM tuner with 40 presets. For anyone contemplating a mid-price system with a strong AV flavour, the AVR-900 is the perfect place to start.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**DENON AVR-900****PRICE** £350

Not Yet Reviewed

DISTRIBUTION

Hayden Laboratories Ltd

☎ (01753) 888447

ALSO SHORTLISTED**HARMAN/KARDON AV1100**

(£300) Not Yet Reviewed

JVC AX-V6 (£230)

Not Yet Reviewed



AV AMPLIFIERS ABOVE £350

Arcam Xeta One

Arcam's *Xeta One* is the first and so far the only all-British Dolby Pro-Logic amplifier. That may well account for its discreet 'hi-fi' styling, and an extremely professional approach to amplification. All three front speakers in a Pro-Logic configuration are driven by the same circuits that power Arcam's 290P audiophile power amp.

You'll find a similar level of technology deployed in surround-sound processing. Here there's a premium Pro-Logic chip

from JRC, and a separate digital delay doing the honours on the rear effects channels. A comprehensive array of audio and video socketry means that your whole AV system can be routed through the *Xeta One*, and surround levels can be set via the on-screen display.

What you get with your movies is the power to shake furniture and portray action with frightening realism, but not at the expense of sonic finesse. Who needs a cinema when you can have *Xeta One*?

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ARCAM Xeta One

PRICE £1,000

REVIEWED HE 24*

DISTRIBUTION

A&R Cambridge Ltd

☎ (01223) 440964

* Home Entertainment magazine

ALSO SHORTLISTED

MERIDIAN 541 (£995)

Not Yet Reviewed

DENON AVC-2800 (£800)

Not Yet Reviewed



AV SPEAKERS UP TO £750

Celestion Style

Celestion's home cinema package isn't called *Style* for nothing. Each product in the *Style* speaker range has been designed with aesthetics strongly in mind. Striking looks even extend to the angular speaker stands!

The package comprises *MP1* multi-purpose loudspeakers for front channels, the appropriately-named *Little 1* loudspeaker for the rear channels, the *CSW Mk II* powered subwoofer, and the *CSC* centre channel speaker.

And the angular styling of these products is not simply cosmetic. The curvilinear cabinets are designed to minimise standing waves and resonance within.

All the *Style* products, except for the *Little 1*s, are magnetically shielded to prevent damaging the colour balance of a nearby screen. Even the subwoofer is screened, which would be extraordinary even in a more expensive unit. So simply add an AV amplifier for sophisticated and complete home cinema sound!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

CELESTION *Style*

PRICE £700

Not Yet Reviewed

DISTRIBUTION

Celestion International Ltd

☎ (01473) 322222

ALSO SHORTLISTED

GLL *Arena* (£400)

Not Yet Reviewed

CANON SKT1/SKT2 (£250)

Not Yet Reviewed



AV SPEAKERS ABOVE £750

KEF 60S, 80C, 30B

KEF's latest and most stylish home theatre speaker package is made up of the 60S satellite for front left/right and surround applications, the 80C centre channel and the 30B subwoofer.

The 60S is an extremely flexible unit, with its own integral mounting bracket. It uses KEF's *Uni-Q* coaxial drive-unit technology in a bass-reflex, magnetically-shielded enclosure. The 80C uses the same driver technology in a horizontal, twin-reflex port design, which will sit above or below

the screen. The 30B subwoofer is an active design, with built-in 100W amplification driving a 30cm cone, which will take you down to 45Hz without trying.

This is one of the more stylish surround packages you can buy. The moulded plastic cabinets give the system a modern, organic feel, which contrasts with the boxy shape of many speakers. The 30B purveys bass without making a fuss about it, and doesn't lose sight of the need to keep good time with music.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

KEF 60S, 80C, 30B

PRICE £1,026

REVIEWED Issue 154 (30B)

DISTRIBUTION

KEF Audio UK Ltd.

☎ (01622) 672261

ALSO SHORTLISTED

POLK AUDIO RT8 (£1,079)

Not Yet Reviewed

JAMO THX System (£2,500)

Not Yet Reviewed



SUBWOOFERS

REL Storm

Little needs to be said about the sensational REL range of subwoofers. Before REL, subwoofers were sneered upon by the UK press, but now they're an everyday part of hi-fi life.

REL's entry-level subwoofer, the thunderous *Storm*, is perfect for adding that extra bit of bass impact and grunt. Whether you need to add power and drive to movie soundtracks, underpin the gutsy sound of the heaviest metal bands, or reinforce the power of an orchestra, REL's

Storm is the subwoofer for the job.

Like all RELs, the sub-bass unit is fully powered, and has the flexibility to be adjusted for any type of partnering full-range speaker – from the smallest to the beefiest boxes around.

One sub not enough? Add a second *Storm* and hear the subtle benefit of stereo operation. We've found that even the biggest speakers benefit from REL reinforcement, so there is no excuse not to give your system the *Storm-in'* treatment!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

REL Storm

PRICE £695

Not Yet Reviewed

DISTRIBUTION

Harman Audio UK Ltd

☎ (0181) 207 5050

ALSO SHORTLISTED

B&W ASA 6 (£500)

Reviewed Issue 154

KEF 30B (£499)

Reviewed Issue 154

Design For Life

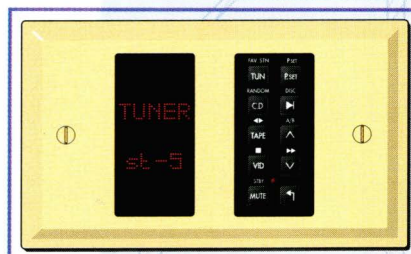
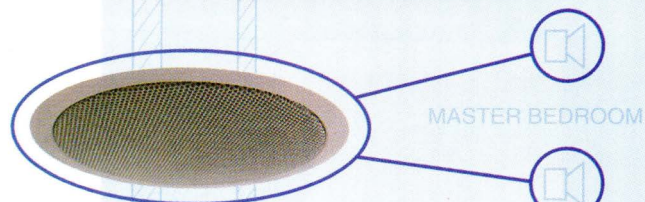


Modern Design to Traditional Standards

The Design for Life storage system is based on CD sized modules which lock together to make just the shape you want. A range of drawers is also available to fit into the boxes, offering unparalleled storage flexibility. The components are all beautifully made in oak with walnut inserts, and look equally good in modern and traditional rooms.

Further details are available from
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HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS UP TO £200

KEF Coda 7

Something of a legend after barely a year in production, the *Coda 7* has single-handedly changed the budget loudspeaker market. Its distinctive sculpted baffle sets it apart from the crowd, and elegantly incorporates a reflex port at the front. However, even this gives little indication of the sonic treats in store.

Round the back there are decent-quality speaker-wire terminals, connecting through to a 95mm doped-paper mid-bass driver and 25mm soft-fabric tweeter.

The *Coda 7*'s sonic advantage comes from a well-judged midband balance complementing treble that is a shade more forward than usual. As a result, the sound is very explicit, and unusually open. *Coda 7* has the sort of qualities that bring out the life and character in music – and it can keep time, too!

Clearly the budget box to beat, KEF's *Coda 7* has dominated the market 'til now, and it'll take something pretty special to knock it off its pedestal.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

KEF Coda 7

PRICE £129

REVIEWED Issue 145

DISTRIBUTION

KEF Audio UK Ltd.

☎ (01622) 672261

ALSO SHORTLISTED

MORDAUNT-SHORT 10i (£140)

Reviewed Issue 130

TANNOY 631 (£130)

Reviewed Issue 141



HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS £201 TO £500

Mission 733

Back in issue 139 of *Hi-Fi Choice*, we gave the £300 Mission 733 a resounding Best Buy thumbs up. Since then, we have regularly recommended this stylish, two-way, floorstanding speaker to readers in search of system satisfaction.

What is at the heart of its appeal? Is it the big box with its smooth curves and neat plastic sub-baffle, or is it the weighty, clean and well-rounded sound that wins so many converts in demonstration rooms

across the land? One thing is for certain: £300 is a small price to pay for a big box with great sound.

Despite modest sensitivity and bass extension, this speaker is a perfect partner for most mid-price amplifiers, but that does not mean it will sound out of place in a high-end system. What's more, in accordance with Mission's design philosophy for its 73-series, the 733 is sensitive and flexible enough to be equally comfortable in an AV rôle.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

MISSION 733

PRICE £300

REVIEWED Issue 139

DISTRIBUTION

Centralforce Ltd

☎ (01480) 451777

ALSO SHORTLISTED

CASTLE Severn (£500)

Reviewed Issue 152

TDL RTL 3 (£400)

Reviewed Issue 126



HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS ABOVE £500

B&W P4

B &W's *P4* is the smallest model in the floorstanding *P* range, but it includes many of the innovations present in its more expensive siblings.

Measuring a discreet 81cm by 20cm, and occupying a mere 25 cm in depth, the *P4* is an elegantly proportioned yet structurally tough design that's available in a variety of real-wood veneers, including cherry, rosenut and black ash. It uses a 165mm Kevlar-coned woofer and 26mm metal-dome tweeter.

Within the box there is a transmission-line-style sloping baffle to reduce standing waves (the energy created by the backward movement of the cone), and damping wool to control resonance. Bass output is consolidated by output from the slot-shaped reflex port under the main driver.

The result is a compact loudspeaker that's capable of considerable loudness and bass extension, and that should work in a variety of systems and situations with the utmost ease.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

B&W P4

PRICE £600

Not Yet Reviewed

DISTRIBUTION

B&W Loudspeakers Ltd.

☎ (01903) 750750

ALSO SHORTLISTED

EPOS ES22 (£1,185)

Reviewed Issue 151

PROAC Two Point 5 (£2,700)

Reviewed Issue 149



COMPLETE HI-FI SYSTEMS BELOW £1000

Akai TX 700

Akai's TX 700 is a complete Dolby Pro-Logic system, which costs less than you'd pay for many a decent subwoofer, but still represents a value-packed proposition.

Featuring an RDS AM/FM tuner, graphic equaliser, three-CD auto-changer, twin auto-reverse cassette decks, and a full surround-sound speaker package made up of centre, main left/right and surround channels, this remote-controlled system has literally got the lot!

What's more, it sounds pretty good. The CD and tape decks play clean and uncluttered, the tuner is sensitive, with very little background noise, and the Dolby Pro-Logic system is armed to the teeth with effects and winking lights.

As a surround system, its processor is one of the sharpest at the price, effects are accurately resolved, and the rear channels are unusually punchy. The shielded speaker system really gives you your money's worth.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

AKAI TX 700

PRICE £500

REVIEWED

Home Entertainment 32

DISTRIBUTION

Akai ☎ (0181) 897 6388

ALSO SHORTLISTED

JVC Adagio C330 (£400)

Not Yet Reviewed

PHILIPS FW 380i (£600)

Not Yet Reviewed



COMPLETE HI-FI SYSTEMS ABOVE £1000

Quad 77 System

A mainstay of the British hi-fi establishment, Quad Electroacoustic's most recent system uses the latest communications technology from the computer industry to feed signal, power and switch information along 'Quadlink' bus lines.

The fully upgradable £1,944 Quad 77 is also the first Quad system to be supplied with a pair of box loudspeakers, instead of the big and expensive electrostatic speakers Quad is best known for. The new enclosures have been designed in association

with Spendor and are strongly styled to match the new 77 system.

However, most clever of all is the remarkable *QuadRemote*. This menu-driven remote control unit has a two-way link with the Quad system, meaning that you can keep up to date with CD track information from across the room! The remote is also software controlled, so that future upgrades can be incorporated as and when they occur. This makes Quad's system one of the most future-proof outfits on the market.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

QUAD 77 SYSTEM

PRICE £1,944

REVIEWED 77 amp: HFC 139; 77 CD: in this issue

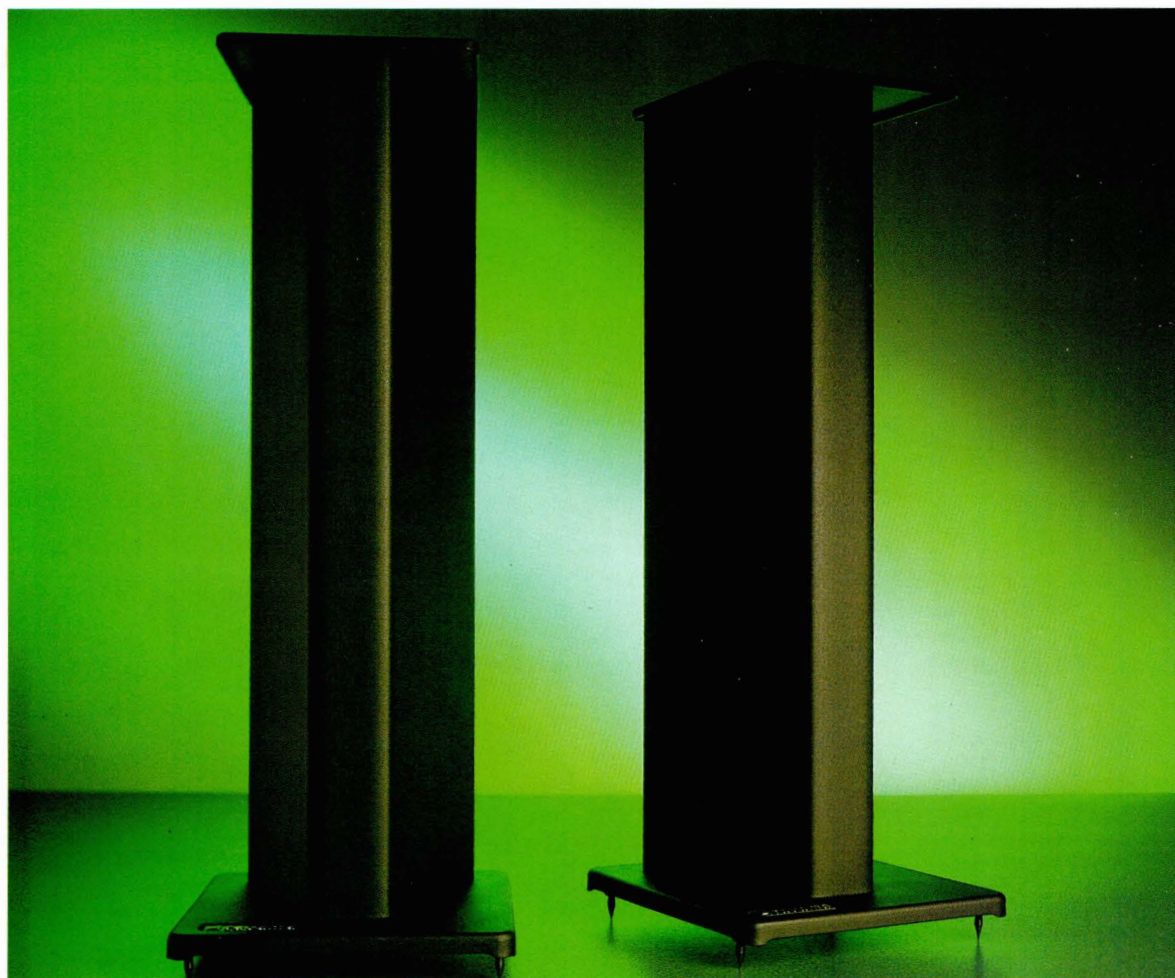
DISTRIBUTION

Quad ☎ (01480) 433777

ALSO SHORTLISTED

DENON D-F10/S (£1,150)
Reviewed Issue 138

NAIM Six-Pack (£30,555)
Not Yet Reviewed



HI-FI ACCESSORIES

LOUDSPEAKER STANDS

Atacama SE24

Ever since we discovered the Atacama SE24 speaker stand back in 1993, it has been the reference budget stand – the one against which all others are measured. So it's not surprising that its simple but effective design has spawned a host of imitations.

The SE24 is a welded-steel design, with threads for spikes top and bottom, and a port at the rear for mass loading – all good, solid stuff with no frills and no rough edges.

The key to the Atacama's success lies in its ability to extract excellent results from a wide variety of loudspeakers, delivering a solid and coherent presentation that's clean at high frequencies, expressive in the midband and timely in the bass. It manages to avoid the pitfalls of many inexpensive stands and lets the speaker do its best.

If you have a bookshelf speaker, and want to extend low-end weight without incurring the risk of added bloom, the SE24 is the stand for you.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ATACAMA SE24

PRICE £69.99

REVIEWED Issue 140

DISTRIBUTION

Sambell Engineering Ltd

☎ (01455) 283251

ALSO SHORTLISTED

BEYER DT531 (£128.66)

Reviewed Issue 144

CHORD CO Siren (£65)

Not Yet Reviewed



EDITOR'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING HI-FI PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

CD RECORDER

Pioneer PDR-05

Of all the hi-fi products introduced over the last 12 months, none has broken as much ground as the Pioneer *PDR-05* Compact Disc Recorder. Essentially similar in operation and sound to standard Pioneer CD players like the *PD-S904*, the *PDR-05* adds a unique recording facility for the first time in the domestic market.

PDR-05 users can record up to 60 minutes of music on specially-designed CD-R discs, which will play on any conventional CD player once recording is complete. The *PDR-05* can record

direct from a digital source, such as another CD player, or it will accept analogue signals (for example from a turntable) and process them with built-in converters. Although you cannot overwrite segments of the recording as you would do with a tape, you can edit out tracks on the disc if required.

In developing CD-R for the general public, Pioneer has taken on the might of the music business (fearful for its copyright fees), and paved the way for CD-quality, CD-convenience home recording at a realistic price.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

PIONEER PDR-05

PRICE £1,300

REVIEWED Issue 148

DISTRIBUTION

Pioneer High Fidelity (GB) Ltd

☎ (01753) 789789

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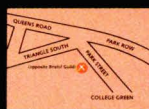
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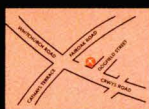
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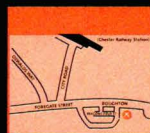
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AWARDS

There go the 1996 British Hi-Fi Awards, in all their glory. We're pleased to note that the result of this closely-fought contest reflects our own findings in formal reviews, which in turn suggests that as well as making its mark in blind tests, this gear has proven its worth in the real world. So let's have another big hand for all winning and shortlisted products in this most democratic of hi-fi awards!

The winners of the British Hi-Fi Awards 1996

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TUNERS ABOVE £250	AUDIOLAB 8000T
CASSETTE DECKS UP TO £250	DENON DRS-640
CASSETTE DECKS ABOVE £250	PIONEER D-05 96kHz DAT recorder
INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS UP TO £300	MUSICAL FIDELITY E10
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COMPLETE HI-FI SYSTEMS UP TO £1,000	AKAI TX 700
COMPLETE HI-FI SYSTEMS ABOVE £1,000	QUAD 77
HI-FI ACCESSORIES	ATACAMA SE24 speaker stand
EDITOR'S AWARD	PIONEER PDR-05 CD recorder

If you want to know more about these products (except for the few that we have yet to review), turn to our new Directory on page 117.

There you'll find a potted summary, specifications, and the Faxback reference number. Using the latter you can dial up reviews on your nearest fax machine, instantly – see details on page 116.

Hi-fi components aren't the only winners in these Awards. There were also prizes for the first 75 readers to return their completed voting forms. The First Prize comprised a holiday for two in Olu Deniz, Turkey, worth £1,000; plus free tickets and overnight accommodation for two to attend our Gala Awards Ceremony in London. The

lucky winner was Mr Alan Wells of Reading. Well done, Alan!

We don't have space to list the winners of the 20 Second Prizes (Monster Interlink 200 interconnects), 30 Third Prizes (Monster Interlink 100 interconnects), 12 Fourth Prizes (subscriptions to *Q* and *Empire* magazines), and 12 Fifth Prizes (subscriptions to *Hi-Fi Choice*). We've barely got space to describe the shoal of swag on offer! However, all winners will be contacted directly by the British Federation of Audio, and a full list of names can be obtained by sending an SAE to "Awards Winners", Dept 155/Z, Hi-Fi Choice, 19 Bolsover Street, LONDON W1P 7HJ.

BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE

Adam Rayner takes breakables off the mantelpiece and tests five large-sound, low-cost loudspeakers.

While many of us aspire to great beauty and grace from our music reproduction and, therefore, desire expensive high-end equipment, limited budgets keep most hi-fi enthusiasts' feet firmly on the ground. Whatever your entry-level might be — low, mid or even upper end — there's still a finite spend available.

What we have here are five pairs of rockin' boxes from makers which are well known for their ability to provide generously-sized loudspeakers at a lowish-price entry-level.

As none of the speakers are over £400, we don't really expect to hear the shape of the recording venue, or count violins.

THE CAST LIST

Celestion Impact 25	£399.00
Cerwin-Vega! VS10	£349.99
Jamo BX100A	£349.99
JBL TLX70.....	£399.99
Wharfedale Valdus 500	£299.00

What we *are* looking for, however, is their raw ability to move air and bring music of a less-than-sober nature to full life-size in your very own home.

Yes, these speakers are likely to be favoured by the perpetrators of noise pollution. When the new legislation for removing hardware from offending homes bites, these products could easily become

'known' to the Police of Peace and Quiet.

So what does one look for in a speaker of this flavour? Ideally, you'll want something with enormous efficiency so that the maximum sound pressure level (SPL) is possible in your room. After all, these boxes should preferably bring you right to the front of the stage at a *Guns & Ammo* gig.

The high and middle frequencies will need to be able to keep up with the low bass output, which can be a problem for some overblown items. Size should be your last consideration, as the urge for this sort of speaker tends to preclude clever miniaturised designs. In fact, for some buyers of this particular persuasion, bigger will indeed mean better. Let's go raise Cain....

Cerwin-Vega! VS10

Somewhat smaller than the Celestion *Impact 25s*, the *VS10s* from Cerwin-Vega! stand on the floor without spikes. Instead, there's a short plinth of chipboard pieces underneath the enclosure, which holds them just off the floor. Unlike the front-ported Celestion, this speaker's port is to the rear, although it's not a smooth, gas-flowed job. However, this means that you can take the speakers' output in the low end and play about with corner or wall-loading by trying the speakers in different positions in your room. Like the rest of the group, bar the Celestion, the *VS10* is a three-way design. The tweeter is a 25mm dome, the midrange a 100mm, and the woofer a meaty ten inches (255mm).

There's a protection device inside for the tweeter, which is a feature shared by the Wharfedales. Clearly, as a genre, these boxes are intended to take some savage stick at the hands of their owners. The woofers have Cerwin's characteristic red foam surround, and a large C-V logo is slapped on each dust dome. The plastic and stretched cloth grilles are top-to-bottom and carry a small silvery badge with black and purple printing revealing the brand and model name.

Around the back, we find a pair of binding posts, thankfully still without the red and black plugs in, although Cerwin-Vega! will probably have to add the CE mark on the back one day.

They were fired up and run on Yello's *Baby* album, but didn't come across quite as faithfully as the *Impact 25s*. The *VS10s* have a high end that seems to extend further up and offers better edges between synthesised sound effects and other high frequency information. Perhaps this is due to the presence of the four-inch cone in the middle, but even without the sound quality of the Celestions, there was more information to be had. They were more 'in yer face', so to speak.

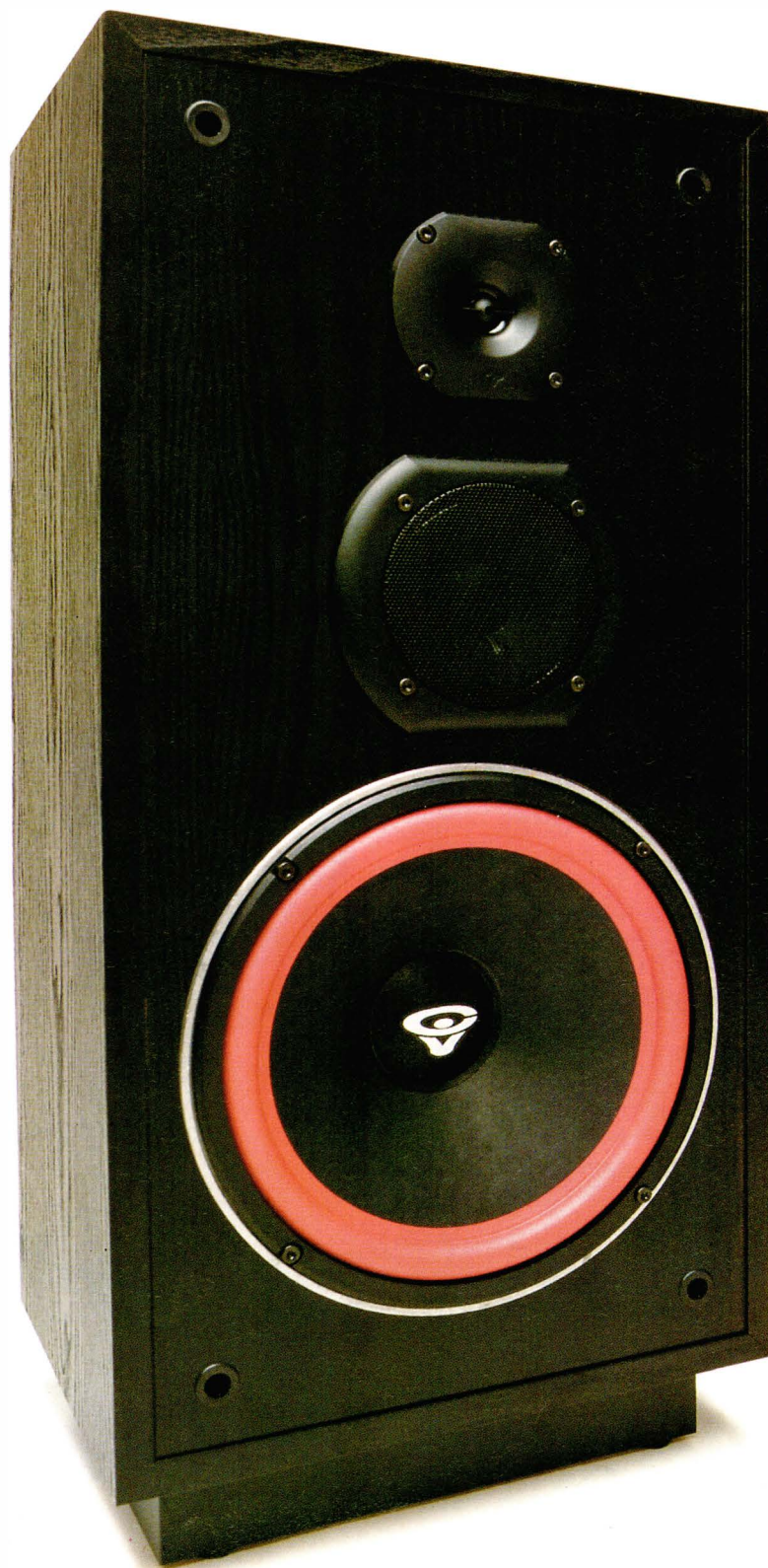
Then the bass line cut in, and the big old ten sure makes some air shift. The cabinets didn't like all the bass notes pulled out of the hat by Yello — the boxes' tuned frequency seemed too far off for some of them — but the ones it did like, it flung out into the fabric of my home, rippling the floor. I was tempted to get one of my very silly

Bass CDs out and play *Follow The Bouncing Bass*, which is recorded just to play with this effect. But I refrained in the interests of any neighbours who might be in on my street. The whole street, that is.

On the second track, there is a cacophony of swerving sub-tracks which leap in all directions, from popping cork noises to helicopters and fat-bottomed bass melody

lines, and the staging here didn't seem quite as good as with the first pair I tested. A couple of speaker positions were tried, but the coherency of the two-driver pair's image wasn't matched. This makes the *VS10s* a bit less refined, but ballsy as hell for their size.

Viva Cerwin-Vega!'s VS10s — the little speakers with a big punch.

**CERWIN-VEGA! VERDICT**

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £349.99

▲ Drop very deeply indeed, and their modest size belies their large output.

▼ Seem to sacrifice some low midbass performance in favour of deep note ability.

✉ Cerwin-Vega UK/CSE, Unit 9, Centre Park Holdings,
 The Airfield, Tockwith, Yorkshire, YO5 8QF.
 ☎ (01423) 359054

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AND MANY MORE

Celestion Impact 25

The Celestions were the only two-way speakers in this test group. Where the Wharfedales were the top dogs of a lower-priced range, these are part-way up a line of more expensive stuff.

The *Impact 25s'* construction and finish seem solid and thought through. They also come with a serious-looking set of spikes and locking rings. Being floorstanders, they have a grille over only the upper portion of their front baffles. Remove the plastic-and-cloth grilles, and you reveal the 25mm tweeter and 210mm bass driver. Beneath both is the mouth of a plastic gas-flowed port. A golden Celestion logotype badge sits beneath the drivers and above this front-firing port. The drivers' chassis are finished in a grey gunmetal-look coating and the recesses for their fixing screws are fitted with small flush-fitting blue rubbery bungs.

The connections to the rear are via a set of perfectly good, gold-plated, knurled binding posts, rendered a pain in the neck by the nutters in Brussels. Yup, these days, CE-badged speakers tend to arrive with little bungs in the mouths of the posts, right where we want to plug in a nice gold-plated banana plug. Extracting a set of these damned plugs resulted in a good few bruises to my delicate skin.

The material was the Yello album again, but particularly the introductory track with a huge 'blamm!' piece called *Homage to the Mountain*. The fifth track, *Who's Groove*, also stood out. It's got a fulsome low end and plenty of mad stuff flying around.

The initial impression was that the Celestions are both capable and enjoyable, with a good image spread between and beyond the boxes. They drop to very low tones happily and are pretty tight, too. This excellent control of the main portion of the bass band seemed to exist at the expense of the speakers' ability to really hit the lowest notes on the disc. These notes are often considered to be below where the music really occurs. The bass end is heavy and accurate, but it somehow it lacks that last bit of daft-deep extension.


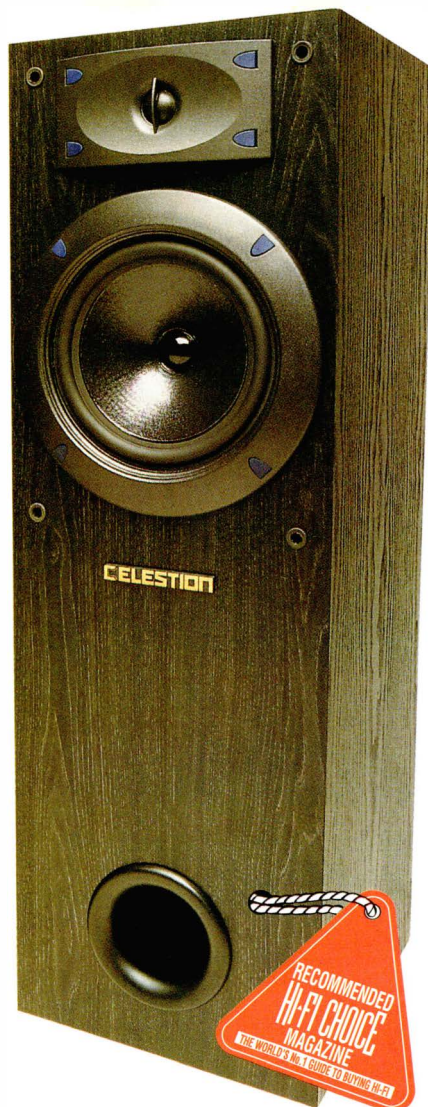
The tweeters are sweet and not at all fatiguing to the ears, although the tambourine sounds behind some of *Who's Groove* did tend to run together into a 'pish' rather than a discernible series of micro-cymbal sounds. That's all a bit academic though, as the output of these Celestions is excellent for the outlay, and they are real contenders in the bang-for-the-buck stakes. Recommended!

CELESTION VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £399.00

▲ Handsome to look at and solidly built. Possess some real authority and weight. Hugely enjoyable.
 ▼ Only a two-way design, so less power handling than its bigger brothers.

✉ Celestion International Ltd., Foxhall Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP3 8JP
 ☎ (01473) 322222

Celestions' Impact 25s look even better without the grilles.

Jamo BX100A

Possibly the classiest-looking of the five pairs of speakers tested, these were also the smallest. They were not the lightest, though, which points to construction of great solidity. Again, out of all the different ranges of speakers made by Jamo, the *BX100As* are intended to handle a thorough spanking from a gutsy amp.

The back of the *BX100As* sports a wide gas-flowed port above a cup with binding posts. In typical Jamo style, the speakers' power handling figure is printed upon it. Amazingly though, despite the clear CE mark, we find the posts unobstructed. No gouging around with a screwdriver in painful attempts to extract the darn things. Was this an oversight or is the use of the blasted bungs on speakers optional...?

Back around the front there's a flat expanse of cloth over a pressed-out sheet-steel frame and dark plastic edges to the enclosure. Not very large compared to some here, these boxes sit upon four plastic feet, inserted into holes under the base. Less effective than spikes, these are ugly and likely to make their mark in your carpet forever. The grilles are held on magnetically, and removing them reveals a mass of brushed alloy, as each driver is held in with a silvery ring of metal. The tweeter and midrange units,

25mm and 102mm wide respectively, sit on a baffle faced with a soft rubbery material, presumably used to control diffraction from the face of the cabinet. The tweeter is slightly horn loaded by its alloy ring, sitting a little back from the face of the box.

All the drivers are held in place with Allen-headed engineering fixings, which in my view look a lot better than crosshead screws. The only branding seen on the box was a raised BX logo on one of the flanking edges on the front. Very subtle, and still evident when the grilles were off.

There is some real slam available with the *BX100As*. They offer plenty of level and a more balanced midrange than the Cerwins. Their sheer visceral attack proved to be a surprise, with the scale of the output (again) being a little out-of-kilter with their 'compact' image.

These *Jamos* rock, and they can drop deeply while keeping a creditable midrange and a fair amount of detail. The power was applied in somewhat bigger slabs and the *BX100As* seemed to like it. With real power flowing up the speaker leads, the highs could get a bit super-bright, even hard at times, and the whole sound was a bit glazed. However, the bass notes were big and very loud. Basically, the *BX100As* have cracking output for the size.

JAMO VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £349.99

▲ Small enclosure for such a large sound. A very handsome piece of design.
 ▼ Really needs a set of short stands, the plastic feet supplied are not as useful as spikes.

✉ Jamo UK Ltd., Jamo House, 5, Faraday Close, Drayton Fields, Daventry, Northants NN11 5RD.
 ☎ (01327) 301300

Jamo's BX100A — one of those medium sized boxes with big-sized outputs.



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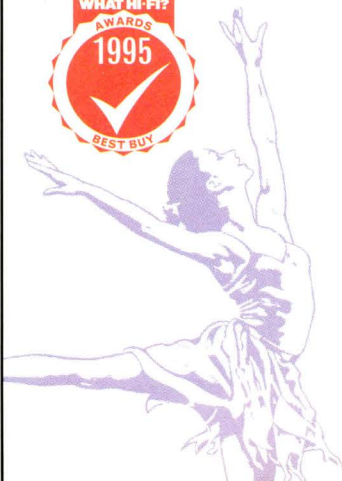
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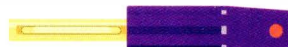


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ROCK 'N' ROLL SPEAKERS

JBL TLX70

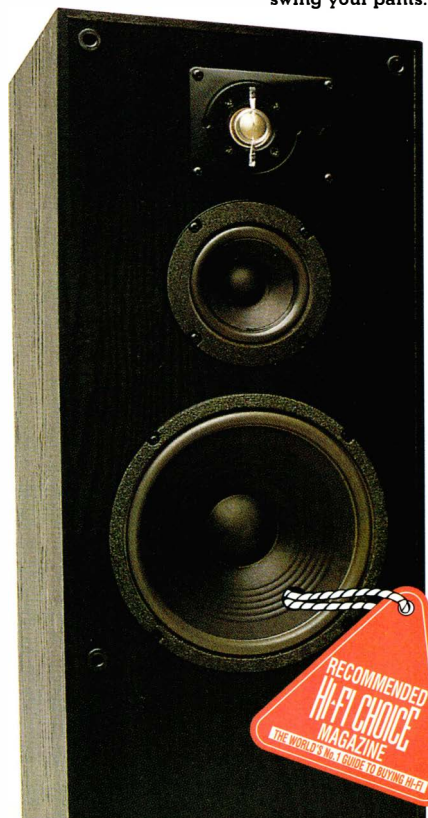
This was the only pair of speakers to come with spring clips rather than binding posts to affix the speaker cables. They're large enough to take a big cable or to accept a banana plug in their maw, so the spring clips are a bit of a mystery, especially since the other boxes in the group (at the same price point) all have proper binding posts fitted.

A curvy gas-flowed port is found at the rear of the tall enclosures, again allowing for experimentation with wall or corner loading. Similar in size to the Celestion *Impact 25s*, the *TLX70s* arrived without feet or spikes at all.

As three-ways, they run a 25mm Titanium-coated fabric dome tweeter, a 100mm paper midrange and a 210mm bass woofer, also paper-coned. The grille is made of a plastic injection-moulded frame with cloth stretched over it. They reach all they way up and down the fronts of the boxes and carry a silvery JBL badge at the very bottom edge. Remove these and the only branding on the speaker's face is found on the plate of the tweeter, where the *TLX* letters alone are embossed. They look a bit low-tech in the company of some of the other boxes, and they're a lot less loudspeaker, physically, for the money. However, the proof is in the performance...

The *TLX70s* have a slam of their own, and their sound corresponds well with the large size. The tweet and midrange driver don't manage to sound as sweet as the units used on the *Cerwins*, but the upper bass control and weight is great. The wild electronic stuff that I play to death in order to do this sort of test was lapped up by the *TLX* beasties, and when the bass comes in with any force, you can feel the air in the room pushing you around a little. Big bass melody lines, so beloved of that strange Yello duo, were deeply

JBL's TLX70s — Practically guaranteed to swing your pants.



satisfying from these enclosures and didn't seem to cause the eight-inch woofer any problems.

When it comes to comparisons, though, things aren't quite as rosy. You have to realise that these are the same price as the *Celestions*, and while the *TLX70s* might have the edge on power handling, the *Celestions* have them beat in most other departments. The *TLXs* might go a bit louder, but, overall, their top end lets them down.

The image ability of the *TLX* speakers was not that impressive either, but their sheer weight in the bass end is startling — fat, full and able to cause a few gut-sensations. I can see why these are offered as left and rights for home cinema use in packages without an extra sub-woofer — they are larger than life.

JBL VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £399.00

▲ Big box, big output, and a lot more than 'bass and tops'.
 ▼ The only set of spring clips in the tested group, even though they could take a banana plug or thick cable.

✉ Harman Consumer Group, Unit 2, Borehamwood Industrial Park, Rowley Lane, Borehamwood, HERTS WD6 5PZ.

☎ (0181) 207 5050

Wharfedale Valdus 500

The *500s* are the biggest speakers on test, yet still sport a price tag that's £100 less than two of their group peers. Moreover, they're the only ones to have four drivers in the front baffle.

The *500s* use street-graffiti images on their publicity material, and they really have an attitude to convey. On this largish tower, you'll find three 200mm drive units in the face, below a 28mm Ferrofluid cooled and damped tweeter in a slightly recessed horn-loaded baffle. They certainly look the part.

This is quite an elegant, if simple, design. The overload-protected tweeter and top 200mm driver act as the upper part of a regular three-way. The tweeter hands over to the first woofer at middle frequencies — the top enclosure is tuned for it to be so — and

WHARFEDALE VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £299.00

▲ Huge set of boxes for the money, huge sound too, and very good value.
 ▼ The high frequencies from these could get a bit tiring.

✉ Wharfedale International Ltd., Sandreas Way, Crossgates, Leeds, LS158AL.

☎ (0113) 260 1222

AFTER CAREFUL DELIBERATION AND CONJUGATION, WE CAN CONCLUDE...

The important thing to grasp with this sort of speaker is the reasoning behind the purchase. None of the samples in this test are going to set the dyed-in-the-wool audiophile's heart on fire. But we are looking from the viewpoint of might, main and sheer welly — any pretensions to excellence in detail ability are secondary. That being the case, in utter bang-for-the-buck stakes, *Wharfedale's Valdus 500s* take it, hands down.

The *Cerwin-Vega! VS10s* were a good bit smaller, and yet were able to generate an awesome level of electronic music from a much smaller set of enclosures. Next would be the the *JBL TLX70s*, which are actually a bit larger in output than the *Cerwins*, but cost a bit more cash. After that, the *Jamo BX100s* were capable of going very loud, but they were not as efficient as some of the others. Finally, at the rear, I'll place the *Celestions* — they're still able to make a serious level, but in a slightly more controlled and sober manner.

From the viewpoint of sound quality, the results are a bit different. The *Celestions* were the best-sounding speaker, followed by the *Wharfedales*, with the *JBLs* just in front of the *Cerwins* and the *Jamos*, which were the least impressive for loveliness. But, like I said, all things considered, the home-grown *Wharfeys* seem to be the best rockin' boxes here.

ON TEST

Wharfedale's Valdus 500s — A real pair of rock'n'roll speakers.

there's a rear-firing port for this part of the output. The passive crossover inside gives the LF to the two remaining 200mm drivers. The bottom enclosure is separated from the top one and has its own port at the bottom of the front drop, firing forwards.

Wharfedale reckons the vane mounted across this port acts as a venturi, assisting the flow of air in the port at high sound pressures.

Like the *JBL TLX70s*, the *500s* arrive without spikes or feet. With all the surface area of a loudspeaker cone available to move air, it's no wonder these proved to be the efficiency stars of the group. The design brief surely has come out of the same pep-od as other *Wharfedale* speakers: fiercely loud with only modest amplification, but still able to soak up and use the Watts when needed.

Boris Blank and Dieter Meier did their thing once more and the room inflated again. The impression these offer is simple: it's just large. Where the *Jamos* needed some real level to fill the room, these *500s* did it with far less power being required of the amp.

The tweeters are pretty quick, although audibly not as good as more expensive items, which sometimes recesses details. The *Valdus 500s* go amazingly loud, but for lovers of near-DC level low frequencies, one or two of the other speakers on test may prove to reach lower, if not as loudly. Still, in sound-for-pound terms they're a Best Buy.





The Monarch of Multistrand. Mr Larm with his Cardas Ring of Confidence, yesterday.

King of Wires

Larm's the name, exotic hi-fi's the game... **Stan Vincent** has an audience with one of London's most serious audiophiles.

Mr Larm's friends call him *sin wong* — King of Wires. It might be due to the thousands of pounds' worth of cables he has tried over the years and now owns — Cardas, XLO, ART, Transparent, Siltech. However, I would like to add a few more titles: Tsar of Tubes, Duke of Digital and Sultan of Instrumental Separation. Larm is the ruler of a full-on audiophile kingdom bordered only by the walls of his discreet London flat.

He acceded to the throne in 1990, spurred on by a recently-matured pension policy and a growing awareness of the delights offered by high-end audio. He'd owned hi-fi since the 1950s, and name-checks the usual Sansuis, Denons and the like that were staple fare during the '70s and '80s. Come the turn of this decade, however, he dis-

covered the treasure cave that is Kapes Patel's Kamla Electronics store on London's Tottenham Court Road; and bumped into the genial Malaysian, Danon Han, who interpreted during our interview. Danon has spent four years studying Law in London as a thinly disguised excuse to buy up and send home most of Kapes's exotic gear, and his "audiophile fever" soon infected the King of Wires.

Larm started in high-end hi-fi with an Aragon preamp and DAC, plus Denon turntable fitted with a Lyra cartridge. Along the way there was a Kuzma record deck and Audiostatic electrostatic loudspeakers, but his current system began to take shape on hearing a friend's Conrad-Johnson PV10 tube preamp. Until then it had been transistors down the line, but the PV10 was a Road To Damascus experience. Says Larm:

"The PV10 allowed me to experience sweetness in a system, and an open soundstage, for the first time."

His musical tastes are biased towards Chinese music, predominantly vocals, so this new-found sweetness was of particular value. At the same time Larm tried out tube amps from Audio Research, McIntosh, Marantz and Audio Innovations — pretty much everything that Kapes could dig up from his store-room. But every time the Conrad-Johnson topped the pile because of its sublime midrange, soundstaging and separation. "Simply a better performance," says Larm, succinctly.

At that time the *he-c-j PV10* partnered its sibling *Premier 11* stereo power amp, but that was only the beginning. Danon Han claims his purchase of two Mark-Levinson 20.6 monoblocks was the spur for Larm's upgrade to dual mono



Record decks seldom come as up-market (or as tweaky) as this.

amplification — in his case the c-j Premier 12 monobloks.

