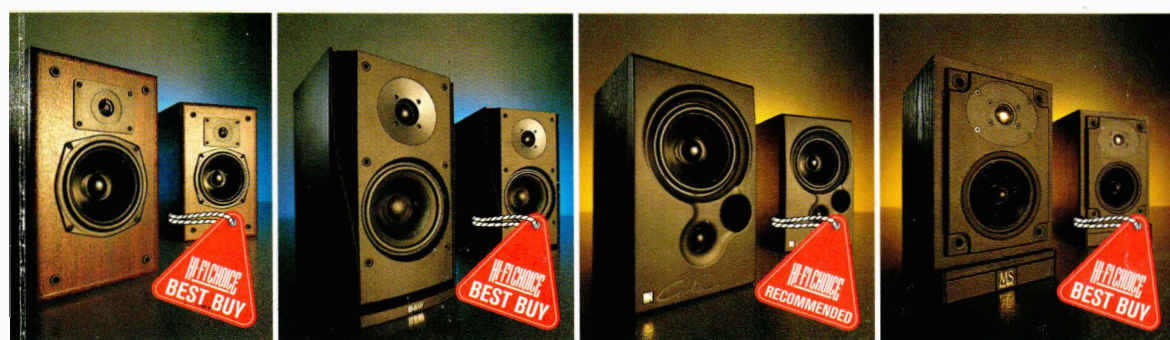


# HI-FI CHOICE

THE FINEST HI-FI MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

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We reveal the best from £55 to £320

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Has Wilson benesch made the ultimate record player?



**CD Multiplayers**

Why the latest CD changers bowled us over

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HI-FI MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR





# Quintet



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**LS33 MAIN LOUDSPEAKERS and C33 CENTRE CHANNEL** - "The front three speakers work their magic far into the room. It's a very integrated, involving combination" *WHAT HI-FI* May 1996.

**LS1 REAR SURROUND LOUDSPEAKERS** - "Aimed at the real enthusiast, the LS1 is right on target" *GRAMOPHONE* March 1996.

"Listen to it at a dealers and prepare to be very impressed" *HOME CINEMA CHOICE*, May 1996.

**Rogers Quintet - "Musical Home Theatre"**

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# Editor's Notebook

Stan Vincent straps himself into the cockpit for another white-knuckle ride of hi-fi spills and thrills.



PHOTO BY SEAN BLOODWORTH

**W**ey-hey! We've been voted Hi-Fi Magazine of the Year, at the recent Consumer Electronics Trade Interface conference in Harrogate. And as if that wasn't enough, our sister title *Home Entertainment* scooped the 'Best Home Cinema' gong, too. We're rehonoured. Got any more champagne, Mr Dennis?

## What's in a month?

Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed that this is a July/August issue, the first of its kind in *Hi-Fi Choice* history. Why have we taken this radical step? Well, by spreading out over the summer a little, we can publish an extra issue just before Christmas, which will be dedicated to all the Best Buy and Recommended components we have tested over the year.

## New thoughts about speakers

I hope you enjoy our big test of speakers this month, which starts on page 56. We decided to gather all of the UK's best selling models, and throw in the best newcomers at the budget end of the market, to see how they compare. And what a test it was! Some were demoted, some got promoted, and we came up with some fascinating observations about how different families of speakers are suited to very different applications. Read Paul Messenger's column (page 19) for the full story.

This month also sees the introduction of Paul Miller's computer-controlled lab test for speakers, which is explained in his column on page 23. Now that Paul can store and compare performance data from CD players, amps and speakers, we'll be working to start 'modelling' hypothetical systems within his computer. The aim is to predict which hi-fi com-

ponents will work best with one another, and which should never be combined, in order to make hi-fi purchasing and upgrading more straightforward and enjoyable.

## Music is good for you shocker

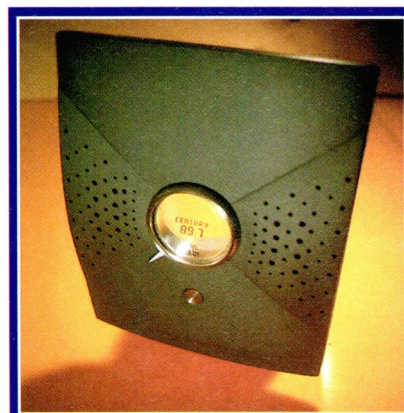
It's official! Buy a good hi-fi and your kids will be smarter. Well, probably... On Sunday evenings during May, Channel 4 screened a fascinating series called *Music and the Mind*, investigating many aspects of how humans understand and appreciate music. I was particularly interested to learn that exposing your kid to music from an early age has a positive effect on their educational development. Apparently, the effect is enhanced if you teach them to play an instrument as well, but I am sure there are equal if not greater benefits to be had from upgrading your hi-fi system at the same time. Just as long as you can still play Rage Against The Machine...

## In memory of Michael Gerzon

I was very sorry to read that Ambisonics pioneer Michael Gerzon died in April. However, though he was far from being a household name, I was pleased to see that *The Guardian* had the foresight to commission a fitting obituary from Barry Fox, which summarised Gerzon's prematurely-ended tenure as an audio visionary. (At the time of his death he was developing lossless digital coding with the Acoustic Renaissance for Audio.) There could be no finer epitaph than that from Gerzon's former partner, Peter Craven: "What Michael has done, the world will want in 30 years' time."

## Oops!

I must apologise for a glaring error on page 64 of last month's issue. This was where



Here's the 'Responsible Radio', by Scott Tomlinson, a student at the University of Northumbria. Manufactured from recycled aluminium and MDF, the radio has won the Sony Attachment Award in the RSA's 1996 Student Design Awards. Scott won a prize of £4,250, and the chance to work at the Sony Design Centre in Tokyo.

Akai's fine TX700 system won Best Complete Hi-Fi System Below £1,000 in the British Hi-Fi Awards. Alas, the picture printed was that of JVC's *Adagio C330* system, a runner-up in this category. A special big sorry to Akai, and indeed to anyone left scratching their heads over what otherwise would be an inexplicable 'alien-abduction-of-correct-photo'-style conundrum.

## Bringing people together

Last month, Jane Smith of Inverness wrote to us relating her desire to own an Akai Reference Series CD player. The ink was barely dry on the paper before the post-bag coughed up a letter from Howard Jones of Glossop, who offers one of these Akais "in immaculate condition, lovingly cared for in its wooden-cheeked 16-kiloglory." To keep the community spirit flowing, we'll be putting Jane and Howard in touch with each other. And next month, we'll be holding a charity whist drive in Paul Messenger's garden shed...

*That's all from me. May your imagery be precise, and your tonal balance sweet, all summer long!*

*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 feature just for you. Entitled 'You Can Buy A Hi-Fi System', and starting on page 94, 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...