Larm's latest indulgence has been to invest heavily in HDCD, for which he has purchased the McIntosh MCD7009 HDCD-compatible player to replace a Micromega Duo. Moreover, he now owns not one but two HDCD DACs: the Muse Model Two and the Audio Synthesis DAX-1. Not many have the luxury of two DACs to choose from, but as Dan relates: "Mr Larm has come to recognise the advantages of HDCD. He has to move into HDCD to get better performance."

Why these components? Kapes reckons that "the McIntosh happened because he was upgrading the DAC, and didn't realise that the Micromega wasn't good enough. He then started looking for a decent transport."

Danon thinks: "It's also because he had upgraded his turntable, and thus the difference between the CD player and his records was too great. He is trying to make his CD system have equivalent performance to his record deck."

Larm gives a more oblique answer: "HDCD is very near to the performance of LP records, so if I have a choice between buying music on HDCD or record, I would go for HDCD because of the convenience; but if there is no HDCD, taking into consideration that both come from the same company, I would go for the record. Both CDs and records are different. Not that CD is better, just a different way of listening. On one side CD is very clear; on the record side is sweetness — it is easy on the ear."

Auditioning Larm's system proves to be a fascinating experience. Indeed, his Audiomeca/Graham/Koetsu/Klyne vinyl chain is as smooth as silk but as finely-cut as lead crystal in its imagery. It is eerily free of tracking noise, and supplies dynamic integrity and timing that are remarkably organic. On CD the conrad-johnsons still add their warmth and 'leather'n'walnut' luxury, yet do not mask the fact that the transport and DACs resolve the kind of intricate detail that only Larm can appreciate during one of his daily three-hour listening sessions.

Kapes is astounded by Larm's ability to detect the most subtle nuances of performance in the many components he has auditioned. Perhaps that is why he pays so much attention to the ancillary components in his system, especially cables. He has tried everything that Kapes purveys, and when the conversation turns to this subject, Larm bangs his fist down on the table and utters a vehement invocation. "Mr Larm would like to make a statement," relates Danon without need for further embellishment. "Larm is a strong believer in wires. Wires make a difference to any system of any price level." Another table-pounding statement follows soon after. "Larm is a strong believer in a separate mains spur."



The empire of the King of Wires, flanked on all sides by conrad-johnson.

I was surprised that Larm's system sits on a prosaic Alphason AV support. Wot, no Mana tables? It turns out that he has found a marble slab in IKEA that does the trick — "sound is more concentrated, separation better, and definition much better. Without it everything is jumbled up." But he also has an assortment of after-market bases and equipment feet, as detailed in the equipment list, not to mention the discreet Room-Tunes pillows lurking in the top corners of the room.

What next for this man whose ultimate hi-fi virtues are detail and separation? He is interested in auditioning the Quad ESL-63 and Mark Levinson pre-power combos, but also wants to try transistor monobloks with his c-j preamp, to "mix valve's quality of vocal concentration and separation with transistor bass and power."

To pursue hi-fi at this exalted level calls for a special rapport between customer and dealer; indeed, as Larm says: "One service that is very important for a hi-fi shop is loaning equipment to try at home, so that I can try and test before investing in it. This equip-

ment is not cheap, but in many shops salesmen just want me to cash and carry. By trying at home I can be assured that all purchases are satisfactory." Kapes admits that he loses a lot of sales by having a flexible home-loan policy, but reckons that he gains just as many customers who go on to be long-term prospects because they are completely satisfied with what they buy.

Although Larm's hi-fi system shares room space with a substantial AV rig, which is fed through his Platinum Solo speakers, his passion will always be for hi-fi. We end our visit talking again about the particularly virulent strain of "audiophile fever" that one can contract in the Far East. A particularly serious epidemic, relates Danon Han, afflicted five owners of the battery-driven Jeff Rowland Reference Model 9 monoblok, a superb piece whose only challenger was the Mark-Levinson No. 33. "On the day the No. 33 was released, all five audiophiles hurried to their dealer, saying: 'if the Mark-Levinson beats the Jeff Rowland, I'll pay you cash today.' The Levinson kicked over the Jeff Rowland, no question"... "and you're talking about a £30,000 power amp!" says Kapes, with dollar signs in his eyes.

The King of Wires looks on enigmatically, wondering when, not if, he will deign to make more of his dealer's dreams come true. ▲



McIntosh's heavyweight CD started HDCD bug.

Mr Larm's System – The Full Story

RECORD MADNESS

Pierre Lurné Audiomeca J1, CR Developments Ringmat, Graham Model 1.5 tonearm, Koetsu Red Signature cartridge £5,500

PHONO PRE-AMP LUNACY

Bright Star Audio sand-filled support £250
connected with XLO 3.1s cable £750
to Klyne 6K phono preamp £1,800
resting on Townshend Seismic Sink £200
connected with Straightwire Virtuoso to preamp £500

CD INSANITY

McIntosh MCD7009 HDCD transport £2,635
resting on Unicorn feet & ART Q-Dampers £170
connected with XLO Type 2 cable £330
to Monarchy DIP "jitter buster" £250
connected with van den Hul The First £210
to Muse model two HDCD DAC £2,050
and connected with HMC Silver cable £150
to Audio Synthesis DAX 2 HDCD DAC £2,000
resting on Shun Mook platform £150
connected with Sonic Link Black to preamp £125

AMPLIFIER & LOUDSPEAKER PSYCHOSIS

conrad-johnson Premier Ten preamp £4,000
connected with XLO Signature 1.1 balanced £625
to two conrad-johnson Premier Twelve monoblok power amps £7,000
and thence with Siltech cable £600
to Platinum Audio Solo speakers £2,000
resting on Target RG stands £315

Mains cables from XLO and ART, plus Titan mains filter £1,500

THE BIG FIGURE £33,100

Equipment installed by Kamla Electronics of London ☎ 0171-323 2747

Divide and Conquer!

Want to get more out of your speakers? **Malcolm Steward** looks for increased power, control and flexibility in four pre/power amplifier combos.

A system can only develop to a finite level with an integrated amplifier at its heart. Once you decide that you need more power and increased flexibility, or that you want to bi-amplify your speakers, you need to consider a move to separate pre and power amplifiers. Over the past few years I've discovered several speakers that respond enthusiastically to being used with a brace of power

amplifiers: not just high cost models such as the £2,000 *Platinum Solo* or the £1,700 *Naim SBL*, but funky little numbers such as the *Neat Petite*, which at under £800 is more affordable. Naturally, any speaker that can be bi-wired can also be bi-amped, so a pre/power upgrade is well worth considering if you think your speakers have more to give.

You can bi-amp with an integrated and an additional power amplifier — provided that the latter is a perfect match for the integrated's power amplifier stage — but it's not an ideal arrangement. You have the preamplifier sharing its power supply with one half of

THE CAST LIST	
Creek P42/A42.....	£1,000
Cyrus Pre and Power.....	£1,100
Moth Thirty Series.....	£1,128
Rotel RC-980BX/RB-980BX.....	£800

the power amplifier, while its delicate audio circuits live in close proximity to the power stages. Neither is ideal if you're chasing optimum performance.

Pre/power combinations — at least those worth serious consideration — were once significantly more expensive than integrated amplifiers. Recently, however, the gap has narrowed. As the models featured in this test show, you can build a sophisticated system for around £1,000.

Throughout this test I relied heavily on my *Naim CDS* CD player. The way it handles bass lines, scavenges detail and effortlessly conveys the emotion within music and performances, make it a suitably dependable input. I used various loudspeakers but spent most time listening to the new *Neat Petite IIs*, which I've found to be truly revealing, and an accurate indicator of amplifier quality upstream.

Setting up the first amplifier provided a reminder of how a system can be made or broken by its interconnects, so I employed a selection from Audio Note, Cable Talk, Chord Co., DNM, Heybrook and Audioquest. Despite my inherent dislike of solid-core leads, I found that the DNM *reson* cables provided consistently fine results. All equipment was supported by Mana Acoustics tables, and the *Neat* speakers were parked on Slate Audio stands. Speaker cables came from Naim Audio and Kelvin Audio Systems.



PRE/POWER AMPLIFIERS

Creek P42/A42

Versatility is a major facet of this Creek combination. Coming in at exactly £1,000 (or £1,100 with remote volume control and muting) the set-up consists of a P42 preamp fitted with Creek's *Special Edition* moving magnet phono stage, and two bridgable stereo A42 power amplifiers. These can be configured to provide a neat 50Wpc bi-amplified system or, as was the case for this test, used as a pair of 150W monobloks.

The A42 also comes with an unusual additional facility that might prove useful when you have a less-than-perfect match between your room and speakers, or if performance is unsatisfactory at low frequencies: by turning a screw inset beneath the rear panel, you can adjust the LF turnover point between 1Hz and 5Hz. This doesn't cure problems of any great magnitude, but it does let you fine-tune the system's performance, and this certainly proved worthwhile. You can bring the soundstage forward or send it back a gnat's so that the performance sits where you prefer it in your room. On Christy Moore's *Live At The Point* album, for instance, the singer's voice had more presence and greater vitality when the pots were cranked fully clockwise. The P42 preamplifier is a minimalist device offering just volume and balance control, a headphone jack, plus independent record and listen selectors for the unit's six inputs.

Connecting up the system seemed a rather convoluted exercise, but Creek's excellent illustrated instructions were a great help. What they didn't point out was the sensitivity of these amplifiers to cable differences. I spent a whole afternoon swapping interconnect and speaker cables trying to achieve a presentation that was wholly balanced and satisfactory. The combination seemed especially picky about interconnects and — to my great surprise — snapped into focus when DNM *reson* solid-core cables were used. The tonal balance evened out and the musical presentation became properly musical: dynamics and rhythm, in particular, assumed the correct degree of snap and speed.

Way back when I worked in retail and sold the earliest iterations of Creek's range, I always



For only a grand, you can go up the Creek in style.

admired the amplifiers' musicality, their ability to forge a link between listeners and performances. The P42 and A42s displayed that same sense of life, urgency and excitement that grabs your attention and focuses it on the music.

It's to their credit that they tempered their 'up-and-at-em' drive with a respectable amount of control and delicacy. Playing Skunk Anansie at unhealthy volume levels, they kept a tight, tuneful grip on the bass lines and sounded engagingly open portraying vocals. The guitar really ripped through the mix and the energetic drumming came through the floor as much as it came through the air, but I never felt tempted to lower the volume level.

Someone whose tastes in music are more genteel will find this combination's articulation and openness equally appealing. Through many systems the vocals on Black Grape's *Kelly's Heroes* sound less than completely intelligible: the P42 and A42s strived to sort out every syllable. They also painted a powerful and precise picture of Dr John's

Afterglow album, conveying the considerable might of his piano and the weight of his big band's horns with commendable authority, and imbuing his voice with a convincing sense of character.

In short, once you have them wired just right, the Creek amplifiers are Recommended because they repay you handsomely with music that's easy on the ear but never short of life. Just remember to choose your interconnects with care.

Cyrus Pre and Power

The Cyrus combination's ethos centres on mixing versatility with technology. The versatility comes through the £300 PSX-R power supply — not tested here — and the various configurations available for upgrading the basic two-box set-up. You can convert the 50Wpc stereo *Power* amp into a 110W monoblok with a (mandatory) PSX-R feeding each power amplifier.

The internal whirring and indicator-flashing that accompanied preamp switch-on alerted me to a high-tech character. The preamplifier's microprocessors have to check that everything is okay and properly adjusted before they'll open up the audio path. That path, incidentally, can be via balanced XLR connections or more conventional RCA leads.

The £650 *Pre* and £450 *Power* cases are small, but there's a wealth of technology packed inside them. The system comes with a remote control straight outta *Star Trek*, ▶▶

Mission's duo is just the thing for *Star Trek* fans.



Billy Vee

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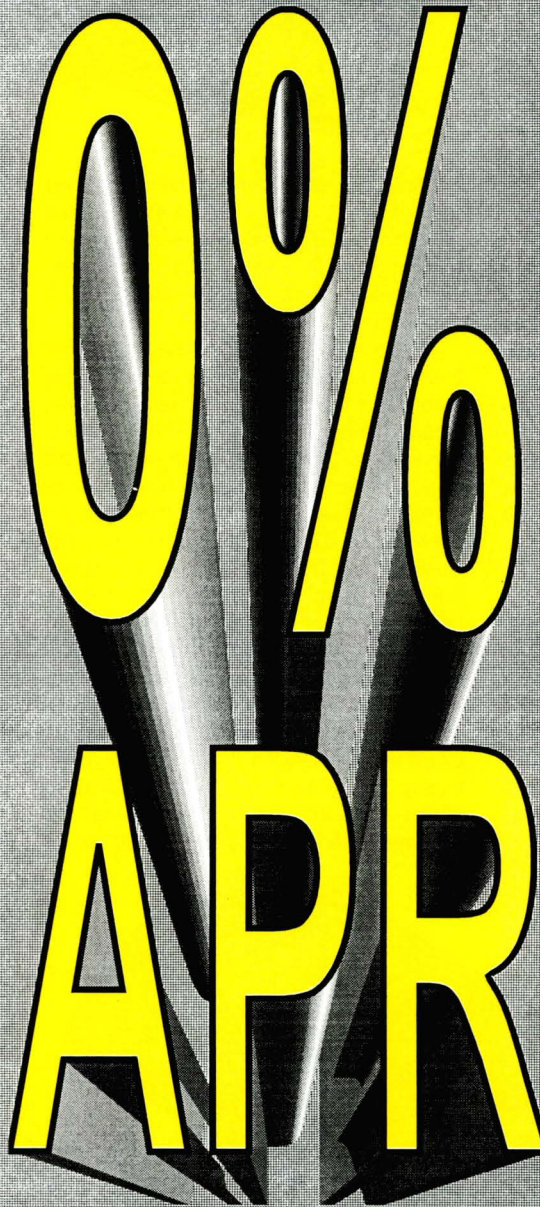
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 Pioneer V201 Sat/Sub System £249.00

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and the proprietary Cyrus MC-BUS fitted to the amps allows complete Cyrus system control with one handset. The *Pre* has five line-level inputs plus tape, and a moving-magnet phono stage that's upgradable to moving-coil status. The phono stage can also be converted to line-level operation.

I was warned that the system needed to warm up thoroughly before it would give of its best, and that advice proved to be invaluable. I used it first with the supplied interconnects and then with the DNM *reson* cables. With the latter it sounded a little cleaner and more open at the top end, yet there was no sacrifice of drive nor of significant weight in the bass.

The *Power* comes with 3mm speaker sockets to please those non-audiophiles in the EC who disapprove of 4mm connectors. The supplied plugs wouldn't accept the heavy cables I prefer and made me desperately keen to ask one of those Eurocrats to come and demonstrate how to bi-wire speakers with popular cables such as Naim *NAC A5* or Cable Talk *Talk 3*.

That aside, the combination produced the sort of results I'd expected. It had the punchy, light-footed delivery that has always characterised amps such as the *Cyrus III* and its predecessors. To this it added a welcome sense of substance and natural warmth — particularly noticeable on vocals — that gave its presentation less of a hi-fi tinge than those that went before. Dr John, for example, sounded like the well-built individual he is. The amp retained this smoothness and solidity until I pushed it past the levels that most folks would deem comfortable. At that point — running at a steady 97dB and hitting 100dB on the peaks — it became a little edgy, but previous experience with *PSX-Rs* suggests that these might well add the extra control that's required for maniacal sessions.

The *Pre* and *Power* seemed perfectly content playing feisty music. Vocals on the Skunk Anansie album did not lack energy, but never reached the point where that vital-

ity became oppressive. The bass drove along determinedly but without the muscle that I'd heard with the *Creek* amps. Nonetheless, it wasn't too light, and remained agile enough to keep toes tapping.

The combination showed enthusiasm for digging detail out of the midband. This paid dividends with *Black Grape*. Vocal intelligibility was better than average, with the voices clearly delineated in the lively mix.

The *Cyruses* are fiery enough to perk up speakers that have a pipe-and-slippers presentation, yet demonstrate sufficient grip and refinement to avoid sounding too effusive when partnered with more forthcoming speakers. Put it this way: without blowing you out of your chair, the *Pre* and *Power's* effervescence should ensure that you never end up sneaking 40 winks in front of your system on a long Sunday afternoon.

Moth Thirty Series

If the *Moth Thirty Series* came in regular-sized casework, you'd be upgrading your equipment rack to accommodate it. As it is, the preamp, its power supply, two 100W monoblok power amps and their shared power-supply unit are all ultra-compact devices that you could stack on a single equipment-table shelf. All are just over 34cm deep but less than 6cm tall. The £249 preamp and its power supply (psu) are just over 10cm wide, while the £879 power amps/psu are just over 15cm wide.

As well as being strikingly compact, the preamp is also strikingly minimalist. Three unlabelled controls and a small illuminated dot are the sole adornment on the fascia. These are the volume control, input selector, tape-monitor button, and power indicator. The unit has four line-level inputs — if you need a phono stage, *Moth* can supply a separate phono preamplifier — connected through RCA phonos and a tape loop on a

DIN socket. Why DIN? The man from *Moth* told me quite candidly it was the only socket that would fit on the rear panel. RCA phonos provide output for the power amplifiers.

This system looks downright unassuming, and its chaste appearance is unlikely to excite your non-audiophile acquaintances. Its performance, however, should make them sit up and take notice. From these undernourished cases emerged a big, bold presentation that was immediately involving. The commanding way the amplifiers handled the good Doctor John's piano and band on *I Know What I've Got* was magnificent. The piano rang out and resonated with superb might, exciting the air in the room with uncommon authority. The brass section's contributions pierced the mix with gusto but without any unnatural stridency, while bass and drums laid a driving foundation for the band to build upon. In the middle of all this bigness and boldness, however, the *Moths* carefully extracted detail and nuances. Dr John's voice was vividly drawn, and his phrasing was sympathetically conveyed.

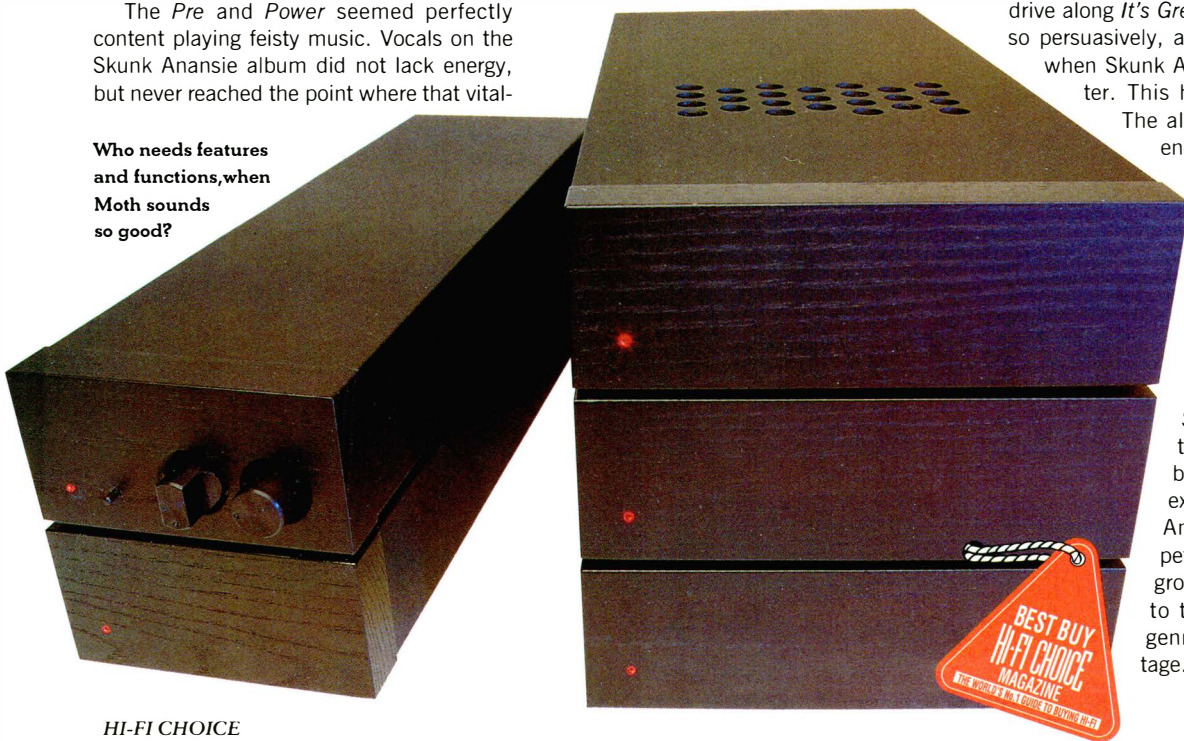
While they demonstrated the solid, even tonal balance and detail retrieval expected from quality hi-fi components, the *Thirty Series* amplifiers proved equally adept at delivering the qualities vital for musical satisfaction. They certainly didn't falter when asked to rock'n'roll. They conveyed the varied rhythms and feels on the *Black Grape* album with a mix of ease and determination that I found most attractive and involving. The same unforced quality also emerged in the way the amplifiers sorted out vocal exchanges between different singers. While never sounding in the least bit clinical, they unearthed each syllable in every quickfire interchange.

The amplifier's robustness, demonstrated by its handling of the bass lines that drive along *It's Great When You're Straight* so persuasively, also proved advantageous when *Skunk Anansie* fell onto the platter. This hard-core fusion kicked.

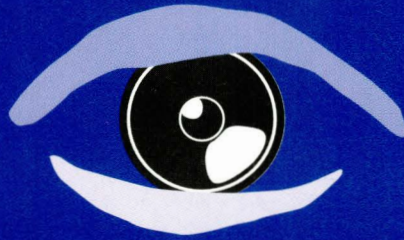
The album demands abundant energy, a full-blooded tonal balance, and control, if it's to have the desired effect. The *Moths* provided all three. Their case-fronts might be wooden but their performance certainly wasn't.

Whatever the music, the strength of the *Thirty Series* amplifiers seemed to be their finely-judged balance rather than their excellence in specific areas. An across-the-board competence and willingness to groove enabled them to get to the heart of a variety of genres to their best advantage. A worthy Best Buy.

Who needs features and functions, when *Moth* sounds so good?



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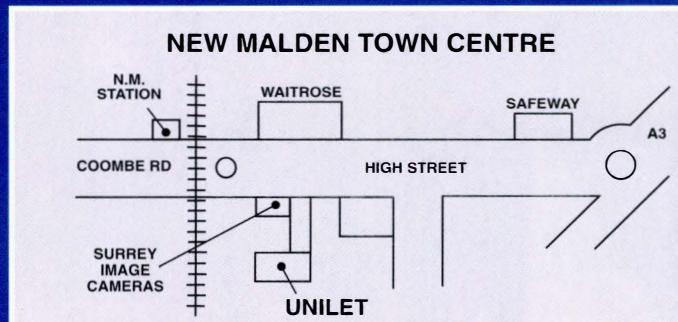
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Rotel puts the 'power' into pre/power amps.

Rotel RC-980BX/RB-980BX

Rotel's two-box 980BX system was the most conventional-looking of this foursome, yet still it strikes a blow for minimalism. The £375 RC-980BX preamplifier proffers no more than a dual-gang volume control and two input selectors, one for choosing the source to be recorded, the other for selecting the source to which you want to listen. Apart from a headphone jack and a power on/off button, that's all. Inputs consist of three at line level, two tape loops and a switchable moving-coil/moving-magnet phono stage.

The £475 RB-980BX power amplifier is equally spartan. Its fascia contains just a power switch and three LED indicators. The first of these comes on when the amp is powered; the second when its protection circuit is operating (when the amplifier is settling down after being powered up, for example); the third lights when the amplifier is configured for bridged-mono operation. In standard two-channel mode the RB-980 delivers 120Wpc but sliding a rear-panel switch and rearranging its connections turn it into a fire-breathing 360W monoblok. Unless you're driving loudspeakers with even less sensitivity than Alan Partridge, stereo should prove quite sufficient.

Dr John's piano and big band sounded confident and powerful. Instrumental timbre had a rich, warm quality that was appealing but not strictly natural. There was a hint of overall softness that robbed the piano of attack, reducing blare and stridency of the horn section when it was in full swing. Nonetheless, the music remained involving and I could imagine this portrayal attracting anyone looking for a smooth-sounding, informative presentation. This quality made it easy to follow the music without being distracted by the tonal harshness found in some low-cost pre/powers. However, the laid-back-ness did tend to take the edge off the music's ambling rhythms. I would have

appreciated a little more urgency at times.

With more up-tempo music, I found that the Rotel combination didn't drive hard enough to put me into air-guitar mode. Vocals sounded less committed; drumming didn't have its usual intensity or attack; guitars sounded too clean and polished; and bass lines didn't have the stop/start precision that normally gives music like Skunk Anansie its fearsome propulsion. The Rotel amps had more success with gentler, slower tracks, but their presentation still sounded too polite and restrained to convey any vivid musical colour and emotional power.

The upside of this gentility was that the Rotels tamed enthusiastically-recorded discs that can sound rather fierce on some systems. Black Grape's album sits on the border that separates vibrant and exciting from bellicose and oppressive. Through the RC/RB-980BX this album retained its vigour but lost its in-yer-faceness. The amplifiers also seemed more rhythmically in tune with Mr Ryder's music: while not sounding as quick and pushy as others here they succeeded in setting my toes tapping. However, they didn't score anything above average in the vocal intelligibility department. This, I reckon, was because they didn't resolve individual strands within busy mixes quite as clearly as the other amps. Also, when the music became busy, the midband tended to sound smeared and less well defined.

Even if you factor in the lower price of this combo, the equation still does not come out in the Rotel's favour. While this combo was outwardly attractive, detailed listening revealed that it didn't extract or organise information so readily as the others in this group. If this was the case when it was fed by a Naim CDS CD player and driving the Neat *Petite IIs*, then it will sound rather cloying and less communicative when partnered by lower-priced components. ▲

CONCLUSION

Versatility has always been a prime reason for choosing a pre/power amplifier combination. The Creek system will convert from bridged dual-mono to bi-amped stereo without additional expenditure. With a Y-interconnect and another Power amplifier, the Cyrus system will handle bi-amping but dual mono operation demands the addition of two PSX-R power supplies (one per Power).

The Moth system's modular approach makes for flexibility but, again, you'd need a Y-interconnect and a couple more mono amps (with their psu) for bi-amping. The Rotel preamplifier's dual outputs and the power amplifier's mono/stereo modes mean that adding another RB-980BX gives you a choice of bi-amped or bridged mono operation at the flick of a switch. If you and your bank balance so wished, you could even bi-amp with four monobloks.

Naturally, you're not going to expand any amplifier system that doesn't light your musical touch-paper. None of the systems here fell severely short of the mark, but each had clearly recognisable characteristics that will either set the fireworks off or leave you wondering whether the fuse went out.

Both the Creek and Cyrus had their moments but my personal favourite was the Moth *Thirty Series*. I just had to wait until the last track had finished playing, before packing it away!

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Mission ☎ 01480 451777
Moth ☎ 01234 741152
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- c) Round
- d) Quadrangular

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Bristol BS12 0BQ.

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- The Closing Date for this competition is June 7th, 1996.
- Winners of the Quadraspire competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted by telephone and post, and drawn at random on the Closing Date.
- All winners will be notified by post.
- The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- This competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd., Quadraspire UK, nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- We regret that this competition is open to UK residents only.
- No cash alternative will be offered.
- The act of entering the competition will be taken as acceptance of the rules.
- You must notify us if you do not wish to be informed of any special offers or promotions. On postal entries, please indicate clearly on your entry if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers.
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TORRA! TORRA! TORRA!

The battle for affordable super sound rages most fiercely in the mid-range price bracket. As we found out, this means there are plenty of great machines to choose from! Subjective Reviews: **Alvin Gold**
Lab Tests: **Paul Miller**



Meridian 506

Our test group this month consists of eleven up-market, one-box CD players costing between £400 and £1,000. The group is an unusually strong one, featuring an eclectic mix of models from mainstream and smaller specialist manufacturers, such as the latest from Linn, Naim, Quad and Marantz.

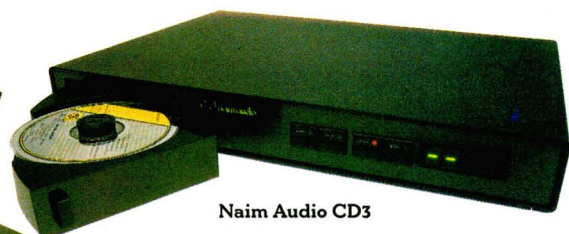
Sound quality is what it's all about. Little space has been devoted to blow-by-blow accounts of front-panel or remote-control facilities, since few listeners will have much use for any but the most basic track-search controls and read-outs. Frankly, if it is gadgets you're after, or if your priorities include automatically-programmed dubbing onto cassette, you'd probably

CD PLAYERS

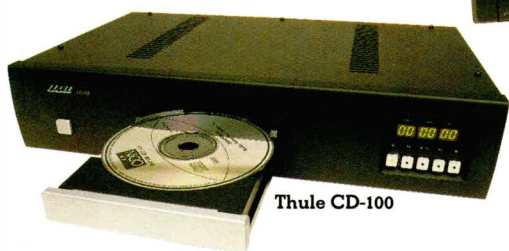
ON TEST



Linn Mimik



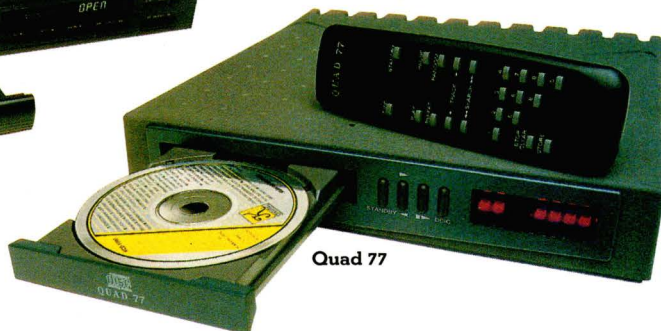
Naim Audio CD3



Thule CD-100



Rotel RCD-975



Quad 77



harman/kardon HD7625

be better served by one of the plethora of multi-disc players, most of which sell for less than £300.

Each of the test players can select individual tracks, offers audible cueing, and allows for track programming. The descriptions concentrate on the features that are relevant in an audiophile context, such as the provision or otherwise of digital outputs. These aren't there just to allow the use of outboard DACs. They are also a prerequisite for those who want to

record in the digital domain onto DCC, MiniDisc or DAT.

This is the first time I, Alvin Gold, have run the CD player listening tests, so regular readers will notice inevitable changes from how CD tests have been conducted in the past. However, most of these changes concern the actual procedure and equipment used to accompany the players under test. A panel of experienced listeners auditioned a selection of music on each player under blind listening con-

ditions (with unannounced repeats) over a two-day period. Volume levels were normalised using a sine-wave test signal and an audio voltmeter between presentations, to ensure that output voltage differences between players had no effect on the test results. The main procedural difference was that listening notes were made individually by each listener, rather than collectively at the end of each test run. I also did my own hands-on listening, and have reported on this as appropriate.

THE CAST LIST

Arcam Alpha 6	£600
harman/kardon HD7625	£450
Linn Mimik	£875
Marantz CD-17	£800
Meridian 506	£950
Naim Audio CD3	£977.60
Orelle CD-100SE	£550
Quad 77	£900/700
Rotel RCD-975	£450
Teac VRDS-7	£650
Thule CD-100	£849



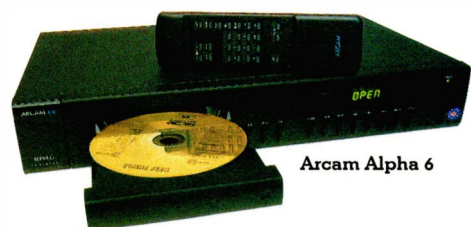
Marantz CD-17



Orelle CD-100SE



Teac VRDS-7



Arcam Alpha 6

THE LISTENING TEST

What hi-fi did we use for the test?

The system we chose for auditioning was designed to be as transparent and neutral as possible, to avoid any possible bias in the results. Equipment included a Krell KRC-3 preamp and KSA-50S power amp, connected using Siltech BA-560 Gold balanced interconnects. Speakers were Spondor's SP7/1 and 2030 models — the latter a new and very different floorstander by Robin Marshall, formerly of Epos. The two speakers were used on successive days — each panel made its own choice at the start of listening. Speaker cables were from AudioTruth.

The Blind Listening Panel

- Robin Marshall (Mission Research)
- Roy Gandy (Rega Research)
- Russell Kauffman (Morel Loudspeakers)
- Alan Sircom (Hi-Fi Choice)
- Jason Kennedy (Hi-Fi Choice)
- John Mansell (Rega Research)
- Stuart Nevill (B&W Loudspeakers).

Albums We Listened To

- Alison Krauss
- Now That I've Found You
- Total Eclipse (Blue Room)
- Nautilus
- Song of Bernadette
- Jennifer Warnes
- Every Morning
- Keb' Mo'
- Beethoven Piano Sonata N° 1
- Alfred Brendel
- Mahler Symphony N° 4, Inbal, Frankfurt RSO
- Helen Donath

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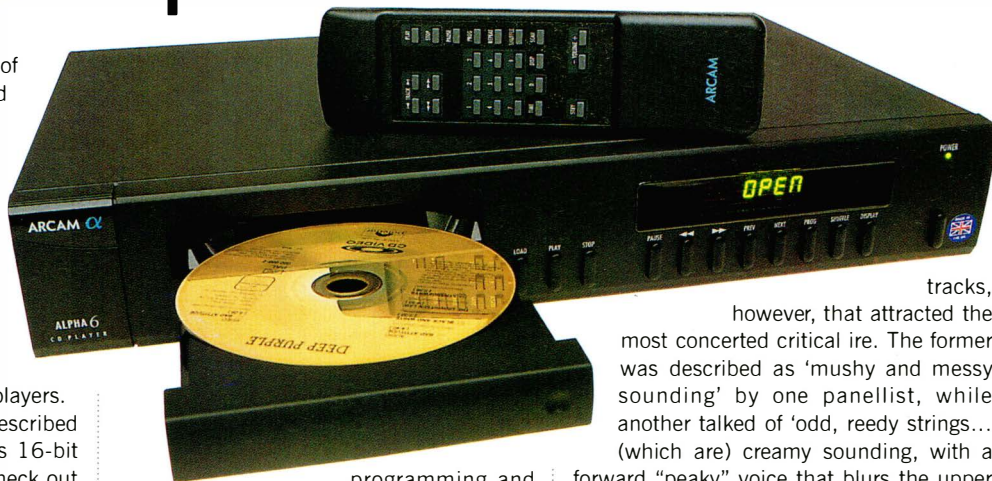
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Arcam Alpha 6

The *Alpha 6* is a derivative of the well known *Alpha 5* and *5 Plus*, both of which can be upgraded to this higher spec machine at a cost equivalent to the difference in retail price. Given the relatively modest sums involved — £120 from the *5 Plus*, and £150 from the *5* — this is an unusual act of corporate generosity and places the Arcam on a roughly equal footing with Micromega's *Stage* series players.

The *Alpha 6* eschews what is described by some as the 'venerable' Philips 16-bit chipset used in the *Alpha 5* (but check out the Orelle review on page 97), in favour of a 20-bit NPC hybrid digital filter and a differential-mode pulse-width DAC. The first analogue filters are also differential, and the audio output topology eliminates coupling capacitors, which are a known source of colouration. The CD transport mechanism is the Philips *CDM-9*.

Although the remote-control handset accesses a typical range of search and play features, the Arcam is one of the few machines here to include most of the key



programming and search controls on the front panel as well. One of these controls turns off the display, which is particularly welcome — despite being both simple and attractive, it is also very bright. An electrical digital output is available.

Sound Quality

The *Alpha 6* elicited a mixed reaction from the panel, which praised certain performance aspects and criticised others in an almost uncanny parallel of the Teac *VRDS-7* player (tested on page 100). Indeed, the two players were confused with each other by one of the panel members.

Though timing was felt to be good, and bass output strong, the *Alpha 6* was criticised for 'erratic, defocused imagery' (playing *Nautilus* from the eponymous Blue Room label — see page 88-89 for track listings), and a 'shouty, ill-defined voice' (Keb' Mo'). Also it was accused of being 'rough — lacking in definition, and with little attack in the middle registers' (Beethoven/Brendel).

It was the Jennifer Warnes and Mahler

tracks, however, that attracted the most concerted critical ire. The former was described as 'mushy and messy sounding' by one panellist, while another talked of 'odd, reedy strings... (which are) creamy sounding, with a forward "peaky" voice that blurs the upper frequencies'.

In conversation after the listening had ended, the panel commented that the *Alpha 6* superimposed a phasiness on the higher frequencies that led to some muddling of fine detail and contributed to a harshness which was noticed at one time or another by each of the panel members. In less crystalline and revealing systems than the one used by the panel, the undeniably flawed high-frequency performance was less exposed, and the player sounded more satisfactory, with its solidity and timing being the dominant characteristics.

Conclusion

An alarmingly uneven player, the *Alpha 6* is capable of working well when not too exposed, but shows its claws in a high resolution system. In the final analysis, it seems that in Arcam's desire to turn out a comprehensively-equipped design that can live alongside mainstream commercial amplifiers and other components, something musically important has been compromised.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £600

▲ Solid, coherent bass; strong on features; and designed to look right with mainstream partnering systems.

▼ Disappointing overall performance, even by comparison with Arcam's cheaper Alpha models.

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THE LAB REPORT

I am always a little concerned when a box arrives with 'Review Sample' plastered over it for all to see. But concern turns to bemusement when the 'Review Sample' is so under par that a spell in intensive care is diagnosed. So it is with the Arcam *Alpha 6* — one of the very first to employ a combination of NPC's *SM5840* 8x digital filter and *SM5864* bitstream DAC.

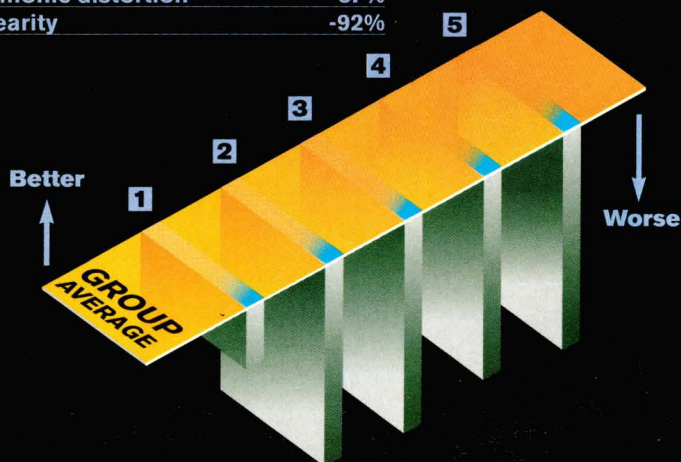
At first sight, the player's flat frequency response, excellent channel separation and balance, healthy 2.3V output level and usefully low 47 Ohm output impedance all look very solid. As does the low 0.0014 per cent distortion at peak level. Unfortunately, things begin to go seriously awry at lower signal levels.

At -60dB, distortion has risen to ten times the expected level, at 1.8 per cent, while its frequency response becomes progressively mangled, peaking and dipping by +13dB to -15dB at the -90dB level! Hence the appearance of the barchart. The final nail in this rough and grubby-sounding coffin is hammered in by a huge 993psec of data-induced jitter and an appalling 89dB S/N ratio — this is 15-bit performance at best.

PM

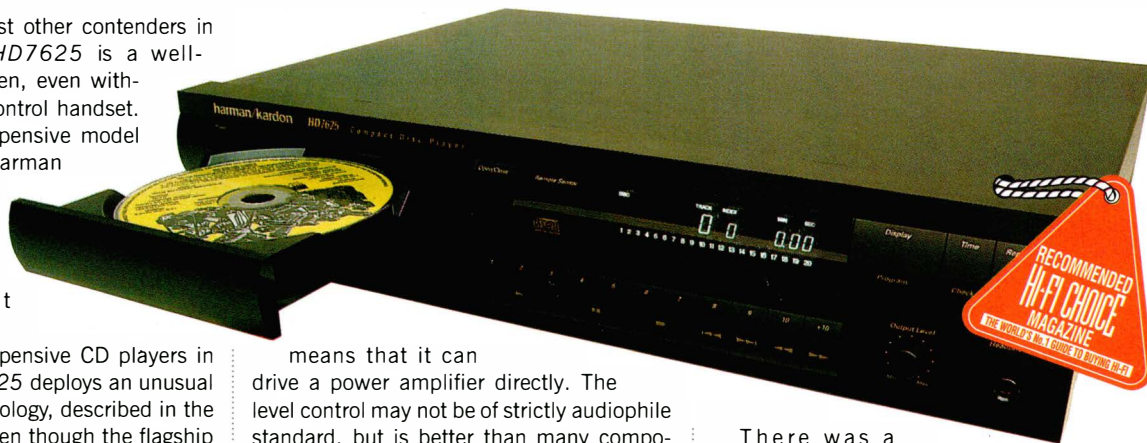
HOW IT COMPARES

1	Suppression of Digital Images	-24%
2	Jitter	-85%
3	Practical dynamic range	-90%
4	Harmonic distortion	-87%
5	Linearity	-92%



harman/kardon HD7625

In contrast to most other contenders in this test, the *HD7625* is a well-equipped specimen, even without the remote control handset. It is the most expensive model bar one in the harman range, and has characteristic house styling, distinguished by the half-rounded front panel features.



Like other less expensive CD players in this range, the *HD7625* deploys an unusual digital conversion topology, described in the Lab Report below. Even though the flagship £800 *HD7725* player acquitted itself well in issue 124, the £400 *HD7525*, tested in issue 151, produced good results but raised doubts over consistency of the conversion implementation from player to player.

The fluorescent music-calendar-type display is clear, informative, attractive, and can be turned off, except when selecting tracks and the like. It even remembers its status after being switched off or disconnected from the mains. A front-panel analogue volume pot controls the headphone socket and one of the two line-level outputs, which

means that it can drive a power amplifier directly. The level control may not be of strictly audiophile standard, but is better than many component preamplifiers. The *HD7625* can also be used as a standalone CD player with headphones.

Sound Quality

As Murphy would have it, the first test sample failed just before the end of the listening tests, but this seems to have been a one-off, and its replacement behaved faultlessly. I am a little concerned, however, that the first player sounded different to the second, being characterised as mellow and warm. Whether or not this is related to the fault (undiagnosed at the time of writing) is not possible to say.

The second *HD7625* attracted particular praise for its instrumental separation, its bold, tuneful bass and its relatively clean, open top end. 'Detailed and dynamic' said one listener, 'clear as a bell' wrote another; and there were similar observations from my separate hands-on listening. This is a crisp, lively and open-sounding player that worked consistently well with virtually all types of music — rock, jazz, classical and more.

There was a down side to this incisiveness. One listener chose to compare the *HD7625* to an *XR3i*, remarking also that it sounded brash and clean with the Blue Room track. He also suggested that the player sounded subjectively loud, a comment echoed by another panellist, who drew a frequency response plot that showed an upper band output peak.

Image depth is also slightly short-changed by this player, and there was a flatness that was explicitly commented upon with such recordings as the Inbal Mahler 4. This was recorded mainly with a single crossed pair of microphones, with minimum fill from other mics, and which, with the right encouragement, is capable of particularly natural three-dimensional imagery.

Conclusion

The *HD7625* is a solid-sounding, articulate and comparatively inexpensive player. It is let down only by a rather flat and upfront balance, and by our concerns about sample consistency.

VERDICT

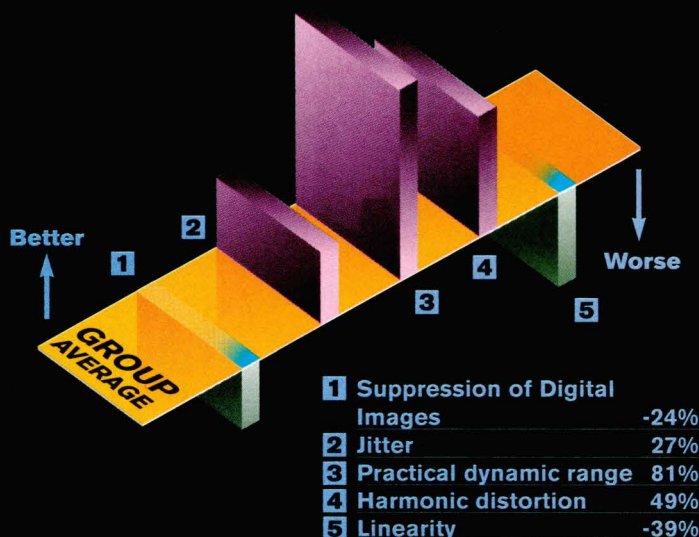
SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £450

▲ Well-endowed and slick player that sounds detailed, sharp and clean.