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

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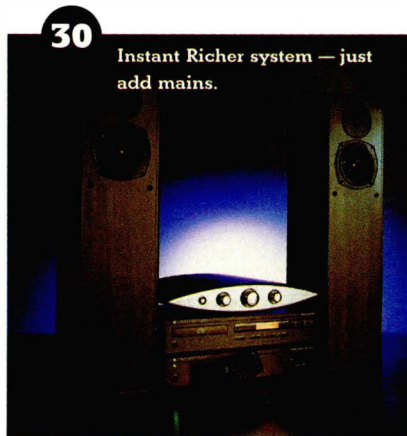
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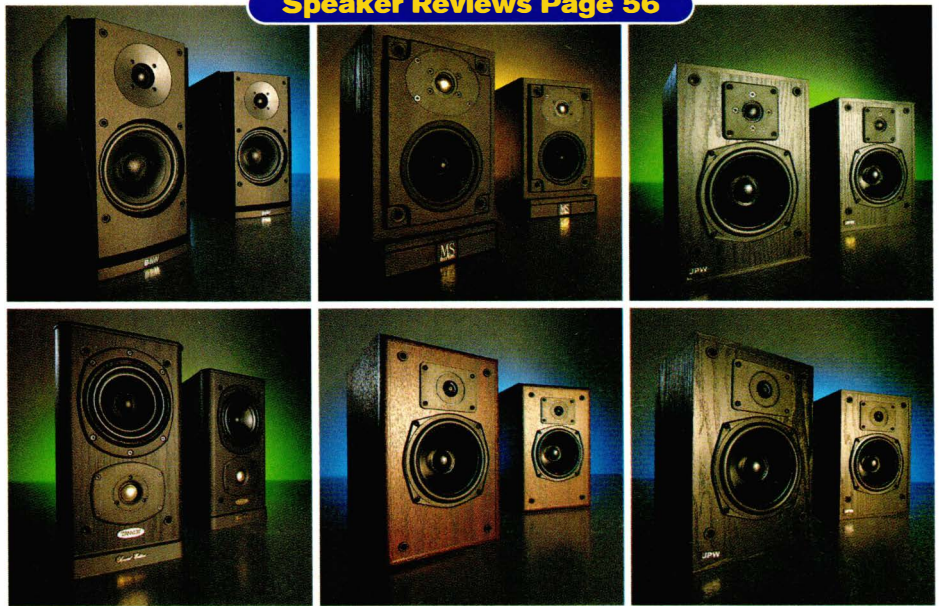
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**WIN! WIN! WIN!**

**Over £2,800 worth of superb JVC hi-fi and home cinema goodies must be won!**







Are you an

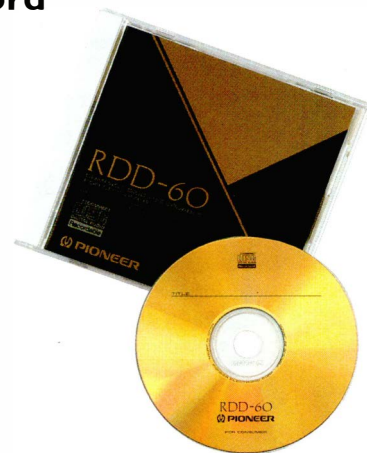
# INDIVIDUAL?



Yes, it's finally happened. Pioneer have lived up to their name yet again by introducing the very first consumer **CD Recorder**. The PDR-05 employs our acclaimed 'CD turntable' transport mechanism and advanced digital filter technology. Thanks to the 1-bit A-to-D Converter and built-in sampling rate convertor you can make the finest pure audio CD recordings from any analogue or digital music source.



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# Update

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

## Sony swoop for summer

As summer sets to sizzling there's a slew of shiny new Sony separates sliding into the shops. Three new tuners join the range. The £99.99 *STS-E200* is the least expensive and provides coverage of the FM, MW and LW bands with thirty presets. The *STS-E300* comes with RDS for £119.99, while the *STS-E700* offers full RDS EON operation. This £179.99 model has a front end based on the ES model.

Six new CD players, all with revised styling, join the range. The line-up starts with the *CDP-XE300* at £119.99, followed by the *CDP-XE300* at £139.99. The £159.99 *CDP-XE500* comes with additional features including a digital output for £159.99. The *CDP-XE700E*, which uses Sony's latest H-Pulse converter and fixed pick-up mechanism, arrives at £199.99, with what's described as the "key model in the UK development project", the £299.99 *CDP-XE900E* (pictured right) occupying the top slot. This uses Sony's Full Feed Forward digital filter and — yes, you guessed it — a complementary mode DAC.

There's a new UK amplifier for 1996, the *TAF-448E*. Selling for £249.99, it's a 50 Watt integrated with six inputs. There are also four new

Dolby S cassette decks: the two-head *TCK-E400S* at £179.99, the three-head *TCK-E500S* at £229.99, the three-head, three-motor *TCK-E600S* at £299.99, and the *TCW-E805S* twin transport model at £249.99. A new MiniDisc recorder also joins the team, the *MDS-503*, which sells for £549.99.

The ES range sees two additions: the highly-specced £549.99 *TCK-A6ES*, three-head, three-motor cassette deck, and the £249.99 *STS-A3ES* RDS EON tuner.

On the home theatre front, Sony's offering the *DSP-E300*, an add-on Dolby Pro-Logic processor for £229.99, and a Pro Logic kit consisting of a 25W *TA-VE100* AV amplifier, five loudspeakers and an active subwoofer for £379.99. ☎ (01932) 816000

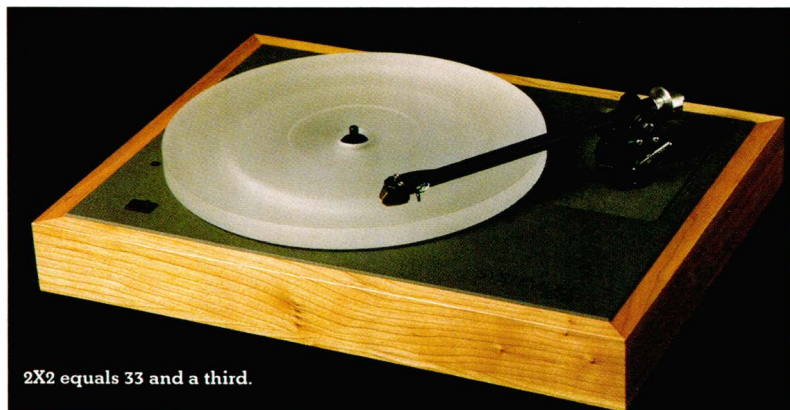


## The turntables came in two by two...

The much loved Systemdek *IIX* turntable has gone, but before shuffling off its mortal coil it sired a successor. The *2X2* (two-X-two) is described as being "based on all the best bits of the *IIX*" and offers improved looks and performance.

Selling for £499 without a tonearm, the *2X2* uses an acrylic platter with a reduced diameter (6mm) spindle, that sits in a revised bearing. The motor is supported on a sprung subchassis from where it belt-drives a smaller drive hub through a smaller pulley. This reduction in size, says Systemdek, provides enhanced speed stability.