▼ Not quite the most natural or transparent player in its class.

✉ Harman Audio UK Ltd, Unit 2, Borehamwood Industrial Park, Rowley Lane, Borehamwood WD6 5PZ.
 ☎ (0181) 207 5050

HOW IT COMPARES



THE LAB REPORT

Once again, the dream of 'Realtime Linear Smoothing' comes alive in one of harman's CD players. As before, this player uses two pairs of 18-bit Burr Brown *PCM61P* DACs per channel. One DAC provides a reference for the both the direction and rate of change of samples emerging from the second DAC of each pair, this being delayed by a period equal to the 8x oversampling rate.

Because HK is using the same *SM5840* digital filter as Arcam, both players are equal in their rejection of digital rubbish. However, even though the *HD7625* suffers a higher and rough-sounding +7dB of noise modulation, it still boasts a spectacular dynamic range. The RLS technique also helps cancel some forms of distortion, keeping THD to within 0.001- 0.01 percent at peak output even though it actually causes a spray of slightly dirty-sounding odd-order harmonics at the -30dB level.

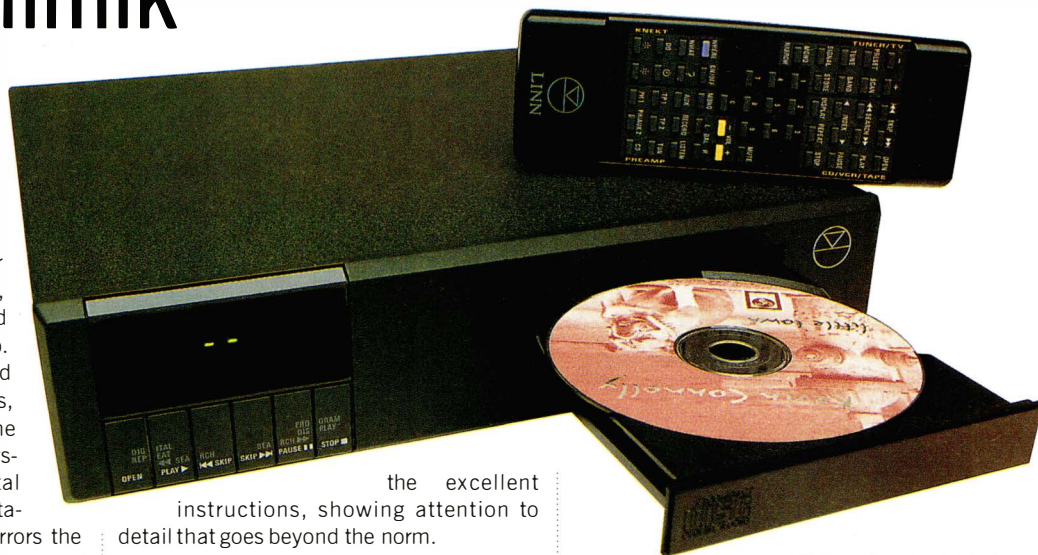
Because the 'reference' and 'delayed' DACs can never be perfectly matched, players like the *HD7625* will always suffer a deterioration in resolution at high frequencies, in this case up to -8dB at 20kHz/-100dB. It all adds to this player's idiosyncratic 'character'!

PM

Linn Mimik

The *Mimik* is a single-box player that comes in at the affordable end of the Linn Products range. Linn's now-familiar 320mm-wide casing contains a Sony mechanism that is responsible for some protracted track access times, and a converter section that is based on the Crystal CS4328 DS D/A chip. Unusually, the *Mimik* is equipped with two sets of analogue outputs, one of which can be routed to the master controller of a multi-room system. A defeatable electrical digital output is available on an instrumentation-quality BNC socket — this mirrors the high-quality internal build.

An attractive though non-dimmable display is fitted above a bank of six press-buttons that access the main functions, and when used in combination, some of the secondary functions too. The secondary functions are signposted in grey on the controls themselves, though the same facilities are more conveniently accessed, without need for double-keying, from the remote handset. A set of decent-quality interconnects and spare mains fuses are supplied along with



the excellent instructions, showing attention to detail that goes beyond the norm.

Sound Quality

A distinctive player on audition, the Linn was recognised by name by one panel member, and elicited comments from each listener close agreement with each other. In each case, the bass was praised for being strong. 'Firm and acoustically convincing' said one, after listening to the Keb' Mo' track; another dismissed it in peremptory fashion as being 'out of time'.

Overall, however, the broader aspects of the Linn's musical style were described in less than glowing terms. 'Phasey, mushy and distorted' was the judgement of one panel member in response to the same Keb' Mo' track. The Alison Krauss song *I Will*, which really demands strong analysis and explicit stereo depth imagery to succeed properly, was accused of sounding as though 'a poor flanger effect had been used', with a further note that the vibrato in Alison's voice 'all but disappeared'.

Midband was singled out for sounding variously 'honky', 'forward' and 'aggressive', and the Jennifer Warnes track was accused of 'mid-forward, aggressive and "in my face" vocals. Positive comments were made by each listener at various times, but they almost always came second to the critical comments.

With the best will in the world, the *Mimik* is disappointing. The bass was often good, striding through complex lines with tunefulness, power and authority, but the mid/top lacks depth, and often seems to smear the image laterally and in the process destroys perspectives. The *Mimik* also lacks consistency, favouring simple, sparse recordings over densely scored ones.

Conclusion

The *Mimik's* best features are its build and presentation, its bass, and the inherent flexibility that allows it to become part of a sophisticated Linn-branded multi-room system. Musically, however, it is less successful. ▶▶

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £875

- ▲ Immaculately presented, with sophisticated multi-room potential and clever diagnostics features.
 - ▼ Bass apart, the *Mimik* sounds messy and falls a long way short of *Karik/Numerik* standards.
- ✉ Linn Products Ltd, Floors Road, Waterfoot, Eaglesham, Glasgow G76 0EP
 ☎ (0500) 888909

THE LAB REPORT

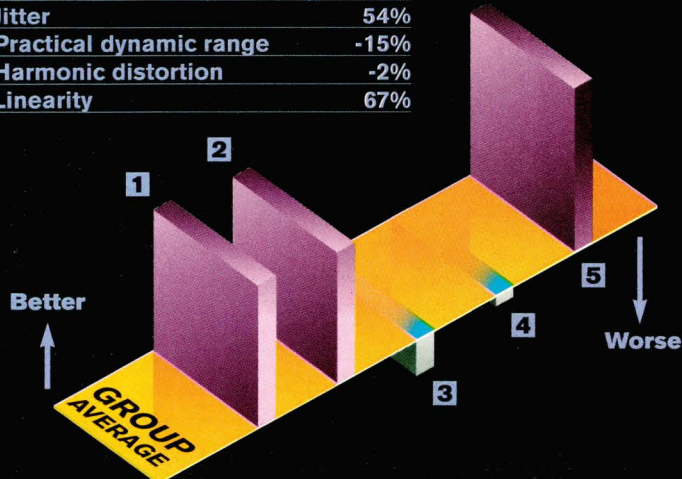
This is one of four players in our test using Crystal bitstream technology, and the first of three to use the CS4328 DAC in particular. The miniature surface-mount version is deployed here, along with surface-mount Burr-Brown op-amps and associated circuitry. A Far-Eastern-sourced laser transport completes the component complement.

On-chip digital filtering yields virtually the same suppression of unwanted images as its cohorts, the Quad and Meridian players, though with a just-about 16-bit S/N of 96dB and +1.4dB noise modulation, the *Mimik* has a slightly inferior overall dynamic range. Jitter is slightly worse, too, with unusual sidebands at 1667Hz and 3190Hz respectively. Unusually, distortion also increases from typically 0.006 to 0.1 per cent with pre-emphasised CDs (at 5kHz), while Linn, like Quad, has engaged Crystal's digital mute facility in an effort to obtain 'enhanced' S/N readings.

Radiated interference is very low but the *Mimik* was fundamentally more sensitive to external RF (including flyback noise from my VDU) than either the Quad or Meridian. Some environmental sensitivity is therefore implied. *PM*

HOW IT COMPARES

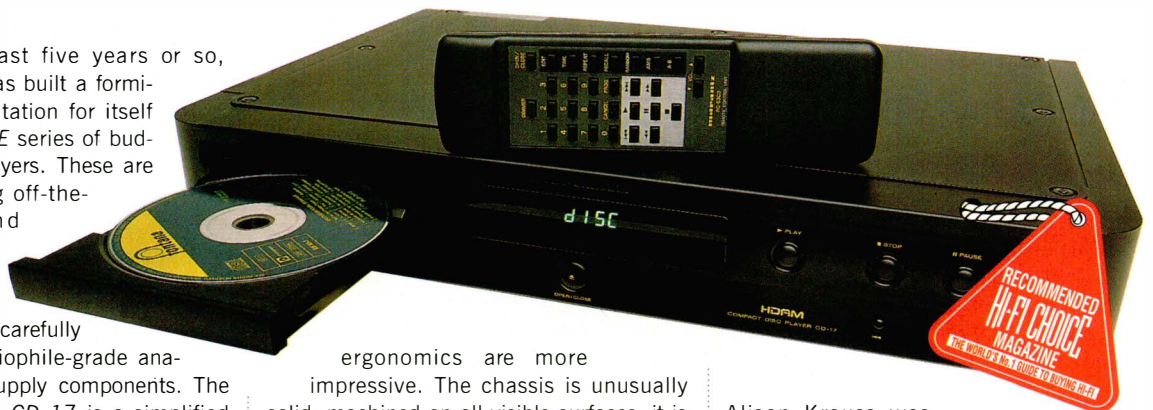
1	Suppression of Digital Images	58%
2	Jitter	54%
3	Practical dynamic range	-15%
4	Harmonic distortion	-2%
5	Linearity	67%



Marantz CD-17

Over the past five years or so, Marantz has built a formidable reputation for itself with the SE series of budget CD players. These are built using off-the-shelf digital and transport components from Philips (Marantz's parent company) that are carefully leavened with audiophile-grade analogue and power-supply components. The recently introduced *CD-17* is a simplified version of the flagship *CD-15*, but it is nonetheless a high spec design. It is based on similar technology in the form of a DAC7 BitStream converter, in this case with a CDM12.3 mechanism and discrete output op-amp, whereas the *CD-15* uses a special version of the diecast CDM4 and dual DAC7s with differential plumbing, and the option of balanced working.

The player is equipped with an electrical digital S/PDIF output and system control sockets. Play and programming facilities are accessed from the remote control, but this player is about more than just offering a bulging feature list — the *CD-17*'s style and



ergonomics are more impressive. The chassis is unusually solid: machined on all visible surfaces, it is wide (454mm) and slim in its proportions — too wide for some equipment supports, including the test Mana Acoustics stands. The rounded edges add a touch of friendliness and style to the deck, while the simplified control scheme is beautifully organised, and matched to an excellent display. Track access is quick, and the tracking sure. The only omission is display dimming.

Sound Quality

For the most part panellists were clearly impressed, but the worst criticisms made of this player were about a slightly squashed, or at any rate lightweight feel in the extreme bass, and that the mid/treble could sometimes sound 'hard and tizzy' or 'a bit closed in and congested.'

Each of these criticisms was hedged around with more positive remarks, and those weaknesses that were apparent evidently did little to spoil the panel's enjoyment of the music.

The Mahler, for example, was judged to be 'well balanced and involving'; the Beethoven was 'musically intelligible if a little dry' and had 'reasonable image depth';

Alison Krauss was 'rhythmically assured'. Keb' Mo's *Every Morning* attracted comments like 'it has a nice balance... good timing and a sense of involvement... a forceful presentation, with a natural balance and quite strong dynamics'. There were a lot of 'quites' and 'fairlies' scattered through the listening notes, but there was plenty of solid praise too. The Marantz was one of the players that was given a repeat presentation, and it attracted similar comments on both occasions. One of the panel recognised that the same player had turned up twice, though perhaps fittingly, given its ultimately somewhat anonymous character, no one hazarded a guess as to its identity.

Conclusions

The *CD-17* is a well sorted implementation of a familiar technology, and a pleasure to own on several different levels. As well as its obvious musical talents, the *CD-17* has the kind of consistency that promises good, if not necessarily ground-shaking results, in a wide range of systems, and with virtually any kind of music. Good stuff, and strongly Recommended.

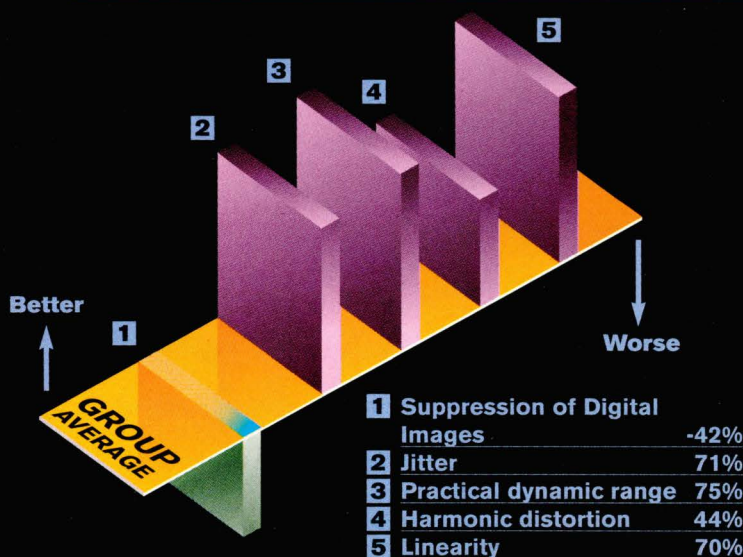
VERDICT

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

▲ Battleship build and sexy good looks complement excellent all-round sound quality.
 ▼ Rather lightweight; some loss of fine detail and dynamics.

✉ Marantz Hi-Fi UK Ltd, Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 575-583 Bath Road, Longfield, Middlesex UB7 0EH
 ☎ (01753) 680868

HOW IT COMPARES



THE LAB REPORT

In contrast with Marantz's cheaper CD players, the *CD-17* reveals the close ties that exist between Marantz and its parent company, Philips. The sleek transport is a derivation of Philips' CDM12, while a new decoder, the SAA7372, passes the unscrambled digits onto Philips' SAA7350 noise-shaper and a single DAC7 bit-converter. In common with many other players, the 8x digital filtering is handled by NPC's SM5841.

All this adds-up to one of the widest S/N ratios for a single DAC7 (110dB) and an appropriately wide dynamic range to boot. Jitter is also mercifully low at 196psec, resolution true to within 0.3dB over a full 100dB range, and distortion held to within 0.0016-0.02 per cent at the musically important level of -30dB. Many players have trouble squashing distortion to these limits at peak output, let alone -30dB. The overall effect will be to encourage a clean, spacious and above all dynamic sound.

Improvements are still possible, however, particularly in its rejection of digital images, which lie just 54dB below full output. A superior digital filter would do the trick. Oh yes, it's also worth noting that the output level increases by 0.4dB as the player warms up...
 PM

Meridian 506

The Meridian 506 CD player is just one of a number of upmarket British players to feature the Crystal CS4328 DS processor. However, as you might expect from Meridian, it also has a radial laser

mechanism that is wholly contained within the bulky drawer.

In some ways the most glamorous of the CD players tested this time out, the 506 is compact, extremely heavy (because of the elaborate power supplies in particular), and superbly finished thanks to a subtle blend of matt-black metal panels and darkened glass. Subtle relief is provided by the controls and an excellent defeatable dot-matrix display. Socketry is available for electrical and optical digital outputs, and there are two proprietary communications sockets for use in full Meridian multi-room systems.

Sound Quality

This player attracted almost complete unanimity on test — each of the panel members categorised the performance of the player completely independently but in broadly the



same terms.

On the positive side, the Meridian was liked for its taut precision and control at both frequency extremes, but it was criticised, in effect, for being incapable of "letting its hair down". 'There is a strange dullness to the midband' wrote one panellist, after hearing the Keb' Mo' track. 'The bass is solid, and the treble sounds more extended than many of the others, but the overall effect is dull and sterile'.

The Beethoven came across to one listener as being 'controlled and slightly restrained' and as having a 'strong sense of detail, but sounding as though the left and the right hand belong to two different pianos'. Another suggested that the 506 'could be a little more enthusiastic and committed', and a third thought the sound 'detached and distant'. A turn of phrase repeated almost verbatim several times throughout the tests was 'devoid of emotion'. The Mahler was similarly characterised as having 'a lot going on', but in a wonderful phrase that somehow says it all, the Meridian was dubbed 'a Mr Spock among CD players'. This panel member

recognised the brand of the player, knowing in advance only the broad price span involved.

Of course those with Meridian systems, especially digital systems that talk the same command language and use the same system remote control, will find a choice from the Meridian range almost irresistible. In its favour, the 506 is beautifully packaged, and remains capable of sounding both detailed and highly refined in a sympathetically chosen system. However, it is less of an advocate for difficult material than a number of others, and it can engender listening fatigue over long term use.

Conclusions

The Meridian 506 is a classic case of a player that time has caught out. It was highly competitive when first released, and was restored to that position following a mid-life revamp a couple of years ago when fitted with a three-beam laser. However, the goal posts have moved since then, and though it remains a competent and in many ways likeable performer, the 506 has been matched and even surpassed several times in the last few years.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £950

▲ Style, display system (with off switch), flexibility and civilised sound.

▼ Lacks organic strengths of the best, and can sound mechanical.

✉ Meridian Audio Ltd, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 6ED
 ☎ (01480) 434334

THE LAB REPORT

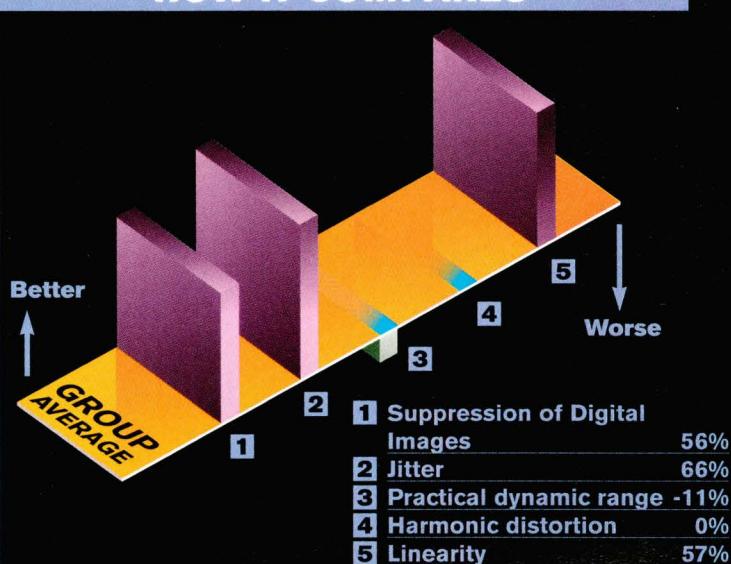
Like Linn's *Mimik*, Meridian's 506 employs the surface-mount version of Crystal's CS4328 bitstream DAC. Unlike the *Mimik*, however, the 506 is graced with one of Philips' CDM12.4 mechanisms together with an older, but thoroughly superior, SAA7310 decoder. This IC promises superb tracking of less-than-perfect discs.

Overall this is an accomplished design, offering low distortion across the entire audioband (0.0007-0.006 per cent), linearity true to within 1dB over a full 100dB dynamic range, an utterly flat frequency response and low 50 Ohm output impedance suitable for driving long-ish interconnect cable. An internal inspection revealed patches of a 'crusty' contaminant on the main board which may be a residue of the PCB detergent used during manufacture. Either way, the presence of a (possibly) semi-conducting impurity is unlikely to improve its performance.

The sonic 'character' of the 506 will be influenced by Meridian's choice of Signetics op-amps in the analogue stage, though its mild data-induced jitter pattern and immunity to outside interference suggest the 506 will sound closer to the Quad 77 than the Linn *Mimik*.

PM

HOW IT COMPARES



Naim Audio CD3

The Naim CD3 is arguably the most wilfully idiosyncratic single-box CD player in current serial production, excepting other players from the same stable. Under the bonnet you'll find the familiar Philips 16-bit, 4x oversampling chipset in selected Silver Crown guise. Output is available from a locking DIN plug for which phono adapter leads are available.

The disc drawer is a manually-operated hinged mechanism, in which the disc is held by a manually-placed magnetic puck. Naim claims that there are subtle performance penalties associated with the use of drawer motors, and the digital output was omitted for a similar reason: the presence of a digital output necessarily increases internal RF noise, however hard the designers work to avoid this. The CD3's suspension has been reworked to further reduce microphony, and the loader is now made from a low-resonance phenolic resin. The disc area has



been painted in a new, textured black paint to reduce light scatter.

Loading drawer apart, the CD3 has excellent ergonomics, though the rather old-fashioned-looking display cannot be turned off. Standard search and programming facilities are available from the remote handset.

Sound Quality

I was less than surprised that two of the panellists, independently, recognised the identity of this player, which is a musically characterful offering in the classic Naim mould. It gave itself away with steamroller bass delivery; slightly forced, almost aggressive timing, and its coherent, if slightly shut-in midband. The coloured nature of the CD3 was recognised by all, but on the whole, it was well liked by listeners who seemed glad to get away from the neutral but ultimately facile sterility of some other players.

'Coherent if rather shut in' wrote one panel member after hearing Keb' Mo's *Every Morning*, adding that 'I could live with it if I had to' — high praise in this case. Material with a more recognisably acoustic basis tended to attract more criticism. Jennifer Warnes's *Song of Bernadette* was marked down for sounding 'congested', and the

Beethoven sonata attracted split comments: praise for the left hand (playing the lower registers) but criticism of a 'lost' right-hand part.

My own view of the CD3 is that although it makes the Keb' Mo' and Blue Room tracks sound fluid and rhythmic, and although it has an unusual and welcome analogue-style presence and solidity, it lost marks for its evident coloration, its loss of subtlety and its lack of image depth; and also for an apparent loss of high frequency 'air'. Overriding this, however, I enjoyed the Naim's muscular bass, and its evident dynamism and focus, which meant that whatever objective shortcomings there may have been, generally, they didn't intrude when the player was auditioned in isolation. To borrow a phrase, the CD3 covered its tracks well.

Conclusions

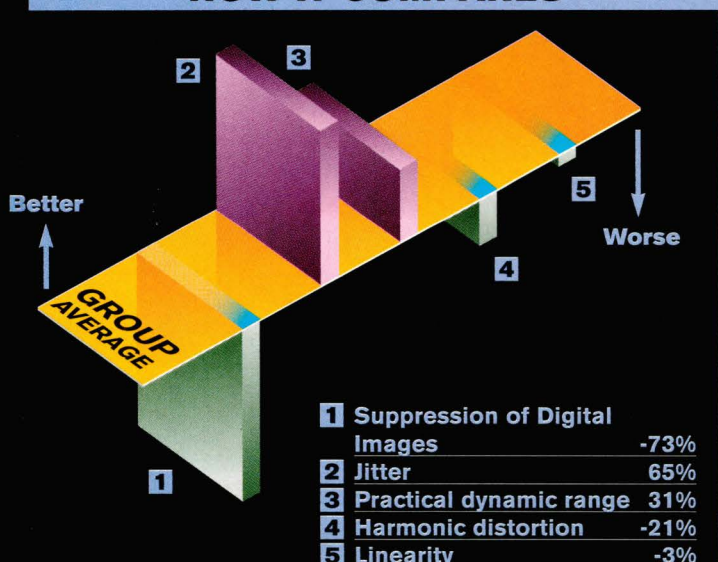
System synergy is clearly an important element of this package, and a sympathetically chosen system is perhaps more necessary than usual. The CD3 is readily Recommended on the basis that it will be used in this way, typically (though not necessarily) with other Naim components.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £977.60

- ▲ Although limited around the edges of the performance envelope, the CD3 has a consistency and dynamism that eludes many others.
- ▼ Idiosyncratic manual loading system, and no digital output means no direct digital recording.
- ✉ Naim Audio, Southampton Road, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 2LN
- ☎ (01722) 332266

HOW IT COMPARES



THE LAB REPORT

In marked contrast with Orelle's rather obvious modification of an old 16-bit Philips player, Naim's CD3 benefits from a custom implementation, albeit employing the same combination of Philips' SAA7220 4x oversampling filter and TDA1541A 16-bit DAC. Here Naim has specified extensive PSU regulation, star earthing, quality passive components (including Siemens layer-type capacitors, apparently) and decent PMI op-amps for both I-to-V conversion and analogue filtering.

Importantly, Naim's custom implementation has ensured a clean ultrasonic spectrum, dominated by simple and subjectively innocuous second-order distortions and sampling images. Low-rate jitter dominates, with fundamental data-induced sidebands joined by a 'clump' of components from 60-95Hz, though this is unlikely to be sufficient to compromise stereo imagery. Naim also enjoys a 3dB advantage in S/N over its Orelle competitor, although this is at least partially offset by a higher +11.5dB noise modulation.

This factor, the typically huge 'multi-bit lurch' in distortion (0.001 to 0.045 per cent from 0dB to -30dB), and the abrupt kinks in low-level linearity, are all features of this established 16-bit chipset, and will encourage a somewhat colourful if slightly abrasive sound.

PM

Orelle CD-100SE

Why is (the) *CD-100* so good?' asks the Orelle data sheet. 'Because it has the right ingredients'. By this Orelle means that the *CD-100* uses classic

technology in the shape of a Philips *CDM-4* swing-arm mechanism and a 16-bit 4x oversampling SI Crown tolerance selected chipset. Additionally this *SE* version has a device called an FRTB (Fast Rise Time Buffer) clock — shades of Trichord, but by different means — which claims to reduce jitter.

Mechanical design has not been neglected. The front panel is an 8mm-thick solid aluminium plate, and the lid is damped to control resonances and hence microphony, which, according to Orelle, causes a 'blurring' effect in the treble.

As we had cause to find out, the heavy mechanism can wreak havoc internally if the transit bolt is not used when the deck is being moved.

This is the kind of technology that was the state of the art just as low-bit DACs were taking their first bows, but it has been used in several of the highest-ranked players then



and since. Maybe Orelle is right about the *CD-100*'s time-honoured ingredients.

The Orelle's black anodised panel is offset by a brushed-silver-finish drawer-front, and socket-headed screws, giving the *CD-100SE* a classy and business-like air. The controls are simple and of good quality, although their layout is slightly wayward — a comment that applies equally to the optically excellent display.

Sound Quality

This player elicited a strong degree of agreement from the panellists, each of whom variously described it as dynamic, muscular and well balanced.

Timing was explicitly praised, as was the Orelle's ability to start and stop cleanly (a related property). This served the music well, especially with the punchy Keb' Mo' track, which was reproduced with a strongly developed contrast between the sparse instrumentation and inky black backgrounds. 'Upbeat, not too "in yer face"', was one listener's considered verdict. There was some comment on a loss of refinement, which was noticed especially in the case of the Jennifer Warnes

recording, and tonal colours were described as a little dark, perhaps an indication of in-band treble loss. There was some disagreement about the Beethoven sonata, but timing and dynamics were both singled out for praise. The overall verdict was that this is a wholesome and enjoyable player — like a good pint of Guinness, as one put it.

I also thoroughly enjoyed this player during hands-on listening. It's clear that it isn't the definitive answer to CD replay, but its presence, ability to fill the soundstage around the speakers, and excellent dynamics (which enabled it to resolve the individual instruments in an orchestra) take it a long way in the right direction.

Conclusions

Students of irony will enjoy the fact that this player came out near the top of the test group, yet uses technology that could have come from the days when arc was spelled Ark. The Orelle was ranked as detailed, dynamic and forceful, and if it is not quite the most subtle of the test group, its excellent timing acts as an object lesson to a generation of more sophisticated designs.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★★
PRICE £549.90

▲ Proof positive that old doesn't necessarily mean outdated.

▼ A marginal loss of refinement.

✉ Orelle Hi-Fi, Unit 12, Imex House, 6 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middlesex UB6 7JJ
☎ (0181) 908 4126

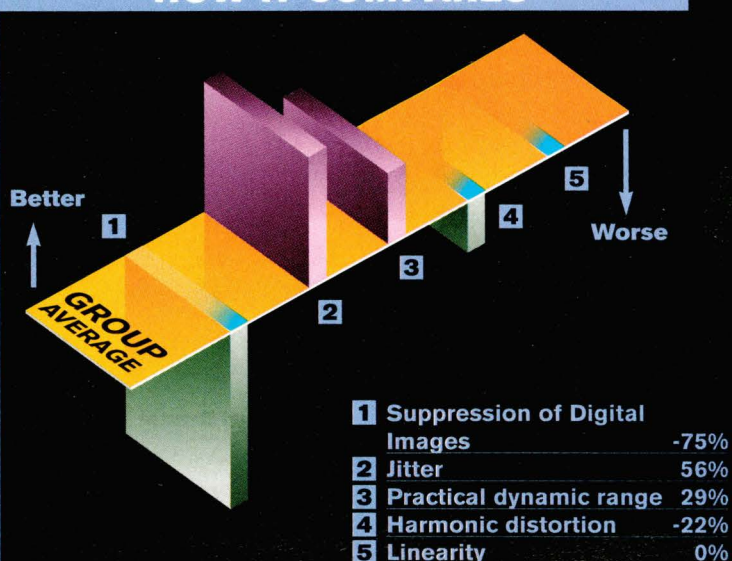
THE LAB REPORT

Broadly speaking, Orelle's *CD-100* is assembled from some very familiar — and very old — Philips components. This includes the large fluorescent display and swing-arm *CDM4* mechanism (which is no longer in production), though many engineers would concur that the latter did represent something of a high point for Philips.

The main PCB with its *SAA7220* 4x oversampling filter and 'Crown SI' version of the 16-bit *TDA1541* DAC are also culled from players of yesteryear. The *CD-100*, however, is distinguished by hand-soldered piggy-back boards for what appears to be a separately-regulated master clock and analogue output stage. Jitter, however, is slightly worse than that obtained by Naim's *CD3*.

Once again, the large jump in distortion that occurs over the first 30dB of its dynamic range, the kinks in low-level linearity and relatively high modulation noise are all features of the 16-bit architecture that the *CD-100* shares with Naim. However, because the *CD-100* is a lot closer in execution to the original Philips players, its ultrasonic spectrum is messier than Naim's, suffering a broader spread of distortion harmonics and high-order sampling images that are not expressly revealed by our barchart values. *PM*

HOW IT COMPARES



Quad 77

Finally, here is the standalone Quad CD player designed to match the futuristic 77 amplifier. This new machine is based on the Crystal 4328 Delta Sigma chip with an 18-bit, 64-times oversampling filter and a CDM12.4 transport with achingly slow track access. The player is designed to exploit the sophisticated Quadlink command/power/audio bus that allows menu-based control of 77 series components. The version tested here is self-contained and has standard phono audio outputs as well as the Quadlink bus.

The Quad 77 is excellent in parts, odd in others. The slimline case and grey textured finish are refreshingly different, but the simple LED display is below par optically. The four-button control system has muddled control graphics, and the power-standby switch and load buttons have been transposed from their common-sense positions. Buggy front-panel control logic sometimes prevented high track numbers being selected without the remote control. There is



no digital output (an omission consistent with company philosophy) or panel dimming, but the remote control is chunky and well made.

Sound Quality

The Quad 77 is one of three models tested here — the others are the Linn *Mimik* and the Meridian 506 — that use essentially the same conversion technology. As you might expect, these machines have something of a common sound, and though this is fundamentally crisp and lively, there is the potential for it to be a little flat and coarse.

Of the three players, the Quad turns out to be the most satisfactory, by some distance in the case of the Linn, more narrowly in the case of the Meridian. By general consent, the stand-out virtues were its seductive midband and the organic way in which it tackled complex sound patterns, although there was some inconsistency and congestion as the music became denser and wider ranging. The bass was described as being 'tactile' and with a 'good sense of rhythm'. The Keb' Mo' tracks displayed 'properly steely-sounding steel strings' and a 'voice that projects nicely without actually

sounding forward'.

The Alison Krauss track inspired one panel member to comment on the 77's 'good timbre' (a Quad speciality), but there was also a mild note of disapproval — 'the instruments are well delineated but there's a touch of hazy bloom at higher levels, particularly on banjo.' The Beethoven sonata presentation inspired one listener to write that he 'could hear more detail of the performance' with the Quad, and that it sounded 'quite sprightly, with good timing'. The Mahler elicited a variety of views, ranging from a verdict that it was 'natural and delicate' from one listener, through to a criticism of the player for 'lacking clarity' by another.

In the end, the fluid, organic nature of the Quad helped it win through, even when there were objective criticisms that it lacked resolving power when playing some of the more difficult passages.

Conclusions

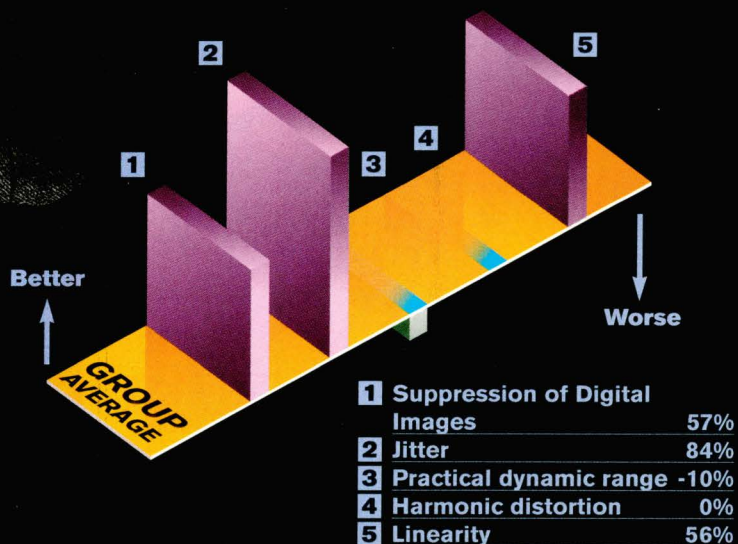
With the caveat that for those who want to do more than simply insert a disc and press 'play', this player could prove a frustrating experience, the Quad sounded excellent. Existing Quad 77 owners should find the bus-only version of the player better value still.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £900 (dedicated Quadlink bus version: £700)

- ▲ Fluid, elegant-sounding player, and an engaging musical advocate.
- ▼ Control system is a mess, although it's not short of good ideas.
- ✉ Quad Electroacoustics Ltd, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6DB
 (01480) 433777

HOW IT COMPARES



THE LAB REPORT

As the third and final player in our test to employ Crystal's CS4328 converter (and the only one to use the full-sized chip), Quad's 77 is arguably the most elegant in execution. It boasts a low 0.0007-0.008 per cent distortion across the audioband at peak output (1.96V), although, as with all applications of the CS4328, this is compromised at lower signal levels by additional ultrasonic requantisation noise.

The practical dynamic range of the player is limited by its 97dB S/N ratio (the 123dB obtained using Crystal's digital mute facility is false) although, with a low +1.9dB noise modulation, good immunity to outside interference and little or no emission of RF, at least its sound will be free of 'rough edges'. Importantly, at 157psec, the 77 enjoys the lowest jitter-level of any player in the test — another plus-point for good sound; likewise the favoured PMI op-amps used in its final analogue stage.

The 77 is not entirely free of quirks, however, and includes a rather 'wobbly' de-emphasis routine that yields a 1kHz/5kHz/16kHz response of -0.2/-0.9/-0.3dB respectively. It must be said that the response with standard (non pre-emphasised CDs) is entirely flat.

PM

Rotel RCD-975

Rotel's most ambitious single-box CD player to date, the *RCD-975*, is low and sleek, thanks to the Philips *CDM-9* swing arm mechanism, a slim-line version of the venerable *CDM-4*. It also boasts an ultra-clear and comprehensive set of controls, and a simple, high-quality fluorescent display to match. The *RCD-975* handles with much of the clarity and sweet precision of the Marantz *CD-17* (reviewed on page 94), which is impressive for a player at this price. The operating facilities require little comment, other than to note the presence of an electrical digital output.

The *RCD-975* employs BitStream conversion in a dual differential configuration using pairs of a recently-introduced Philips DAC called the *TDA1305T*. This is described as offering a unique combination of BitStream and continuous calibration techniques, and is followed by Analogue Devices output stages. As usual for Rotel, there are several individually-regulated power supplies and a number of audiophile-quality components. These have been used principally in the power supplies and analogue



circuits, and were specified as a result of a UK-based programme of listening tests.

Sound Quality

Rotel's claim for the *RCD-975* is that it is the most finely-detailed player the company has produced to date. The panel's findings only partially vindicated these worthy intentions. One listener found the Rotel 'brighter (which generally implies more detail) but harder'; another wrote that the sound was 'congested' and that it was ultimately 'rather boring'. A third commented that the 'voice was forward and brash', and the accompanying instruments were 'mushy' following a presentation of the Jennifer Warnes track.

The Alison Krauss Beatles cover *I Will*, which is a particularly open and sweet-sounding recording, was described as being 'brighter and more synthetic' than it should be, and the bass was too soft and 'tonally synthetic with indistinct timing'. Another lis-

tener talked of a 'cupped hands' quality to vocals. A more positive comment on the Jennifer Warnes piece described the Rotel as offering 'good timing,' noted that it was 'easy on the ear'.

Although the voice wasn't 'very sexy' the music was 'enjoyable enough'.

There is some diversity in the tone of these remarks, but a consistent theme, too: this is a player that, while fundamentally crisp and detailed, suffers from an overlay of muddle and congestion. In my own listening, using a different system and in a different listening room, I found the Rotel rather frazzled and lacking the focus and consistency found, for example, in the Linn, Orelle, Marantz and other models. To describe the Rotel as sounding overly digital is perhaps too simplistic, but that comment contains a germ of truth. There were times, especially with simple material, when it sounded very presentable, but more difficult challenges were handled less happily.

Conclusions

Despite its obvious plusses — the price, the sleek new packaging, and comprehensive features — the Rotel fails in its central aim of providing high resolution, and inhibits a full sense of involvement. ▶▶

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £450

▲ Crisp, lively and sometimes detailed player...
▼ ...but with a synthetic overlay that can impede the musical flow.

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

THE LAB REPORT

'Differential Mode MBCC Conversion' boasts the logo on the fascia of Rotel's *RCD-975* CD player. In practice, Rotel is using the same hybrid converter — Philips' *TDA1305* — as Audio Innovations and Cambridge in recent times. There's additional digital signal processing in the guise of some eight 8-bit shift registers which, I presume, generate separate differential L and R datastreams for the two *TDA1305* converters.

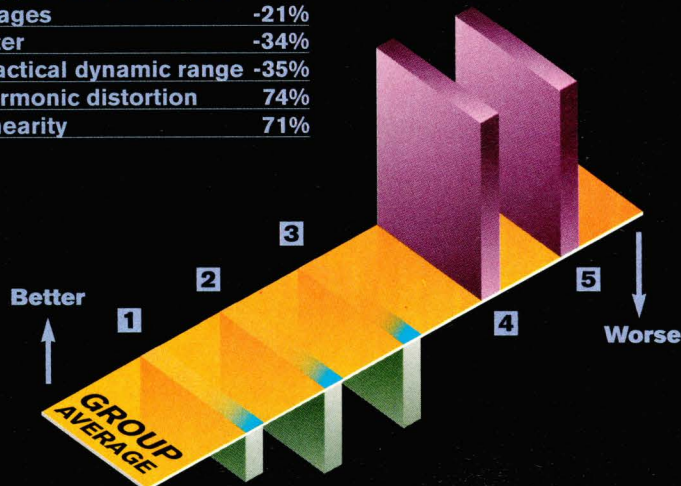
These DACs have several well-known pros and cons. On the plus side there's a low static distortion of just 0.0009-0.0025 per cent at peak output (2.19V), excellent low-level resolution with errors of just +0.2/-0.6dB over a full 100dB range, and a 'real-life' A-wtd S/N of 111dB.

Ranged against this is a positively huge +18dB's worth of noise modulation, which helps squash its practical dynamic range and introduce a rough, crude quality to its music-making. Jitter is also high at 647psec and, as with other implementations of Philips' *TDA1305*, this is composed of spurious sidebands at multiples of 1296Hz. Digital images and out-of-band noise are not adequately suppressed, and thus add to the aggressive tonal colour of the player as a whole.

PM

HOW IT COMPARES

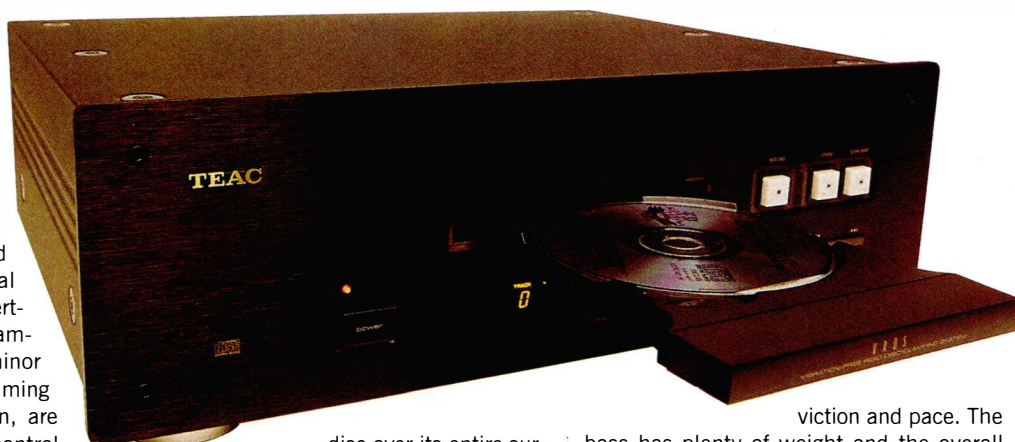
- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|------|
| 1 | Suppression of Digital Images | -21% |
| 2 | Jitter | -34% |
| 3 | Practical dynamic range | -35% |
| 4 | Harmonic distortion | 74% |
| 5 | Linearity | 71% |



Teac VRDS-7

At first sight, this player looks like something you might find in a recording studio, with its square section, internally-lit controls, and its uncompromisingly macho, business-like air. Under the skin, it is a sophisticated design that uses dual differential Philips SAA7350 BitStream converters with a 20-bit, 8-times oversampling digital filter. Most of the minor features, including delete programming and a multi-mode repeat function, are available only from the remote control, but a display-off switch is available from the front panel. This is of the kind that allows the displays to be seen when selecting tracks, but switches off automatically when play starts. Optical and electrical digital outputs are included in the VRDS-7's extensive specifications.

This player is well constructed, with some care having been taken to reduce microphony. The undoubted star of the vibration control measures is the VRDS (Vibration-free Rigid Disc-clamping System) transport mechanism, which clamps the



disc over its entire surface rather than just the central section, as a means of ironing out the small departures from true flatness that are inevitable with Compact Disc. A flatter disc means less servo action is necessary to maintain tracking, and less servo action in turn means calmer electrical and RF conditions inside the player, hence better sound quality. Teac has established a industry-wide reputation for the quality of its transport mechanisms, which have been adopted for a number of prestigious specialist players.

Sound Quality

There was some disagreement about the sound of this player, which was sometimes accused of being both harsh and soft at the same time — on one occasion by the same listener talking about a single piece of music (the Keb' Mo' track). The view I endorse is that although the VRDS-7 has several of the properties that mark out a top class player, it is ultimately a little too crude and caricatured to pass the test.

On a more positive note, this is a solid player that drives music forward with con-

viction and pace. The bass has plenty of weight and the overall effect is authoritative, although low frequencies sometimes seemed resonant and overhung, prompting one panel member to describe the Blue Room track as 'soggy, ill-defined and a little lacking in dynamics'.

The minus side concerns the mid and treble — these were described variously as sounding 'grainy and quite wearing' (Keb' Mo'); as making the piano seem almost 'toy-like' (Beethoven); and as being 'reedy, with a nasal voice...' and 'screechy and unemotive' (Jennifer Warnes).

I think some of these criticisms slightly overstate the case, but the Teac does tend to impose its own character on the music, and subtleties of detail and expression are the first to go.

Conclusions

The VRDS-7 certainly looks the part. It is massive, and massively built, with a superb control system and a first-rate display. Somehow, though, the whole is a little less than the sum of the parts, and as a result it lacks that certain intangible something that marks out the leaders from the also-rans.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £650

▲ Bold, outgoing sound; bold, outgoing build and presentation.