The *2X2*'s plinth is styled to match Systemdek's speaker range. The choice of standard finishes includes Cherry, Walnut, black Ash and light Ash, with Rosewood available to special order. ☎ (01294) 271251



2X2 equals 33 and a third.

## The surround forest

Sherwood has launched two new home theatre receivers to join the existing £149.95 *RV4050R* model. The *RV5050R* sells for £299.95 and delivers 50 Watts to the front and centre channels, and 25 Watts to each of the surround speakers. The £399.95 *RV7050R* provides 100W to the front channels, 65W to the centre and 30W per channel to the rear

Both new models use the Analog Devices Pro Logic chipset and feature pre-amplifier outputs for all channels. The *RV5050R* has five audio and three video inputs along with two surround sound modes, while the *RV7050R* provides six audio and four video inputs with seven surround sound modes. ☎ (0500) 101112

## In brief

October 1996 is the month in which Thomson plans to introduce DVD players into the UK under the Thomson and Ferguson brand names.

Nakamichi has withdrawn from the European hi-fi market, though production continues for the US and Japan. There will be no more new cassette decks or CD players arriving on these shores, but spares will remain available for many years and B&W UK Ltd will continue to service *Dragons*, *DR-2s* and key models that have been produced over the years. ☎ (01903) 750750

Expanding Bush's retro radio revival range, the *R702* wireless comes in a varnished wooden case with a sunrise motif on its fascia. It offers access to FM, MW, and LW bands through an illuminated rotary tuning dial. It sells for £49.99. ☎ (01923) 859777

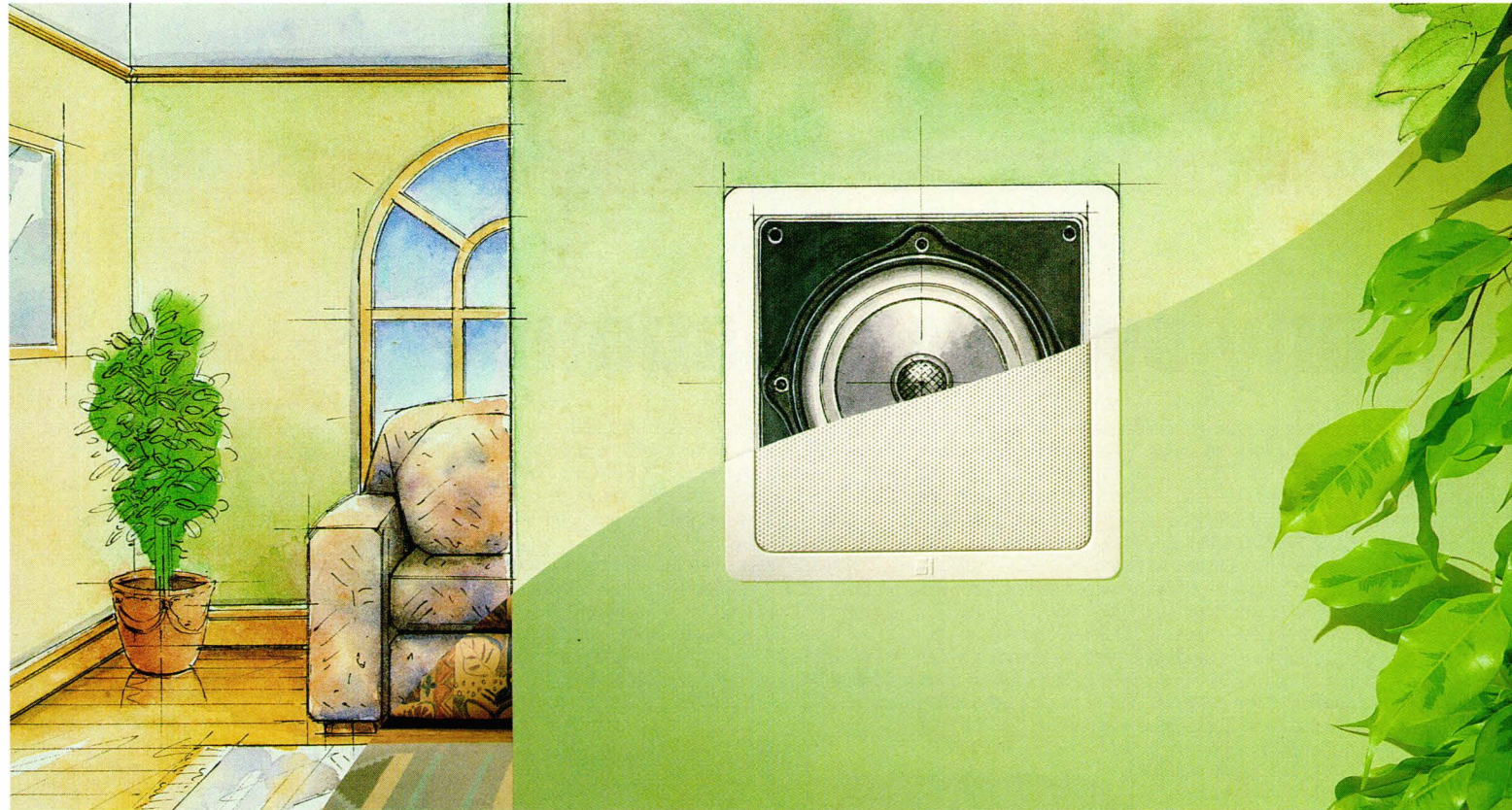
Accessory specialist Puresonic has developed a pair of SCART to phono converters to enable home theatre fans to use high quality interconnects in their systems. The *213IN* converts from phono to SCART-in, while the *231OUT* converts from SCART-out to phono. Each carries left and right audio signals plus video, and costs £6.95. ☎ (0181) 771 8388

Billed as the baby brother to the KEF *30B*, the *20B* is a budget active subwoofer for audiophile or home cinema use. Selling for £349, it uses a 70W amplifier and a 250mm paper driver to deliver 107dB maximum output. ☎ (01622) 672261

Revolver UK Ltd., a new company formed to handle all Revolver activities in the UK and the rest ►►



# How KEF's interior design can help yours.

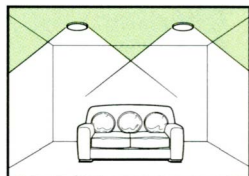


## KEF® Ci Series

KEF's new Ci Series speakers are stylish and space-saving - but that's not all.

They also have KEF's patented Uni-Q® technology, to give you astonishingly accurate tonal balance throughout the room.

Most loudspeakers, even ones with pivoting tweeters, only sound their best in one small area of the room. That's because they have a separately mounted woofer and tweeter. But with KEF Uni-Q® loudspeakers the tweeter is mounted at the exact acoustic centre of the



woofer cone. So they sound great wherever you are (or wherever they need to be installed!).

And great sound is only part of KEF's Ci Series design. They're easy

to install in new or existing homes and you can paint them to match your decor. They come in round and square shapes to complement ceilings or walls and because all of them have stainless steel grilles and weather resistant components, you can put them where you want – even in bathrooms, or under the eaves outdoors.