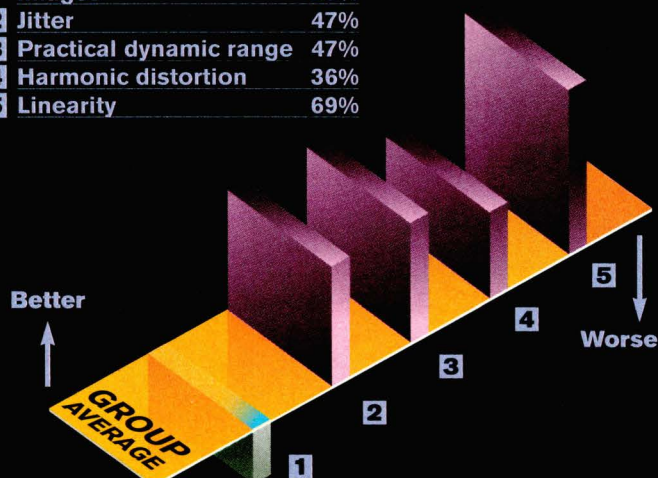
▼ Sometimes rather crude sound suffers from being both intrusive and lacking in fine detail, or at least properly organised fine detail.

✉ Teac UK Ltd, 5 Marlin House, The Croxley Centre, Watford, Hertfordshire WD1 8YA

☎ (01923) 819630

HOW IT COMPARES

1	Suppression of Digital Images	-23%
2	Jitter	47%
3	Practical dynamic range	47%
4	Harmonic distortion	36%
5	Linearity	69%



THE LAB REPORT

Evidently based upon the costlier VRDS-10, this VRDS-7 uses the lightweight CMK-4 version of Teac's famous 'Vibration-free Rigid Disc-clamping System' CD transport. Like the VRDS-10, the VRDS-7 uses one of NPC's 8x oversampling filters which lends it a modest 61dB rejection of stopband images. Unlike the VRDS-10, however, this version uses a pair of Philips' SAA7350 chips as combined noise-shapers and DACs rather than the costlier SAA7350/DAC7 combination used before.

This results in a 3-4dB compromise in S/N but a usefully wide dynamic range and freedom from a certain 'crudeness' thanks to the low modulation noise. On the other hand, this implementation of the SAA7350 has resulted in unwanted levels of digital images actually folding-back into the audioband at the -30dB level. We've seen this before with earlier Teac and Kenwood players and it's a quirk that may add a degree of coldness or dirtiness to the sound.

Digital jitter is moderate at 270psec though my jitter analyser did reveal some additional high level but low-rate asymmetric components at 35Hz and 43Hz — sufficient to soften the clarity of images, perhaps? The high 1.2 kOhm output impedance may also imply a sensitivity to certain esoteric interconnect cables. *PM*

Thule CD-100

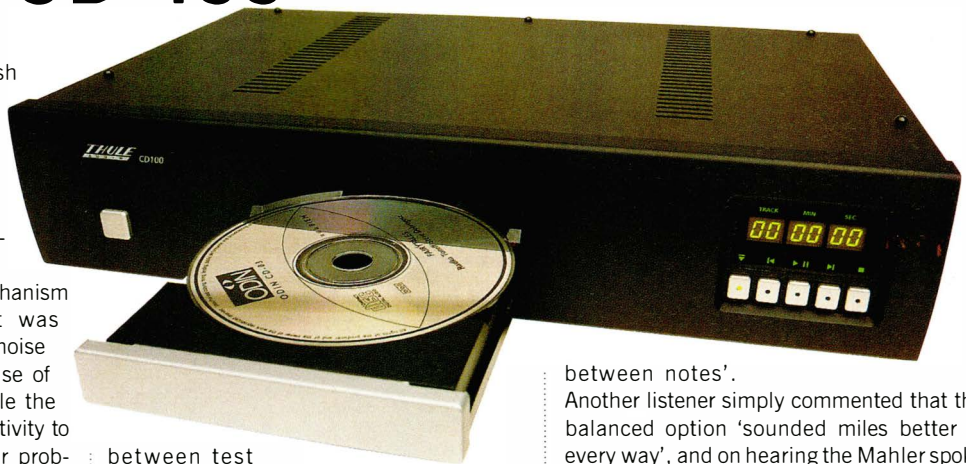
The Thule *CD-100*, a Danish expat, is aimed unerringly at the audiophile. Little effort or expense has been expended on exterior decorations, and the control and display area, though simple and functional, is certainly no beauty.

The player has a *CDM12.4* mechanism running in-house software that was designed to reduce servo-generated noise and interference in the greater cause of enhancing sound quality. In principle the trade-off is higher than normal sensitivity to shock, but in practice no particular problems were noted.

Uniquely in the test group, the Thule (pronounced 'tooler', since you asked) has balanced XLR outputs. In principle this means improved distortion and signal/noise figures in the analogue stages, and reduced susceptibility to RF pickup due to good common mode rejection.

Sound Quality

The *CD-100* was presented twice to the listening panel, via the unbalanced and the balanced outputs, with the volume control reset



between test

runs to ensure equal loudness.

This doesn't quite eliminate all the variables, however. There is no guarantee that the test preamplifier, which was also wired to the power amplifier using balanced-mode connections, doesn't change sonically when fed a balanced signal, and in practice it is not possible to say definitively how the perceived differences were to be apportioned between the CD player and the amplifier, except that some of it is certainly the latter.

In fact the differences were more than dramatic enough to overturn any lingering doubts about balanced operation. In unbalanced mode the Thule was described as pleasant but slightly soft, although one listener's comment that it 'sounded a bit crap' was perhaps a tad unfair, as well as ungrammatical. When operation was switched to balanced mode, the listener who described the unbalanced Beethoven piano sonata as 'lacking image depth and sounding soft at the frequency extremes' noted 'more piano (and) less sogginess', commenting also on a bigger, more expressive and dynamic sound, with a greater sense of space and 'darkness'

between notes'.

Another listener simply commented that the balanced option 'sounded miles better in every way', and on hearing the Mahler spoke of 'greater clarity and detail in the voice, and of a generally less audiophile presentation'.

My own hands-on listening (prior to the panel tests, and conducted without the benefit of balanced operation) found that the Thule was indeed a little soft and subtly tailored. It provided just the analysis needed to cope with densely-scored orchestral material, and the grace and subtlety required for acoustic and vocal music, but it lacked the exuberance and bottle to make the best of the Keb' Mo' and Blue Room material, and sometimes seemed lacking in resolving power.

Conclusions

The problem for Thule is that in the real world, few of the *CD-100*'s target customers will have access to balanced mode preamps. Even if they do, they may not reap all the benefits we experienced on test, for the reasons already given. In unbalanced mode, the Thule was generally felt to be pleasant but lacking in clarity and separation, making a firm recommendation unsafe. It's still well worth shortlisting, though.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £849

▲ An intriguing attack on the audiophile market, the *CD-100* is at its best using balanced connections to the amplifier.

▼ Slightly wayward and lossy, especially when used unbalanced.

✉ Virtual Reality Audio Systems, PO Box 383, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4GB
(01277) 277355

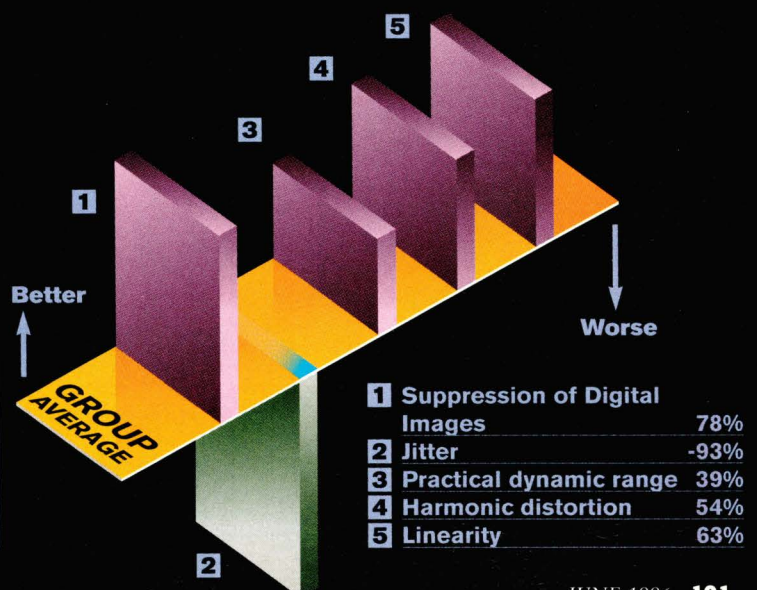
THE LAB REPORT

Despite its modest appearance, Thule's *CD-100* actually plays host to one of Crystal's top bitstream DACs — the *CS4303*. Crystal claims a wide 107dB S/N for this IC, a figure matched at 107.5dB in our tests. This is a full 10dB ahead of the 96-97dB achieved by the cheaper Crystal DAC used in the Linn, Quad and Meridian players, though a thumping great +9dB of noise modulation diminishes what might otherwise have been the best dynamic range on test.

Another contributor to auditory 'stress and strain' is the very high 1048psec of jitter caused by diode-switching noise from the on-board power supply which, evidently, bypasses the 'Low Jitter Master Clock'. It is possible, however, that this modulation is occurring in the *analogue* domain which would imply a lower perceived jitter count via the player's balanced outputs.

The player also suffers the same de-emphasis error noted with Quad's 77 but, thanks to the top-spec converter and digital filter, does benefit from a near-perfect rejection of digital images and very, very low harmonic distortion (as low as 0.008 per cent midband, at the musically-important -30dB). Overall, something of a mixed bag. PM

HOW IT COMPARES



Conclusions, Best Buys and Recommendations



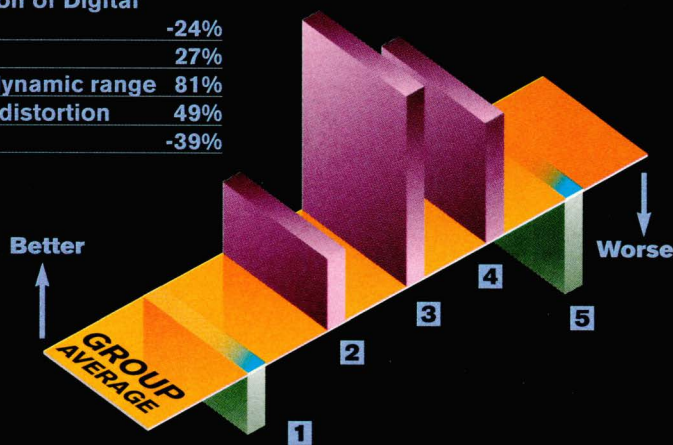
UNDERSTANDING OUR CD PLAYER TESTS

Continuing our new instant guide to the technical performance of products in our group tests, this month we introduce the performance parameters of CD players. Although the graphs look simple — which is our intention — you can be assured that *Hi-Fi Choice's* renowned attention to detail is preserved.

In every case, the middle position on the graph represents the average value for that parameter, taken across the group as a whole. For example, the height of the first bar (Suppression of Digital Images) on our sample chart (taken from the harman/kardon HD7625) is 24 per cent below the group average. However, the next bar shows that its jitter performance is 27 per cent better than average for the group, the practical dynamic range in bar three is 81 per cent above the group average, and so on.

Importantly, the value described by each bar indicator is arrived at by applying an algorithm, or weighing factor, to a combination of carefully-measured parameters. The harmonic distortion bar, for example, is a summation of total harmonic distortion (THD) vs. level measurements taken at 0dB, -30dB, -60dB, -80dB and undithered signals at -90dB, -100dB and -110dB. In addition, the more obvious forms of distortion, such as third harmonic distortion, will be given a higher weighting and consequently will have more impact on the height (or depth) of the bar.

1	Suppression of Digital Images	-24%
2	Jitter	27%
3	Practical dynamic range	81%
4	Harmonic distortion	49%
5	Linearity	-39%



The players featured in this test are designed to tread the narrow path between élitist non-affordability and the budget end of the mainstream — an area that does not always offer fertile ground for audiophile virtues. The group we're looking at should offer superior sound at a reasonable sum (which in this case means three figures), often at the expense of the sophisticated tape-dubbing or multi-disc features that many users of inexpensive players have come to take for granted.

An obvious subtext of the story is that the link between technical sophistication and sound quality turns out to be tenuous to say the least. In fact, a case could be made that the most advanced players were the ones that performed worst, and the most venerable technology yielded the majority of the real winners. The Orelle and Naim players are particularly interesting examples, both scoring high in the listening tests on the basis of multi-bit chipsets that have been around almost since year zero.

Let's take a look through the group, building up to the Recommended models, and the solitary Best Buy. The Rotel RCD975 failed to live up to the promise implicit in its high-tech new BitStream converter, and sounded rather messy and ill-sorted for a £450 player, although it is well presented and pleasing to operate. The Arcam Alpha 6 and Teac VRDS-7, which were sometimes confused with each other in the blind-panel tests (although they are very different animals in the flesh), both had a good, solid bass, but sounded crude and messy rather too often. The Meridian 506 is a better player altogether, but one that time has to an extent



passed by; at £950, it has simply been out-classed. The Linn *Mimik* uses similar converter technology, and costs a little less, but again it was a messy and synthetic-sounding player, especially with complex material.

The Thule *CD-100* was also a little disappointing when used conventionally, but it came together remarkably well through its balanced output. The problem here, of course, is that an appropriately-equipped preamplifier of suitable quality (some balanced preamps use input circuits that sound worse than their normal unbalanced inputs) are likely to be out of financial reach for customers thinking of buying a CD player at this price point.

Four of the test players achieved Recommended status: the Quad 77, Naim Audio *CD3*, harman/kardon *HD7625* and the Marantz *CD-17*. Of these the harman/kardon is the closest to the mainstream, with a full set of fascia controls, slick disc handling, fairly rapid track access, and sound quality that practically tells you it's a harman/kardon even if you haven't seen the nameplate. It has a brisk, no-nonsense kind of sound. There is plenty of detail, the frequency extremes are open and explicit but not over the top, and it costs just £450 — which makes it a bargain even after a slight loss of euphony has been allowed for.

The Marantz is a real head turner. It has superb ergonomics and sounds accomplished if not totally transparent. It performed consistently with just

about every disc played. It is a little pricey, which explains why it is not a Best Buy, but it makes a very strong and attractive Recommendation.

The Quad is a real oddity. Its sophisticated user interface has more rough edges than a woodsaw, but it simply oozes polish and refinement when playing music. Quad owners can take advantage of the much cheaper bus version (not tested). This is easily the best of the three Crystal DAC models (the Linn and Meridian offerings being the other two), and if it wasn't for the ergonomic shortcomings, it would be roundly acclaimed as a solid Best Buy.

Finally, the Naim *CD3* is another 16-bit, Philips-based player, but it is certainly not just another clone. The technical aspects of the design seem unadorned and sensible, but considerable efforts have been made to avoid light scatter around the laser pickup and reduce microphony. The result is an unusually uncomplicated, physical kind of sound that is very seductive on audition.

Top scorer in this group is the Orelle *CD-100SE* — the only model to be awarded a Best Buy tag. The *CD-100SE* is an ostensibly straightforward player that uses the hoary old Philips 16-bit, four-times oversampling chipset and the long-discontinued but well-liked CDM-4 mechanism. We must hope Orelle has built a stockpile of this now-

discontinued mechanism; supplies may be limited, so don't wait too long to try one of these players. Perhaps due to the intrinsic qualities of its raw components, or simply because it is easier to work with tried and tested raw materials, the Orelle came closest to turning base metal into gold. The *CD-100SE* sounded crisp and lively, with solid imagery and good musical architecture. It looks good and handles well, and at £549 it is reasonably priced.

Remember that we tested the *SE* version: this indicates it has undergone a clock modification designed to reduce jitter, but this is unannounced externally. Please note that a similar mod can be carried out on other Orelle players, too.

BEST OF THE REST

Hi-Fi Choice has previously tested a number of top-flight CD players. These are still current models and are more than worthy of a thorough investigation. Although the Linn *Mimik* sounded rather synthetic in this test, the *Mimik*'s bigger brother *Karik* received a recommendation for its dry, positive and detailed performance back in issue 119. But it is quite a bit more expensive than this month's group...

Moving back into the price band tested here, Quad's fluid and captivating Best Buy 67 and harman/kardon's bold, dynamic Recommended *HD7725* (both tested in issue 124) are both worth seeking out at the £800-£1,000 level. The next point of activity is around £400, where we find the heavyweight Recommended Sony *CDP-XA2ES*; the glorious, if inconsistent, Recommended h/k *HD7525*; the boisterous Recommended NAD 514 (all tested in issue 151); as well as the fleet-of-foot Recommended Kenwood *DP-7060* from issue 141.

The next flurry of products occurs around the £300 mark. It's worth investigating the following recommendations: the raunchy AMC *CD6* (see issue 124); the fast, lean and fluid Denon *DCD-1015* (tested in issue 141); JVC's even but over-glossy *XL-Z674* (see issue 151); the best of the multiplex bunch in Nakamichi's *MB4s* (tested back in issue 132); or the intriguing Pioneer *PD-S703* (from issue 137). There are also two Best Buys at this price area — the classic Rotel *RCD-965BX* (tested way back in issue 100) and the Onkyo *DX-750* from issue 141 — which demand a good audition.

Finally, don't forget the smooth and satisfying Marantz *CD-63 mkII*, which received a firm Best Buy in issue 151. Although considerably cheaper than the products in this test, it is one of those benchmarks by which all products are judged. Check it out as a starting point.

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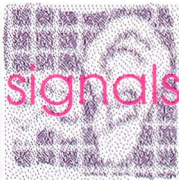
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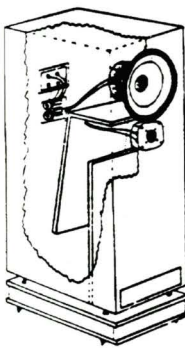
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London, May 1996

LONDON DEALER IN SERIOUS OUTBREAK OF SOUND SENSE

By our intrepid reporters Ian Interconnect and Carla Cable.

SOUND SENSE the renowned multi dimensional central London Hi-Fi dealer has created a centre of excellence for lovers of good home entertainment in at 350 Edgware Road, W2.

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can be easily assessed and exactly the right choice of cable made.

van den Hul assert that cables are as important to the overall quality of a sound system as any of the other piece of equipment. To obtain the best results all the system components must be selected to work together and here interconnect and loudspeaker cables are just as important as the right amplifier or the right CD player and loudspeakers and the system budget should reflect this.

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Make a date to visit Sound Sense - The Linear Structured Carbon Cable Centre in Central London and form a new relationship which may change your life forever. Phone 0171 402 2100.

Reach For the Sky

Skytrack Hybrid is the superb new budget bi-wire Linear Structure Carbon Hybrid cable from van den Hul. Performance is simply astounding for only £5.49/m. Hearing is believing.

Wired for sound. CS122 Hybrid Sets New Standard at a give away price!

The CS122 Hybrid Loudspeaker Cable is the bargain of the year. **Hi-Fi News** (Nov. 95) wrote "A magnificently transparent Cable" while at **Hi-Fi Choice** (April 96) "CS122 won over our most prejudiced of testers" The technology is new, the performance amazing.

In the past speaker cables were almost always a compromise. While some preferred solid core cables which were either stiff and unmanageable or lacked bass, they said that the more flexible multi-strand varieties lacked clarity and coherence. van

den Hul now have the answer. The CS122 uses a Linear Structured Carbon conducting coating over a multi-strand silver clad matched crystal copper conductor to give a superbly integrated performance while preserving flexibility and ease of use, RRP-£11.99/m.

For all bi-wire speakers van den Hul have now launched a bi-wire version of the wondrous CS122 called The Teatrack - same performance now more convenient, RRP-£21.99/m

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A NEW DIMENSION IN SOUND RETAILING

By Dave Nandra & Anica Amp

Sound Sense now adds a new dimension to Hi-Fi retailing in Central London. With brand new, superbly equipped, demonstration facilities and a carefully chosen selection of the very best Hi-Fi and Super-Fi available in this country, it is the place to head for if you are serious about sound. Don't imagine that Sound Sense are only interested in expensive

gear either, as they have a full range of products from selected manufacturers to offer the best available for everyone irrespective of their budget. The experts at Sound Sense have listened long and hard, using their vast experience of the Hi-Fi market to carefully select products which offer the very best in performance and style.

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Denon is a strong Japanese specialist Hi-Fi brand which offer an excellent blend of performance at a competitive price. Their budget (from £160) "separates" "**British sound**" amplifiers The PMA250III, The PMA350II and The PMA450SE are all strong competitors in their price territory and offer real musical integrity - all very favorably reviewed everywhere. The CD825 CD player (RRP £240) gives an interesting multi-bit alternative to the mass

Date with Denon

market low bit conversion. This player is a favorite of the Reviewers at Hi-Fi News and is strong on dynamics and timing earning it a Sound Sense special recommendation in this price sector. We also stock their "**Best Buy**" budget tuners and their strong moderately priced cassette decks. They also offer a strong range of or award winning AV audio products and complete high performance Systems.

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Total Exposure

Classic styling, good engineering and build quality, with a sound that's hard to beat have earned Exposure an enviable reputation. **Five gold stars** for the Exposure XX in What Hi-Fi? Need we say more! A good range is available from a great well established brand.

Orelle new amp KOs established champions

The SA100, Orelle's £449 amplifier gets a "**BEST BUY**" from Hi-Fi Choice (April 96). It thrashed the very strong established opposition to become "**the one to beat**". The SA-100 has also received praise from What Hi-Fi?, they gave it **5 stars** for sound quality. The SA-100 is now on demonstration. We are so impressed with this products that if you are not totally satisfied with your purchase, return the amplifier within 7 days and we will refund your money in full.

Sorted for XTC

XTC is a new range of Hi-End equipment from an established UK Hi-Fi manufacturer. This range has been carefully designed to combine classic styling with the best sounds available from electronic equipment at a price well below the normal for this market sector. After a careful review of the market, Sound Sense have chosen the XTC range as the one which has the best performance without inflated price tags - a classic in creation. What Hi-Fi? were so impressed with the CDT-1 & DAC-1 combination that they gave it full **5 stars**, First Test April issue. The XTC range comprises of a CDT-1 'LE' CD transport £1250, DAC-1 18bit DAC £1000, PRE-1 remote control Class A preamp £1000 & POW-1 175W quad channel power amp £2000. Drop in for a audition, you will be swept away!

Sound Sense Sales Hotline Tel: 0171 402 2100

350 Edgware Road, London W2 1EA, Nearest Tube: Edgware Road. Fax: 0171 724 7750

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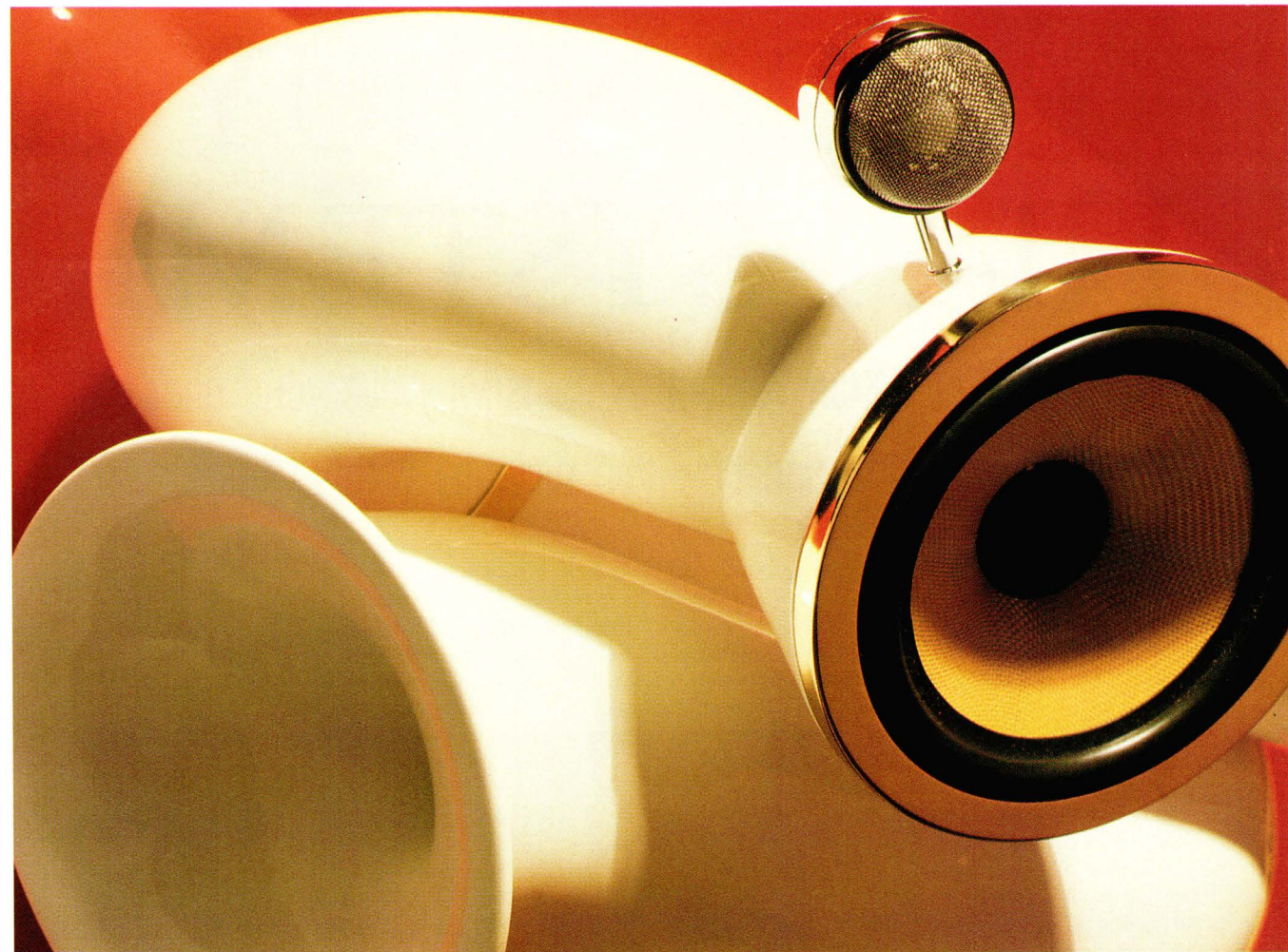
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THE DIRECTORY



INDEX

HOW TO BUY HI-FI	p118	CASSETTE DECKS	p133
NEW PRODUCT PRICES	p120	CD PLAYERS	p134
LIST OF REVIEWED PRODUCTS	p128	CD TRANSPORTS	p135
AMPLIFIERS		DACS	p135
INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS	p128	DIGITAL RECORDERS	p135
PREAMPLIFIERS	p129	HEADPHONES	p136
POWER AMPLIFIERS	p129	HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS	p137
CABLES		STANDS & SUPPORTS	p140
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS	p130	TOPEARMS	p140
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS	p130	TURNTABLES	p141
LOUDSPEAKER CABLES	p131	TUNERS	p142
CARTRIDGES	p132	MANUFACTURERS & DISTRIBUTORS	p143

NEW READERS

YOU CAN BUY A HI-FI SYSTEM!

Editor-in-Chief **Stan Vincent** explains why everyone needs a good hi-fi – and how you can buy without tears.

Buying a great hi-fi system is not difficult. Anyone with a pair of ears can do it. A good hi-fi will continue to give pleasure for many years, and carefully-selected separate hi-fi components are among the few investments that will not devalue the moment they depart the dealer's showroom. Why is it, then, that the process of buying 'real' hi-fi can seem so fraught with complications? I think the answer is to be found in that immortal *Not The Nine O'Clock News* sketch, in which Griff Rhys-Jones's hapless hi-fi buyer is humiliated and confused by wise-cracking counter staff Rowan Atkinson and Mel Smith. Stores like that have long since gone out of business, but the stereotype crystallises the unnecessary mystique and jargon that, all too often, obscure the inviting portals of the hi-fi kingdom.

You do not need to be an 'audiophile' to buy hi-fi. You do not need a degree in electronics; you do not need to be an acoustic engineer; you will not need to stand on one leg with trousers rolled up in order to become a paid-up member of the global hi-fi fraternity. All it takes is a love of music, a desire to do better than second best, and a little bit of advice from us to help you on your way.

Let's face it: hi-fi is the tool that allows us to hear music as it was recorded. The better the hi-fi, the closer the approach to the master tape. Think of it this way and you'll soon see the wisdom of saving your cash for tools that are right for the job. It's also a matter of making the most of your investment in records and CDs.

Play your new £14 CD on even a good packaged mini or micro system, and at the very most you'll hear only £7 worth. Spend a little more on decent hi-fi and you'll soon get double-figure replay.

Lasting satisfaction

Once upon a time hi-fi was high on the average household's list of purchasing priorities. Now, myriad consumer durables take precedence on today's family shopping list. But how many modern-day baubles provide the lasting satisfaction promised

by even a modest system of hi-fi separates? And how many lifestyle fripperies can be supplemented and upgraded as the years go by, such that the pleasure they provide can only increase?

If you're still not convinced that hi-fi is the best investment you'll ever make (but also if you are) the next step is to take your courage in your hands, draw in a deep breath, and Visit A Hi-Fi Store.

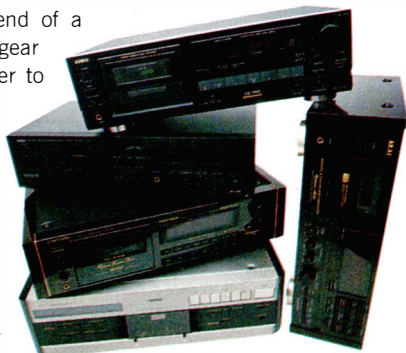
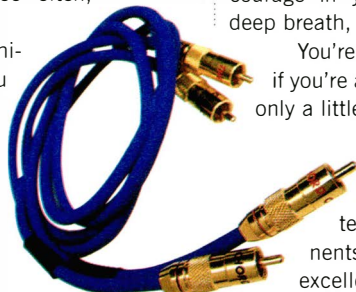
You're not going to look stupid if you're a first-time buyer. You need only a little faith in your ability to recognise the difference between

a piece of music played on a packaged audio system, and the same piece played through a system of hi-fi separates; and between music played on a cheap system and the same tunes reproduced on costly components. And the good news is that you can put together an excellent first system for much less than you think!

Dive into dealerland

Where do you find a dealer? Maybe there's one down the High Street, but if not, your first stop is our Dealer Directory (page 147), which lists dealers all over the UK. Some of them belong to the British Audio Dealers Association, which means they offer a standardised set of services including extended guarantees and bonding to protect monies held on deposit. Call (0171) 226 4044 for more details. If all else fails there must be a friend of a friend who has bought some hi-fi gear recently — why not get him or her to recommend a supplier?

When you decide to visit a dealer, it's best to phone beforehand and book an appointment. Whether you're buying a complete system or just one component, an appointment ensures you'll have the benefit of one-to-one attention from sales staff. Take along a selec-



START HERE

Our Three Step Guide to Buying Hi-Fi

The legendary **Hi-Fi Choice Directory** is now simpler to use than ever before, but contains all the information you need to select and buy the perfect hi-fi system.

Step One: Discover which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide (starts on page 120). This listing is updated monthly and includes all hi-fi products currently available in the UK. It is organised by product type, then by price band, and is sorted alphabetically. Products whose names are printed in red are those that we have reviewed. Which leads us to...

Step Two: Read about the hi-fi equipment that we have reviewed in the Directory (starts on page 128). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy and Recommended awards that mark out products of exceptional quality and value. The Directory is sorted by product type and listed alphabetically, and the beginning of each section provides essential information about each kind of hi-fi component.

Step Three: Find your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (starts on page 147) to book a demonstration of the products you are interested in.

tion of your own CDs (or records!), chosen more for familiarity than for being stunning recordings.

Does the dealer make you welcome and relaxed? Successful hi-fi buying depends on taking your time to find equipment that suits you, with no pressure along the way. A truly helpful dealer will let you try out equipment at home on a no-obligation basis, which is really the only way to find out whether you like it. (A pukka purveyor will always offer to install equipment for you if you are at all unsure about how this should be done.)

Spot the differences

It's a commonly-held misconception that all hi-fi sounds the same: packaged audio systems may sound similar, but every piece of real hi-fi — and every system — has its own little sonic quirks and differences. In hi-fi as in life, one man's meat is another's poison, which is why that free home trial is so important. After all, it would be a sad and sorry person who chose his or her marital partner off the shelf on the basis of an half-hour demonstration... A hi-fi can sound dramatically different at home than it did in the dealer's showroom.

Don't forget that good-quality rigid supports for speakers and electronic components are vital links in the hi-fi chain, as are decent-quality cables. If you get bitten by the hi-fi bug, you'll soon find that these are just a few of the fascinating aspects to one of the world's most engrossing pursuits. Just remember: whatever your level of interest and expense, a good separates hi-fi system is likely to be the most rewarding investment you'll ever make. Happy listening!



Best Buys and Recommendations

If you see a Best Buy (red) or Recommended (blue) flag at the beginning of an entry in our Directory or reviewed products, the item concerned is particularly deserving of your attention.

- B** This signifies the Best Buy swing-tag, which indicates products of the best quality and superb value for money in their price category.
- R** Recommended products offer excellent quality and value, though not at the superlative level of a Best Buy.

Please note that an expensive Recommended product will nearly always perform better than an inexpensive Best Buy.

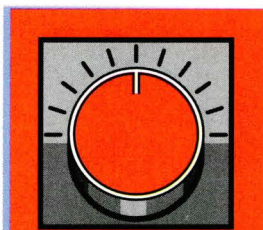
Using Best Buys and Recommendations to buy hi-fi.

Do not commit the cardinal sin of dashing into your local dealer, magazine in hand, demanding to purchase Best Buy CD player A, Best Buy amplifier B and Best Buy speakers C. This is unlikely to result in your long-term satisfaction. Our policy at *Hi-Fi Choice* is that one must consider the hi-fi system as a complete entity, not a collection of components. While a superb system might well contain Best Buy and Recommended components, one cannot lump together Best Buys and Recommendations in the hope that they will automatically perform superbly. These ratings make a useful guideline for short-listing components worth trying, but only by hearing them for yourself can you draw meaningful conclusions about what suits your taste. Furthermore, don't panic if the dealer offers you a equipment that we have not tested. At the end of the day, what matters most is that your hi-fi system fits your tastes like a glove, and it is the dealer's challenge to ensure your satisfaction by any means — and components — necessary!



The hi-fi system as investment

One of the great things about buying "separates" hi-fi is that you can build on your investment as fast as funds allow. Your CD player, amplifier and speakers can be improved item by item — you only need to unplug a few wires to effect a miraculous change. To see the upgrading process in action turn to page 34, where we show how a good basic hi-fi system can be substantially enhanced, component by component.



AMPLIFIERS

Integrated Amps
Up to £250

Aiwa XA-003	140
Alchemist Axiom	249
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	240
Cambridge Audio A1	100
Denon PMA-250 III	160
Denon PMA-350 II	230
Denon PMA-480R	230
Grundig V11	160
Harman-Kardon HK610	200
JVC AX-R5BK	200
JVC AX-V6BK	230
JVC AX-A662BK	250
JVC AX-A472BK	250
Kenwood KA-1060	140
Kenwood KA-2060R	170
Kenwood KA-3020SE	170
Kenwood KA-3060R	200
Lecson 380X	230
Luxman A-312	200
Luxman A-331	250
Magnum IA120	249
Marantz PM-34	150
Marantz PM-44 MkIIse	200
Marantz PM-43	200
Marantz PM-53	250
NAD 302	189
NAD 312	200
NAD 304	249
Nakamichi IA4s	200
Onkyo A-801	200
Pioneer A-103	130
Pioneer A-203	150
Pioneer A-303R	200
Pioneer A-300X	230
Rega Brio	229
Rotel RA935BX MkII	250
Sherwood AI 1110	100
Sherwood AI 5010	170
Sony TAF211B	150
Sony TAF244E	200
Sony TAF44E	250
Teac AR300	200
Teac AR500	250
Technics SU-V300	170
Technics SU-V500	200

Technics SU-V620	230
Technics SU-A600 Mk2	230
Yamaha AX-490	239

£251 to £500

Alchemist Maxim	299
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399
Analogue Jupiter	330
Arcam Alpha 6 Plus	350
Arcam Delta 290	500
Arion Adonis (kit)	495
Audio Innovations Alto	329
Audiolab 8000A	500
Audiolink Sterling II	350
Aura VA100 II	330
CR Developments Kalypso	499
Credo IMP702	499
Creek 4240	279
Creek 4240SE	350
Denon PMA-450SE	280
Denon PMA-715	300
Denon AVC-1530	480
EMF Audio Sequel	349
Harman-Kardon HK620	280
Harman-Kardon HK1200	300
Harman-Kardon HK1400	400
Harman-Kardon HK640	450
Inca Tech Oberon	450
JVC AX-A662BK	330
Kenwood KA-4060R	280
Kenwood KA-V3700	300
Kenwood KA-5050R	350
Lecson 380X	255
Lecson Stereo 383X	295
Lecson Quattr	420
LFD Integrated Zero	499
Luxman A-353R	350
Luxman A-373	400
Magnum IA170	270
JVC AX-A662BK	330
Magnum Quartet	329
Marantz PM-63	300
Marantz PM-700AV	450
Mission Cyrus III	500
Moth 30 Integrated	320
Musical Fidelity E10	300
NAD 306	349
Onix OA30	300
Onix OA21S	430
Onix OA31	480
Onkyo A803	260
Onkyo A-911	350
Onkyo A850	370
Orelle SA-100	449
Pioneer A-400X	300
Pioneer A-503R	300
Pioneer A-602	350
Pioneer VSA-701S	500
Pioneer VSA-701S	500
Pro-ject Model 7	259
Rega Elex	398
Rega RA970BX	300

Sony TAF542E	300
Sony TAF-A3ES	400
Sony TA-AV570B	400
Technics SU-A700 MkII	280
Technics SU-A800 Mk2	350
Technics SU-A800D	400
Technics SU-A900 Mk2	450
Technics SU-A900D	500
Yamaha AX-590	299

£501 to £700

Alchemist Kraken Anniv	549
Alchemist Nemesis	650
AMC CV13030	529
Audiolab 8000S	650
Credo IMP703	538
DPA Renaissance	595
Exposure XX Super	699
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699
Harman-Kardon HK660	650
Heybrook Integra	555
Kenwood KA-V7700	600
Lecson Quattr Plus	655
LFD Int. Zero (Ph)	280
Linn Majik-1 (Line)	524
Linn Majik-1 (Phono)	593
Lynwood Opal	685
Magnum Class A	599
Meridian 551	695
Micromega Tempo 1	700
Naim MJ	695
Musical Fidelity E100	599
Myrrad MI120	530
Naim NAIT	549
Nakamichi IA2	600
Pioneer VSA-D802S	600
Quad 77	650
Rose Scion	545
Shearman Phase 2	649
Stemfort Audio SF60	549
Teac A-BX7R	700
Triangle TE60SE	650

£701 to £1,000

Alchemist Forseti	899
Arcam Xeta One	999
AVI S2000MI	799
Chimera X-80	800
CR Developments Romulus	998
Electrocompaniet EC1-2	990
Exposure XV Super	799
Harman-Kardon HK680	1,000
LFD Int. Zero LE	799
Micromega Tempo 2	900
Minstrel Ultra Linear	900
Monrio MC-200S	900
Naim NAIT R	724
Rega Elit	730
Sonic Link DM30	725
Stemfort Audio SF100	849

Teac A-BX10	999
Thule IA100	949
Woodside ISA230 Disc	899
Woodside ISA230 Line	899
YBA Integre Line	999

£1,001 to £2,000

Arion Elektra Export Mk	1,399
Arion Talos Line Mk II	1,450
Arion Talos Phono Mk II	1,650
Arion Tycho Int Mk II	1,999
Art Audio Integra	1,499
Audio Innovations Classic 25	1,099
Audio Innovations S500	1,199
Audio Innovations S700	1,199
Audio Note Oto SE	1,500
Chimera X-100	1,200
AVI S2000MP	849
AVI S2000MP+P	1,049
Bryston 4	641
Bryston BP1	673
Bryston BP4	802
Bryston BP5	889
Bryston BP20	1,126
Chimera X-150C	800
Classe Audio Audio 3D	1,320
Classe Audio Audio 4L	1,697
Classe Audio Audio 4	1,735
Concordant Exhilarant	900
Concordant Exquisite	1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV10AL	995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	1,250
Copland CSA-303	1,155
Copland CTA-301MkII	1,349
Counterpoint SA-1000E	1,195
Counterpoint Solid 8E	1,195
Counterpoint SA-2000E	1,695
Credo CMP004	799
Credo CMP005	1,119
Dawn Audio Prelude +50	951
DNM 3 Start	950
DNM 3A Start	1,500
Dynavector L200	1,195
Dynavector P100	1,495
Dynavector L100	1,995
ECA Vista S	760
ECA Vista HD	880
ECA Prisma	880
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	580
Electrocompaniet ECP-1 SF	749
Electrocompaniet EC-4 Line	1,420
Electrocompaniet EC-4 SF Line	1,790
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC	1,953
Exposure XIX	799
Exposure XVII	849
Exposure XIV	1,400
Fullers Pre 1	599
Fullers Pre 1 +	649
Gamma Acoustics Era Std	999
Graaf WFB Two	1,000
Grant G100P	764
Heybrook SIG CA	649
Heybrook SIG CAP	829
KAL Magician	550
KAL Harlequin	750
LFD MC1 Phonostage	949
LFD LS1 Linstage	999
LFD PPS	999
LFD Phonostage MC2	1,499
LFD Linstage LS2	1,599
LFD Linstage LS2P	1,750
LFD Linstage LSB	1,999
Linn Kairn Pro	998
Linn Kairn Preamp	1,398
Lumley Reference LV1	1,000
Lumley Reference PV1	1,500
Marantz AV-500	699
Marantz SC-22	900
Marantz PH-22	1,000
McIntosh C712	1,479
Meracus INGREDI	925
Meridian 501	625
Meridian 562	685
Meridian 501V	785
Meridian 562V	895
Micell Argo	715
Micell Iso HR	879
Micell Argo HR	1,339
Michi RHC-10	795
Michi RHO-10	995
Michi RHA-10	995
Micromega Tempo P	1,250
Monrio ADN	595
Monrio PWR1L	950
Musical Fidelity E200	599
Musical Fidelity F22	999
Naim NAC32R	579
Naim NAC72	670
Naim NAC82	1,997
PS Audio 6.1	799
PS Audio 6.2	899
PS Audio Phono Link	899
Quad 66	897
Roksan ROK-L2.5	995
Rose RV-23S	525

Over £2,000

Adyton OPERA	2,595
Electrocompaniet EC1-1	2,188
Electrocompaniet EC1-1 SF	2,460
Gamma Acoustics Rhythm	2,499
McIntosh MA6800	3,735
Meracus ONESTA	2,595
Tube Tech Synergy 1	3,999
Unison Research Performance One	4,500

Preamps

Up to £500

Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380
AMC AV81 Control	289
AMC 1030	379
AMC S84	479
AMC AV81 H.T. Control	499
Analogue Saturn	75
Analogue Saturn MC	75
Art Audio Minuet	499
Audio Innovations P1	369
Audio Innovations L1	369
Audio Innovations T2	425
Audiolink P400	467
Credo PMP003	385
Credo HMP003	388
Credo MPM002	439
Creek OBM-8	99
Creek OBM-9	110
Creek P42	279
Crimson CS610C	450
DPA DSP200S	495
EAR 834P	399
EAR 834L	449
Grant CD10	482
Harman-Kardon AP2500	499
Inca Tech Oberon Pre	350
LFD Linstage LSO	499
Lumley Reference PP70	325
Lumley Reference PP40	325
Lumley Reference PP1	325
Michell Iso	412
Moth 30 Passive	149
Moth 30 RIAA	199
Moth 30 Active	249
Moth 30 RIAA 100VA	299
Moth 30 Active 100VA	349
NAD Monitor 1000	229
NAD Monitor 1000S	349
Naim NAC92	435
Onix OA24	400
QED Vector One	199
QED Vector Reference	299
Quad 34	414
Rose RV-23	450
Rotel RC9706X MkII	175
Rotel RC980BX	350
Rotel RC990BX	500
Sentec PP9 RIAA MM	500
Technics SU-C1000	500
Thorens TIP2000	350
Unison Research Simply Phono	495

£501 to £2,000

Adyton CHORUS	1,995
Alchemist Forsetti Pre	870
Arcam Delta 110	750
Arion Eros Line Mk II	1,150

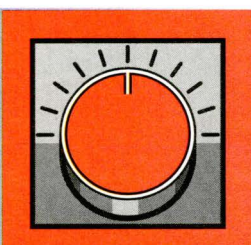
Arion Eros Phono Mk II	1,350
Art Audio Headline	600
Art Audio VPL	741
Art Audio Conductor Phono	750
Art Audio VP1	952
Art Audio Conductor	1,100
Art Audio Conductor Export	2,000
Audio Innovations L2	749
Audio Innovations P2MM	749
Audio Innovations P2MC	949
Audio Research PH-3	1,550
Audio Research LS-3	1,845
Audiolab 8000C	520
Audiolab 8000PPA	850
Audiolab 8000Q	1,000
Aura CA200	700
AVI S2000MP	849
AVI S2000MP+P	1,049
Bryston 4	641
Bryston BP1	673
Bryston BP4	802
Bryston BP5	889
Bryston BP20	1,126
Chimera X-150C	800
Classe Audio Audio 3D	1,320
Classe Audio Audio 4L	1,697
Classe Audio Audio 4	1,735
Concordant Exhilarant	900
Concordant Exquisite	1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV10AL	995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	1,250
Copland CSA-303	1,155
Copland CTA-301MkII	1,349
Counterpoint SA-1000E	1,195
Counterpoint Solid 8E	1,195
Counterpoint SA-2000E	1,695
Credo CMP004	799
Credo CMP005	1,119
Dawn Audio Prelude +50	951
DNM 3 Start	950
DNM 3A Start	1,500
Dynavector L200	1,195
Dynavector P100	1,495
Dynavector L100	1,995
ECA Vista S	760
ECA Vista HD	880
ECA Prisma	880
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	580
Electrocompaniet ECP-1 SF	749
Electrocompaniet EC-4 Line	1,420
Electrocompaniet EC-4 SF Line	1,790
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC	1,953
Exposure XIX	799
Exposure XVII	849
Exposure XIV	1,400
Fullers Pre 1	599
Fullers Pre 1 +	649
Gamma Acoustics Era Std	999
Graaf WFB Two	1,000
Grant G100P	764
Heybrook SIG CA	649
Heybrook SIG CAP	829
KAL Magician	550
KAL Harlequin	750
LFD MC1 Phonostage	949
LFD LS1 Linstage	999
LFD PPS	999
LFD Phonostage MC2	1,499
LFD Linstage LS2	1,599
LFD Linstage LS2P	1,750
LFD Linstage LSB	1,999
Linn Kairn Pro	998
Linn Kairn Preamp	1,398
Lumley Reference LV1	1,000
Lumley Reference PV1	1,500
Marantz AV-500	699
Marantz SC-22	900
Marantz PH-22	1,000
McIntosh C712	1,479
Meracus INGREDI	925
Meridian 501	625
Meridian 562	685
Meridian 501V	785
Meridian 562V	895
Micell Argo	715
Micell Iso HR	879
Micell Argo HR	1,339
Michi RHC-10	795
Michi RHO-10	995
Michi RHA-10	995
Micromega Tempo P	1,250
Monrio ADN	595
Monrio PWR1L	950
Musical Fidelity E200	599
Musical Fidelity F22	999
Naim NAC32R	579
Naim NAC72	670
Naim NAC82	1,997
PS Audio 6.1	799
PS Audio 6.2	899
PS Audio Phono Link	899
Quad 66	897
Roksan ROK-L2.5	995
Rose RV-23S	525



Sentec PP9 RIAA MC	600
Sentec SC9	800
Shearne Phase 6 Pre	895
Shearne Phase 1 Pre Ref	1,399
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1	1,095
Sonic Frontiers SFL-1	1,395
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Sig	1,495
Sonic Frontiers SFL-1 Sig	1,795
Technics SU-C2000	700
Tesseract TAADA	1,500
Tesseract TALA	1,500
Tesseract TAHA	1,800
Thorens TRP3000	1,500
Thorens TRP3000	1,500
Thule PR200	699
Tube Tech Seer Line	575
Tube Tech Seer Phono	649
Tube Tech Prophet	1,199
Unison Research Mystery One	1,750
Unison Research Phono One	1,995
Woodside SC27 Line	705
Woodside SC27 MC	881
Woodside SC27 MM	999
Woodside SC25 Line	1,420
Woodside SC26 Phono	1,931
XTC PRE-1	800
YBA 3 Pre	1,250
YBA 2 Pre	1,699

Rotel RB970BX MkII	225
Rotel RB980BX	450
Technics SE-A1000	400

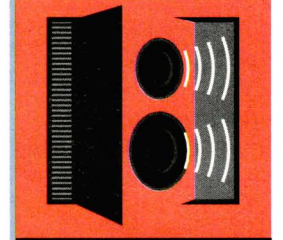
Woodside STA35	1,323
XTC POW-1	2,000
YBA 3 Power	1,199



AV Amplifiers
Integrated AV Amps

Arcam Xeta One	1,000
Denon AVC-1530	480
Denon AVC-2800	400
Harman-Kardon AV1200	499
JVC AX-V6BK	230
Kenwood KA-V3700	300
Kenwood KM-X1000	480
Kenwood KA-V7700	600
Marantz MA500THX	250
Marantz MM-500	400
Marantz PM-711AV	450
Marantz SR-73	600
NAD 902	200
NAD AV316	450
NAD AV216THX	470
NAD 906	500
NAD 208THX	1,000
Onkyo A-S610	600
Onkyo A-SV810PRO	900
Rotel RB956AX	400
Rony TA-AV590	399
Sony TA-AV570B	400
Technics SA-GX470L	400
Yamaha DSP-A590	349
Yamaha DSP-A780	599
Yamaha DSP-A970	799
Yamaha DSP-A2070	1,099

NAD AV713	480
NAD 917	550
NAD AV716	600
Onkyo TX-SV414PRO	400
Onkyo TX-SV525PRO	600
Onkyo TX-SV727PRO	900
Onkyo TX-SV919THX	2,000
Pioneer VSX-804RDS	399
Sony ST-AD54B	280
Sony STR-D615	300
Sony SMD611B	330
Technics SA-GX390L	300
Technics SA-GX470L	350
Technics SA-GX690L	450
Yamaha RX-V390RDS	299
Yamaha RX-V590RDS	449



AV Loudspeakers
Centre Channel Speakers

B&W 2001FS	120
B&W Solid HCM1S	125
B&W CC6	200
Boston Acoustics 404V	100
Boston Acoustics CR1	100
Boston Acoustics Centre 6	130
Boston Acoustics S25V	150
Boston Acoustics Centre 7	200
Boston Acoustics VR12	300
Canon S-C10	129
Canon S-C20	199
Celestion CSC	129
Celestion Centre 2	189
Denon SC-H1C	130
Jamo Centre 50	80
Jamo Centre 100	140
Jamo Centre 200	200
Jamo Converta Light	200
JBL MR Centre	100
JBL TLX103	130
JBL SC305	150
JBL Centre	180
JPW Minim Shielded	90
JPW Center 160	170
Kenwood CS-6	150
Linn Centrik	298
Meridian DSP5000C	1,595
Meridian DSP6000C	4,500

Over £2,000	
Adyton TEMPER	2,495
Adyton MODUS	2,895
Alchemist Alchemist Control	4,995
ATC SCA2	2,499
Audio Research LS-3b	2,250
Audio Research PH-2	2,895
Audio Research LS-2 II	2,997
Audio Research SP9 III	3,290
Audio Research LS-2b II	3,398
Audio Research LS-5 II	5,690
CAT SL1 Sig line	5,500
CAT SL1 Sig phono	6,000
Classe Audio Audio 5L II	2,395
Classe Audio Audio 5 II	2,657
Classe Audio Audio 6L II	3,469
Classe Audio Audio 6 II	3,817
Conrad-Johnson PV-12L	2,250
Conrad-Johnson PV-12	2,750
Conrad-Johnson Premier 10	3,900
Conrad-Johnson Evolution 20 SP ED	6,700
Counterpoint SA-3000E	2,195
Counterpoint SA-5000E	3,995
Counterpoint SA-9	3,995
DNM 3B Twin E	3,050
DNM 3B Primus E	3,630
DNM 3B Six E	4,780
EAR 802MC	2,599
EAR G88	6,999
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC SF	2,270
Gamma Acoustics Era Ref	3,999
Jadis DEFY-P60	3,774
Jadis JPL	4,720
Jadis JPP-200	4,998
Jadis JP-30MC	5,978
Jadis JP-S2	7,900
KAL Empress	3,660
Krell KSL-2	3,331
Krell KRC-2	4,190
Krell KRCs	6,949
LFD Disc Preamp	4,499
Mark Levinson 38	3,995
Mark Levinson 38S	6,495
Matisse Fantasy	2,300
Matisse Reference	3,500
McIntosh C38	2,095
McIntosh C22	2,099
McIntosh C39	3,129
McIntosh C40	3,239
Meracus PRETARE	2,195
Meridian 601	2,750
Naim NAC52	5,006
Roksan ROK-L1.5	2,250
Sonic Frontiers SFL-2	3,795
Tesseract TAP-A	5,300
YBA 1 Pre	3,750

Power Amps	
Up to £500	
Alchemist Kraken/mono	380
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr A	499
AMC 2445	299
AMC 2030	449
Arcam Delta 290P	400
Creek A42	279
Crimson CS620C	450
Harman-Kardon PA2100	400
Inca Tech Oberon Pwr	400
LFD Powerstage PAO	499
Marantz MA-500	250
Moth 30 Series Power	239
Moth 30 Mono/40	459
Naim NAP90/3	416
Onix 0A401	400
Quad 306	364

Alchemist Forsetti Pwr	1,250
Arion EOS Export Mk II	1,299
Arion Triton Mk II	1,399
Arion Tycho Pwr Mk II	1,850
Art Audio Quintet	1,393
Art Audio Concerto	1,669
Audio Innovations Ser 800	999
Audio Innovations First Audio	1,749
Audio Innovations Ser 1000	1,799
Audiolab 8000P	700
Audiolab 8000M	750
Audiolink PR401	583
Aura PA200	1,200
AVI S2000MA	849
AVI S2000MM	1,249
Bryston 2B-LP	750
Bryston 3B-NRB	1,159
Bryston THX3B	1,262
Bryston 4B-NRB	1,756
Bryston 7B-NRB	1,815
Bryston THX4B	1,858
Bryston THX7B	1,917
Chimera X-150P	1,200
Classe Audio Audio 70	1,399
Copland CTA-501	1,599
Copland CTA-504	1,999
Counterpoint Solid 1EM	995
Counterpoint SA100E	1,495
Counterpoint Solid 1E	1,495
Counterpoint NPS-100E	1,995
Credo PMP154	1,699
Credo PMP303	1,699
Crimson CS630C	800
Dawn Audio Cmd 2 by 200	890
DNM PA1	1,750
DPA 200S	750
ECA Lectern S	880
ECA Lectern HD	1,480
Exposure XVIII Super	849
Exposure XVIII (pr)	1,599
Fullers A10	1,200
Grant G50A	1,128
Grant G100AMS	1,528
Harman-Kardon PA2200	700
Harman-Kardon PA2400	1,000
Heybrook SIG MNEX	698
Heybrook SIG /SPX	922
LFD PA1 Powerstage	999
LFD Powerstage PA2	1,599
LFD Powerstage PA2M	1,999
Linn LK100	549
Linn Klout	1,895
Lumley Reference ST40	1,250
Lumley Reference ST70	1,950
Lynwood Ruby	985
Magnum MF125	515
Magnum MF300	595
Magnum MA500	1,295
Marantz MA-22	1,600
McIntosh MC7100	1,259
Meracus CIERE	1,095
Meridian 555	625
Michell Alecto Stereo	1,150
Michell Alecto Mono	1,989
Michi RHB-05	995
Michi RHB-10	1,650
Micromega Amp	1,250
Monrio MC-25	895
Monrio HP1	1,995
Moth 30 Stereo/60	549
Moth 30 Mono/100	879
Musical Fidelity E300	699
Musical Fidelity FX	1,099
Musical Fidelity F15	1,899
NAD Monitor 208	999
Naim NAP140	699
Naim NAP180	987
Naim NAP135	1,529
Naim NAP250	1,529
Onix OA601	699
Onix OA801	849
Papworth TVA50	1,425
PS Audio 100 Delta	1,499
Quad G06	718
Roksan ROK-S1.5	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	550
Rotel RB990BX	750
Sentec PA9	1,000
Shearne Phase 3	619
Shearne Phase 5 Mono	879
Sonic Frontiers SFS-80	1,695
Technics SE-A2000	1,100
Thorens TTA2000	550
Thorens TRA3000	2,000
Thorens TRA3000	2,000
Thule PA200	1,798
Tube Tech Unisys Pwr Amp	1,099
Woodside ISA 240	949
Woodside MA50 Class A	1,224

Over £2,000	3,495
Adyton CORDIS 1.6	3,995
Alchemist Alchemist Stereo	8,995
Alchemist Alchemist Mono	2,499
Art Audio Tempo	3,524
Art Audio Maestro	2,499
Audio Innovations Ser 1000SE	3,299
Audio Innovations Second Audio	2,645
Audio Research V160	3,248
Audio Research D-200	3,355
Audio Research V35	4,480
Audio Research V70	4,800
Audio Research D-300	5,994
Audio Research VT130	6,600
Audio Research D-400II	7,200
Audio Research VT150	8,960
Audio Research V140	2,195
Bryston 3B-NRB	2,195
Bryston THX8B	2,400
Classe Audio Audio 10	2,299
Classe Audio Audio 15	3,399
Classe Audio Audio 25	4,639
Classe Audio Audio M-700	7,690
Classe Audio Audio M-1000	9,968
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	3,500
Conrad-Johnson Premier 12	7,000
Copland CTA-505	2,099
Counterpoint Solid 2E	2,495
Counterpoint NPS-200E	2,995
Counterpoint SA4	3,575
Counterpoint Nat Progress	4,125
Counterpoint NPS-400E	4,395
Counterpoint NPM-E	8,995
Credo PMP102	2,181
Credo PMP252	2,509
DNM PA2BE	4,250
DNM PA2BS	5,250
DNM PA2BS-1	5,650
Dynavector HX75	2,195
Dynavector HX1.2	3,995
EAR 509 Mk II	3,499
EAR 519	4,699
EAR 549	6,999
Electrocompaniet AW100DMB	2,080
Electrocompaniet AW100DMB-SF	2,280
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB	3,983
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB-SF	4,195
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	4,673
Electrocompaniet AW180MB-SF	4,900
Exposure IV	2,199
Exposure XVI	4,000
Gamma Acoustics Space Ref	3,999
Graaf 5050	2,200
Grant G350A	3,455
Grant G200AMS	3,760
Jadis JA-30	2,880
Jadis JA-80	4,956
Jadis DEFY-7	5,290
Jadis JA-200	7,759
KAL Emperor	4,375
Krell KSA-50s	3,690
Krell KSA-100s	5,843
Krell KSA-200s	7,987
Krell KSA-300s	9,500
Lumley Reference M120	3,200
Marantz MA-24	2,400
Mark Levinson 29	3,450
Mark Levinson 331	4,495
Mark Levinson 27.5	5,399
Mark Levinson 332	6,495
Mark Levinson 23.5	7,399
Mark Levinson 333	8,495
Matisse Ref Monoblocks	7,800
McIntosh MC7108	2,249
McIntosh MC7150	2,295
McIntosh MC7104	2,729
McIntosh MC150	2,855
McIntosh MC7300	3,195
McIntosh MC7106	3,425
McIntosh MC275	3,595
McIntosh MC300	3,765
McIntosh MC2600	5,395
McIntosh MC500	6,265
Meracus TENTARE	2,245
Meracus CANTARE	8,995
Musical Fidelity F18	3,999
Papworth M100	2,645
Papworth M200	3,825
PS Audio 200 Delta	2,279
PS Audio 200b Delta	2,490
PS Audio 250 Delta	2,980
Roksan ROK-M1.5	4,500
Shearne Phase 1 Pwr Ref	2,199
Sonic Frontiers SFS-80	2,895
Sonic Frontiers SFS-160	5,495
Tesseract TAMP-60	7,350
Tube Tech Genesis	2,599
Unison Research Smart 845	2,995
YBA 2 Power	2,150
YBA 1 Power	4,250

AV Receivers

Denon AVR-900	350
Denon AVR-1000	520
Grundig R14DPL	280
Harman-Kardon AVR-20	499
Harman-Kardon AVR-25	699
Harman-Kardon AVR-30	1,000
JVC RX-416VBK	270
JVC RX-508VBK	299
JVC RX-616BK	350
JVC RX-808VBK	500
Kenwood KA-V5570	300
Kenwood KR-V6070	350
Kenwood KR-V7070	400
Kenwood KR-X1000	1,300
Marantz AV600THX	900
Marantz SR-82	900



Monitor Audio CC200	200
Monitor Audio CC900	400
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Dialogue	60
NAD 808CC	170
Polk CS200	170
Polk CS250	250
Polk CS350	450
TDL Nucleus CCS	150

Surround Speakers

Aiwa SX-R220	50
B&W SCM8	550
Boston Acoustics VRS	429
Boston Acoustics 575X	450
Canon V-100	210
Celestion Impact 25	99
Jamo Surround Rear	60
Jamo Surround 50	70
Jamo Surround 100	90
Jamo Surround 200	170
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Decormatch	150
Polk M3 II	220
Polk M5	300
Polk LS f/x Surround	449

AV Speaker Packages

Aiwa TS-W5	150
Aiwa TS-W7	200
B&W Solid System	685
B&W THX System	4,395
Boston Acoustics THX System	2,500
Canon S-KT2	250
Canon S-KT1	300
Celestion CS2	149
Celestion Style Series	699
Dali Surround Sound Sys	1,240
Harman-Kardon HT-1 System	2,500
Jamo SP50	140
Jamo System 4000S	240
Jamo Art	250
Jamo System 4000	300
Jamo THX System	2,500
JBL Control 1	119
JBL Control 4	249
JBL SAT2	299
JBL Control 25	599
JBL Music/Movies One	650
JBL / REL System	995
JBL Music/Movies Two	1,100
JBL HT-1 System	2,500
JBL Synthesis Three	15,000
JBL Synthesis Two	22,500
JBL Synthesis One	32,000
JPW Gold Monitors	80
JPW MM Package	199
JPW Gold Monitor	280
JPW Package 1	300
JPW Package 2	300
JPW AV2	300
JPW AV1	300
JPW Package 3	400
JPW AV4	400
JPW AV3	400
Kenwood THX System	2,800
Linn Tukán	449
Linn Keilidh	649

Mordaunt-Short CS-1	115
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Stereo Plus	260
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 System Pack	400
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Decormatch	465
Pioneer S-V201	250
Pioneer S-V401	700
Polk M Solution	999
Polk RM3000 II/M3/CS200	1,088
Polk SRT	9,500
REL REL/JBL System	1,000
Sony SA-VA1	599
Sony SA-VA3	799
Sony SA-V55	800
TDL Home Theatre Pk 1	500
Wharfedale Movies 4	349
Wharfedale Movies 7	459
Wharfedale Movies 9	489

Subwoofers

B&W Solid Powerbass	300
B&W AS6	500
B&W PCS8	750
B&W 800ASW	1,495
B&W 800ASW	1,500
B&W 800ASW	1,500
Boston Acoustics VR500	300
Boston Acoustics SW10	450
Boston Acoustics 595X	455
Canon S-B20	200
Jamo SW400e	330
Jamo SW300SYS	350
Jamo SW505e	400
Jamo SW500 SYS	450
Jamo SW600e	530
JBL PS60	399
JBL Satellites	275
JPW Subwoofer	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
KEF Model 30B	500
Kenwood CM-5ES	80
Kenwood RS-05	80
Kenwood CM-7ES	100
Kenwood OMNI-7	180
Kenwood SW500	250
Kenwood SW-500	250
Kenwood SW900	260
Kenwood SW-900	260
Linn Sekrit	298
Meridian Sub 1	1,500
Monitor Audio MA100/G	280
Mordaunt-Short SW 1	150
Polk PSW100	499
Polk PSW100	500
REL Strata	500
REL Storm	700
REL Stadium II	1,000
REL Stentor	1,495
REL Studio	2,995
TDL SBR	200
Wharfedale Modus Sub-Bass	180

Main LR speakers

B&W Solid Verticale	400
Boston Acoustics HD5 Video	160
Boston Acoustics Lynfield VR20	350
Boston Acoustics Lynfield VR30	600

Boston Acoustics Lynfield VR40	1,000
Canon S-25	149
Celestion Impact 20	279
Celestion Impact 25	399
Celestion Impact 30	429
Celestion CS6T	449
Celestion CS8T	499
Celestion Impact 35	529
Celestion Impact 40	629
Jamo SAT80	100
Jamo SAT160	110
Jamo SAT200II	130
Jamo SAT300II	140
Jamo SAT500	170
Jamo 307A	300
Jamo 507A	700
Jamo 707A	900
JBL MRV308	399
JBL MRV310	499
JPW Mini Monitor	40
JPW Satellite (Shld)	50
JVC SP-V50	80
JVC SP-X220BK	100
JVC SP-X550BK	130
JVC SP-V70	150
JVC SP-V90	170
JVC SP-X990BK	230
JVC SX-911WD	660
JVC SX-500	700
Linn AV5140	1,495
Meridian M2500	1,695
Monitor Audio Monitor 14 Gold II	500
Monitor Audio Studio 2	600
Monitor Audio Studio 30	1,000
Mordaunt-Short HT30	150
Mordaunt-Short HT50	275
Polk RT8	380
Polk RT10	480
Polk RT12	580
Polk RT16	680
TDL RTL2	300
Triangle SAT III	650

Sub/Sat Systems

B&W Solid Verticale	400
Bose 100	159
Bose VS100	250
Bose AM4	599
Bose AM7	829
Boston Acoustics SubSat 6 II	450
Boston Acoustics SubSat 7	550
Jamo SW500SYS	350
JVC SX-SW10VBK	300
Pioneer S-W33 / C-V201	250
Polk RM3000 II	699
Polk RM5000 II	899
Polk RM7000	999
Polk RM7000	999
Polk RM5000 II M3	1,019

Centre & Rear Packages

JBL SAT1	100
JVC SP-X50	90
Kenwood CRS-15	130
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Triple	200
Pioneer S-CR22	100

Wharfedale Valds HT1	179
L,R,S	
B&W Solid HCM2	130
B&W Solid Monitor	200
B&W Solid HCM1	249
Canon S-V15	99
Canon S-30	180
Canon S-35	250
Canon S-70	700
Celestion MP1	149
Celestion Impact 15	199
JPW Minim	80
Meridian M60C	995
Meridian DSP5000	1,500
Polk RT3	190
Polk RT5	250
Polk RT7	300
TDL NFM	100

L,R,C

B&W Matrix HTM	500
B&W FCM8	550
Boston Acoustics 555X	380
Meridian A500	695
Meridian M60	1,995



CABLES

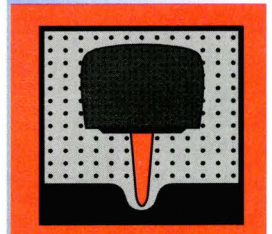
Analogue Interconnects

Arion SA0.5	75
Arion SA1	125
Arion SA2	199
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	25
Cable Talk Advanced 2	35
Cable Talk Improved 2/T1	50
Cable Talk Studio 2	65
Cable Talk Professional 2	85
Cable Talk Broadcast 2	130
Cable Talk Reference 2	180
Chord Chrysalis	30
Chord Cobra	32
Chord Siren	65
Chord Chameleon	68
Chord Solid	99
DPA Slink	47
DPA White Slink	75
DPA Black Slink	220
Ixos 104	20
Ixos 103	40
Ixos 102	60
Ixos 101	100
Kimber Cable Orchid	1,183
Kronos Konnekt 3	49
Kronos Konnekt 2	99
Kronos Konnekt 1	199
Nordost Magic 1	30
Nordost Black Knight	50
Nordost Blue Angel	80
Nordost Blue Heaven	120
Nordost Red Dawn	250
OED P2 Gold	20
OED Incon P2 Screened	23
OED Incon P1 Screened	26
Sonic Link Pink	35
Sonic Link Red	45
Sonic Link Derwent	50
Sonic Link Violet	85
Sonic Link Blue	115
Sonic Link Black	165
Trichord Pulsewire	150
van den Hul The Storm	25
van den Hul The First	210

Digital Interconnects

Arion DAC1	99
Arion DAC2	199
Audioquest Video Z	50
Audioquest Digital PRO	90
Cable Talk Digital 2	75
Chord Codac	32
Chord Prodac	50
DPA Digi-link	28
Ixos 105	25
Kimber Cable PSB D'link	37
Kimber Cable KC-1 D'link	52
Kimber Cable KC-AG D'link	95
Kimber Cable D-60	513
Kimber Cable Illuminati DV50	552
Monster Datalink 100	45
Moth Leyline Datalink	140
Nordost Moonglo Digital	135
OED DigiFlex	20

Siltech HF-6	150
Sonic Link Light Brown	30
Sonic Link Green	50
Trichord Pulsewire 75/D	64
van den Hul MV Videolink 75	30
van den Hul The First	120



CARTRIDGES

Up to £100

Arcom C77	30
Arcom C77MG	40
Arcom E77	50
Arcom E77MG	60
Arcom P77	63
Arcom P77MG	73
Audio Technica AT-91	13
Audio Technica AT-95E	19
Audio Technica AT-110E	24
Denon DL110	70
Denon DL160	90
Denon DL103	100
Goldring Elan P	17
Goldring Elan	17
Goldring Elektra	25
Goldring 1006	50
Goldring 1012GX	65
Goldring 1022GX	85
Goldring Eroica LX	100
Goldring Eroica	100
Grado ZTE+1	27
Grado ZCE+1	37
Grado Z3E+1	47
Grado ZF1+	82
Linn KS	54
Nottingham Analogue Tracer I	98
Nottingham VMS2	10
Ortofon OM-5E	16
Ortofon OM-PE	17
Ortofon OM Pro S	21
Ortofon OM10 Super	25
Ortofon OM Night Club S	32
Ortofon S10/P	37
Ortofon OM Night Club E	32
Ortofon Concord Pro S	40
Ortofon Concord NC S	55
Ortofon S20/P	55
Ortofon OM20 Super	60
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	60
Ortofon Concord NC E	60
Ortofon OM30 Super	80
Ortofon MC10 Super	85
Ortofon S30/P	85
Pickering TE-15	20
Pickering VE-15	25
Pickering T-E	25
Pickering V15-DJ	28
Pickering TL-E	35
Pickering XV15-350C	40
Pickering TL-2E	45
Pickering XV15-625E	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	50
Pickering TL-2-S	55
Pickering XV15-757S	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	70
Pickering TL3S	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	100
Pickering TL-4-S	100
Rega Bias	34
Rega RB78	34
Rega Super Bias	52
Rega Elys	74
Shure ME70B	18
Shure M92E	22
Shure SC35C	28
Shure M44C	33
Shure ME95ED	38
Shure M55E	42
Shure M104E	44
Shure ME97HE	60
Shure M110HE	74
Stanton 500EL	37
Stanton 500AL II	34
Stanton 680AL/X	50
Stanton 680EL/X	56
Stanton 890AL/X	82
Sumiko Oyster	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	50
Sumiko Pearl	70
Sumiko Blue Point	100

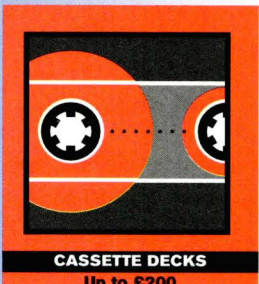


Over £100

Audio Note to IV	1,395
Audio Note to Ltd V	2,950
Audio Technica AT-OC5	146
Audio Technica AT-OC9	245
Audio Technica AT-OC30	619
Audio Technica ART-1	944
Audioquest MC5	250
Audioquest 404L	599
Audioquest 404MH	899
Audioquest 7000SX	1,495
Benz-Micro The Glider	600
Benz-Micro H200	700
Benz-Micro M090	700
Benz-Micro L040	700
Benz-Micro Wood Ref	1,100
Benz-Micro Ruby Ref	1,400
Denon DL304	200
DNM Reson Mica	150
DNM Reson Aciore	199
DNM Reson Rete	225
DNM Reson Etie	299
DNM Reson Lexe	899
Dynavector 50X	159
Dynavector 10X	189
Dynavector 23RS	375
Dynavector 17D2	450
Dynavector XX-1L	998
Dynavector XX-1	998
Dynavector TE-KAITORA	1,698
Goldring 1042	105
Goldring Elite	200
Grado Signature Junior	149
Grado Signature 8MZ	250
Grado Signature MCZ	375
Grado Signature TLZ	650
Grado Signature XTZ	975
Kiseki Blue GS	499
Kiseki PHS	899
Koetsu Red T	1,550
Koetsu Red K Sig	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	2,297
Koetsu Signature	3,218
Linn RS	109
Linn K18/II	197
Linn Klyde	449
Linn Arkiv	998
London Decca Maroon	199
London Decca Gold	239
London Decca Maroon Dp	259
London Decca Gold Dpd	299
London Decca S Gold	339
London Decca S Gold Dp	399
London Decca Jubilee	999
Lyra Lydian	699
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069
Lyra Parnassus	2,295
Militek Aurora	299
Militek Olympia	399
Nottingham Analogue Tracer II	175
Nottingham Analogue Tracer III	350
Nottingham Analogue Tracer IV	550
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	110
Ortofon MC15 Super II	110
Ortofon 540/P	110
Ortofon MC25E	160
Ortofon MC25FL	210
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	250
Ortofon MC20 Sup eme	350
O tofon MC30 Supreme	450
Ortofon MC2000II	650
Ortofon MC3000II	950
Ortofon MC5000	1,500
Ortofon MC7500	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	150
Pickering TL-4004	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	200
Roksan Corus Black	130
Roksan Shiraz	975
Shure V15V-MR	265
Sumiko BPS	250
Transfiguration AF-1 Mk II	1,595
Transfiguration Supreme	1,995
van den Hul MM-1	250
van den Hul MM-2	299
van den Hul DDT-II	699

Over £200

van den Hul MC-10	799
van den Hul MC-One	999
van den Hul MC-One/Hi	1,149
van den Hul MC-Two	1,349
van den Hul Grasshopper IISLN	2,200
van den Hul Grasshopper IICMN	2,750
van den Hul Grasshopper IISLA	2,999
van den Hul Grasshopper IIGLN	2,999
van den Hul Grasshopper IIGLA	2,999
van den Hul Grasshopper IICHN	3,400
van den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	3,450



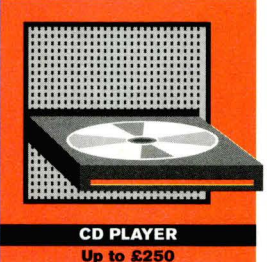
CASSETTE DECKS
Up to £200

Aiwa AD-F450	120
Aiwa AD-WX727	170
Denon DRM-540	160
Denon DRW-580	200
Dual CC8009 RS	200
Goodmans Delta 700W	100
Goodmans GSW650	130
Grundig CCF3	200
Grundig CCF3	200
JVC TD-W106BK	120
JVC TD-W218BK	170
JVC TD-K372BK	170
JVC TD-R472BK	200
JVC TD-W318BK	200
Kenwood KX-W4070	170
Kenwood KX-3060	170
Kenwood KX-W6070	200
Luxman K-322	200
Marantz SD-53	200
NAD 502	199
Pioneer CT-S330	170
Pioneer CT-W503R	200
Pioneer CT-S430S	200
Sherwood DS1150	80
Sherwood DS1010C	100
Sherwood DD1030C	100
Sherwood DS3010C	120
Sony TC-FX211B	100
Sony TC-K215B	130
Sony TC-K311B	130
Sony TC-W445B	150
Sony TC-K461S	180
Sony TC-K415B	180
Sony TC-WR545B	200
Teac V395CHX	100
Teac V-610	129
Teac R-560	180
Teac W-760R	180
Technics RS-TR373	200
Technics RS-BX501	200
Yamaha KX-380	169
Yamaha KX-W282	199
Yamaha KX-480	199

Over £200

Aiwa AD-F850	230
Aiwa AD-S350	300
Arcam Delta 100	899
Denon DRS-640	210
Denon DRW-760	260
Denon DRM-740	270
Denon DRS-810	310
Harman-Kardon TD420	280
Harman-Kardon TD450	350
Harman-Kardon TD470	450
JVC TD-V562BK	220
JVC TD-W718BK	250
JVC TD-V662BK	270
Kenwood KX-5060S	235
Kenwood KX-W8070S	280
Kenwood KX-7060S	329
Luxman K-373	400

Marantz SD-535	250
Marantz SD-63	270
Marantz CP-230	400
Marantz SD-635	400
Marantz DC-1010	450
Marantz CP-430	500
NAD 613	230
NAD 614	270
NAD 616	320
Nakamichi DR3	450
Nakamichi DR2	700
Nakamichi Dragon	2,350
Onkyo TA-RW313	250
Onkyo KR-609	350
Onkyo TA250	350
Onkyo K-W606	370
Onkyo K-611	430
Pioneer CT-W603RS	230
Pioneer CT-W803RS	300
Pioneer CT-S630S	300
Pioneer CT-M601R	380
Pioneer CT-S830S	500
Pioneer CT-95	1,000
Sony TC-WR645S	250
Sony TC-K511S	250
Sony TC-K611S	300
Teac V-1030	250
Teac W-6000R	450
Teac V-8030S	650
Technics RS-TR474	220
Technics RS-BX601	250
Technics RS-TR575	280
Technics RS-BX701	300
Technics RS-BX747	350
Technics RS-TR979	400
Yamaha KX-W482	249
Yamaha KX-580	249
Yamaha KX-W952	599



CD PLAYER
Up to £250

Aiwa XC-300	150
Cambridge Audio CD4	150
Cambridge Audio CD200 Mk II	150
Cambridge Audio CD200	150
Denon DCD-315	150
Denon DCD-825	200
Denon DCD-625	200
Denon DCD-825	240
Dual CD1135RC	140
Dual CD1150RC	150
Dual CD1000RS	170
Dual CD1180RC	180

Eclipse CD101a	80
Eclips CD420	100
Goodmans Delta 700	110
Goodmans CCD360R	120
Grundig CDII	170
Harman-Kardon HD710	250
JVC XL-V184BK	120
JVC XL-V284BK	140
JVC XL-F116BK	180
JVC XL-F216BK	200
JVC XL-V574BK	250
Kenwood DP-2060	160
Kenwood DP-R4070	200
Kenwood DP-3060	200
Kenwood DP-M5570	250
Kenwood DP-5060	250
Luxman D-322	200
Marantz CD-53	200
Marantz CC-45	250
NAD 501	189
NAD 502	239
NAD 512	250
Onkyo DX-710	200
Onkyo DX-703	240
Philips CD163	100
Philips CD711	120
Philips CD721	130
Philips CD740	170
Pioneer PD-77	100
Pioneer PD-103	140
Pioneer PD-203	160
Pioneer PD-S504	200
Pioneer PD-M603	250
Rotel RCD-930AX	200
Rotel RCD-940BX	250
Sanyo CPM2403	200
Sherwood CD3020R	130
Sherwood CDC5030R	200
Sony CDP-M302	130
Sony CDP-312	150
Sony CDP-561E	200
Sony CDP-C325M	230
Sony CDP-C345	230
Sony CDP-761E	250
Teac CD-P1100	140
Teac CD-P3200	150
Teac CD-P3450	179
Teac CD-3	250
Teac PD-D2200	250
Technics SL-PG370	130
Technics SL-PG470AK	150
Technics SL-PG570AK	170
Technics SL-PS670AK	200
Technics 1278	250
Yamaha CDX-480	169
Yamaha CDC-555	199
Yamaha CDX-580	229
Yamaha CDC-655	249

£251 to £500

Aiwa DX-C100M	500
AMC CD6	349
Arcam Alpha One	300
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	470
Audio Innovations Alto	399

Audio Innovations Alto Chr	449
Aura CD100	400
Creek CD42	500
Denon CDC-1015	300
Grundig CDC14	300
Harman-Kardon HD7325	299
Harman-Kardon FL8450	300
Harman-Kardon HD730	300
Harman-Kardon HD7425	349
Harman-Kardon HD7525	400
JVC XL-Z674BK	300
JVC XL-M408BK	300
Kenwood DP-7060	380
Marantz CD-63MkII	270
Marantz CD-1010	300
Marantz CD-1020	334
Micromega Minium CD	350
Musical Fidelity E60	300
NAD 514	370
NAD 517	400
Nakamichi MB4s	300
Nakamichi MB3s	500
Onkyo DX-7210	260
Onkyo DX-C711	290
Onkyo DX-7510	350
Onkyo DX-750	350
Orelle CD-100	500
Pioneer PD-S703	300
Pioneer PD-M703	300
Pioneer PD-S904	400
Pioneer PD-DM802	450
Pioneer PD-S901	499
Pioneer PD-TM3	500
Rotel RCD-965BX	300
Rotel RCD-970BX	375
Rotel RCD-965BX D	375
Rotel RCD-965BX LED	425
Sony CDP-XA2ES	400
Teac CD-5	350
Yamaha CDX-880	339

£501 to £1,000

A cam Alpha 6	600
Arcam Delta 250	750
Arcam Delta 270	800
DPA Renaissance	895
Harman-Kardon HD7625	550
Harman-Kardon HD7725	800
JVC XL-MC100	800
Kenwood DP-J0270	800
Linn Mimik	798
Luxman D-373	600
Marantz CD-72 Mk II	550
Meridian 563	750
Meridian 506	875
Meridian 200	895
Mic omega Stage 1	500
Micromega Stage 2	750
Micromega Stage 3	900
Musical Fidelity E600	599
Naim CD3	949
Nakamichi MB2s	700
Nakamichi MB1s	900
Onix CD33	999
Pioneer PD-F100	600



Quad 67	875
Sony CDP-CX100	800
Teac VRDS-7	599
Teac VRDS-10	770
Teac VRDS-10SE	850
Technics SL-P2000	1,000
Thorens TC02000	900
Thule CD100	849

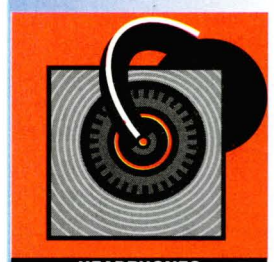
Over £1,000	
AVI S2000MC Ref	1,249
AVI S2000MC	1,300
Copland CDA-288	1,799
Jadis JS-1	8,068
Krell CD-DSP Mk II	5,000
Krell CD DSPII 5000	5,000
Krell KPS20i	9,990
Luxman D500XS	4,500
Marantz CD-10	1,200
Marantz CD-16	1,400
Marantz CD-15	3,000
Marantz CD-23	4,000
McIntosh MCD7008	2,195
McIntosh MCD7009	2,635
Meracus AURIGA	1,295
Meracus FLAGRARE	2,495
Meracus AMAGO	3,995
Meracus IMAGIO	4,495
Me idian 605	1,350
Meridian 508	1,475
Micro-Seiki CD-M2DC	3,695
Micro-Seiki CDM2000X	4,689
Mission Disc/Dacmaster	1,900
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,499
Naim CD2	1,997
Naim CDS	3,642
Pioneer PD-95	2,500
Roksan ATT-DP3P	1,495
Teac VRDS-20	1,299
YBA 2	2,999

Transports	
ATD Drive 1	3,499
Audio Alchemy DDS III	700
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,300
Audiomeca Damnation	950
Audiomeca Damnation SE	1,100
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,299
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,450
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,100
AVI S2000MCI	999
Counterpoint DA-11E	1,495
DPA Enlightenment	635
Jadis JCOT	8,000
Krell KSP20i/1	1,100
Krell MD-20	4,999
Krell MD-10	7,990
Krell KPS 20T	8,490
Krell DT-10	9,090
Linn Karik	1,497
Meridian 500	1,095
Meridian 602	1,750
Micromega Drive 1	700
Micromega Drive 2	1,000
Mission Dacmaster	750

Pink Triangle Cardinal	795
PS Audio Lambda	2,250
Roksan ATT-DP3	1,295
Teac VRDS-TI	550
Teac P-700	900
Teac P-2S	4,000
Theta Data Basic II	2,298
Theta Data III NTSC	5,345
Theta Data III NTSC/PAL	5,879
Wadia 8	3,195
Wadia 20	4,370
XTC CDT-1LE	1,250

DACs	
Arcam Black Box 50	480
Arcam Black Box 500	750
Audio Alchemy DAC-in-a-Box	230
Cambridge Audio DACMagic 1	150
Counterpoint DA-10E	1,895
Linn Numerik	1,075
Mission Dacmaster	750
Pink Triangle Ordinal	837
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,536
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,650
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550
QED Digit Reference	299
Teac D-TI	500
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395

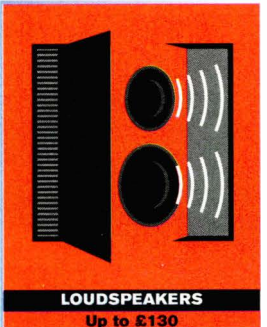
DIGITAL RECORDERS	
JVC XM-D1BK	900
Meridian CDR	4,500
Philips DCC134	150
Philips DCC730	250
Philips DCC170	250
Philips DCC951	280
Pioneer D-05	800
Pioneer D-07	1,150
Pioneer PDR-05	1,300
Sharp MD-M11E	450
Sony MDA-JA3ES	799
Sony MBS501	800
Sony DTC80ES	800
Teac R-9	1,200



HEADPHONES	
Up to £40	
Aiwa HP-X201	13
Aiwa HP-A360	13
Aiwa HP-X301	20
Aiwa HP-VX303	25
Aiwa HP-X705	40

AKG K2	23
AKG K33	25
Audio Technica ATH-P1	10
Audio Technica ATH-S22	11
Audio Technica ATH-P3	15
Audio Technica ATH-S44	16
Audio Technica ATH-P1/TV	20
Audio Technica ATH-P5	20
Audio Technica ATH-M2a	28
Beyer DT111 Alpha	15
Beyer DT111 Beta	20
Beyer DT111 Gamma	25
Beyer DT211	33
JVC HA-22	6
JVC HA-CD88	18
JVC HA-D525	20
JVC HA-F65	20
JVC HA-D626	25
JVC HA-D610	25
Kenwood KH-535	15
Kenwood KH-757	20
Kenwood KH-1000	20
Kenwood KH-959	25
Kenwood KH-2020	40
Kenwood KH-2020	40
Maxell EB-125	4
Maxell HP-100	4
Maxell HP-200	5
Maxell EB-225	8
Maxell HBS-150	8
Maxell HP-400	8
Maxell EBS-325	9
Maxell EB-425	10
Maxell HP-700	10
Maxell HP-500	13
Maxell HP-1000	15
Maxell HP-2000	20
Maxell HP-3000	30
Pioneer SE-5	16
Pioneer SE-15	20
Pioneer SE-32	23
Pioneer SE-52	25
Pioneer SE-15V	30
Pioneer SE-3300	35
Pioneer SE-4000	37
Ross RE-233	5
Ross RIH-150	6
Ross RE-235	6
Ross RE-234	6
Ross RE-229	6
Ross RE-2030	6
Ross RMH-300	7
Ross RE-280	7
Ross RE-246	7
Ross RE-223	7
Ross RMH-500CD	9
Ross RIH-360CD	9
Ross RE-2060CD	9
Ross RMH-310TV	10
Ross RIH-550	10
Ross RIH-460CD	12
Ross RDH-200CD	13
Ross RDH-100CD	15
Ross RDH-300CD	17
Ross RDH-400CD	22
Sennheiser HD26	10
Sennheiser HD36	13
Sennheiser HD56	15
Sennheiser Vegas	28
Sennheiser Manhattan	28
Sennheiser HD60TV	38
Sennheiser HD445 II	40
Sony MDR-E505	8
Sony MDR-E515EX	8
Sony MDR-007 Mk II	8
Sony MDR-009	10
Sony MDR-W07L	11
Sony MDR-A009	12
Sony MDR-E515V	12
Sony MDR-V50	13
Sony MDR-E525	15
Sony MDR-24	15
Sony MDR-25	16
Sony MDR-W12L	16
Sony MDR-008TV	17
Sony MDR-E535	18
Sony MDR-44	18
Sony MDR-009TV	19
Sony MDR-35	20
Sony MDR-CD30	20
Sony MDR-E747MP	20
Sony MDR-CD50	20
Sony MDR-5747	20
Sony MDR-P1TV	22
Sony MDR-A22L	22
Sony MDR-CD250EX	28
Technics RP-HT77	30
Technics RP-HT300	40
Vivanco SR60	3
Vivanco SR12	3
Vivanco SR52	5
Vivanco SR54	7
Vivanco SR14	7
Vivanco SR16	8
Vivanco SR120	15