So if installed speakers are part of your interior design, choose the ones designed with your interior in mind.



**The experience of sound**



# All change at Micromega

The arrival of new EC regulations and the non-availability of CDM9 mechanisms prompted Micromega to revise its Classic line models. At the time of writing there were still some details to be sorted — exact prices, for example — but the *Trio*, *CD3.1* and *CD2.1* players, along with the *Duo Pro* and *Duo BS* DACs, look set to be replaced by the new Solo integrated player and the *Dialog* DAC

The *Solo*, which is expected to sell for around £2,750, will use a Philips CDM12 industrial grade — aluminium body and glass optics — mechanism mounted in a solid aluminium suspended sub-chassis. It will have new, 'rounded' styling but remains a top-loader with a disc clamping mat. *Solo* will provide both balanced and unbalanced analogue outputs along with a switchable coaxial digital output

The *Dialog* D/A converter will feature four separate digital inputs — coaxial cinch/phono, coaxial BNC, AES/EBU XLR and a Toslink optical with AT&T available as an option. It will have two digital outputs (one coax, one optical) and a DAC7 chipset used with an eight-times oversampling filter and fourth order noise shaping. Analogue outputs will be both balanced and unbalanced, and the DAC will make

extensive use of surface mounted components to shorten signal paths.

Both units come with an amber fluorescent display panel. If you'd prefer a colour that matches your tuner or cassette deck, you can specify alternative displays in green, red or blue. ☎ (0181) 502 1416



# All hail the vanquisher



If you have a spare £1,299.95 in your pocket, you could take a look at the new flagship CD player from Teac. The *VRDS-25* (above) uses the battleship construction chassis (which alone weighs 11kg) that distinguishes the *VRDS* range. In an all out struggle to vanquish vibration and resonance, it has a three-piece top plate of thick steel that attaches to pure aluminium strengthening blocks, and sintered metal 'pinpoint' feet.

Under the bonnet, there's a centrally mounted, *CMK-3* *VRDS* disc-clamping mechanism feeding four 20-bit DACs with *ZD-II* distortion shaping circuitry and a 25-bit, eight times oversampling digital filter.

The player provides both balanced and unbalanced analogue outputs along with a switchable digital output through coaxial and optical connections. It is available in black or gold finishes. ☎ (01923) 819630

# Help me, I'm shrinking

Not content with building some extremely compact micro systems, JVC is introducing a new miniaturisation paradigm with its 'ultra-micro' *UX1000* system. The electronics in this package comprise a top-loading CD player, three-band tuner and 14 Watt amplifier all bonsai'd into a box measuring 14cm wide (the width of a CD case), 16cm high (about the height of a 15 stacked CD cases) and 24.5cm deep (work it out for yourself). The partnering speakers are a smidgen smaller

Diminished dimensions don't, however, demand any dearth of features. The system still has remote control, a motor driven CD door, Active Hyper-Bass *SUPER PRO* technology, clock-timer, auxiliary terminals for a cassette deck and a digital output for a MiniDisc recorder. The speaker system boasts capacitors "chosen for superior hi-fi qualities (smoothness, imaging, delicacy, the ability to express subtle nuances, etc.) after a series of serious listening tests." ☎ (0181) 450 3282



UX1000: high fidelity for today's shoe box.

◀ of the world, is also now the official importer of Dual turntables. The company has moved to new premises at 77 Dane Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 7BP. ☎ (0161) 973 0505

The *PSW300* is a new active sub-woofer from Polk, which incorporates the same 254mm driver used in the flagship *SRT* sub-woofer system. Finished in black and powered by a 125W amplifier, it sells for £749.90. ☎ (01727) 827311

Technics will be unveiling its *SH-DJ1200* mixer at the Disco Mix Club World DJ Championships, at June's four-day youth culture festival *Nightwave 96*. Designed to complement the *SL-1200* turntables, the unit features long-life fader durability and an integral spare cross-fader component. ☎ (01344) 853550

B&W's *DS6* is the newest addition to the company's 600 series. A THX-approved dipole design, it uses a 5-inch bass driver and a pair of 3-inch mid-high frequency drivers placed on opposing axes. Standard finish is black but the £399.95 speaker also comes in a white finish that can be painted to blend into the surrounding decor. B&W has used its prism technology in a new, 'affordable' centre channel monitor, the £149 *CC3*. Voiced to integrate seamlessly with the *DM302*, the *CC3* has 91dB sensitivity to provide compatibility with a wide range of other front channel speakers. ☎ (01903) 524801

Vivanco's Young Collection is a range of three headphones specifically aimed at young music lovers. With self-adjusting headbands, Neodymium magnets, and soft ear cushions, the phones are equally suitable for use at home or with personal stereos. The heaviest model weighs just 188g. Prices are £39.99 for the *SR550*, £49.99 for the *SR650* and £59.99 for the *SR750*. ☎ (01903) 524801

Two new mini systems from Technics, the *SC-CH74* and *SC-CH34*, promise extended background music through five-disc, multi-changer CD mechanisms. Once loaded, discs will play selectively, sequentially or at random. The 30W *SC-CH34* ▶▶

# Flowered up

Orchid Precision Audio's phase linked loudspeaker, the *PLL1*, aims to bridge the gap between studio monitors and high-end speakers. Claimed to be capable of high volume and low distortion, this £4,750 design comes in a conventional looking cabinet that hides a "radical and unique" six-way system.

The 36-element filter network has crossover points at 350Hz, 4kHz and 10kHz, and forces linear phase behaviour at these points. The crossover points are described as trinary, with three drivers involved at each transition rather than the usual two. ☎ (01608) 684694

# The balance of power

Absolute Sounds recently launched three new Full Power Balanced amplifiers from Krell. All are zero feedback designs offering full balanced operation and Class A performance. The model *150*, for instance, delivers 150 Watts per channel into eight Ohms and doubles its output power down to one Ohm. The *300* and *600* are rated at 300Wpc and 600Wpc respectively and perform the same doubling trick, which means the *600* will output nearly five kilowatts into one Ohm!

All the amplifiers use actively regulated outputs to maintain a source of constant current and voltage for the speaker regardless of its demands or the signal content. Holding the reins on this overkill power is 'intelligent' circuitry that monitors the incoming signal, the mains supply, and the output. Expect to pay around £6,000 for the *150*, £9,450 for the *300* and around £12,000 for the *600*.

Krell also announced its *Audio Video System Controller*, a nine-channel, THX processor/preamplifier using 20-bit DACs. Expected price is about £11,000. ☎ (0181) 947 5047



Krell's tightrope walking power amp.