Vivanco SR250	19
Vivanco SR150	20
Vivanco SR200	25
Vivanco SR300	30
Vivanco SR606	40
Over £41	
AKG K44	42
AKG K135	46
AKG K141	74
AKG K240 Monitor	82
AKG K222IR	100
AKG K270	112
AKG K280 Parabolic	117
AKG K400	118
AKG K270 Studio	121
AKG K500	138
AKG K333IR	150
AKG K444IR	180
AKG K340	191
AKG K1000	646
Audio Technica ATH-M4A	42
Audio Technica ATH-M7A	78
Audio Technica ATH911	90
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	90
Audio Technica ATH9000	273
Beyer DT311	49
Beyer DT331	59
Beyer DT411	69
Beyer DT431	89
Beyer DT511	99
Beyer DT531	129
Beyer IRS790	129
Beyer DT770 Pro	139
Beyer DT100	139
Beyer DT801	159
Beyer DT990 Pro	163
Beyer DT811	179
Beyer IRS890	199
Beyer DT901	199
Beyer DT911	219
Jacklin Float Model 1	75
Jacklin Float Model 2	99
Jacklin Float ELS	399
JVC HA-D727	43
JVC HA-D710	55
JVC HA-D910	65
JVC HA-D1000	250
JVC HA-F25	699
Kenwood KH-5000	70
Nakamichi SP7	70
Pioneer SE-500D	48
Pioneer SE-700D	60
Sennheiser HD414 Class	50
Sennheiser HD455	50
Sennheiser HD465	65
Sennheiser IS360/UK	70
Sennheiser HD475	75
Sennheiser HD25 SP	85
Sennheiser HD535	100
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	120
Sennheiser HD565 Ovati'n	140
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	140
Sennheiser IS450	150
Sennheiser HD25	160
Sennheiser IS550	180
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	200
Sennheiser IS850	860
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	998
Sennheiser Orpheus	9,652
Sony MDR-CD450	45
Sony MDR-IF210	50
Sony MDR-CD550	60
Sony MDR-D33	70
Sony MDR-IF210K	80
Sony MDR-D55	90
Sony MDR-CD750	90
Sony MDR-D77	120
Sony MDR-610K	190
Sony MDR-CD1000	200
Stax SR34	169
Stax SR Gamma	239
Stax SR84	259
Stax SR Lambda	349
Stax Gamma Pro	399
Stax Lambda Pro	449
Stax Lambda Sig	549
Stax Omega	1,695
Technics RP-HT400	50
Technics RP-HT600	60
Technics RP-HT700	70
Technics RP-F10	100
Technics RP-F30	180
Vivanco IR5700	50
Vivanco IR5000	50
Vivanco SR850	50
Vivanco IR6000	70
Vivanco SR909	70
Vivanco IR6500	90
Vivanco SR1000IFL	110
Vivanco IR7100	120
Vivanco IR7600	140
Vivanco SR200IFL	140



LOUDSPEAKERS	
Up to £130	
Advent Mini	99
Allison AL100	100
AMC WM50	120
B&W Solid HCM15	125
B&W DM302	130
B&W Solid HCM2	130
Bose XL1000	115
Canon SV-15	110
Canon S-C10	130
Celestion Little 1	99
Celestion 1	99
Celestion Impact 10	129
Celestion CSC	129
Denon SC-M2	80
Denon SCM2	80
Gale Ref Monitors	100
Genexxa GX330	80
GLL Arena	89
GLL Maxim	119
Goodmans Active 75	65
Goodmans M100	80
Goodmans HT100	100
Interaudio XL1000	100
Jamo Studio 80	70
Jamo Cornet 20.4	90
Jamo Studio 110	100
Jamo Sat 160	110
Jamo D115	110
Jamo Cornet 30.4	110
Jamo Artina	120
Jamo Sat 200 II	130
JBL Control One	115
JPW Minim SGL SHD	50
JPW Satellite SGL SHD	50
JPW Satellite	80
JPW Minim	80
JPW Minim Pair Solid	89
JPW Sonata Vinyl	100
JPW Sonata	120
JPW Subwoofer	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
JVC SP-V50	80
JVC SP-X220TBK	100
JVC SP-X550BK	130
KEF Coda 7	129
Mission 73S	100
Mission 731L	130
Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Dialogue	60
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100
Mordaunt-Short CS1 Stereo	115
Pioneer CS-3030	120
Realistic Minimus 3.5	30
Realistic Minimus 21	30
Realistic M'mus 26	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-7	60
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100
Revolver Beretta	100
Sony SS-E300	50
Sony SS-V77	50
Sony SS-E500	80
Sony SS-J90AV	100
Sony SS85E	100
Sony SS125E	120
TDL Near Field Monitor	100
TDL NFM	100
Teac LS-X8	80
Technics SB-CS55	80
Technics SB-CS75	100
Wharfedale Centre Cube	49
Wharfedale Valdus 100	79
Wharfedale Diamond 6R	99
Wharfedale Valdus 200	109
Wharfedale Modus Micro	109
Wharfedale Modus Centre	119
Yamaha NS-C80	99
Yamaha NS-E80	120
£131 to £200	
Acoustic Energy AE100	200
Advent Baby 2	149
Allison AL105	170
AMC WM75	160
B&W CWM5	150
B&W DM601	199
B&W Solid Monitor	200
Bose XL2000	160



Bose XL3000	180	Interaudio XL3000	160
Bose 101 M'ble Monitor	190	Interaudio XL4000	200
Boston Acoustics HD5	139	Jamo Studio 140	140
Boston Acoustics 325	139	Jamo Sat 300 II	140
Boston Acoustics CR6	149	Jamo Cornet 40.4	140
Boston Acoustics Runabout	169	Jamo D135	160
Boston Acoustics 350	179	Jamo Studio 180	170
Boston Acoustics 335	179	Jamo Sat 500	170
Boston Acoustics Satellites	179	Jamo Converta	180
Boston Acoustics CR7	199	Jamo Converta Light	200
Canon S-25	150	Jamo D165	200
Canon S-30	180	Jamo Cornet 60.4	200
Canon S-B20	200	JBL TLX111	140
Celestion CS135	139	JBL TLX121	170
Celestion 3 MKII	139	JPW P1 Vinyl	150
Celestion MP1	149	JPW P1	170
Celestion CS2	149	JPW AP2	200
Celestion CS4	169	KEF Coda 8	189
Celestion Centre 2	189	KEF 60S	199
Celestion 5 MkII	189	Kenwood LS-200G	200
Celestion Impact 15	199	Mission 73C	150
Cerwin Vega HED165	200	Mission 73Z	200
Denon SC-E313	160	Monitor Audio MA301	200
Denon SC-E313	160	Monitor Audio Monitor 1 Gold	200
Gale Model 2	150	Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140
Gale Model 4	200	Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Decormatch	150
Genexa CX650	140	Mordaunt-Short HT30	150
GLL Mezzo	169	Mordaunt-Short SW1	150
GLL Imagio IC100	170	Mordaunt-Short CS-1 Triple	200
GLL Magnum	199	Mordaunt-Short MS20i	200
Goodmans HT170	150	NAD 800	149
Grundig BK1	160	Philips Legend FB720II	200
Harman-Kardon LS0200	149	Pioneer CS-5030	170
Harman-Kardon LS0300	199	Polk RT3	190
Heybrook Prima	139	QLN QuBic111	200
Heybrook Solo	199	Roga Kyte	198
Infinity SM65	150	Revolver Colt	139
Infinity Reference Ii	150	Revolver Purdey Mk II	199
Infinity Reference 11i	200	Rogers LS1	149
Interaudio XL2000	140	Royd The Herald	198

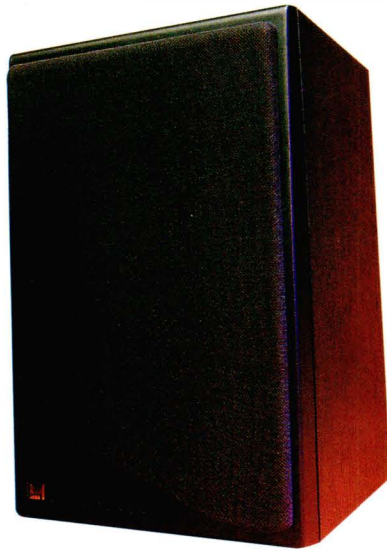
Tannoy 631	149	System Audio 905	250
Tannoy 632	189	Tannoy G33/II	300
TDL NFM2	180	TDL RTL2	300
TDL SBR	200	Visonik David 8001	228
Technics SB-CS95	150	Wharfedale Modus Five	259
Technics SB-M200	200	Wharfedale Valduis 500	299
Visonik David 5001	132	Yamaha NS10M	250
Visonik Sub 4	154	ZYP A1T	219
Visonik David 6001	163	ZYP A2S	275
Wharfedale Modus Mini	139	ZYP A2ST	295
Wharfedale Valduis 300	149		
Wharfedale Modus One	159		
Wharfedale Modus Sub-bass	179		
Wharfedale Modus Three	199		
Wharfedale Valduis 400	199		
Yamaha NS-C110	149		
ZYP Ai	199		

£201 to £300	
Advent Graduate	219
Advent Prodigy	299
Allison MS200	220
Allison AL110	220
Allison AL115	280
Allison CD6	300
AMC WM100	210
B&O Beovox CX50	300
B&W CWM6i	240
B&W Solid HCM1	249
B&W DM602	280
B&W Solid Powerbase	300
B&W CWM8i	300
Bose XL4000	220
Bose VS100	250
Bose 151 Environmental	270
Bose 161 Freestyle	275
Bose 201 Ser III	290
Bose C'puter RoomMate	300
Bose Video RoomMate	300
Bose Roomate II	300
Boston Acoustics 360 Ser II	209
Boston Acoustics CR8	239
Boston Acoustics 380	249
Boston Acoustics CR9	279
Boston Acoustics Voyager	299
Canon V-100	210
Canon S-35	250
Castle ISIS	229
Castle Durham 900	300
Celestion 7 MkII	239
Celestion 9	269
Celestion Impact 20	279
Celestion 11	299
Celestion Impact 23	300
Cerwin Vega VS8	250
Cerwin Vega VS8	250
Cerwin Vega HED265	300
Cerwin Vega SAT-6	300
Dali 102B	260
GLL Imagio IC110	300
Heybrook HB1	269
Infinity SM85	250
Infinity Inf IV Sat	300
Jamo Classic 4	250
Jamo Art	250
Jamo D265D	300
Jamo 307A	300
JBL TLX50	250
JBL TLX60	300
JPW AP3	230
JVC SP-X990BK	230
JVC SX-SW10	300
KEF Q10	229
KEF Coda 9	299
KEF 70S	299
Kenwood LS-300G	300
Keswick Audio Palermo	259
Linn Sekrit On Passive	298
Linn Sekrit In Passive	298
Micromega Minium MS1	300
Mission 733	300
Mission 751	300
Monitor Audio Monitor 7 Gold II	245
Monitor Audio MA100G	280
Monitor Audio Sub /W/200/92	300
Monitor Audio MA201	300
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275
Mordaunt-Short HT50	275
Mordaunt-Short MS25i	300
NAD 802	249
Origin Live OL-IB	289
Pioneer CS-7030	230
Pioneer S-4UK	250
Pioneer S-60	270
Pioneer CS-9030	280
Polk M3 II	220
Polk RT5	250
Polk RT7	300
Polk M5	300
QLN QuBic 121	250
Roga EL8	298
Rogers LS33	249
Royd Minstrel	259
Royd Merlin	298

£301 to £500	
Advent Legacy 2	349
Advent Laureate	499
Allison CD7	380
Allison AL120	420
Audio Innovations Alto	329
Audio Note AN-KB	499
AVI Neutron	499
B&O Beovox CX100	400
B&O Beovox RL6000	450
B&O Beovox 4500	475
B&W CDM2	400
B&W Solid Verticale	400
B&W AS6	500
B&W DM603	500
B&W Signature 7	500
Base 301 VM	380
Base 305	430
Base A'mass AM3 II	500
Base 401	500
Boston Acoustics SW10	449
Boston Acoustics SubSat 6	449
Castle York	370
Castle Severn	500
Celestion 15	389
Celestion Impact 25	399
Celestion Impact 30	429
Celestion SL6Si	429
Celestion CS6i	449
Celestion CS8i	499
Cerwin Vega VS10	350
Clements 300Si	395
Dali 104B	370
Dawn Audio Chorus BS	482
Epos ES11	445
Faraday SG	345
Faraday Siren	445
Fullers Sultan	399
Fullers Sultan H.E.	439
GLL Imagio IC120	420
Grundig BX3 Mk II	350
Heybrook Trio	373
Heybrook Heylo	389
Heybrook Heystak	499
Infinity SM105	350
Infinity Inf Micro II	400
Infinity SM115	450
Infinity SSW-10 Sub	500
Jamo Classic 6	330
Jamo BX100A	350
Jamo 407A	350
Jamo Graphic	380
Jamo Classic 8	400
Jamo D365D	400
Jamo Silhouette	450
Jamo Atmosphere	450
Jamo BX150A	450
Jamo BX200A	500
Jamo 477A	500
JBL TLX151	350
JBL TLX70	400
JBL TLX161	400
JBL TLX171	500
Jordan Watts JHFLG	420
JPW Ruby 1	500
KAL Mini-Ref MKII	395
KEF Q30	379
Kenwood LS-500G	500
Keswick Audio Aria II	329
Linn Tukan	449
Lumley Reference LM4	375
Lumley Reference LM5	499
Manticore Minaret	450
Mission 734	430
Mission 752	500
Monitor Audio Monitor 9 Gold II	350
Monitor Audio MA302	400
Monitor Audio MA202	450
Monitor Audio MA303	500
Monitor Audio Monitor 14 Gold II	500
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	500
Mordaunt-Short MS40i	450
Musical Technology Harrier	400
Origin Live OL-2B	349
Origin Live OL-1AS	399
Origin Live OL-1A	399
Origin Live OL-2AS	469
Origin Live OL-2A	470
Origin Live OL-1	499
Pentachord A	469
Pioneer S-80	370
Polk RT8	380
Polk RT10	440

Polk LS 1/4 Surround	449
Prof Monitor Co TB1	481
QLN QuBic 222	375
Roga ELA MK II	498
Rogers LS55	429
Rogers AB1	499
Rogers Studio 3	499
Roksan Roksan 1	495
Royd The Squire	349
Royd Doublet	449
Ruark Swordsman Plus II	329
Ruark Icon	359
Ruark Sabre II	449
Ruark Templar	499
SD Acoustics SD3R	399
Sony SA-W90	350
Sony SSA11	450
Spendor 2020	399
Tannoy Subsat3	399
Tannoy 636	419
Tannoy 637	499
TDL RTL3	400
TDL Studio 0.5	499
Technics SB-M300	350
Technics SB-M500	450
Triangle Titus TZe	325
Triangle Comete TZe	475
UKD-Opera Prima	450
Wharfedale Modus Seven	339
Wharfedale Modus One-Three	439
£501 to £800	
Acoustic Energy AE1	764
Advent Heritage	579
Allison CD8	550
Allison AL125	650
Allison AL130	800
Audio Note AN-KSP	699
Audio Note AN-J/B	799
B&W CDM1	600
B&W P4	600
B&W P5	800
Bose SE-5 Ser II System	760
Bose A'mass AM511	760
Boston Acoustics SubSat 7	549
Castle Chester	700
Castle Harlech	799
Celestion Impact 35	529
Celestion 100	539
Celestion Impact 40	629
Cerwin Vega VS12	550
Cerwin Vega DC10	550
Cerwin Vega DC12	650
Cerwin Vega VS15	700
Clements 600Si	595
Dawn Audio Chorus FS	698
Epos ES14	675
Faraday FS10	795
Fullers Pharaoh 1	649
GLL Imagio IC300	530
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799
Heybrook Quartet	575
Infinity SM125	550
Infinity SM155	650
Jamo 507A	700
JBL TLX181	600
Jordan Watts JH200	510
JPW Ruby 2	700
JVC SX-911WD	660
JVC SX-500	700
KAL Mini-Tower	619
KAL Compact Ref	650
KAL Tunejal	795
KEF Q50	529
KEF LS3/5a	649
KEF Q70	629
Keswick Audio Volante	629
Keswick Audio Torino	759
Lineaum LFX Wood	649
Linn Keldih Passive	649
Lumley Reference LM6	650
Manticore Minaret F1	750
Meridian A500	695
Mission 735	600
Mission 753	700
Monitor Audio Studio 2	600
Monitor Audio MAG901	800
Mordaunt-Short MSS0i	550
Naim S-NAXO 3-6	699
Naim S-NAXO 2-4	699
Naim IBL Active	776
Neat Petite	595
Orelle Orator II	699
Origin Live OL-2	649
Pentachord B	519
Pentachord Pentode	729
Pioneer S-200	600
Polk RT12	580
Polk RT16	680
Polk RT16	680
Polk LS50	800
Proac Tablette 50	599
Proac Studio 100	699





Helius Sirius II	2,395	Tannoy Edinburgh TW	2,700
Helius Sirius I	2,850	TDL Studio Monitor m	2,449
Impulse Lali	1,595	Thiel CS2.2	2,749
Impulse Ta'us	2,695	Triangle Aitnis	1,950
JBL Ti 1000	1,600	Triangle Altair	2,850
JBL L100	1,800	UKD-Opera Caruso II	2,250
JBL Ti 2000	2,000		
JBL Ti 3000	2,700	Over £3,000	
Jordan Watts JH1 +1 Aspect	1,730	Allison I.C. 20	5,500
Jordan Watts JH1 +1 Aspect K	2,310	Apogee CDD Subwoofer	3,490
Jordan Watts Aspect JH1 +1	2,745	Apogee Stage Sub	3,645
KAL Warlock	1,600	Apogee Centarus Slant 8	3,700
KEF 104/2 REC	1,799	Apogee Caliper Sig	3,998
KEF Model Three	1,999	Apogee Stage 1 GS	4,100
KEF Model Four	2,999	Apogee Centaur Major	4,980
Kenwood LS-1000G	1,700	ATC SCM50	3,499
Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,135	ATC SCM100	4,149
Lowther Academy	1,805	ATC SCM50A	4,999
Lowther Bel Canto	2,035	ATC SCM100A	5,699
Lowther Delphic	2,525	Audio Physic Virgo	3,399
Lumley Reference LM2	2,500	Audio Physic Terra	3,499
Magnepan MG-10 SE	1,650	Audio Physic Avanti	5,599
Magnepan MG-1.5 SE	1,780	Audio Physic Caldera	9,999
Magnepan MG-2.7 SE	2,650	Audiovector 6	4,600
Martin-Logan Aerius	2,288	B&W Matrix 801s3	3,795
Martin-Logan Stylos	2,993	B&W Silver Signature	5,000
Meridian DSP5000	2,995	Boston Acoustics Lynfield 500L	4,449
Monitor Audio Studio 20SE	2,200	Bravura Brio	4,750
Mordaunt-Short Performance 860	1,695	Bravura Accelerando	5,500
Naim SBL Active	1,692	Definitive BP2000	3,600
Naim SBL Passive	1,821	Electrocompaniet Ellipse	3,760
Origin Live Conqueror	1,600	Genelec Triamp S30	3,055
Pentachord P'column	1,649	Genelec Triamp 1037A	4,982
Polk LS90	1,700	Horning Agathon	3,570
Posselt Albatros	2,200	Infinity ARS Epsilon	9,995
Proac Studio 200	1,850	Jamo Oriol	8,500
Proac Response 2S	2,000	JBL S2600	3,500
Proac Response 2.5	2,700	JBL Ti 5000	3,700
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,598	Jordan Watts JH2K	3,230
QLN Reference	2,000	Jordan Watts Classic JH2KM	4,250
QLN Ref HDI	2,500	Jordan Watts Classic JH5K	4,875
Quad ESL-63	2,860	Jordan Watts Classic JH5KM	5,860
Rehdeko RK115	1,550	Jordan Watts Classic JH10K	9,340
Rehdeko RK125	2,750	KEF 107/2 REC	3,999
Rogers LS5/9	1,531	Linn Keltik Aktiv	4,400
Rogers Studio 9	1,549	Lumley Reference LM1	8,500
Ruark Crusader II	1,599	MAG Audio Audio A90	3,600
Ruark Equinox	1,849	Magnepan MG-3.5 SE	3,800
Ruark Accolade	2,699	Martin-Logan Sequel II	3,399
SD Acoustics SD1E	2,695	Martin-Logan CLS IIz	4,555
Shahinian Arc	1,675	Martin-Logan Quest Z	5,350
Shahinian Obelisk	2,490	Martin-Logan Monolith IIP	8,730
Sonus-Faber Electa	1,790	Monitor Audio Studio 50	4,000
Sonus-Faber Amator	2,992	Naim DBL Active	6,991
Spendor SP7/1	1,990	Proac Response 3.5	4,250
Spendor SP100	2,030	Prof Monitor Co MB1P	4,681
Tannoy Sterling TW	1,750	Prof Monitor Co BB5P	6,754
Tannoy D700	2,100	QLN Artec 1600	4,500

QLN 313	600
QLN 929	700
QLN Classic One	800
Rogers LS3/5A	699
Rogers Studio 5	699
Roksan Ojan Sub	795
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795
Royd The Sorcerer	595
Royd Abbot	665
Ruark Talisman II	749
Shahinian Super Elf	790
Spendor 2030	599
Spendor LS3/5A	630
Spendor S20	760
Spendor SP3/1	795
Tannoy 625	595
Tannoy 638	599
Tannoy D100	649
TDL Studio 1	699
UKD-Opera Seconda	550
UKD-Opera Operetta	660

KAL Trans-double	1,500
KEF Model One	1,099
KEF Model Two	1,499
Kenwood LS-700G	1,200
Keswick Audio Figaro Evolution	899
Keswick Audio Milano	999
Keswick Audio Alto	1,299
Keswick Audio Amber	1,349
Lineaum LSII	991
Lineaum LFX Corian	1,399
Linn Keilidh Aktiv	1,144
Linn Kaber Passive	1,389
Lowther Fidelio	1,465
Lumley Reference LM3	895
Magnepan SMG-C SE	990
Magnepan MG-0.6 SE	1,370
Manticore Matisse	1,300
Meridian DSP6000	850
Monitor Audio Studio 6	900
Monitor Audio MAG902	1,000
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000
Monitor Audio MAG903	1,300
Morel D04/2	1,000
Naim IBL Passive	905
Origin Live DL-3	975
Philips DSS930S	1,300
Pink Triangle Ventrical	896
Pioneer S-400	950
Polk LS70	1,200
Proac Response 1S	999
Proac Studio 150	1,399
Prof Monitor Co LB1	998
QLN Signature	1,000
QLN Prestige	1,500
QLN Sig Splitfield	1,500
Rega XEL	1,040
Rogers Studio 7	899
Roksan Ojan 3 Rosewood	995
Roksan Ojan 3X Black	1,195
Roksan Ojan 3X Rosewood	1,395
Royd The Prior	978
Ruark Broadsword II	899
Ruark Paladin	1,099
SD Acoustics SD5	1,235
Sonus-Faber Minuetto	898
Sonus-Faber M Amator	1,498
Spendor 2040	899
Spendor SP2/3	930
Spendor SP1/2	1,330
Tannoy D500	1,470
TDL Studio 1m	899
Thiel SCS	1,379
Thiel 2	1,499
Thiel CS-5	1,499
Totem Model One	995
Triangle Antal	975
Triangle Zays	1,399
UKD-Opera Super Pavarotti	875
UKD-Opera Callas II	895
UKD-Opera Callas Gold	995
UKD-Opera Divina	1,390
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395

ATC SCM20 Tower	1,999
Audio Note AN-E/SP	1,599
Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999
Audiovector 5	2,500
B&O Beolab 8000	1,999
B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,500
B&W Matrix 804	1,595
B&W Matrix 803s2	1,995
B&W Matrix 802s3	2,795
Bose 901 V1	1,650
Boston Acoustics Lynfield 300L	2,000
Castle Winchester	1,650
Celestion Kingston	2,500
Clements Reference 7	1,995
Dawn Audio Symphony	1,995
ECA SERVO A.2	2,450
Epos ES2.5	1,655
Fullers Pharaoh 3	2,499
Gamma Acoustics Epoch Five	1,999
Gamma Acoustics Epoch Ref Five	2,999
Genelec 1019A	1,572
Genelec Blamp 1031A	2,068
Harbeth HL-5ES	1,559

£801 to £1,500

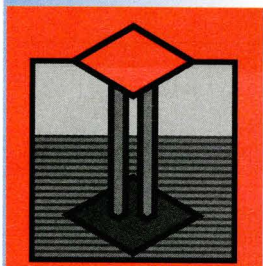
Acoustic Energy AE2	950
Apogee Centaur Minor	1,345
ATC SCM10	995
ATC SCM20	1,499
Audio Note AN-J/SP	999
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299
Audio Physic Step	1,299
Audiovector 2X	850
Audiovector 3X	1,500
B&O Beolab 4500	1,200
B&O Beolab 6000	1,450
B&W Matrix 805 V	995
B&W DM604	1,000
B&W P6	1,000
B&W Solid 800ASW	1,500
Bose A'mass AM7	830
Bose 601 MKIII	880
Canon S-75	899
Castle Howard S2	1,100
Celestion SL600si	820
Celestion 300	1,099
Celestion 700SE	1,435
Cerwin Vega DC15	850
Cerwin Vega 1515	1,300
Chord SysAudio Sig	850
Clements Reference 1	995
Electrocompaniet The Qube	1,265
Epos ES22	1,185
Fullers Sphinx	839
Fullers Pharaoh 2	1,200
Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,259
Harbeth HL Compact 7	1,329
Heybrook Sextet	1,129
Impulse Kora	1,095
Infinity Kappa 6.1i	995
Infinity Kappa 7.1i	1,195
Jamo 707A	900
JBL L20	850
JBL L40	1,100
JBL L60	1,200
JBL L80	1,300
JBL L90	1,300
JBL L90	1,500
Jordan Watts JH400	820
Jordan Watts JH400M	970
JPW Ruby 3	1,000
JPW Ruby 4	1,300

£1,501 to £3,000

Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,995
Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,995
Allison I.C. 10	2,500
Apogee Ribbon Wall	1,750
Apogee Centaur	2,300
Apogee Centarus Slant 6	2,400



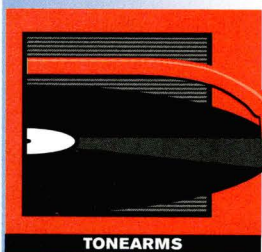
Rehdeko RK145	4,250
Rehdeko RK175	7,750
Shahinian Hawk	4,950
Shahinian Diapason	8,350
Sonus-Faber Guarneri	5,500
Sonus-Faber Extrema	5,991
Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790
Sound-Lab Pristine II	6,990
Spendor SP9/1	3,400
Tannoy GRFM TW	3,500
Tannoy Canterbury 12 ^	5,500
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000
Tannoy Canterbury 15 ^	7,000
TDL Ref Standard-m	4,999
Thiel CS3.6	3,899
Triangle Octant TXe	3,950
Wilson WAP Puppy II	5,600
Wilson WAP Puppy 5	7,290
Wilson WATT 5	8,800



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

Alphason R24/24	100
Alphason R17/17	100
Alphason R12/12	100
Alphason GR24/24	130
Alphason GR17/17	130
Alphason GR12/12	130
Alphason VR24/24	160
Alphason VR17/17	160
Alphason VR12/12	160
Audiophile Furniture Base	480
Deadrock 701	40
Fi-Rax R4	250
Ixos 800	35
Ixos 701	40
Ixos 711	60
Ixos 802	70
Ixos 803	90
Ixos 802P	100
Ixos 703	100
Ixos 803P	110
Ixos 804	110
Ixos 713	110
Ixos 804P	140
Ixos 704	140
Ixos 705	170
Ixos 714	190
Ixos 715	230
JPW Add-on	50
JPW 3 tier	80
JPW 5 tier	100
Mana Acoustics Sound Frame	125
Mana Acoustics Mini Table	150
Mana Acoustics Sound Table	235
Mana Acoustics 2 Tier Amp stand	325
Mana Acoustics Reference Table	350
Mana Acoustics 3 Tier Amp Stand	450
Mana Acoustics 4 Tier Amp Stand	500
Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand	600
Mana Acoustics 6 Tier Amp Stand	700
Projekt A3	125
Projekt A4	165
Projekt A5	205
Projekt A6	245
QLN Modulux	125
Quadraspire Q4	200
Sound Organisation Z022	60
Sound Organisation Z230	70
Sound Organisation Z021	75

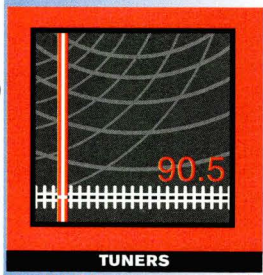
Sound Organisation Z030	95
Sound Organisation Z060	115
Sound Organisation Z550	125
Sound Organisation Z038	130
SoundStyle X300	170
SoundStyle X305	200
SoundStyle X053	200
SoundStyle X050	200
SoundStyle X100	210
SoundStyle X058	230
SoundStyle X310	240
SoundStyle X120	240
SoundStyle X105	240
SoundStyle Select 6105	280
Stands Unique Sound Tower Target B5	249
	175



TO NEARMS

Air Tangent Tangent 10B	7,777
Air Tangent Ref. Sig.	11,000
Alphason Xenon	286
Alphason Xenon MCS	370
Alphason HR100S	490
Alphason HR100S MCS	550
Audiomeca SL5	1,999
Decca LJ Arm	49
Decca LIR Arm	99
Dynavector 507	2,175
Graham 1.5T	2,550
Helius Orion 4 Copper	549
Helius Orion 4 Silver	725
Helius Cyalene 2	1,495
Kuzma Stogi	600
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000
Linn Akito	209
Linn Ekos	1,297
Manticore Musician	395
Manticore Magician1	695
Manticore Magician2	795
Moth Arm	95
Moth Mk III	146
Naim ARO	963
Nottingham Analogue Space	350
Nottingham Analogue Mentor	750
Nottingham Analogue Alien	1,200
Rega RB250	95

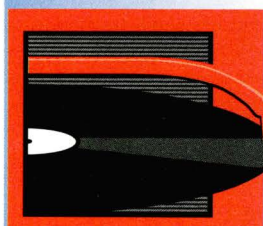
Rega RB300	139
Roksan Tabriz Basic	275
Roksan Tabriz Zi	395
Roksan Artemiz	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	294
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	321
SME Series II 3009-R	490
SME Series II 3010-R	501
SME Series II 3012-R	538
SME Series 300-309	657
SME Series 300-310	672
SME Series 300-312	765
SME Series IV	936
SME Series V	1,391
Townshend Excalibur	799
Wheaton Tri-Planar 4	2,750
Wheaton Tri-Planar 4C	3,000
Wilson Benesch ACT1	975
Zeta as	469



TUNERS

Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	220
Arcam Delta 280	399
Audiolab 8000T	750
Aura TU80	350
AVI S2000MT	599
Day Sequerra FM Ref	5,937
Day Sequerra S B'cast Mon	14,640
Denon TU-260L	120
Denon TU-215RD	150
Denon TU-380RD	200
Goodmans GST650	90
Goodmans Delta 700	100
Grundig T12	170
Harman-Kardon TU930	180
Harman-Kardon TU950	200
Harman-Kardon TU9400	299
JVC FX3628X	130
Kenwood KT-1060L	120
Kenwood KT-2060L	140
Kenwood KT-3050L	170
Kenwood KT-6050	300
Linn Kremlin	1,995
Luxman T-353	200
Magnum Dynalab FT11	550
Magnum Dynalab FT101	825
Magnum FT101 Etude	1,250
Marantz ST-55	150
Marantz ST-72	300
McIntosh MR7084	1,550
Meridian 504	625
Meridian 604	1,350
Michi RHT-10	895
Micromega Minium FM	300
Micromega Tuner	700
Mission Cyrus FM7	400
Musical Fidelity E50	300
Musical Fidelity E500	499
Musical Fidelity FT	899
NAD 412	190
Naim NAT03	549
Naim NAT02	998
Naim NAT01	1,599
Nakamichi ST3s	350
Onix BWD1	420
Onkyo T-401	160
Onkyo T-430RDS	190

Onkyo T-409	230
Onkyo T-450RDS	260
Onkyo T-411RDS	280
Onkyo R-811RDS	420
Pioneer F-203RDS	130
Pioneer F-303RDS	180
Pioneer F-502RDS	250
Quad FM66	554
Rotel RT-950BX	220
Rotel RT-990BX	500
Sherwood TD1120	90
Sherwood TX1010C	100
Sherwood TX3010C	120
Sony STS211LB	130
Sony STS311LB	200
Sony STS505ES	250
Teac T-R400	120
Teac T-R450	140
Technics ST-GT350L	150
Technics ST-GT550L	200
Technics ST-GT650L	250
Thorens TRT2000	450
Yamaha TX-480L	139
Yamaha TX-580RDS	199



TURNTABLES

Up to £500

Akai AP A950	179
Ariston Pro-1200	160
Dual CS3700/3701	85
Dual CS435	150
Dual CS503-2	130
Dual 505-4 UK	200
Dual CS750-1	100
Dual Golden II	350
Genexxa Lab-710	60
Genexxa Lab-810	70
Goodmans Delta 700	55
Grundig TT1	180
Kenwood KD-492F	100
Linn Basik	349
Michell Mycro	397
Moth Alamo	175
Moth Turntable	195
Moth Kanoat Mk I Arm	249
Moth Kanoat Mk III Arm	299
NAD 5120	129
Pioneer PL-225	120
Pioneer PL-335	150
Pro-ject 0.5	145
Pro-ject 1	185
Pro-ject 1 (E)	209
Pro-ject 2	249
Pro-ject 2/Ortofon	275
Pro-ject 6	379
Pro-ject 6/Ortofon	435
Rega Planar 78	198
Rega Planar 2	198
Rega Planar 3	260
Roksan Radius	460
Sherwood PS1870	70
Sony PSLX150H	90
Sony PSLX431B	150
Systemdek I/920	136
Systemdek IIX/900	230
Systemdek I/920/Moth	235
Systemdek IXE/900Ap	388
Technics SL-BD20	160

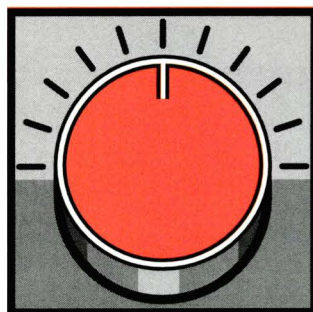
Technics SL-BD22	180
Technics SL-1210MkII	500
Technics SL-1200MkII	500
Thorens TD180/AT91	180
Thorens TD180/S500	200
Thorens TD280 IV/UK	200
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/BC	200
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/AT	270
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/RB	300

Over £500

Alphason Sonata	835
Alphason Sonata/Atlas	1,235
Alphason Symphony	1,860
Audiomeca Romance	1,675
Audiomeca J1	2,500
Audiomeca J1/SL5	4,250
Basis Ovation II	4,800
Basis Debut Gold Std III	7,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	9,250
DNM Rota 2	4,800
DNM Reson Rota 1	3,500
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200
Kuzma Stabi Ref/PS	3,000
Linn LP12 Basik	745
Linn LP12 Valhalla	894
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,345
Manticore Madrigal	570
Manticore Mantra	890
Manticore Magister	3,800
Michell Mycro/arm	539
Michell Gyrodek	765
Michell Gyrodek/arm	907
Michell Orbe	1,950
Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck	600
Nottingham Analogue Illusion	600
Nottingham Analogue HyperSpacedeck	1,200
Nottingham Analogue Graphic	1,200
Nottingham Analogue Mentor	2,200
Nottingham Analogue Mentor Ref	4,800
Origin Live Oasis-S	899
Pink Triangle Export	948
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,797
Pink Triangle Anni/DC PSU	2,173
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	699
Roksan Radius/Tabriz	735
Roksan Radius/Tabriz zi	855
Roksan Xerxes 10	1,295
Roksan TMS	2,750
SME Model 20	3,240
SME Model 20A	4,631
Thorens TD3001BC	630
Thorens TD2001	700
Thorens TD3001A/UK	770
Thorens TD520	900
Townshend MkIII Rock	799
Voyd 0.5	3,940
Voyd Reference	6,500
Well Tempered Record Player	1,800
Well Tempered Classic	2,800
Well Tempered Super	3,500
Well Tempered Reference	5,000
Wilson Benesch	1,550

Remember that all entries printed in RED refer to hi-fi products that we have reviewed. Turn to page 128 for a full summary of test results!





Amplifiers

The amplifier sits at the heart of the system, processing the outputs from the various music sources as necessary and then driving the loudspeakers. These two (quite separate) functions are integrated into a single box at the low-to-middle price points; but become separated into preamps and power amplifiers, even separate power supplies, become increasingly common as one moves upmarket. Bear in mind that output power and sound quality are not necessarily

related. Some of the finest amplifiers around have outputs as low as 12 Watts, but team them with high efficiency loudspeakers and you can achieve loudness aplenty. Power output is equally no indication of sound quality.

Best buy

Recommended

KEY

LINE INPUTS: Amount of input sockets for non vinyl sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.
MM PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving magnet (normal output) cartridges.

MC PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving coil (low output) cartridges.
REMOTE CONTROL: If amp is couch potato ready.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: If an amp is can friendly.

POWER OUTPUT (W): Lab tested power output in Watts per channel.
RECEIVER: If an amp has a built in radio tuner.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback

information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Maxim APD30A	299	Vivid and colourful sounding amp that's just too bold and brassy.	5	●				30			154
AMC 3050	220	Low-price NAD-alike amplifier that is polite and modest but rather wooden. Phono better than line.	4	●				45			154
AMC CVT3030	529	Attempt to mix transistors with valves only shines with simple musical styles.	6	●				30			116
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	240	Detailed improvement on predecessor, but lacks 'air'	5	●				40			1109 149
Arcam Alpha 6 Plus	350	Very mid-band oriented sound that was bright, yet lacks detail. Good for smaller speakers.	6	●	●	●		50			154
Arcam Delta 290	500	Combines dry restraint with detail, dynamics and musical colour.	6	●	●	●	●	75			116
Audio Innovations Alto	329	Despite a lack of bass, it still sounds open, natural and relaxed.	6					35		1540	138
Audio Innovations S700	1,199	Turns the roughest of digital sounds into understated and graceful music.	5					25			116
Audio Note Ongaku	56,000	A single ended, zero negative feedback triode, line-level amplifier and a half. Probably the best amplifier in the world.	3					26			C91
Audio Note Oto SE	1,500	Transparent, dynamic, clear and subtle, but limited power.	4					24			126
Audiolab 8000A	500	The 8000A remains a highly disciplined and mature sounding amp.	5	●	●		●	60		1581	140
Audiolab 8000S	650	Informative in every sense, only a slight lack of bite detracts. Perhaps Audiolab's best yet!	6			●	●	60			154
Aura VA100 II	330	Big, smooth yet slightly disjointed sound was equally familiar.	5	●				70			1541 138
Cambridge Audio A1	100	Dull musically - but at this price, Hobson's choice	4	●				35			1463 139
Chimera X-80	800	Stonking looks, powerful, but ultimately lacking in dynamics. Tested in Sessions	5					80			138
Copland CSA-14	1,099	Great sound and looks, but watch out for high capacitance cables	4	●				60			1416 148
Creek 4240	279	Bearing no relation to earlier Creek designs, this radical rethink is more successful via MM than CD.	4	●				40			1127 134
Creek 4240SE	350	At best, bland and plodding, at worst grainy, shouty and honky. Best on simple rock.	5					35			154
Denon PMA-250 III	160	High resolution amp, can loses its grip but is engaging and enjoyable.	4	●				30			121
Denon PMA-350 II	230	Modifications give this amp a powerful up-front and compelling performance.	5	●			●	50		1128	134
Denon PMA-450SE	280	Based on the original '450 and offers a fast, furious and entertaining sound.	5	●			●	60		1258	142
Densen Beat B100	600	Seriously well controlled amp that does everything well. Very slightly shut-in sounding.	6					60			154
DPA Renaissance	595	DPA's first integrated amp is typically innovative, but a little too 'crisp 'n dry' for our tastes.	5	●				40		1582	140
EMF Audio Sequel	349	Relaxed and restrained design from Mike Creek.	5	●				50			109
Exposure XX Super	700	Rather transistorised, unexciting sound. Good coherence and rhythm. Best played loud.	6					55			154
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but low power, mundane sound and poor build	3					12			1416 148
Harman-Kardon HK610	200	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●				30			1465 149
Harman-Kardon HK1400	400	Relaxed, confident sound is only troubled by the most dense of recordings.	5	●	●			40			1011 129
Harman-Kardon HK640	450	Breezy, nimble sounding amp lacks grip and fortitude - it can sound artificial and insubstantial	6					55			1542 138
John Shearne Phase 2	649	Either a natural-sounding superstar or nasal and hard to listen to — make up your own mind!	5					50			154
JVC AX-R5BK	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●			●	45			1466 149
JVC AX-A472BK	250	Unpredictable performer that is initially impressive but often ends up sounding starchy and tiring.	5	●				65			1259 142
JVC AX-A662	329	Huge, tidy and ordered sounding behemoth of an amp. Now discontinued so hunt around.	6	●	●		●	90			154
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200	Not a brilliant phono stage, but this is a lively, exuberant sounding amp via CD	5	●			●	50		1130	134
Kenwood KA-3060R	230	Classy engineering, but sound is over-dry, often frustratingly restrained and rather unsophisticated.	5	●				45		1260	142
Kenwood KA-5050R	350	A listenable but neither particularly communicative nor captivating amplifier.	5	●			●	95			1012 129
LFD Integrated Zero	499	Lively and brisk, but at the same time cold and unsympathetic	6					50			1584 140
Linn Majik-I (Phono)	593	The cornerstone of Linn's modular hi-fi system is innovative, but sounds vague and confused.	5	●	●			33			1013 129
Magnum IA170	270	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic, preserves colour & dynamics well	6				●	96		1260	142
Magnum Quartet	329	An integrated model that incorporates four monoblocks optimised for bi-wiring, but sound is sandy in the treble.	5	●				36			121
Magnum Class A	599	Lashings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A trades lushness for accuracy.	4	●	●			60			116
Marantz PM-44 MkIIse	200	Two generations on from the PM-40SE, this new model gives a disappointingly grey view of music	5	●				40			1131 134
Mission Cyrus III	500	The classic Cyrus II sounds convincing, masterful and musical.	6	●			●	50		1585	140
Musical Fidelity E10	300	Smooth and high-endish sound that is marred by a lack of dynamics and a touch of grain.	5	●				40			154
Musical Fidelity E100	599	Beautifully crafted with a vibrantly colourful, almost dramatic sound.	5	●			●	70			1586 140
Myryad MI 129	520	Despite an ultra-modern appearance, the old-fashioned cold, dry transistor sound.	5	●				60			154
Naim Nait 3	550	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes.	5					30			154
Onix OA21S	430	CD input sounds dead, but via MM disc, this amplifier has a fresh, vibrant sound.	4	●	●			50			97
Onix OA31	480	Eager to please, dynamic and fresh sounding, but it's grip is wafer thin	5	●	●			60			1587 140
Onkyo A803	260	This amp sounds lifeless, vague and disinterested in the music at hand.	5	●	●	●		60			1261 142
Orsite SA-100	449	A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble.	5					50			154
Pioneer A-303R	200	Fresh and uncomplicated sound bests much of the audiophile competition.	5	●			●	45			1129 134
Pioneer A-300X	230	This revamped version of the A300 sounds more confident via CD than MM, yet our panel was unmoved.	5	●				40			116

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
Pioneer A-400X	300	On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling	6	●	●	●	50	1545	138
Pioneer A-503R	300	Best via MM disc, the dull and claustrophobic sound is otherwise deeply uninspiring.	5	●	●	●	70	1544	138
Pro-ject Model 7	259	A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC.	5	●	●	●	40	1264	142
Quad 77	650	Stylish remote driven amp, bright and lively. Tested in Sessions	4	●	●	●	50	139	139
Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier sounds forward, hard and unforgiving.	4	●	●	●	50	116	116
Rotel RA970BX	300	Lively, fresh and perky with plenty of power, but not so clever with complex recordings.	6	●	●	●	60	1546	138
Sonic Frontiers SFC-1	1,795	Smooth, sophisticated Canadian valve amp with a decent direct input and more features than average.	6	●	●	●	50	126	126
Sony TAF444E	250	Sheds all frippery for an audiophile approach, but till sounds grubby and stilted.	5	●	●	●	50	1262	142
Technics SU-A600 Mk2	230	An amplifier that's great fun to be with, but a little untidy from time to time	5	●	●	●	37	1472	149
Technics SU-A800 Mk2	350	Long term listening shows this model is a little bit bluff.	5	●	●	●	55	1133	134
Technics SU-A900 Mk2	450	Jeckyl and Hyde amplifier with a dismal-sounding phono stage but transparent CD input.	5	●	●	●	90	1547	138
Woodside ISA230 Disc	899	Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for a truly entertaining sound.	3	●	●	●	30	116	116
Yamaha AX-490	239	Widgets aplenty, but unemotional sound evoked an uncertain response from panel	5	●	●	●	85	1473	149
YBA Integre	1,199	Audiophile spec French integrated with good resolution and nice phono stage.	5	●	●	●	45	121	121

PREAMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380	Quirky Class A design with an equally warm and colourful sound.	4	●	●	●	124	124	124
Audio Innovations L1	369	Reviewed with S800 Anniversary — Explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole	4	●	●	●	1300	145	145
Audiolab 8000C	520	Distinctive, stark neutrality that will not appeal to all. Good value engineering.	5	●	●	●	97	97	97
Audiolab 8000Q	1,000	Tested with £750 8000M monoblocks	6	●	●	●	1301	145	145
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	1,250	Beautiful imaging, superb detail, plenty of gain on the phono input; classy build too. Tested in Sessions	4	●	●	●	1560	139	139
Conrad-Johnson Premier 7	11,000	The 7 is designed without compromise, and is clearly one of the finest (valve) preamplifiers money can buy.	??	●	●	●	C91	C91	C91
Copland CTA-301MkII	1,349	Sweet sounding - but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●	●	●	1630	151	151
DPA DSP200S	495	Dramatic but detailed and transparent sound belies modest power rating (tested with DPA-200S).	6	●	●	●	124	124	124
EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with £3499 509 Mk II - see comments in power amp section	4	●	●	●	63	63	63
ECA Vista	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system (tested with Lectern).	5	●	●	●	1302	145	145
Exposure XVII	849	Superbly rhythmic; maybe a tad overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super	5	●	●	●	142	142	142
Jadis JP-30MC	5,978	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (tested with JA30).	5	●	●	●	60	60	60
Krell KRC-2s	4,190	This is an exquisitely refined and transparent design (tested with KSA-50S in Statements)	6	●	●	●	141	141	141
Meridian 501	625	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. Tested with 555	5	●	●	●	1303	145	145
Meridian 562V	895	Transparent and capable preamp, also features 6 digital inputs	9	●	●	●	140	140	140
Moth 30 Passive	149	Modular system gives cracking results. Passive pre/power amp warrant Best Buy (tested with 30/Stereo 60).	4	●	●	●	109	109	109
Musical Fidelity E200	599	Weighty, luxuriant but hardly scintillating. Tested with MF E300	7	●	●	●	1304	145	145
NAD Monitor 1000S	349	Sounds a little restrained.	5	●	●	●	124	124	124
Quad 34	414	Good filtering and above average tone controls, but lacks detail and dynamics	3	●	●	●	44	44	44
Quad 66	897	Amplifier with classic lineage but compromised by an equally dated, soft and undynamic sound (tested with 606).	6	●	●	●	124	124	124
Rose RV-23	450	You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price.	3	●	●	●	77	77	77
Rotel RC970BX MkII	175	Confident, consistent sound. reviewed (in Sessions) with RB970BX MkII power amps	5	●	●	●	144	144	144
Rotel RC980BX	350	Powerful, expansive but lacks poise, control and detail - disappointing (tested with RB980BX).	5	●	●	●	109	109	109
Thorens TTP2000	500	Minimalist shoebox preamp, rhythmic, warm balance. Tested in Sessions with TTA2000	4	●	●	●	139	139	139
Woodside SC26 Phono	1,931	Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency (tested with STA35).	5	●	●	●	100	100	100
YBA 3 Pre	1,250	See-through, ethereal stereo images, but more convincing towards centre of soundstage (tested with £1199 3 Pwr).	4	●	●	●	72	72	72
YBA 2 Pre	1,699	Superbly finished, good space and transparency. Needs transformer for MC cartridges (tested with £2150 2 Pwr).	4	●	●	●	56	56	56
YBA 1 Pre	3,750	Tested with £4250 1 Pwr - see power amp section for comments.	5	●	●	●	62	62	62

POWER AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless.	1	●	●	●	60	124	124
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around. Surprisingly gutsy.	1	●	●	●	15	109	109
Audio Innovations S800	1300	Reviewed with L1 — Explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole	1	●	●	●	25	1300	145
Audiolab 8000M	750	Strong, controlled sound; confident bass, but colourless. Tested with 8000Q	1	●	●	●	125	1301	145
Audio Research VT60	2,645	Ranks as 'must try' American cultural item	1	●	●	●	35	1179	136
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1	●	●	●	67	1630	151
DPA 200S	750	Dramatic but crisp, open sound belies power rating (tested with DSP-200S).	1	●	●	●	60	124	124
EAR 509 Mk II	3,499	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with £2599 802).	1	●	●	●	100	63	63
ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista - see preamp section for comments.	1	●	●	●	50	1302	145
Exposure XVIII Super	849	Slight dullness and hardness, but great 'boogie factor'	1	●	●	●	70	142	142
Jadis JA-30	2,880	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange (tested with £5978 JP30).	1	●	●	●	30	60	60
Krell KSA-50s	3,690	Stretches the performance margins of difficult speakers - state of the art at the price	1	●	●	●	50	141	141
Meridian 555	625	By providing an open window on the music, this amp is wide open to RF and low level IM distortions	1	●	●	●	60	1303	145
Moth 30 Stereo/60	549	Tested with 30 Passive - see comments in preamp section	1	●	●	●	60	109	109
Musical Fidelity E300	699	Tested with E200 - see comments in preamp section	1	●	●	●	100	1304	145
Musical Fidelity F18	3,999	Belongs to the rarified group of refined, high resolution amplifiers	1	●	●	●	220	1508	133
NAD Monitor 208	999	Truly a beefy amplifier	1	●	●	●	250	124	124
Quad 606	718	Amplifier with classic lineage but compromised by an equally dated, soft and undynamic sound (tested with 66).	1	●	●	●	140	124	124
Rotel RB970BX MkII	225	Tested with RC970BX MkII in Sessions (see preamp section)	1	●	●	●	60	144	144
Rotel RB980BX	450	Sound is expansive but lacks poise, control and fine detail - disappointing (tested with RC980BX).	1	●	●	●	120	109	109

CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price (£)	Comments						FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
			SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER		
A Audioquest Video Z	50	The very best available, with an expressive sound, but generously priced.	●	●	●	●	●	E	108
Audioquest Optilink Z	100	Good level of midband detail but frequency extremes lack depth and extension.						O	108
Audioquest Digital PRO	90	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear cut transparency.			●			E	108
Bandridge AL4900G	40	Lacks deep rounded bass and treble is coloured with a spittiness, a little rough and ready			●		●	E	131
Chord Codac	32	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration.		●	●			●	E
A Chord Prodac	50	Price for 0.6m length. Lively detailed treble, drives music along confidently with no hint of fizz		●		●	●	E	131
DPA Opti-link	20	Very similar to Bandridge AL560; sound is lacklustre						O	108
A DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impressive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound.		●	●	●	●	E	108
A Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colourations, plenty of weight, smooth vox		●		●	●	E	131
Kimber Cable PSB D'link	37	An analogue interconnect inappropriately pressed into digital service. A visible deterioration in the digital signal results.		●	●		●	E	108
Kimber Cable KC-1 D'link	52	This cable adopts a woven construction with the addition of a conductive screen. Music lacks detail and spirit.		●	●			E	108
A Kimber Cable Opti-link	59	Hardly cheap for what appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet it sounds a little brighter and livelier than most.						O	108
Kimber Cable KC-AG D'link	95	An asymmetric cable using silver conductors that deviates from the 75ohm standard. Not ideal for digital applications.		●	●		●	E	108
A LFD DigiLink Copper	30	Slightly grainy highly compatible cable with coherent and forward dynamic quality		●		●	●	E	131
A Monster Interlink LS100	45	Well constructed stepped-index fibre with polished ends and connectors. Lean, fuzzy, engaging performance.						O	108
A Monster Datalink 100	45	Price for 0.5m. A colourful coaxial interconnect with an equally colourful and up-beat sound. Very compatible.		●	●		●	E	108
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive.		●	●	●	●	E	108
A QED DigiFlex	20	A top performance, low-loss 75ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality.		●	●	●	●	E	108
Siltech HF-6	150	Sounds detailed, very clean and very extended, but bass is less well resolved - a treat for high end systems		●		●	●	E	131
SonicLink Light Brown 75	30	Hampers life like dynamics, stripping out vigour but will never sound harsh		●	●		●	E	131
A SonicLink Green	50	Spacious, positive and engaging if a tad over crisp at times, very compelling however		●		●	●	E	131
A van den Hul MV Videolink 75	30	An AV-cum-digital cable that nearly beats QED's DigiFlex, but emphasises sibilants.		●				E	108
A van den Hul The First	120	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly dark or cautious compared to some, plenty of subtle information and beautiful integration		●	●			E	131
Loudspeaker Cables									
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that should be twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward.				●	●		109
A Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical				●	●		133
A Audio Note AN-L	29.50	Fruity bass and expressive vocal rendition was appreciated by the panel which was happy to accept its foibles		●		●	●		133
A Audio Note AN-SP	125	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity		●		●	●		109
A Audioquest F-14	1.95	Ideal for laying under carpets, F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound				●	●		109
Audioquest Type 4	4.95	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains the cable's 'bite'.		●		●	●		109
Audioquest Cobalt 2	45	A rather polite and anemic sound that bubbles gently with detail and is largely uncoloured and cautiously spacious		●		●	●		133
Bandridge SF LC1070	42p	Basic figure 8 bellwire, lightweight balance and a softness that dilutes even the strongest bass		●		●	●		133
A Bandridge SF LC1259	1	Fresh and open, bubbly and naturally colourful soundstage that's neither forced or unduly edgy. Treble is slightly messy		●		●	●		133
A Bandridge Highflex LC2604	3.50	Substantial 6mm ² conductor produces weighty but ploddy music that lacks transparency		●		●	●		133
A Cable Talk 3	3	Easy on the ear but far from lazy, should yield a round, smooth yet colourful sound in most systems				●	●		133
A DNM LSCB500	5.95	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire				●	●		133
A DPA Black Sixteen	180	Unflappable resolution of fine musical details, there's no dampening of dynamics simply oodles of taut information		●		●	●	●	133
A Heybrook Heywire	4	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven.				●	●		109
A Ixos 603	2	Big and expansive sounding cable, full and engaging while retaining a high degree of neutrality				●	●		133
Ixos 604	5	Midrange is detailed and surprisingly smooth but treble is hard and synthetic and the bass no better				●	●		133
Mission Quartet	7.90	Mixed, inoffensive sound, adds guttural resonance to vocals and could be generally more coherent. Bi-wire.				●	●		133
Monster Cable XP	1.50	XP offers plenty of slightly soft bass and a slightly rounded treble, a relaxed cable whose indiscretions are not bothersome		●	●		●		133
Naim NACA 5	4.96	Described as a 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems. But it works a treat in them				●	●		109
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey sounding and strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance, a bit bass shy too				●	●		133
A Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric with robust full blooded bass, and dynamic too if slightly bright at times				●	●		133
QED Qudos	3	Excellent dynamics, midrange and transparency, almost equalling some fine and costly designs (tested in Sessions)				●	●		145
SonicLink Grey	9	A spaghetti-thin silver plated cable lacks bass impact and treble 'air'				●	●	●	109
SonicLink Care Music	15	Lack of conviction and integration through treble and relatively shallow bass but waffle free and open at high frequencies				●	●	●	133
SonicLink Blue Bi-wire	20	Small sounding and bass light with limited subtle detail and a dirtiness to percussion				●			133
A Tara Labs Rectangular SCM	725	Price for terminated 2m pair. Dynamics are exquisite, luxurious smooth sound, brimming with unforced detail				●	●		133
A Transparent Audio Musichord	11.42	Sweet, open and refined treble, a bit of breathy exuberance and can sound slightly lackadaisical				●	●		133
A Transparent Audio Wave	22.84	Very close to the sound of 'no cable', one of the very best. Slightly softens treble detail		●		●	●		133
van den Hul The Clearwater	6	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky sounding cable.				●	●	●	109



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Esoteric High Fidelity CABLES

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... in YOUR system

... for YOUR ears

... in YOUR home

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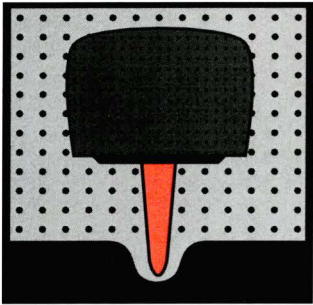
CONNECTIONS

13 John Princes Street, London W1M 9HB (A division of Connection 90' Travel Ltd.)

CABLES (CONTINUED)

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER FAXBACK NUMBER ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
van den Hul The Magnum	31	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twinlead cable, Magnum sounds soft and old fashioned.				●	●	●		109
van den Hul The Wind	35	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!				●	●	●		109
van den Hul Revolution	64	Silver plated OFC combined with carbon fibre prompts a sombre character with an easy and relaxed treble				●	●	●		133



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs; and generally more expensive low and very low output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono input-equipped valve designs need a

transformer to cope with MC cartridges.

■ Cartridge/amplifier interfacing can be very subtle, but even basic high output MM designs benefit in overall balance from optimised amplifier capacitance loading.

B
R

Best buy **Recommended**

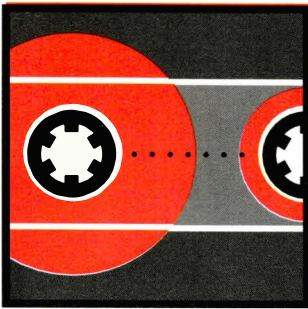
KEY	REPLACEABLE STYLUS:	OUTPUT (MV):	copy of the review.
MM: Moving magnet cartridge with a normal output suitable for all vinyl disc amplifier inputs.	sensitivity vinyl disc amplifier inputs.	Cartridge output in millivolts.	
MC: Moving coil cartridge with a low output only suitable for high	Most MM cartridges have a stylus that can be removed and replaced.	Cartridge mass can affect arm choice.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
		FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax	

CARTRIDGES

REPLACEABLE STYLUS OUTPUT (MV) FAXBACK NUMBER ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (MV)	FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Arcam C77	30	A sensible moving magnet package with good bounce at a competitive price.	●	4.0	6	48
Arcam C77MG	40	Punchy, with plenty of energy to liven things up. The solid body is well worth the extra £10.	●	4.0	6	67
Arcam E77MG	60	Our sample had a disappointing stylus, but gave a coherent, rich and laid back sound.	●	4.0	6	48
Arcam P77MG	73	Preferred to its cheaper partner thanks to a better tip. Channel balance poor	●	4.0		48
Audio Note Io IIV	1,395	One of the best, giving an extraordinarily relaxing midrange clarity. Needs a transformer.	●	0.1		100
Audio Technica AT-95E	19	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced.	●	2.8		48
Audio Technica AT-OC5	146	Effortless and detailed, but rather relentless and tiring eventually.	●	0.4	8	103
Audio Technica ART-1	944	This is a delicate and very fluid-sounding MC that tracks well.	●	0.4	9	72
Audioquest 404L	599	Slight harshness detracted from the performance of this otherwise clear-sounding and detailed cartridge.	●	0.5	6	84
Audioquest 7000NSX	1,495	Stunning stereo imaging and detail spoiled by poor tracking and high sensitivity to arms.	●	0.4	6	91
Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well	●	1.0	6	48
Denon DL160	90	Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'	●	0.1	6	43
Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life' is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail.	●	0.1	6	103
Dynavector 17D2	450	Clear, detailed, neutral and generally informative - excellent.	●	0.15	5	91
Dynavector XX-1L	998	Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm.	●	0.25	12	84
Dynavector XX-1	998	Good, but not immensely competitive at the price, and not helped by comparison with the low output version.	●	2.0	12	84
Goldring Elan	17	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●	5.0	7	67
Goldring 1012GX	65	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency colouration apparent.	●	6.5	7	85
Goldring 1022GX	85	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●	6.5	7	85
Goldring Eroica LX	100	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative.	●	0.5	8	84
Goldring 1042	105	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively though.	●	6.5	6	91
Goldring Elite	200	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound has a certain dirtiness.	●	0.5	8	103
Linn K5	54	Not as crisply focussed as the other Linn magnetics, but the K5 is smoother.	●	4.5	6	67
Linn K9	109	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus.	●	4.5	5	Col
London Decca Maroon	199	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever.	●	5.0	6	67
London Decca S Gold	339	Immediate and detailed, but coloured, nonlinear with a questionable effect on records.	●	5.0	6	84
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard	●	0.1	7	143
Milltek Aurora	299	An overall feeling of relaxed ease characterised this clear and atmospheric Kiseki-built cartridge.	●	2.0	0.1	299
Ortofon 510/P	32	For the price, a good blend of virtues - weight, clarity and neutrality	●	3.0	5	85
Ortofon 520/P	55	Sensitive to load capacitance, the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound.	●	3.0	5	6
Ortofon MC10 Super	85	'What a delightfully sweet-sounding cartridge this is...' we said.	●	0.3	7	48
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	110	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle - take it as it comes.	●	3.3	4	103
Ortofon MC15 Super II	110	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and clos up.	●	0.35	7	103
Ortofon MC25E	160	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable	●	0.5	11	139
Ortofon MC25FL	210	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP	●	0.5	11	139
Ortofon MC3000II	950	A real eye-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere, one of the very best.	●	0.12	10	84
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo	●	0.12	10	91
Rega Bias	34	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow build, the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound.	●	5	4	67
Rega Elys	74	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is both more detailed, accurate and convincing.	●	5.0	5	67
Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but more civilised and smoother.	●	6.5	5	91
Shure ME97HE	60	It won't turn a sow's ear into a silk purse, but it will produce an acceptable result.	●	4.0	7	48
Shure V15V-MR	265	Extended familiarity gave the feeling of a lack of energy and a 'shut in' sound.	●	3.0	7	38
van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●	5.5	6	103
van den Hul MC-10	799	A neutral, balanced performer gives, fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-One	999	This extended all the positive qualities of the '10, but added greater authority and scale - worth all the extra money.	●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-Two	1,349	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal.	●	0.4	6	72
van den Hul G' hopper IIIGLA	2,999	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available, it has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse.	●	0.4	6	122

Cassette Decks



The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Buffs may wrinkle their noses, but they all use it.

There should be no problems in connecting a cassette deck to any normal amplifier, but some care needs to be taken in choosing the best tapes for a specific machine. (Trial and error is one effective technique, but many decks have manual bias adjustment and some match up to the tape automatically.)

Twin decks offer the option to dub tapes and play two cassettes sequentially. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but usually with some mechanical compromise. The sort of facilities that are useful include tape monitor switching and Dolby B.

Best buy

Recommended

KEY

DOLBY C: A rather extreme noise reduction system not usually associated with high sound quality.
DOLBY S: A desirable derivative of the Dolby SR professional noise reduction system.
DOLBY HX PRO: System designed by B&O to extend headroom for cassette recording.
3-HEAD: If you want to monitor a recording while you are making it, a third head is essential.
TWIN DECK: Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play, in most instances only one deck will record.
AUTOREVERSE: Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.
AUTO CALIBRATION: The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.
ADJUSTABLE BIAS: Bias can be manually set to suit the tape being used.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

CASSETTE DECKS

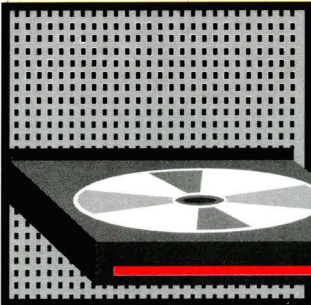
Product	Price (£)	Comments	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN HEAD	AUTOREVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well designed budget deck, astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away.	●								1513	136
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High class twin for those who want bells, whistles - and music.	●					●	●		1377	146
Aiwa AD-S950	300	High-value, high-spec package is both well set up and musically well sorted.	●	●							1590	140
Arcam Delta 100	899	Superb transport and a ripe, spacious sound. Dolby S is more successful than some.	●	●			●					111
Denon DRM-540	160	Exceptionally stable and well focussed sound quality and a bargain price.	●								1378	146
Denon DRS-640	210	Drawer loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well adjusted sound.	●								1591	140
Denon DRM-740	270	Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment offers good, if somewhat detached sonics.	●					●			1514	136
Denon DRS-810	310	Drawer loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition.	●			●						127
Goodmans Delta 700W	100	Compact and ultra-basic twin deck which is rough and bass shy, with a less than stable tape path.						●				123
Grundig CCF3	200	Simple, sensible and well built twin, but lack of pitch stability compromises performance	●					●	●		1379	146
Harman-Kardon TD420	280	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well conceived, minimum features design	●					●			1592	140
JVC TD-V562BK	220	Ultra-sophisticated transport at a silly price; sound quality is stable but slightly opaque.	●				●					123
JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class.	●								1380	146
Kenwood KX-5060S	235	Well engineered transport and Dolby S star in this refined and detailed design.	●	●					●		1593	140
Kenwood KX-7060S	329	Although slightly dull sounding with prerecorded tapes, this is a well equipped and fine sounding deck.	●	●			●				1381	146
Luxman K-322	200	Gives best value results with lower bias tapes, helped by a successful Dolby C installation.	●					●			1382	146
Marantz SD-53	200	Modestly equipped player is short-changed by a rough transport, and dull prerecorded quality.	●					●			1383	146
NAD 602	199	Minimalist deck for the audiophile market. Unfortunately engineering is minimalist too.	●					●				127
Nakamichi DR3	450	Refined, exquisitely detailed and solid sounding 'budget' Nakamichi 2-header.	●					●				123
Nakamichi DR2	700	Accomplished design with simple features (manual tape select!) but superb sound and serviceability.	●					●				127
Onkyo K-611	430	Cute drawer loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport.	●								1384	146
Pioneer CT-S430S	200	Against the odds - a 2-head Dolby S deck that works. Well set up and fully equipped.	●	●							1515	136
Pioneer CT-S630S	300	3 heads and Dolby S feature in an excellent deck that is underbiased with Type IV tapes.	●	●							1595	140
Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound.	●	●							1385	146
Sherwood DS3010C	120	Good range of facilities, let down by poor transport and iffy electronics.					●					117
Sony TC-K461S	180	Transport is good, and sound quality is fine, though undynamic. Marginal with metals.	●	●							1386	146
Sony TC-K415B	180	Mainly UK designed with audiophile intent, but spoiled by erratic output, at worst with metal tape.	●								1516	136
Sony TC-K611S	300	Good Dolby S deck - slightly let down by lack of attention to detail.	●	●			●					127
Technics RS-BX501	200	A real rarity - an auto reverse model that can hold its head up with the single-siders	●						●	●	1597	140
Technics RS-BX601	250	Remarkably fast cassette wind means it will suit those with large collections. Good all-round sound.	●								1517	146
Technics RS-BX701	300	Costly, but well built, this decks is a pleasure to operate and listen to.	●								1517	136
Yamaha KX-580	249	Stable and clean, if bright. Play Trim helps wake up recalcitrant recordings.	●								1388	146

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Hi-Fi Choice back issues

turn to page 107

CD Players



All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see below). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical persuasion; sonically the former is preferable.

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

B
Best buy

R
Recommended

KEY

ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT: Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For optical connection to an outboard DAC.

AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT: High speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT: Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: For car users.
VARIABLE OUTPUT: Remotely adjustable volume controlled

output.
MULTI-DISC: Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue convertor: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid multibit and bit-stream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH,

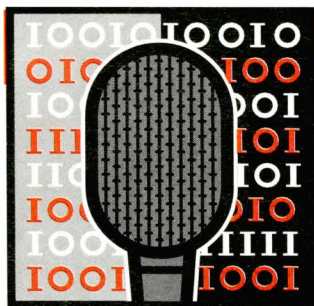
bitstream, PWM etc.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

CD PLAYERS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
AMC CD6	349	Based on Rotel's RCD-965BX, but has a raunchier, beefier but less transparent sound.	●	●						BS	124
Arcam Alpha One	300	The first UK-built player under £300 is hampered by a tidy but rather grey and uninspiring sound.	●							DS	1530 137
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	470	Upbeat, dynamic sound disguises lack of transparency	●							MB	1634 151
Arcam Delta 250	750	Arcam's best effort yet is a new design based on Philips CDM9 transport. Specification includes Sync Lock facility.	●	●						-	1491 130
Arcam Delta 270	800	Dry, tightly-focussed sound will either beguile or aggravate, depending on taste!	●							Hyb	124
Audio Innovations Alto	399	Refreshing piece of audio sculpture belies inconsistent audio behaviour	●							BS	1635 151
AVI S200MCII	999	A stylish, midi-width player with an exceptionally refined and comfortable sound. Lacks passion.	●			●				1bit	119
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and 'em sound quality.	●							Hyb	1268 147
Denon DCD-825	200	Despite extensive revisions, this latest player still sounds like a typical 18-bit Denon, which is no bad thing!	●			●				MB	1531 137
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear.	●							MB	1269 147
Denon DCD-825	240	Not the subtlest of players, but this model will bolster the weediest of systems with its colourful sound	●							MB	1531 137
Denon DCD-1015	300	Excellent, middle range player - fast, fluid and lean	●			●				MB	1599 141
Dual CD1000RS	170	Old fashioned sound and appearance, though well suited to light classical music	●							BS	1562 139
Eclipse CD101a	80	If you want to know the sound of high order distortion, this is probably as good a place to start as any								MB	144
Goodmans Delta 700	110	A 16-bit alternative to the CD650II that furnishes a colourful and animated sound.								MB	128
Harman-Kardon HD7425	349	Needs a touch of Oxy-10 to clean up its complexion	●							MB	1600 141
Harman-Kardon HD7525	400	Glorious sounding player, if slightly inconsistent	●							MB	1636 151
Harman-Kardon HD7725	800	This flagship implementation of RLS sounds impressively bold and dynamic.	●							MB	124
JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined, if occasionally unpredictable sound.	●							1bit	1270 147
JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●							1bit	1637 151
Kenwood DP-2060	160	A player that bears no relation to the DP-3060, despite appearances. Sounds vague and thoroughly uninteresting.	●							1bit	1271 147
Kenwood DP-3060	200	Based on the same filter/DAC as Marantz's CD-53, but with a more transparent, sober and highly insightful sound.	●							1bit	1564 139
Kenwood DP-7060	380	Fleur-footed, but will appear bright in lightweight systems	●							1bit	1601 141
Luxman D-322	200	Well bred player sounds smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring.								BS	1272 147
Marantz CD-53	200	Looks identical to CD-63, but internal costs are cut, exposing a slightly ragged performer.	●							BS	1565 139
Marantz CD-63MKII	270	Smooth sounding and highly satisfying player	●							BS	1638 151
Mission DAD7	900	Pleasant but not particularly exciting, but this remains a classy, sharply etched performer	●							MB	145
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,499	Remarkably coherent and three-dimensional performer, and an inspiring piece of audiophilia	●							BS	1051 131
NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●							BS	1639 151
Nakamichi MB4s	300	Entry level Music-Bank player has plenty of dynamics and detail but little stereo depth.	●							MB	1074 132
Onkyo DX-7210	260	Well-bred CD player features an unusual digital filter is smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring.	●							BS	1273 147
Onkyo DX-7510	350	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●							BS	1640 151
Onkyo DX-750	350	Exuberant, highly communicative player, brims with confidence, though unpredictable with some systems	●							BS	1603 141
Orelle CD-100	500	Excellent information retrieval and convincing with a wide range of music. HF could be more natural though	●							MB	1628 151
Philips CD740	170	One of several Philips players using hybrid DAC technologies. Still sounds insufferably boring, however.	●							MB	1567 139
Pioneer PD-S504	200	More consistent than the old PD-S503 and capable strong atmosphere and 'occasion'.	●							BS	1274 147
Pioneer PD-S904	400	Too much legato - literally - in sound, but a very smooth performer	●							1bit	1641 151
Quad 67	875	Powerful, fluid and captivating sound reminiscent of Meridian's 206.								DS	124
Rotel RCD-940BX	250	A sea change in transport and DAC technology lies behind this untidy-sounding and irritating player.	●							MB	1535 137
Rotel RCD-965BX	300	Exceptionally refined: transparent, exquisitely detailed and powerfully emotive. A landmark.	●							BS	100
Rotel RCD-965BX Discrete	375	Can sound unfamiliar with known CDs, but this is a refined and powerful player with a 'bobby' bass	●							BS	1604 141
Sherwood CD3020R	130	Although this budget wonder has little respect for musical convention, it is still remarkably entertaining.								BS	119
Sherwood CDC5030R	200	This replacement for the 5-disc CDC5010R sounds messy, disjointed and generally unpleasant. A disappointment.	●							1bit	1076 132
Sony CDP-312	150	Something of a rough diamond, offering a raft of features and good build but a decidedly Technicolor sound	●							1bit	1569 139
Sony CDP-561E	200	Combines plenty of features with an open, transparent and sparkling sound.	●							BS	1275 147
Sony CDP-C345	230	Sony's Hybrid Pulse DAC can sound great, but in this 5 disc carousel it provides a mere skeleton of a performance.	●							1bit	1077 132
Sony CDP-761E	250	Tarted up CDP-561E with less widgets and a slightly overcooked performance.	●							BS	1267 147
Sony CDP-XA2ES	400	Strong-willed, heavyweight sound; not for the faint-hearted	●							BS	1642 151
Teac CD-P3200	150	A primitive looking CD player, housing 16-bit electronics delivering an equally primitive and uninspiring sound.	●							MB	1277 147
Teac CD-5	350	Bright, breezy and up-beat - but short in the trouser department	●							BS	1643 151
Teac VRDS-10	770	A basic analogue stage compromises performance. Lacks bass energy.	●							BS	119
Technics SL-PS770A	250	A mellow sounding player that never quite rouses from its slumber to really tackle the music at hand.	●							M	1278 147

CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	DAC TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
Yamaha CDX-480	169	A dispassionately calm sounding player that delivers the musical goods with little or no apparent enthusiasm.	●	●						BS 1279	147	
Yamaha CDX-880	339	Plenty of uncluttered detail, and a smooth, refined midband, but lacks fredpm, extension and compassion	●	●						BS 1606	141	
TRANSPORTS												
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,450	Superb combo for those who like the sound of valves (tested with Elixir DAC in Sessions)	●	●						MB	141	
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,100	Tested with Trichord Pulsar, the duo provides a highly composed and tactile sound.	●	●						-	1320	144
Counterpoint DA-11E	1,495	Harsh and fatiguing sound when used with DA-10E	●	●				●		-	1492	130
Linn Karik	1,497	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing.	●	●						-	1323	144
Meridian 200	895	Light, fresh and very bubbly sound that is natural, engaging and unfatiguing.	●	●						-		96
Meridian 500	1,095	Used with the 563 DAC, the combination is thin, brash and uncomfortable.	●	●						-	1103	133
Meridian 602	1,750	With matching 606 DAC, Meridian's top player sounds distinctive and elegant.	●	●						-		120
Mission Discmaster	1,500	Powerful performance - large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Dacmaster)	●	●							1104	133
Pink Triangle Cardinal	795	Sound quality is warm but over-polished compared to PT Ordinal (tested with DaCapo and DC PSU).	●	●						-	1324	144
PS Audio Lambda	2,250	With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail.	●	●						-	1106	133
Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound (tested with D-T1).	●	●						-	1325	144
Teac P-700	900	Tested with D-700, low resolution sound is warm, bubbly and entertaining.	●	●						-		120
Teac P-2S	4,000	The latest version of Teac's luxury P-2 transport sounds as over-engineered as it looks.	●	●						-	1493	130
Theta Data Basic II	2,298	Uses a Philips CDM-9 Pro mechanism a works a treat with more lively DACs	●	●						-	1494	130
Wadia 8	3,195	Budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; just too expensive for the performance on offer.	●	●						-	1495	130
DACS												
Arcam Black Box 50	480	Measured and sophisticated sound from a DAC that leaves plenty in reserve for future upgrades.	●	●				●		Hyb	1506	133
Arcam Black Box 500	750	Sophisticated unit with Sync Lock and discrete DAC. Early samples sounded grubby and restrained.	●	●						BS	1519	136
Audio Alchemy DAC-in-a-Box	230	This giveaway DAC may still rescue the oldest of players from obsolescence.	●	●						MB		127
Audio Note DAC1	600	Oddball DAC with manual de-emphasis switch. Needs a high preamp input impedance or bass will suffer.	●	●						MB		127
Audiolab 8000DAC	800	Just as smooth and refined as its predecessor yet, sadly, still manages to obscure the passion or fire of music.	●	●						BS		127
Audiomeca Elixir	745	DAC was tested with Kreatura SE - see below	●	●						BS		141
Cambridge Audio DACMagic 1	150	Ridiculously under-priced, this DAC is best suited to high end transports.	●	●						Hyb	1521	136
Counterpoint DA-10E	1,895	Tested with DA-10E	●	●				●		-	1322	144
DPA PDM256	2,995	Highly advanced, with adjustable dither, but the different settings only lead to compromise.	●	●						BS		133
Linn Numerik	1,075	A new 20 bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a tad dry and humourless.	●	●						MB	1323	144
Meridian 563	750	Warmer but no less detailed than the earlier 200-series, the 563 flies with a top rate transport.	●	●				●		DS	1103	127
Meridian 508	1,475	Excellent partner for Meridian digital systems, and one of the best neo-high end systems	●	●						DS		140
Mission Dacmaster	1,500	Powerful performance - large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Discmaster)	●	●						MB	1104	133
Pink Triangle Ordinal	837	The cheapest dual-differential DAC7 converter available offers top-flight sound quality.	●	●						BS	1524	136
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,536	With Cardinal and DC PSU, the DaCapo is best with its 22bit option. It is warm but over-polished.	●	●						BS	1324	144
Pink Triangle DC Supply	1,590	Battery power supply for Cardinal and DaCapo	●	●						-	1324	144
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HCD	2,650	With Lambda transport, the sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail.	●	●						MB	1106	133
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics	●	●				●	●	MB	1069	132
QED Digit Plus	139	Bearing in mind its expensive but very forgiving performance, the Digit is almost embarrassingly cheap.	●	●						BS		113
QED Digit Reference	299	No great advance on the basic QED Digit yet its enthusiastic sound is more than competitive at the price.	●	●						BS	1525	136
Teac D-T1	500	Teamed with VRDS-T1 for test, this superb quality unit is tidy and composed.	●	●						BS	1325	144
Teac D-700	600	With P-700, the D-700 may lack the resolution, but is bubbly and entertaining.	●	●						MB		120
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Richly detailed and honest sound, switchable phase, dither etc	●	●						Hyb	1320	144
Woodside DAC2	509	Sharp, dynamic sound is captivating for its lack of grain and 'tizz'.	●	●						MB		101
Woodside DAC1	909	Fine but slightly dated and costly package in performance terms - but flexible, musical and well built.	●	●						MB		87



Digital Recorders

Digital recorders come in a variety of different guises, but have yet to make much of an impact on the domestic market. At present there are four types to choose from: DAT (digital audio tape), MD (Mini Disc), DCC (digital compact cassette) and CD-R (CD Recordable). DCC is backwards compatible inasmuch as the machines can play regular audio cassette. MD's claim to fame is its optical disc format, which offers instant track access and can't be worn out like a tape. DAT has been on the market for quite some time now, but has never

really 'made it' as a consumer medium due to the dearth of pre-recorded material. However, it has begun to carve itself a niche in the top end of the market, replacing the reel-to-reel as the audiophiles tape based medium. Home CD-R is coming into its own with Pioneer's PD-R05 machine attempting to set a trend.

Best buy

Recommended

KEY	ADC TYPE: Analogue to digital converter types as per DACs.	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital socketry for electrical cable.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of HI-FI Choice in which the original review appeared.
FORMAT: Type of recorder, see above for descriptions.	PORTABLE: Can be run off batteries but not necessarily personal stereo size.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital socketry for optical cable.		

DIGITAL RECORDERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Philips DCC170	250	Good sound quality for a portable that records as well, beating competition from MD in its group	DCC	BS	BS	●	●	●	1237 141
Philips DCC951	280	Offering 18-bit record and replay this does an impressive job in many ways but PASC is still a limitation	DCC	BS	BS		●	●	139
Pioneer D-05	800	Second generation 96kHz DAT recorder can offer startling realism with the right software - ie first generation	DAT	BS	BS		●	●	152

DIGITAL RECORDERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DIAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL I/O	OPTICAL I/O	ISSUE NUMBER
Pioneer D-07	1,150	96kHz double sampling mode gives this deck a sense of naturalness missing from most DAT recorders	DAT	BS	BS	●	●	1089 133
Pioneer PDR-05	1,300	CD recorder that uses domestic blanks only (limited to 62 minutes), write once but excellent sound quality	CD-R	BS	BS	●	●	152
Pioneer D-C88	2,000	State of the art portable 96kHz DAT recorder, the size of a lap-top computer this Nagra country on the cheap	DAT	BS	BS	●	●	1431 150
Sharp MD-M11	450	Slick MD personal with recording capabilities and rapid track access but less stunning sound quality	MD	BS	BS	●	●	139
Sony TCD-D7	500	Extremely desirable personal size recorder tested with optional Super Bit Mapping decoder. The modern Walkman Pro	DAT	BS	BS	●	●	1396 148
Sony MDS-501	800	Minidisc seems to be slowly winning the domestic digital recorder battle and this is one of its better exponents	MD	BS	BS	●	●	1089 133



Headphones

There are a variety of different approaches to headphone design. Among the more expensive models, electrostatic drivers are used in open-backed phones. Most models feature dynamic (moving coil) drivers in circular, open or closed-back designs. The advantage of open backs seems to be a correspondingly open sound, but one can also hear external noise, of course. Closed-back designs are useful in situations where it is necessary to block out noise.

There are three styles of headphone: circumaural models enclose the ear; supra-aural designs feature a flat pad which presses on the outer ear; and intra-aurals (in-ear) rest inside the ear itself, à la personal stereos. For best results a separate headphone amplifier is recommended.

B Best Buy **R Recommended**

KEY

TYPE: Operating principle: D - dynamic, E - electrostatic.	CLOSED BACK: Keeps out external noise.	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR: Can be used with mini-jack equipped components such as personal stereos	to find the Factsback information page.
SUPRA-AURAL: Style of it where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.	WEIGHT (G): Mass in grams	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
CIRCUM-AURAL: Style of it which encloses the ear	IMPEDANCE (Ω): Load offered to the headphone amplifier, the higher the impedance the louder the sound for a given amplifier output.		
OPEN BACK: Offers an open sound but lets in noise.			

HEADPHONES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SUPRA-AURAL TYPE	CIRCUM-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT(g)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	ISSUE NUMBER
AKG K44	42	Good quality personal oriented phone, could have a better sense of space but is musically quite communicative.	D	●	●	●	90	50	●	99
AKG K135	46	The K135s doesn't live up to the usual AKG standards, though it does have the ability to convey rhythm well.	D	●	●	●	160	150	●	63
AKG K240 Monitor	82	Something of a classic, these AKGs are very user-friendly in all respects; sonically on the warm side of normal.	D	●	●	●	240	600	●	63
AKG K280 Parabolic	117	Revealing twin-driver design uses the same design principles as a satellite dish to beam sound into ear.	D	●	●	●	250	75	●	63
AKG K400	118	Comfortable over long sessions. Sound is exquisitely detailed, dynamic and uncoloured.	D	●	●	●	250	120	●	121
AKG K500	138	K500 offers impressive definition. Balance is on the light side but transparency is high.	D	●	●	●	250	120	●	111
AKG K340	191	Heavyweight cans in most respects, the K340 with its electrostatic tweeter is a very revealing headphone.	D	●	●	●	380	400	●	75
AKG K1000	646	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs.	D	●	●	●	270	120	●	99
Audio Technica ATH-M2a	28	Cheap, comfortable, well built and adequate - if over exposed - midband	D	●	●	●	115	22	●	1097 133
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	90	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found with headphones.	D	●	●	●	280	40	●	55
Audio Technica ATH9000	273	Electrets which connect to the amp's speaker outputs. They sound a little too smooth, but would suit aggressive amps.	E	●	●	●	240	32	●	111
Beyer DT311	49	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone.	D	●	●	●	124	40	●	1098 133
Beyer DT411	69	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price.	D	●	●	●	120	250	●	111
Beyer DT531	129	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D	●	●	●	245	250	●	144
Beyer DT911	219	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps, these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans.	D	●	●	●	275	250	●	111
Jecklin Float Model 1	75	Whilst very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness at a reasonable price.	D	●	●	●	400	200	●	55
Jecklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in long term, despite lack of adjustment.	D	●	●	●	400	200	●	63

BEST BUY VIVANCO - THE NAME BEHIND THE BEST BUYS

SR 606

 "An excellent buy"
WHAT HI-FI
 December 1993
 ★★★★★

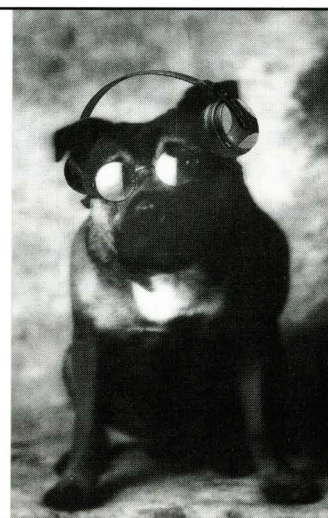
IR 7600

 "Clear sound; controlled bass; comfortable cordless"
WHAT HI-FI
 June 1995

SR 250

 "A real bargain and an obvious Best Buy to boot"
Hi-Fi Choice
 March 1995

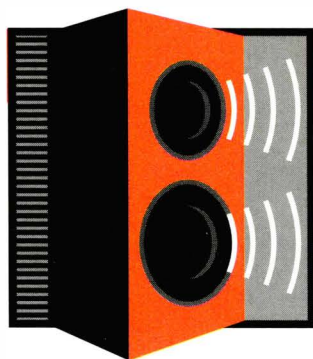
SR 850



Vivanco UK Ltd, Unit C, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7SS
 Tel: 01442 231616 Fax: 01442 2355421

HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TYPE	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	WEIGHT(g)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
▶ Jecklin Float ELS	399	These electrostatics have an openness of sound that is rarely found in the breed, with good dynamic range to boot.	E	600	8	●	55
▶ JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations.	D	220	32	●	121
▶ Kenwood KH-1000	20	First step up from a true mini: a near miniature which is cheap, comfortable and inoffensive	D	30	32	●	121
▶ Maxell HP-3000	30	Solid, smooth sounding supra-aural headphone, but congested and undynamic. Includes in-lead controls.	D	120	32	●	1099 133
▶ Pioneer SE-400D	37	Acceptable, if unexciting all-rounder, this supra-aural phone has good long-term comfort levels.	D	185	35	●	1099 133
▶ Ross RDH-300CD	17	In-lead controls are the highlights of this shoddy, sometimes aggressive sounding design.	D	155	8	●	133
▶ Sennheiser HD445 II	40	Still the one by which others at the price are measured, though now slightly leaden sounding, with a cold treble	D	125	52	●	121
▶ Sony MDR-CD450	45	Fair acoustic isolation and comfortable construction, moderate sound.	D	260	24	●	1101 133
▶ Sony MDR-CD550	60	Competent headphone creates remarkable space from a closed back design and sounds natural to boot.	D	270	45	●	99
▶ Sony MDR-CD750	90	Reasonably comfortable and eminently listenable, these Sonys have characteristically good bass power and relaxed HF.	D	290	45	●	111
▶ Sony MDR-CD1000	200	A fine sounding and comfortable headphone that's likely to work well with most sources.	D	330	45	●	111
▶ Stax SR Gamma	239	One down from the Lambda, the Gamma is an excellent headphone with little to criticise bar the price.	E	300	-	●	55
▶ Stax Gamma Pro	399	With SRD-X Pro, like a stethoscope for your hi-fi, revealing subtleties that many loudspeakers fail to resolve.	E	300	-	●	63
▶ Stax Lambda Pro	449	Tested with SRD-7B PSU, this is an industry reference, and is frighteningly revealing.	E	325	-	●	55
▶ Stax Lambda Sig	549	With SRM-T1. Electrostatic - the Signature must be the most transparent headphone available.	E	325	-	●	72
▶ Technics RP-F10	100	Another very comfortable sealed circum-aural model, has modest sound isolation and uneven, sound favouring bass.	D	300	32	●	121
▶ Vivanco SR606	40	Although slightly overblown at times, this model is easy on the ears and essentially enjoyable	D	225	32	●	1101 133



Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

As the last item in the hi-fi chain, the loudspeaker is merely the slave of what has gone before; it is capable only of reproducing a signal as good as it is fed. Nevertheless, the distortions (colorations and stereo effects) introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be greater than those anywhere else in the hi-fi chain, so careful selection of models is very important.