# 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 English 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 +49-40-

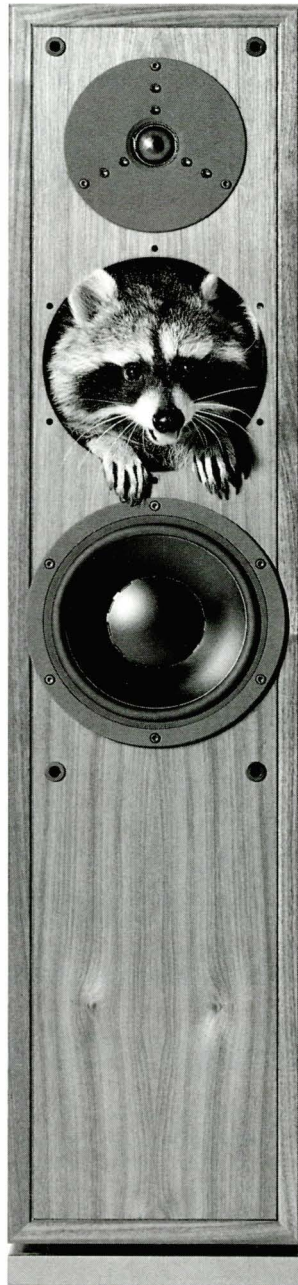
858-066 or fax us at +49-40-859-035 for a

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.



**DYNAUDIO**  
AUTHENTIC FIDELITY

DANES DON'T LIE.™



# Calling all bass heads

Harman Audio has two new budget and one not-so-budget offerings to tempt buyers this month. The harman/kardon *HK3250* comes in at £249.99, making it the least expensive in its line of receivers. It combines a 40 Watt amplifier and a thirty-preset FM/AM tuner in one remote controllable package. Features include three line-level inputs and two tape loops, pre-out and two pairs of speaker connections, along with a dimmable display and preset scanning.

The *FL8300* is a five-disc carousel CD player using Bitstream D/A conversion and a dual differential discrete output stage. It has a thirty-two track memory and four repeat modes, and its auto/manual edit function matches track times to tape length to ensure recordings don't over-run. The price is £279.99.

The not-so-budget offering is the JBL *TR125* loudspeaker, a two-way 'Pro Box' aimed at "bedroom DJs, AV aficionados, bass heads and volume freaks". Selling for £749, this 99dB efficient design uses a horn-loaded, liq-



uid cooled, titanium domed compression driver and a 15-inch bass unit to provide 225 Watts continuous power handling. Each *TR125* is, we're told, tested at full throttle for 300 hours before it gets to wear a JBL badge. However, to safeguard it from truly determined abuse, it features SonicGuard protection circuitry and comes in a 27kg, roadie-proof cabinet. ☎ (0181) 207 5050

## 500 times four from Meridian

Meridian's 500 Series continues to develop with the release of four new products. The first, the 566 20-bit DAC, enables 500 Series owners to run their systems in fully balanced mode throughout. Priced at £995, the DAC has four inputs — three unbalanced using RCA connectors, one Toslink, and an XLR balanced connection. All are stabilised by Meridian's proprietary twin PLL circuit for low jitter.

The £6,000 *DSP5500* digital loudspeaker plugs the gap between the £3,000 *DSP5000* and £9,000 *DSP6000* models. It is, effectively, a single-box version of the *DSP6000* using forward-facing bass drivers rather than the side-firing units employed in the top model. Fully active with four 70W amplifiers on board, it's a three-way reflex system whose response extends down to a claimed 30Hz.

The 557 stereo power amplifier is designed to drive passive loudspeakers — particularly 'difficult' models. The case contains two 200W mono power amplifiers, which can be bridged to deliver in excess of 800W into an eight-Ohm load. It costs £1,295 — the same price as the new

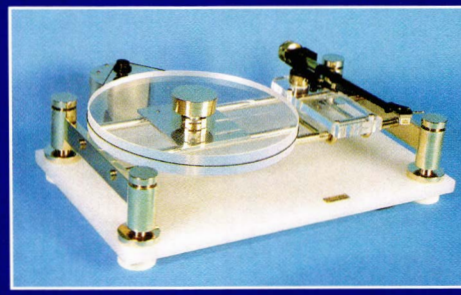
502 pre-amplifier designed to partner it. Also using balanced operation and full dual-mono construction for optimum dynamic range, noise and isolation performance, the 502 provides balanced and unbalanced

socketry. Plug-in phono modules for MC and MM cartridges are available. The preamp comes with remote control and, like the rest of the 500 Series, can connect to the Meridian communications bus for system control integration. ☎ (01480) 52144

## Quasar — now with Poron

You can now obtain Sound by Design's *Quasar* turntable in a stylish *Limited Edition* format. The *LE* is a refined, brass and acrylic version of the *Quasar SE* using a shorter sub-chassis and a new spring damping material, Poron. Other refinements include a new power supply and motor, while the base-board, which is an optional extra on the *SE*, is a standard feature with the *LE*.

Priced from £1,515, the *Quasar LE* offers choices of base-board colour, brushed or matt acrylic platter, and solid brass record clamp. ☎ (0141) 943 2062



More Meridian muscle, the 502 and 557.

## In brief

◀ costs £279.95 while the 50W *SC-CH74*, which comes with Sound Field processing, sells for £329.95. ☎ (01344) 853550

In-car specialist, Alpine is offering a free theft replacement scheme on head units bought from an authorised dealer after 1 April 1996. For customers wishing to insure other components in their Alpine system, the company is opening a 'quote line' to help with additional cover. ☎ (01908) 611556

Rogers is still looking after Auntie. The company has just provided four pairs of *Studio 5* loudspeakers for monitoring duties at the BBC's Pebble Mill studios. ☎ (0181) 640 2172

Tech + Link has developed a new stand for rear channel loudspeakers. Priced at £39.95, it is height adjustable from 830mm to 1530mm. ☎ (0181) 771 8388

Denon's latest amplifiers incorporate many of the innovations developed for its S-1 high end range. They provide remote control operation through the Denon IS system, which also operates recent Denon CD players, cassette decks and tuners. The £229.99 *PMA-425R* is a 45 Watt design while the *PMA-725R* delivers 65 Watts per channel. ☎ (01753) 888447

Grahams Hi-Fi has announced its summer programme. In August the Linn clinic will service *LP12* turntables at parts cost only. On the 16th and 17th there will be Linn AV open days. Naim's mighty AV system gets an airing on the 30th and 31st. Meridian's digital home theatre will be performing on September 20th and 21st. ☎ (0171) 359 7620

## 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  
 Practical Hi-Fi, 65 Bridge Street, Manchester, 0161-8398869

Practical Hi-Fi, 88 Bridge Street, Warrington, 01925-632179  
 Practical Hi-Fi, 33 Knowsley Street, Bolton, 01204-395789  
 Practical Hi-Fi, 106 English Street, Carlisle, 01228-44792  
 Chelston Hi-Fi, 38 Walnut Road, Chelston Torquay, 01803-606863  
 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  
 The Music Room, 98 Bath St, Glasgow, 0141-3325012  
 Richer Sounds, 34 Wellington Quay, Dublin, 0103531-6719666  
 Richer Sounds, 40-41 Smithfield, Belfast

**DYNAUDIO**  
AUTHENTIC FIDELITY



# Choice sessions

AUDIO BON VIVEUR, ALAN SIRCOM, WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE THE CONTENTS OF HIS LISTENING ROOM

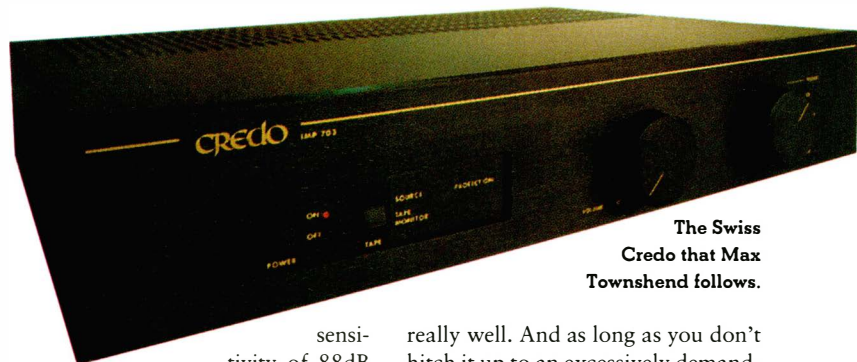
## B&W P4

This year's star buy in the up-market speaker stakes, the award-winning B&W P4 certainly looks the part. Does the sound live up to the image?

£600

B&W's P4 loudspeaker, £600, was voted Best Speaker Above £500 in last month's British Hi-Fi Awards, as we reported in last month's *Choice*. It's a slim floorstander, available in two glam veneers as well as good ol' black ash. Beneath the removable grille, there's a 26mm metal dome tweeter, a 165mm Kevlar midbass unit, and a cigar-shaped port. I think it could do with a Linn-Keilidh-like plinth, but the P4's centre of gravity is pretty low already. With a claimed

Is the B&W P4 all things to all music lovers?



The Swiss Credo that Max Townshend follows.

sensitivity of 88dB and nominal impedance of eight Ohms, it doesn't require a kiloWatt amp with massive current capabilities to drive it.

The tweeter takes an age to loosen up from new. Stick with it, and you'll get treble to match a deep, tidy bass and uncoloured midband.

To summarise, I'd say it strikes a nice balance between all-out studio monitor sound and bass-filled crowd-pleaser. The hi-fi buff will like the way it dips into recordings and shows up nuances of the system it is connected to. Party animals will love the way the P4s eat power and play loud and louder without a struggle.

So as a speaker that's all things to all people, the B&W P4 deserves a good, long look. It sounds good, and goes up to 11 on the volume control without any fuss. Little wonder it won that award.

B&W (UK) Ltd ☎ (01903) 750750

## Credo IMP 703

In Switzerland they had brotherly love, 500 years of democracy and peace.

And what did they produce? The cuckoo clock — and a natty integrated.

£799

The Credo range of amplifiers hails from Switzerland, and the IMP 703 is the least expensive model at £799. It's a 70 Watt line-and-phono design, available in line-only guise for £538.

The IMP 703's front panel may look dated, but this product is made

really well. And as long as you don't hitch it up to an excessively demanding speaker load, this little integrated can turn out some real audio magic, in the manner of the Mitchell *Argo/Alecto*. Its clarity is truly breathtaking with the right equipment, producing insight over detail and music over equipment. There are many pre/power amplifiers, costing several times as much, that don't achieve the difficult transition worked by the Credo into the realm of real music.

It demands the best and most complementary sources. As such, the excellent phono stage will sound fine with anything from a Rega to a *Rock*. Likewise, while the linestage will work well with a Naim, it comes to life with players from AVI or Trichord.

Pick your system wisely and the Credo will perform as well as, or better than most amplifiers. But you must remember that most electronics, cables and speakers lack sufficient honesty to achieve the best results in concert with the Credo IMP 703.

Townshend Audio ☎ (0181) 979 2155

## ECA Prisma

As if to prove the adage that old turntables never die (they simply lose their bearings), amp-maker ECA has made the disc stage of doom.

£880

ECA started out with a classic phono-stage-equipped preamplifier called the *Finestra*. Now it has decided that a matching high-quality disc stage was required to complement its *Vista* pre and *Lectern* power



## Speaker Connectors

Confusion still reigns over how we shall connect up our amps and speakers without flouting EU rules. Here's a summary of the latest options.

Special report

European legislation has made an outlaw of the humble 4mm banana plug and socket, used to connect amp, cable and speaker. Throughout most of Europe, the banana plug is almost identical to the pins used in 230V mains plugs. Mistaking one for the other is potentially fatal to both user and hi-fi. Thus, outside the UK, the 4mm banana plug is a no-no.

Trouble is, there ain't no valid

The trusty 4mm banana next to 6mm 'cucumber' plug and socket proposed by the Audio Partnership.



alternative to the 4mm plug at the moment, save for easily-dislodged spade connectors, bare wires, or force-feeding 4mm plugs into side-entry sockets — and none of these offer a practical solution.

Two companies are bucking the trend, designing variants on the existing 4mm socket. The first, Mission, shaved the diameter of the socket by 1mm about 18 months ago (to bring the it within European SEMKO legislation specs) and this is now fitted to the company's latest electronic equipment. However, a 3mm plug could still (in theory) be pushed into

▶▶ Is Parasound's CD combo 'affordable high end'?

ECA's Prisma phono stage has some promising lineage.

amp (tested in issue 145), so its design team developed the £880 *Prisma*. This is a sort-of box design, with a captive umbilical lead connecting phono stage to power supply. As it is a hand-built product, it can be tailored to your cartridge's exact specification.

When thoroughly warmed up and at fighting weight, the *Prisma* gives you the sort of imagery that is hard to credit, and comes from sheer detail. As long as your amp and speakers sound similarly uncluttered, the *Prisma* will place the listener right in front of the music, as if in the third row of the stalls, and makes the speakers disappear completely.

All this detail is not presented in a stripped-down manner, but in a dynamic, warts'n'all way. There is a touch of syrup to sweeten the pill, but this is the kind of experience that few phono enthusiasts can anticipate.

Detail is not the full story. The *Prisma* has better rhythmic qualities than most detail hounds, its tonal balance is admirably flat, it's whisper-quiet when dormant, and it stubbornly refuses to pick up stray radio broadcasts. Don't dismiss this phono stage as simply too sharp-edged. Maybe it's a bit shiny sounding compared to the very best, but that's the only criticism I can muster.

ECA Distribution ☎ (0181) 998 1086

## Parasound CD Player/Transport and DAC

Ride the digital range with the latest in American CD engineering, with this new CD player and HDCD-equipped DAC from cost-conscious Parasound.

£969/£749

If you want high-end US sound without high-end US prices, take a look at Parasound. Its latest venture is into High Definition Compatible Digital (HDCD) with the £969 *D/AC-1100* DAC, and matching CD-player-cum-transport, the £749 *C/DP-1000*.