■ The average loudspeaker consists of an enclosure plus a couple of drive units hidden behind a removable grille. Inside the box lurks a simple

electrical circuit known as a crossover, which divides the incoming (full range) signal into the right bits for the drivers to handle. The designer's primary task is to balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against the bass extension (how low it goes), for the given box size.

Best Buy

Recommended

KEY

SIZE WxHxD (cm): Width by height by depth in centimetres.

FLOORSTANDER: As opposed to requiring a dedicated stand.

SENSITIVITY (dB/W): Efficiency: how much volume you get for a given input; the higher the louder.

IMPEDANCE (Ω): Measured in Ohms impedance is a measurement of how hard a loudspeaker is to drive; the lower the number the more powerful the amplifier needs to be.

BASS FROM (Hz): The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce, based on in-room measurements.

FREE SPACE: Speakers should be placed away from walls.

CLOSE TO WALL: It is recommended that these speakers be placed close (between 3 and 12cm) to the rear wall.

FACTSBACK NUMBER: The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback page.

BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TYPE	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	WEIGHT(g)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
▶ Acoustic Energy AE1	764	Exceptional mid focus and coherence, but it is pricey and could be more agile.	F	88	8	●	102
▶ Allison AL100	100	Loud and lively budget wall-mount is big and beefy, but lacks sparkle and refinement	F	90	4	●	94
▶ Allison AL105	170	Pretty enough in appearance; sonically the AL105 doesn't really make the grade at the price.	F	90	4	●	78
▶ Allison AL110	220	Compact bookshelf model is a little dry and mid-forward, but bass is extended and solid.	F	90	4	●	102
▶ Allison AL120	420	Pretty well balanced if slightly mid-forward, but sound quality is disappointing at the price.	F	90	4	●	98
▶ Apogee Caliper Sig	3,998	Remarkable transparency and delicacy; loudness and 'grunt' are a bit lacking.	F	87	4	●	81
▶ ATC SCM20	1,499	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable.	F	83	8	●	86
▶ Audio Innovations Alto	329	Styling makes competition look old-fashioned, but sound is thin and cold	F	88	6	●	1653 152
▶ Audio Note AN-J/B	799	Light damping and local unevenness adds some colouration, but doesn't spoil the very speaker.	F	93	8	●	110
▶ Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	Coherent dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity - but ugly!	F	94	8	●	106
▶ Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning.	F	88	8	●	1344 143
▶ Audiovector 3X	1,500	Superior time coherence, a wide dynamic range and exception bass/mid balance.	F	89	8	●	1345 143
▶ B&W DM602	280	Prefers tall stands and space, but offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension	F	90	8	●	1654 152
▶ B&W Matrix 805 V	995	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low colouration.	F	87	8	●	98
▶ B&W Matrix 801S3	3,795	Lacks transparency and the drama of the best dynamics, but acoustically a tour de force.	F	87	8	●	81
▶ Bose 305	430	Fine dynamic liveliness and a good room match counter strange imaging and treble.	F	-	8	●	78
▶ Bose 401	500	Cheaply built but distinctively styled, the 401 suffers from heavy midband.	F	-	4	●	110
▶ Boston Acoustics HD5	139	Pretty miniature lacks boxiness, but is short of drama and dynamic drive.	F	89	8	●	110
▶ Canon S-30	180	Moulded design has lively coherence, with 'wide imaging stereo'.	F	90	6	●	114
▶ Castle Durham 900	300	Lovely veneer and lots of engineering create a very upfront, coherent and exciting sound.	F	90	8	●	1162 135
▶ Castle York	370	Real wood compact has an engaging transparency: fine balance and timing, but could use some authority.	F	89	8	●	110
▶ Castle Severn	500	Light and bright, but sound is open and communicative. Looks good too.	F	88	8	●	1655 152
▶ Castle Chester	700	A brilliant throwback, using a horn type approach to provide startling dynamics and coherence.	F	90	8	●	98
▶ Castle Howard S2	1,100	Absolutely fills the gap between Chester and Winchester, has a rich, laid back balance.	F	90	8	●	1078 132
▶ Castle Winchester	1,650	Large for its bass extension but engagingly agile, open and airy.	F	90	8	●	90
▶ Celestion 1	99	It sounds a bit scrappy and untidy, but its heart is in the right place.	F	86	8	●	114
▶ Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass: for high sensitivity speakers	F	86	8	●	128
▶ Celestion 3 MKII	139	Smooth and polished by budget speaker standards, if a bit laid back for some tastes.	F	88	8	●	1036 130
▶ Celestion 9	269	Nicely presented and fair material value, with impressively flat mid to bass balance.	F	89	8	●	102

SIZE WxHxD(CM)
 FLOORSTANDER
 SENSITIVITY(DB/W)
 IMPEDANCE(Ω)
 BASS FROM (Hz)
 FACTSBACK NUMBER
 CLOSE TO WALL
 FREE SPACE
 ISSUE NUMBER

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

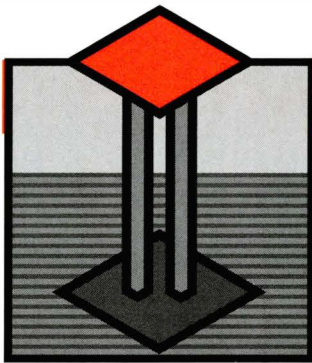
Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY(DB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	CLOSE TO WALL	FREE SPACE	ISSUE NUMBER
Celestion Impact 23	300	Big, cheap and loud. Sounds coloured and old fashioned, lacks subtlety	82,28,29		89	8		●			1656 152
Celestion 15	389	Big box and but short on subtlety and control though long on both enthusiasm	21,100,25	●	89	8		●			114
Celestion SL6Si	429	This stereotype luxury compact can sound a bit dull and congested; favours CD.	20,38,27		84	8		●			94
Celestion SL600si	820	Some will find this speaker irresistible, but it needs careful system and room matching.	20,37,24		82	8		●			68
Celestion 300	1,099	Splendid bass extension and fine panel-like openness, but dynamics and timing are suspect.	21,97,33	●	84	8		●			118
Dali 104B	370	Lively, rich sounding and communicative. Shame about bland styling and dull balance.	22,86,27	●	93	4		●		1657	152
Dawn Audio Chorus FS	698	Compact floorstander with superb coherence but rather forward midband. Would suit smaller rooms best.	26,88,21	●	89	8		●			11
Epos ES11	445	Integral baffle/driver gives remarkable colouration, transparency and speed.	20,38,25	●	87	8		●			94
Epos ES14	675	Substantial stand mount delivers delightful midrange focus and delicacy with good bass control.	23,49,29		87	8		●			98
Epos ES22	1,185	Elegant floorstander with 'safe' balance that can be enlivened with the right cable and energetic material (Sessions)	21,88,25	●	87	6	58	●		1629	151
Epos ES25	1,655	Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance.	24,90,35	●	88	6		●		1346	143
Faraday Siren	445	High mass concrete cabinet is let down by imbalance of ageing driver combination.	27,25,46		90	4		●			94
GLL Maxim	119	Budget miniature offers well balanced strengths and few weaknesses at a bargain price; a bit feeble.	10,26,17		86	6		●			122
GLL Mezzo	169	Splendid midband but a dull treble. Could suit budget systems well.	21,36,25		88	6		●		1610	141
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699	Still a classic miniature, though not to every taste, and none the better for the recent update.	30,19,18		82	10	80	●			66
Harman-Kardon LS0200	149	Laid back to a fault but entertaining nevertheless, and a big box for the price.	21,35,30		87	8		●		1037	130
Heybrook Prima	139	Fine pace and timing, but balance is forward and bass is tight.	20,29,18		87	6		●			110
Heybrook Solo	199	Untidy bass and treble, but handles complex rhythmic material well.	23,36,23		89	6		●			90
Heybrook Trio	373	HBS1 drivers in real wood enclosure give a sweeter and more forgiving sound.	24,47,25		89	8		●			118
Heybrook Heylo	389	Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought.	73,23,19	●	88	8		●		1658	152
Heybrook Heystak	499	Elegant, highly detailed and level-headed sound, but could use injection of life	98,22,28	●	89	8		●			141
Heybrook Quartet	575	Solidly large bookshelf model with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound.	24,41,22		90	8		●			122
Heybrook Sextet	1,129	Coherent and highly analytical, partly due to distinct upper-mid forwardness.	27,90,20	●	88	8		●			102
Infinity Reference 1i	150	Although not to our tastes, this is a competent speaker, and decent material value	34,20,20		89	6		●		1403	148
Infinity Kappa 6.1i	995	Good extension, but bass is fat and slow, and dynamics are unconvincing.	31,95,25	●	89	6		●		1080	132
Jamo Cornet 40.4	140	Pretty presentation and a strong box, but poor driver fixing. Decent if bright sound.	32,20,22		89	8		●		1038	130
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom 'n tizz character sounded crude	90,22,29	●	90	4		●		1659	152
Jamo 477A	500	Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price.	77,19,28	●	88	4		●		1549	138
Jamo 707A	900	Superb styling and cosmetics and decent balance apart from detached bass.	26,38,104	●	90	4		●		1085	132
JBL Control One	115	Sub-miniature with forward midrange and real bass; price justified by build	24,156,14		87	4		●			90
JBL L20J	850	Pricey, heavy and a bit laid back, but this is a fine rock 'n' roller which is dynamic and communicative	42,26,28		86	8		●		1550	138
JBL L90	1,300	A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a tad crude	94,24,35	●	91	6		●			143
JBL Ti 1000	1,600	Performance compromised by over enthusiastic midbass output from port.	20,30,13		89	4		●			118
Jordan Watts JH400	820	Piano finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid.	28,38,21		86	8		●			106
JPW Minim	80	Civilised but undynamically, the Minim is great in small rooms and at limited volume.	19,28,20		87	6	70	●			82
JPW Sonata	120	Fine sound if limited bass and dynamic range, wood veneered at a silly price.	23,32,22		87	8	70	●			71
JPW P1 Vinyl	150	Competent loudspeaker for the price, with a safe sound that won't disappoint.	26,44,25		89	8	65	●			102
JPW P1	170	Longstanding design is remarkable material value (real wood etc) and sounds pretty too.	26,44,25		89	8	65	●		1611	141
JPW AP2	200	Real wood finish, and performance is cleaner but similar to P1 Vinyl overall.	26,44,25		89	8	65	●			106
JPW AP3	230	Good stereo and well balanced overall; character is well suited to vinyl replay.	26,52,29		88	8	55	●			46
JPW Ruby 1	500	Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good, if slightly edgy balance.	32,19,21		87	6	55	●		1572	139
KEF Coda 7	129	Sharp, lively and articulate design at moderate levels, becomes untidy at higher levels	18,30,24		91	6		●		1625	151
KEF Q30	379	Fine focus from Uni-Q driver, but lacks drive and time coherence.	19,73,30		88	6		●			126
KEF Q50	529	Compact twin-driver floorstander with Uni-Q treble and a rather midbass, heavy overall balance.	19,83,30	●	89	6		●		1573	139
KEF 104/2	1,799	A reference point for dynamics, best without KUBE, suited to many rooms.	28,90,41	●	92	4		●			60
Kenwood LS-500G	500	Japanese designed and built luxury compact delivers an invigorating and exciting sound.	22,44,28		87	4		●			118
Keswick Audio Aria II	329	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24		89	8		●		1405	148
Linn Keilidh Passive	649	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive.	20,83,28	●	87	4		●		1552	138
Linn Kaber Passive	1,389	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving.	20,90,28	●	87	4		●			118
Living Voice Air Partner S	27,000	Outstanding transparency and dynamics from remarkably solid and fast mega horn	64,160,90	●	108	8		●			138
Lumley Reference LM4	375	Metal diaphragm and wood veneer; balance uneven upper and has suspect timing.	18,36,22		86	6		●			126
Lumley Reference LM3	895	Despite indifferent bass alignment, LM3 is fast, coherent, solid and informative	27,87,28	●	90	8		●			106
Meridian DSP6000	8,500	Sophisticated digital design, with a wide ranging, refined and detailed sound	133,28,43	●	-	-		●		1226	140
Meridian DSP5000	2,995	State of the active loudspeaker art, a high grade design with unique capabilities	90,21,30	●	-	-		●		1226	140
Mission 731	130	Good looking and cleverly conceived high-tech miniature could have more brio.	31,17,20		89	8		●		1612	141
Mission 732	200	Attractive presentation but a rather dull and thick sounding speaker, and a tad pricey too.	41,20,30		89	8		●		1613	141
Mission 733	300	Stylish and a lot of speaker for the money, sounds pretty good too.	84,20,30	●	89	8		●		1574	139
Mission 751	300	Great sonic potential, but our review samples have been marred by sample variations.	17,32,27		89	6		●			125
Mission 734	430	Fine all rounder, and good value, but dynamically a bit lazy, and tweeter quality limited.	84,21,33	●	90	8		●		1660	152
Mission 752	500	Brilliant style, engineering and sound	20,88,26	●	90	8		●		1553	138
Mission 753	700	Gorgeous presentation and potential for open transparency.	21,88,32	●	90	6		●			114
Monitor Audio MA201	300	Lively and coherent with good power handling, but also a bit shut in and coloured.	22,41,40		90	8		●		1164	135
Monitor Audio MA202	450	Uneven, informative and easy-listening floorstander delivers decent scale.	22,89,27	●	90	8		●		1575	139
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	500	Good looking luxury compact with all-metal diaphragms, lovely midrange, but occasionally edgy	22,35,26		89	8		●		1661	152
Monitor Audio Studio 6	900	Metal diaphragm compact has transparent midband but lacks vigour and drive.	22,35,25		88	8		●			118
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000	A real looker, but sound and content are a bit on the small side for the price.	92,17,20	●	90	8		●		1349	143
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100	Tiny and hence bass light, but fine voicing at a competitive price. (redesignated 'i' but unchanged).	26,17,18		87	8		●		1615	141
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	Fine bass/mid but top is less appealing (redesignated 'i' but unchanged).	19,31,22		88	8		●		1040	130
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150	Prettily finished and inexpensive passive subwoofer is only really useful with sub-miniature speakers	24,58,26		90	8		●			128
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Slightly shut in and coloured quality is compensated by fine bass and impressive communication.	25,43,28		90	8		●		1662	152
Mordaunt-Short MS50i	550	Big value big box with fine engineering content and a big, laid back sound; lacks charisma.	25,87,33	●	90	8		●		1554	138
Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,695	Although a very neutral loudspeaker it can, with the right ancillaries, pack a serious punch (Statements)	86,26,35	●	90	6		●		1367	146

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price (£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	BASS FROM (Hz)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	FACTSBACK CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE	ISSUE NUMBER	
Morel 704/2	1,000	There's real potential here, but it's not fully realised	80,23,21	●	88	8	●	1350	143	
Musical Technology Harrier	400	Very pretty package, good measured performance and even sound. Sensitivity is low, and dynamics limp	80,25,23	●	86	8	●	1663	152	
Naim IBL Passive	905	Outstanding dynamics, speed and detail marred by pronounced upper mid forwardness.	25,80,28	●	86	6	●		94	
Naim SBL Passive	1,821	Lively and punchy - smoother but more upfront than before.	27,89,27	●	88	6	●	1352	143	
Neat Petite	595	Among the most entertaining and enjoyable, despite colourations	20,30,18		87	6	●		102	
Origin Live OL-IB	289	Pretty miniature has a punchy, dynamic midband, but costs a lot for the engineering on offer.	20,30,19		89	8	●	1166	135	
Origin Live OL-2A	470	Fine dynamics and a good looking, well engineered package, though presence bland and treble restrained.	19,80,19		86	8	●	1664	152	
Origin Live OL-1	499	Luxury miniature has very good overall balance, sacrificing sensitivity for bass.	20,30,19		86	8	●		106	
Phillips Legend FB720II	200	<i>Liveliness, coherence and fine information retrieval justifies the odd looking baffle.</i>	21,37,31		90	6	●		122	
Pink Triangle Ventrical	896	If you are after Quad Electrostatic type transparency but can't afford the price... (Sessions)	15,80,32		86	11	●		142	
Pioneer S-4UK	250	Latest version now balances pretty well, with a coherent lightweight bass.	21,37,28		88	6	●	1157	139	
Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	●	89	8	●	1155	138	
Polk LS70	1,200	High sensitivity, but balance has too much midbass boom; mid-top is laid back.	31,94,37	●	90	8	●	1084	132	
Proac Response 2.5	2,700	For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good conventional boxes, this speaker should be first port of call	107,22,25	●	86	8	●	1457	149	
Prof Monitor Co LB1	998	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited.	18,53,25		89	4	●		110	
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,598	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room.	26,79,43		89	6	●		114	
Quad ESL-63	2,860	Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without.	66,93,27	●	86	8	●		60	
Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative.	19,31,19		87	8	●		114	
Rega EL8	298	Kyle drivers in compact floorstander gives more bass but less coherence.	17,72,20	●	86	8	●		122	
Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20	●	87	8	●	1579	139	
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing.	20,82,30	●	89	6	●	1083	132	
Revolver Colt	139	A good all-rounder, if a little bland, and excellent value for money	30,19,22		88	6	●	1407	148	
Rogers LS1	149	High grade miniature	20,20,30		87	6	●	1408	143	
Rogers AB1	499	Designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures	57,19,16	●	82	8	●	1354	143	
Rogers Studio 3	499	Pricy LS3/5A derived miniature, excitingly coherent if lightweight, can't go loud.	19,30,16		85	8	●		118	
Rogers LS3/5A	699	Clever AB1 stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot.	19,31,17	●	82	12	●	1354	143	
Rogers Studio 5	699	Luxury finish bookshelf size model has genuine monitoring capabilities.	25,25,48		89	8	●	1556	138	
Rogers Studio 7	899	Latest variation on classic BBC-monitor theme has beautifully voiced, laid back sound.	30,63,30		90	8	●		122	
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance.	28,76,46	●	88	8	●	1082	132	
Royd Minstrel	259	<i>Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing, a bit bright.</i>	69,18,12		86	8	●	1167	135	
Royd Merlin	298	Invigorating and exciting design with plenty of upfront detail, but balance lacks warmth and a tad overpriced	31,20,18		86	8	●	1409	148	
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Extremely musical and communicative speaker that fun to listen to. Aesthetics could use improving though	31,20,18		86	8	●		139	
Royd Abbot	665	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance.	81,20,30	●	90	8	●		118	
Ruark Templar	499	Striking baffle gives decent bass/mid but dull treble; could tame over-bright system.	19,70,27		87	8	●		122	
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence.	23,84,32	●	88	8	●		118	
Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to remove itself from the picture	25,88,34	●	88	6	●	1227	140	
SD Acoustics SD3R	399	New SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature, good bass and low sensitivity.	20,38,30		87	8	●		106	
SD Acoustics SD5	1,235	Bass suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth. Has ribbon tweeter.	20,110,30	●	88	8	●	1081	132	
Shahinian Arc	1,675	Occasionally wonderful small floorstanding omni; bright but coherent and revealing.	35,69,25		88	6	●		110	
Spendor S20	760	Maintains Spendor's tradition for peerless mid-to-treble coherence and perspectives..	22,38,26		84	8	●		102	
System Audio 905	250	Fine coherence and remarkable dynamic freedom some something so small, though there's little real weight	15,27,21		89	8	60	●	1410	148
Tannoy 631	149	<i>Balanced, open, unboxy and quite lively, but lacks muscle.</i>	19,34,15		87	6	●	1616	141	
Tannoy 632	189	<i>Clever cabinet avoids boxiness and promotes focus imaging and bass</i>	51,43,27		88	8	●	1168	135	
Tannoy 633/II	300	Impressive bass and balance from very compact floorstander. Upper midband could be cleaner.	29,75,28	●	89	8	●	1665	152	
Tannoy 638	599	Big value vinyl big box has good balance and lots of loudness, but needs a good amp.	33,96,32	●	91	6	●	1558	138	
Tannoy D500	1,470	Plenty of muscle and stereo, but short of poise and delicacy. Hard work for amps.	31,93,34	●	91	6	●	1355	143	
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000	These awesome horn loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive.	-	●	99	8	●		C93	
TDL Near Field Monitor	100	Despite low price, this is an unimpressive performer, poor low frequency resolution and analysis being main flaws	30,18,17		87	8	●	1043	130	
TDL RTL2	300	Spacious, weighty and enveloping sound if you can accept the laid back balance	20,73,22		87	8	●	1412	148	
TDL RTL3	400	Bargain price floorstander has rich, heavy and bright sound with a good scale.	20,90,37	●	90	8	●		126	
TDL Studio 0.5	499	Tiny floorstanding transmission line lacks coherence or the balance of Studio 1.	20,62,30		85	8	●		94	
TDL Studio 1	699	Genuinely extended bass from a compact enclosure, very detailed but a shade clinical.	23,77,33		86	8	●		78	
TDL Studio 1m	899	Transmission line helps bring the best from metal cone driver.	23,77,34		86	8	●		118	
Technics SB-M20	200	Well balanced with natural perspectives and fine midband coherence, but bass is a bit boxy and uneven	20,32,23		70	8	●	1413	148	
Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass heavy balance and low sensitivity.	25,78,37	●	100	8	●	1666	152	
Thiel SCS	1,379	Class leading coherence and communication, but can sound shut-in and dark	92,23,41	●	87	4	●		114	
Totem Model One	995	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size.	17,31,23		87	4	●		122	
Triangle Octant Tx	3,950	Errs on side of extremism. High sensitivity and beguiling midband make a persuasive case for valve partnership	42,150,19	●	94	4	●	1539	137	
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness.	41,101,27	●	88	7	●		86	
Visonik David 6001	163	Sharp styling, but the complex grillwork worsens a sound which starts off with too much top and not enough bottom.	13,20,12		87	8	●		74	
Wharfedale Valdus 400	199	Goes very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is very thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	80,25,26	●	91	8	●	1414	148	
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun.	14,22,12		88	8	●		110	

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Stands & Supports



Hi-fi furniture is more important than you might imagine; the effect it can have on the sound of your system is far from subtle. Hi-fi furniture can be split up into two categories — equipment supports and loudspeaker stands.

■ It is not entirely clear what makes a great equipment support, but some are definitely more equal than others. There's a variety of approaches and materials used include particle board, hardwood, glass and all manner of steel tube and section. The majority are built

for sound quality first, aesthetics second, but there are attractive examples.

■ Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models. Use dealer or manufacturer recommendations to narrow down the choice, but as a rule you want the tweeter at ear height.

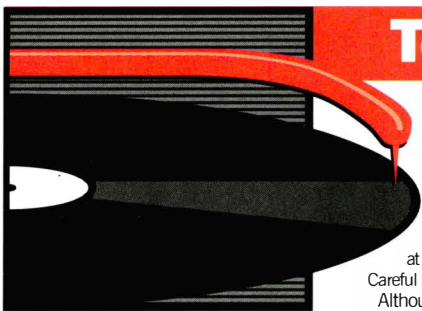
B Best buy **R** Recommended

KEY	
HEIGHT (CM): Height of stand or equipment shelf.	lead to increase mass which affects sound.
TOP PLATE SIZE (CM): Dimensions of top plate on speaker stand or equipment support.	WELDED: The better stands and supports are welded rather than bolted together.
FILLABLE: Some speaker stands can be filled with sand and/or	NUMBER OF SHELVES: The amount of tiers on an equipment
	rack or support.
	SHELF TYPE: Material that shelves are made of on an equipment rack. Wood generally means MDF.
	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax
	copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

STANDS & SUPPORTS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	HEIGHT(CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE(CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Equipment Supports										
R Audiophile Furniture Base	480	Easy to set up, well ordered sound	40					4 Wood	151	
Fi-Rax R4	250	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass						5 Glass	151	
B Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	King of its type, angle iron, chipboard and glass combined to make a significant difference to sound quality						1 Glass	147	
B Quadraspire Q4	200	Easy to live with, and tonally neutral						4 MDF	151	
R Sound Organisation Z038	130	Too lively and lacking order - but cheap	50	40,84				5 Wood	151	
R SoundStyle Select 6105	280	Respectable sonics, structurally solid and smart						5 Glass	151	
Stands Unique Sound Tower	249	Adds colouration, and lacks weight. Optional Isolation Platform	81	72,42				5 Glass	151	
R Target B5	175	Free of colourations, fine grip and good value						5 Wood	151	
B Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand	600	Infinitely upgradable. Persuasive and thrilling						5 Glass	151	
Speaker Stands										
Alphason Titan S50	100	Excels in the midband and allows voices to come across in a detailed and expressive fashion								146
B Atacama SE24	70	Stand out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of the performance	61	19,5,17						146
Ixos Deadrock 903	50	Smooth and tonally even but short on definition. Deep bass is soft which doesn't help timing	60							146
B Gale Reference 600	60	Smooth sounding with impressive bass well suited to less civilised speakers								146
B Kudos S50	100	Robust, clean and tidy in appearance and sound, it has the substance, slam and control of a properly balanced design	46/60							146
R Mana Soundframes	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks these make music effortless and natural, can be stacked for greater effect	5							146
B Partington Discovery	80	The depth and substance of the presentation truly added to the convincing nature of the system's portrayal								146

Tonearms



Specialist turntables are what high fidelity sound is all about. CD players may offer silent backgrounds and flat frequency responses, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative timing that serious turntable users take for granted. Turntables at the cheaper end of the market tend to be supplied with a matching tonearm, and often include a 'starter' cartridge. Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Careful partnering and set-up is essential for these components. Although the turntable is the most important part of a record

player, the tonearm is the second most important and its quality of construction and design has a significant bearing on sound quality. There are three basic types of arms listed in the key and each has its strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular for reasons both practical and economical.

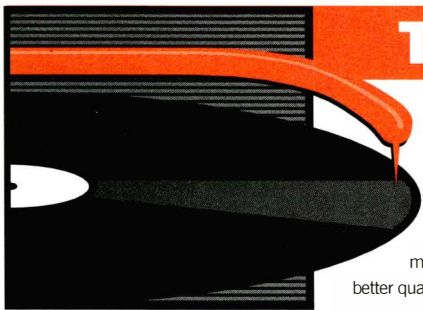
B Best buy **R** Recommended

KEY	
EFFECTIVE MASS: This relates to cartridge compliance and generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.	track the disc in a linear fashion.
PARALLEL TRACKING: An arm which allows the cartridge to	PIVOTED: Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.
	UNI-PIVOT: Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in
	two planes.
	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm): Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.
	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT: Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback.
	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

TONEARMS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	EFFECTIVE MASS	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	UNI-PIVOT	PIVOTED	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
R Alphason HR100S	490	S-shaped arm sounds smooth, but nevertheless reproduces transients with fine attack.	Medium						229	86
R Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000	Large, solid and well made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness.	High							79
R Linn Ekos	1,297	Superb, state of the art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths.	Medium						229	6
B Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural.	Low						237	60
B Rega RB300	139	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high end turntables.	Low						237	60
R Roksan Tabriz Basic	275	Targetted at the Xenex, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases - a touch bright though.	Low						240	91
R SME Series 300-309	657	Beautifully made and finished: fully adjustable and a highly neutral performer.	Low						238	79
R SME Series IV	936	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low colouration.	Low						233	60
R SME Series V	1,391	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price.	Low						233	60

Turntables



Specialist turntables are what high fidelity sound is all about. CD players may offer silent backdrops and flat frequency responses, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative timing that serious turntable users take for granted. Turntables at the cheaper end of the market tend to be supplied with a matching tonearm, and often include a 'starter' cartridge. Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units

and tonearms. Careful partnering and set-up is essential for these components, but many so-called 'sympathetic' combinations exist.

Because turntables are mechanical devices that are designed to retrieve modulations as small as a micron, engineering quality is of paramount importance. It is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do and require high quality support systems.

B Best buy **R** Recommended

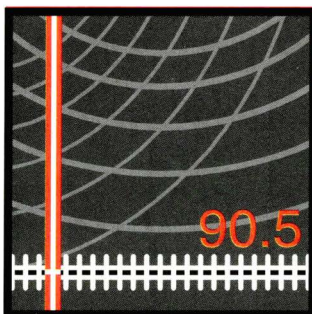
KEY	
MANUAL: You do it all: put the needle on the record and you take it off.	SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS: Sprung suspension to minimise structural interference.
AUTO: The record player does it all.	EXTERNAL PSU: Outboard power supply; generally indicative of high quality.
SEMI-AUTO: The work is shared: you put it on, it takes it off.	SUPPLIED WITH ARM: Many turntables require a separate arm to be fitted.
SPEEDS: In RPM to correspond with software.	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE: Most turntables do not come supplied with a needle.
	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

TURNTABLES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS	EXTERNAL ELECTRONIC PSU	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE	ARM	ISSUE NUMBER	BACK ISSUE
R Alphason Sonata	835	Good sound in all areas - bass, clarity and neutrality all in top class (tested with HR100S MCS).	●			33	●	●	●		79	
R Clearaudio Reference	2,500	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail with a fizzy character but is quite bold	●			33/45					1328	144
R DNM Rota 2	4,800	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on own table	●			33/45					1328	144
R Dual CS503-2	170	Coarse and woolly sound - not inoffensive, but bettered by the CS-505-3.				33/45	●	●	●			91
R Dual 505-4 UK	200	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph.				33/45	●	●	●			103
R Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200	(Tested with Stugi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended.	●			33/45		●	●			91
R Linn Basik	349	Strong midband analysis and imagery; clean if sharp treble is matched to a good if occasionally wooden bass.	●			33/45		●	●			103
R Linn LP12 Basik	745	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●			33		●	●			103
R Linn LP12 Lingo	1,345	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains.	●			33/45		●	●			91
R Michell Gyrodek	765	Sweet and natural sounding player, well matched with the Rega RB300	●			33/45		●	●			55
R Pink Triangle Export	948	The PT100 with built-in PS. Transparent and neutral, but review sample had high motor noise.	●			33/45		●	●			91
R Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,797	Possibly the most detailed, clear and neutral sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny.	●			33/45		●	●			91
R Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	699	Don't think of this as a mid price deck with a good arm, but as a scaled down Oracle Delphi - it's that good	●			33/45		●	●			138
R Rega Planar 2	198	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●			33/45		●	●			48
R Rega Planar 3	260	The '3 (with RB300 arm) sounds musical in a balanced and coherent manner, needs decent isolation	●			33/45		●	●			48
R Rivelin Eclipse	1,100	Tested with SME 309. Tends to simply things and add a slightly ragged edge to the proceedings	●			33/45					1328	144
R Roksan Radius/Tabriz zi	855	Musically it offers exceptional performance with a minimum of fuss.	●			33/45		●	●			103
R SME Model 20A	4,631	Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval.	●			33/45/78	●	●	●			118
R Systemdek IIX/900	230	A high performance budget turntable that is particularly strong at fine detail resolution and imagery.	●			33/45		●	●			103
R Systemdek I/920/Moth	235	The motor is derivative of the Rega Planar 2 with a Moth arm. Uptempo, even bright at times but never lacks enthusiasm.	●			33/45		●	●			115
R Systemdek IIXE/900AP	388	The acrylic platter IIXE is one of the most capable budget decks on the market: good resolution, dynamics and timing.	●			33/45		●	●			103
R Thorens TD166 VI/UK/RB	300	Refined and solid sound with well focussed imagery; suitable for use with good MM and budget MC cartridges.	●			33/45		●	●			103
R Thorens TD2001	700	Similar to TD320 but much dearer - why? Sound is comfortable but not very detailed.	●			33/45		●	●			91
R Thorens TD3001/UK	770	Excellent middle ranking esoterica, with strong all-round abilities rather than excellence in particular areas.	●			33/45		●	●			103
R Voyd 0.5	3,940	Cross between standard and Reference Voyds. Superb finish, colourful and dynamic.	●			33/45		●	●		1328	144
R Voyd Reference	6,500	Voyd's flagship, equipped with three substantial motors, is a strong contender for world's best.	●			33/45		●	●			91
R Well Tempered Record Player	1,800	Intriguing and challenging. Musically it is not ideal, but has a limpid quality and a lack of artificiality that sets standards.	●			33/45		●	●		1180	136

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Tuners



The radio medium operates at a lower profile than TV, but in areas outside pop music the BBC service is the envy of the world. Live concerts rival all other sources from a hi-fi perspective.

■ Something of a hi-fi afterthought, the task they discharge is far from simple, since it requires the skills of RF (reception) and audio (signal processing) engineering. The importance of the former will depend on reception conditions, but a high-quality aerial system is well worth having.

■ Tuners come in two basic types. Analogue models tune gradually and can have analogue or digital displays; they are often preferred for sound quality. Digital tuners offer convenient automatic tune facilities and pre-set memories.



Best buy



Recommended

KEY








WAVEBANDS: Only the FM (VHF) bands give stereo hi-fi sound, though AM (MW & LW) are useful for certain transmissions in the UK.
PRESETS: Amount of station frequencies that can be stored.
RDS: (radio data system) is a feature originally designed for in-

car applications. Basically, RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, but they offer a variety of other features as well.
REMOTE CONTROL: Couch potato friendly.
SIGNAL STRENGTH METER: Indicates strength of signal from

aerial, useful for aligning aeriels.
ROTARY TUNING KNOB: The ergonomically attractive approach to dial surfing.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page

to find the Factsback information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

Tuners

Product	Price(£)	Comments	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	REMOTE CONTROL	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	220	Selectivity modest and there is some susceptibility to front end overload, though basic sound quality is pretty good	FM,M,L	24						142
Arcam Delta 280	399	Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. remote £60 extra	FM	20			●			120
 Audiolab 8000T	750	Unusually combination of fine sound quality and RF performance (inc AM), and superb ergonomics	FM,M,L	39			●	●		142
 Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound.	FM,M,L	20						93
 Harman-Kardon TU9400	299	This striking tuner exceeded our expectations. On stereo FM, it's HK's best yet	FM,M	24						142
JVC FX362BX	130	Disappointing all-round performance - watch out for aerial overload in strong signal areas. Tuning knob unspecial	FM,M,L	40						1017 129
Kenwood KT-3050L	170	Excellent RF performance and plenty of features including RDS, but ordinary sound.	FM,M,L	39	●					1018 120
 Linn Kremlin	1,995	Controversially good sound at a very high price. The reviewer's saving up but you should check it out for yourself.	FM	80			●	●		142
 Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation.	FM							72
 Meridian 604	1,350	Unique digital converter makes most sense in Meridian system context: smooth, sweet sound with fine front end.	FM	30						120
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	Open, generous soundstaging gives the music plenty of foundation, if a touch shut in at the top	FM	29			●	●	●	142
 Naim NAT01	1,599	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one.	FM							142
Onkyo T-430RDS	190	Pleasingly neutral, but rather undynamic and congested	FM/MW	30	●					142
Quad FM66	554	Very pretty and compact but technically unadventurous. Sound is smooth, but only makes sense in Quad system context.	FM	19			●			142
Rotel RT-950BX	220	Budget audiophile device delivers a pacey, exciting experience, though RF performance is uninspiring	FM,M,L	20						142
Sherwood TX3010C	120	Lots of features and fine FM discrimination for price. Sound is communicative but inconsistently tacky.	FM,M	30						120
Technics ST-GT350L	150	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM,M,L	30			●	●		142

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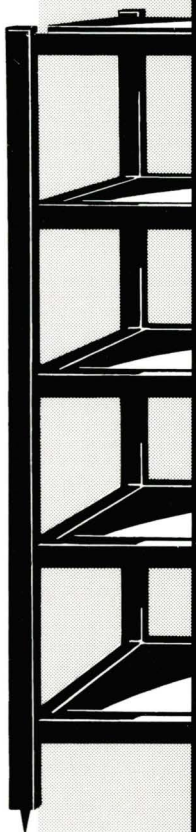
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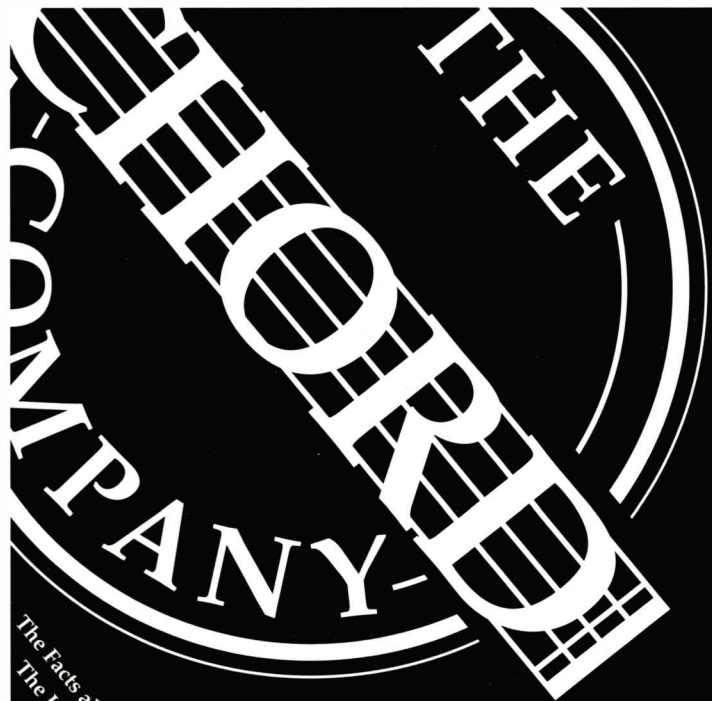
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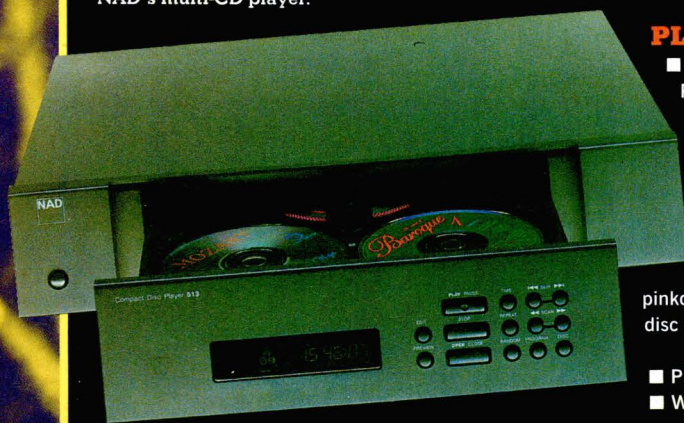
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Miss it at your peril.

Ultra Jazz can be so serious it's funny, but as David Vivian explains, it's also the ultimate test of a good hi-fi system.

Vivian Scene

Taking yourself too seriously isn't always a good idea. It can leave you at the mercy of sharp-tongued jokers ready to deflate your pomposity at the slightest sign of weakness. To a professional comedian, then, jazz must look like an over-inflated condom popping out of a cabinet minister's lapel pocket. If you saw any of the priceless 'Jazz Club' sketches from the recent BBC series *The Fast Show*, it's doubtful whether you'll be able to look a Chick Corea CD in the face again. If, indeed, you ever could. A handful of sketches were used sparingly throughout the series, but they did speak the truth about this part of the music industry.

If you missed them, allow me to explain. Jazz Club spoofed the sort of arty late-night TV slot that Britain's jazz revival always threatened but, thankfully, never delivered. The principal character was a slow-talking, polo-necked, medalion-wearing, basin-cut host with a penchant for stretching superlatives, who had found a true home for the hushed reverence Bob Harris wasted on rock'n'roll in *The Old Grey Whistle Test* during the '70s.

What made Uncle Bob's style a cult was its inappropriate tone. The very basis of rock is accessibility — it simply didn't warrant the bunny-toothed one's pseudo-sophisticated whisperings. And what made the *Fast Show's* piss-take so inspired was its aptness to the subject: the transparent pretension; the knowing, winking conceit that jazz — and especially modern jazz — is an elite society open only to the truly enlightened.

Sure, it sounds like four guys playing the first thing that comes into their heads at breakneck speed but, hey, we're the jazz cognoscenti; we understand. Grrreat...

The ersatz fusion band on the first show, the James Nance Quartet, featured James Nance on Hammond (naturally), Theydon Bois on guitar (Paul Whitehouse remarkably rolling Larry Coryell, Lee Ritenour, Al di Meola and Steve Khan into one twitching, bespectacled fretmeister), Sid Bellamy

on drums and *Clam* on bass. They played "the haunting Buddy Freak melody", *Desolate Shore*.

"But," explained the by-now-smarmily-smug presenter, "in an inventive new arrangement where although it follows the original 32-bar A-A-B-A structure, instead of providing an harmonic departure from the A section, the bridge resolves the rising chromatic pattern. Wuunderrfull..."

Spot on. As was the playing: more chops than Sainsbury's.

For my part, I've always felt guilty about liking jazz. All my fears and doubts were laid bare on screen. The cultural snobbery and pretension, the affectation and hubris, the knee-deep bullshit. And it was hilarious. My wife — who has never forgiven me for

penses the following pearl of elucidation: "It comes deceptively after a soft, padding double-bass statement of the theme *So What*. As it ends, Miles Davis's trumpet solo begins, with only two notes, the second an octave below the first. The first haunting sound hangs on its own in an otherwise empty space for a second that seems to go on forever. As it dips, the drummer suddenly hits his cymbal with a single reverberating blow that erupts like a flare over a twilit scene, and the jangling rivets sizzle on as Davis's horn eases nonchalantly into swing. It sounds both inevitable and astonishing at every new hearing. It is the sound of jazz."

Nnnnniiiiice...

What astonishes me is how many supposed jazz lovers don't own a decent hi-fi.

Jazz (especially the modern stuff) and good hi-fi were made for each other. This has little to do with cymbals erupting like flares over twilit scenes. I fear it's a bit more basic than that.

Many of the best recordings you can buy are jazz recordings. Check out the ECM and GRP labels for conspicuous effort here. Jazz virtuosity is top value — you get more npm (notes per minute) than with any other form. The hardest rhythms for any sound system to portray are jazz rhythms. (And

they're the most satisfying when handled correctly.) Jazz drum solos are faster, crisper, longer. The best-sounding acoustic instrument in the world is the tenor saxophone. The next best is the double bass, closely followed by the grand piano — all notoriously difficult to reproduce convincingly. But when they are...

I listened to a densely layered, hugely busy Branford Marsalis track for years, and it always made me feel slightly tense and uneasy. When I bought a better system, what had previously seemed chaotic relaxed into focus and made sense. I became more excited about both jazz and hi-fi at a single stroke.

Jazz has more high and low, more fast and slow, more going on in the middle. Funny, maybe — but not as funny as the people who take it oh-so-seriously. ▲



If you don't play jazz on decent hi-fi, the original 32-bar A-A-B-A structure sounds like this...

taking her to a Chick Corea concert at The Royal Festival Hall (when Chick reached inside the belly of his piano and started plucking the strings, her smouldering irritation turn to amused disbelief) — was rolling around on the floor.

And it's good to laugh. Though *The Fast Show* might not have won jazz any new fans by taking a well-aimed poke at the rampant pseudism that infects it, at least I feel a whole lot better.

Truth is, some jazz pundits are much further up their own bottoms than even hinted at in *Jazz Club*. Writing about the late Miles Davis in the introduction to his otherwise solid tomb, *Jazz*, critic John Fordham dis-

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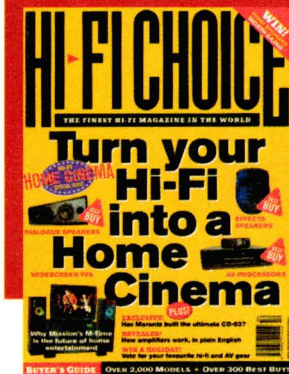
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