Let's start with the latter, which uses something that Parasound calls a 'one-bit-18-bit linear-hybrid, hand-

trimmed' digital-to-analogue converter, with eight times oversampling. Its clunky transport mechanism, meanwhile, is made by Japanese company CEC. The player can be upgraded with a £350 Advanced Digital Adapter Module, which adds AES/EBU balanced and AT&T fibre-optic digital outputs to the existing 75 Ohm RCA jack.

In terms of sound, I'm not convinced by the standalone CD player. While its output is quiet, and produces music in an ordered, pacy manner, it has a gritty treble, and there is an inescapable starkness about the entire performance.

This is the complete opposite of the matching DAC. *D/AC-1100* has four digital inputs, a relocked digital output for connection to a digital recorder, and a pair of analogue RCA sockets. The up-to-date sounding *D/AC-1100* combines the richness and warmth of modern digital converters with the brisk tidiness of 16-bit superstars. While the *D/AC-1100* is a fine-sounding converter in its own right, a good HDCD disc will make you wonder why every disc isn't HDCD encoded.

As it stands, I would hesitate using the *C/DP-1000* as a standalone CD player except as a stop-gap, waiting for the pay cheque to clear before moving on to the HDCD converter. Even though, at the moment, there is only a handful of discs that can get the best out of the Parasound duo.

Heybrook ☎ (01752) 731313







a European mains plug socket, and the purist may comment that you get slightly less contact area than you do with a 4mm connection.

The Audio Partnership, manufacturing arm of Richer Sounds, has taken the opposite stance. Instead of making the plug smaller, AP has designed a 6mm plug and socket. This is overkill technology, but it does make for top-class contact area between plug and socket.

The best option of all would be to leave the 4mm connection alone and get Europe to adopt shuttered three-pin mains sockets, just like we have in the UK. Being realistic, that is about as likely as 'News At Ten — The Musical'. Instead, the hi-fi industry needs to decide upon a standard — and quick.

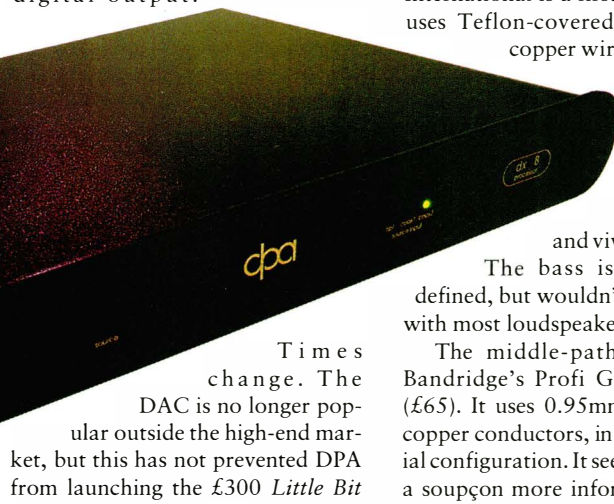
### DPA Little Bit Three

Well-respected digital expert, DPA has made top-class budget DACs in the past. How will the new Little Bit Three shape up?

£300

DPA has gone for an earthy sound with its new DAC.

Back in the good old days, an add-on D/A converter was considered a fine way to upgrade your hi-fi system, if you had a CD player with a digital output.



Times change. The DAC is no longer popular outside the high-end market, but this has not prevented DPA from launching the £300 *Little Bit Three*. This eschews standard digital chipsets in favour of DPAs own dx8 converter. It also uses a double phase-locked loop with an eye to minimising jitter.

Those of you with long memories may remember HFC singing the praises of DPA and Deltec DACs in the past. Where the old DACs were squeaky clean, the *Little Bit Three* is earthy. Where there was image focus, now there is a more woolly, mellifluous soundstage. There is a brightness to the new sound of DPA, that adds snap to an ageing transport, but wouldn't do any favours to an already bright system.

Those who seek absolute neutrality and transparency should look else-

where. However, to blow away audio cobwebs, it might be worth a listen. But despite its abundant zing, I was largely unmoved by the overall performance. I gravitated away from classical during audition, but concede that it wrung some emotion from rock tracks.

DPA ☎ (01222) 795621

### A Short Cable Round-up

How do you upgrade the cables in a mid-price system, without making an expensive mistake? Perhaps one of this colourful trio may hold the answer.

Special Report



Squeeze the last ounce out of your system with a candy coloured cable.

Finding a good, mid-priced interconnect is never easy. Cables are highly system dependent and hard to borrow. But fear not, help is at hand.

The red van den Hul *Thunderline* (£50) sets a new, lower price point for the carbon-fibre technology used in vdH's *The First* interconnect. This reduced treble grain in my system and introduced a richer, more mellow tone overall. This was supported by depth, weight and control in the bass.

Looking to add a touch of zest to a dark sounding system? The royal blue *IC-80* (£65) from LAT International is a first rate option. It uses Teflon-covered, silver-plated copper wire and is almost

as open sounding as *Thunderline*, yet imparts a little bit of extra freedom and vivacity to treble.

The bass is not so well defined, but wouldn't be a problem with most loudspeakers.

The middle-path is taken by Bandridge's *Profi Gold PGA 301* (£65). It uses 0.95mm oxygen-free-copper conductors, in a simple coaxial configuration. It seems to transmit a soupçon more information across the board. The treble might not be as

extended as LAT, and not as clean as vdH, but it was the best balanced of the three. As such, it's perfect for those who already like the sound of their system, but simply want more.

LAT - Adusa UK ☎ (0181) 942 6241

Bandridge ☎ (0181) 543 3633

van den Hul ☎ (0181) 810 9388

### Cleaning and Tweaking

If you don't keep LP records clean, you get sonic problems pronto. CD is less susceptible to grunge, but it still benefits from a little TLC!

Special Report

Russ Andrews Turntable Accessories has introduced a £20 CD cleaning kit to remove the remnants of mould-release and other detritus. It makes discs sound more immediate and fresh, peeling away a hitherto undetectable barrier between ears and music. Bass drivers appear to increase in size, and the sound undergoes a spring clean. My usual worry with this kind of product is whether it will have an adverse effect on the disc's life-time. However, since the cleaning fluid is washed away without residue, its effect will be minimal, and RATA is philosophically opposed

Something to clean your system inside and out with.





to the sale of CD-killing gloop. If you think I am paranoid about CD rot, speak to proprietor Russ Andrews!

Densen's £10 *DeMagic* is a demagnetising disc, first mentioned in our review of the *DM-10* amplifier (*Statements*, issue 142). *DeMagic* puts three minutes of eerie warbling sound through your system, in order to 'demagnetise' CD player, amplifier and speaker. I remain cynical of such things, but *DeMagic* does seem to put sound into slightly better order.

The only component that the *DeMagic* cannot reach is the one where demagnetising has a proven and needed effect — the phono cartridge. Enter high-end cable maven Cardas. Its new £15 *Sweep* record puts a 'demagnetising' signal through the cartridge, and subsequently shakes down the amp and speakers in at the same time. This sweep signal is set to work at 45rpm, and between each sweep band on the 12 inch disc is an area of blank vinyl, useful to adjust anti-skate correctly.

At first, I felt that the *Sweep* disc was simply shaking loose all the gunk within the poles of the cartridge. However, the increase in clarity and focus also extended to the amplifier and speaker. This disc makes regular demagnetising of the LP system a practical possibility.

Cardas - *Audiotreaks* ☎ (0181) 948 4153  
 Densen ☎ (01582) 561227  
 RATA ☎ (01539) 823247

**AudioCarpet**

**Always being condemned for keeping ugly hi-fi? Audio equipment doesn't go with the decor? Then check out AudioCarpet's soft furnishings with a sonic difference.**

£799

Your home will never feature in *Homes & Gardens* if you fill your listening room with ugly acoustic treatments. There is all manner of diffusers, absorbers and reflectors available to make sense of awkward acoustics, but to an egg-box they are ugly, unaesthetic things.

AudioCarpet has produced two domestically acceptable variants on the acoustic treatment theme: one to hang on your wall, and one to rest your slippers on. Five layers of spongy material make the Italian rug seriously bouncy and rather warm, too; your pets will love you forever.

Italy may have given us Renaissance art, but the AudioCarpet designs — from top textile-design school Missoni — are closer to pizza. In fact, more than one person alluded to the wall-hanging device's remarkable resemblance to the seat on 1960s



Green Line coaches.

AudioCarpet's effect varies from room to room, depending on the type of floor, roof, wall and furnishing. In my parlour, AudioCarpet soaked up a few stray resonances in the mid-band, making the system sound dry and a bit quieter. There was a smaller attenuation of bass overhang, but this was nowhere near as profound as the midband upgrade. I wouldn't say that the improvements were remarkable, certainly not as dramatic as the effect of a Mana table or a new set of cables, but when the Carpet (and the still more subtle bus seats) were packed away, I noticed more of the room's signature and felt a touch of regret at the loss.

AudioCarpet price varies with size, of course, but start at £555 for the Carpet and £275 for the bus seat. The package I tested would have cost at least £1,200. As such, I would only recommend considering the carpet as a finishing touch to a rad high-end system. Normal mortals should stick with normal shag pile, soft furnishings, books, house plants, goldfish...  
 MPI ☎ (01483) 454993

**Mission 731i**

**The 731 is dead. Long live the 731i! Here's an exclusive first listen to the latest incarnation of Mission's would-be budget blockbuster.**

£130

Here's the story. Mission had a great speaker called the 760, which was a solid budget favourite. To replace it they cooked up a new model called the 731, launched last year which never managed to impress the critics in the manner of its forbear, though it has continued to be a best-seller. (See it in action against the other best-selling budget boxes, in this month's big test on page 57.)

Arriving just too late for that test is a new version of the 731, the 731i, still priced at

£130. And no matter that it looks pretty similar to its ancestor: this is a wholly new model. The company claims to have spent more than £96,000 in research, development and tooling to get this potential budget blockbuster just right.

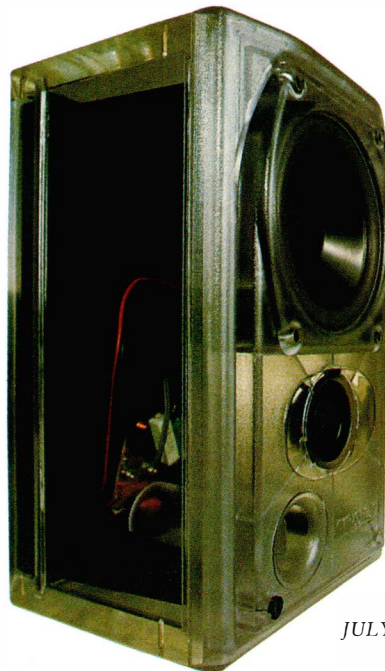
It uses a new plastiflexed, paper-cone, 130mm bass unit, with a larger magnet; a refined version of the existing 28mm laminated-dome tweeter; and a new first order crossover. Mission claim this gives a nominal impedance of six Ohms, and 89dB efficiency. The new 731i also sports Mission's unique driver isolation system, which is said to make the cabinet remarkably free of movement or resonance, to keep coloration low.

Mission is on top form with the 731i. Play anything on the new Mission babies and the music is brimming with brio and charm. They are slightly darker-toned and drier than previous models, but that only serves to benefit bright CD players and brash amplifiers.

The other major plus is the out-of-box experience you can get with these speakers. While there is still that peaky-forwardness that says Mission, the 731i largely lacks the meditating tonal balance common to the budget breed.

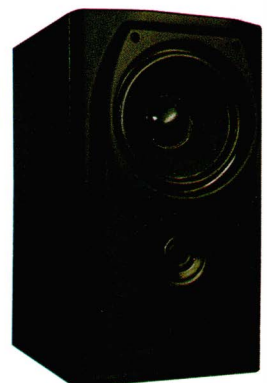
Now Mission has a combatant truly worthy of the budget speaker challenge.

Mission ☎ (01480) 451777 ▲



**Straight out of the Arabian Nights, the magic Audio carpet — they never mentioned bus seats though!**

**The new 731i attempts to confer a sense of transparency...**





INTRODUCING THE NEW 600 SERIES

Don't believe all that  
you read in the press...



just this bit:

B&W has pulled the stops well and truly out for these speakers, and boy does the result sound good... the 601's sound like the voice coils of God. Up-to-the-minute design, gold-plated biwirable sockets: they're a bargain - magnificent for £200.



**What Hi-Fi, November 1995**



**L I S T E N   A N D   Y O U ' L L   S E E**

For details and stockists of the 600 range of loudspeakers, 'phone B&W UK on 01903-750750



# Ear Waxings

Tuner in the toilet, airwaves in the attic, demodulation in the drawing-room. **Jason Kennedy** discovers FM radio!

**T**his month oi 'ave been mostly listening to the wireless. With the aid of the audio maniac's aerial supplier, Ron Smith of Luton, I have been discovering the power of radio as a valid hi-fi source.

Of late, I have been unable to get even semi-decent reception of Radio Three & Co from a roof mounted dipole, so I vowed to get a more effective signal catcher, and spoke to Mr Smith junior of my needs. Initially a *Galaxie 14* was suggested. This has a 55 degree acceptance angle, which would be sure to snare the desired transmissions from Croydon and Wrotham. However, Mr Smith senior came to the conclusion that the longer *Galaxie 17*, despite its narrower beam, would also do the trick and give me better sound quality to boot. The narrower the acceptance angle, the less interference and the cleaner the signal, in the way that a smaller aperture gives a camera greater depth of field.

I drove up to Ron's aerial shack and picked up the 'twig', which turned out to be 2m by 2m by 1.5m in size. Thankfully, it all broke down to fit quite easily into my Renault 5. I also picked up all the necessary gear to rig it up, and the total bill was £190. I balked at the high cost of a two-part pole, needed because I couldn't transport a five-metre alloy tube on the roofrack! I was warned I'd have a struggle to track down anything suitable for less money, but I managed to source a two-inch diameter aluminium pole elsewhere, and was ready to fly the beast.

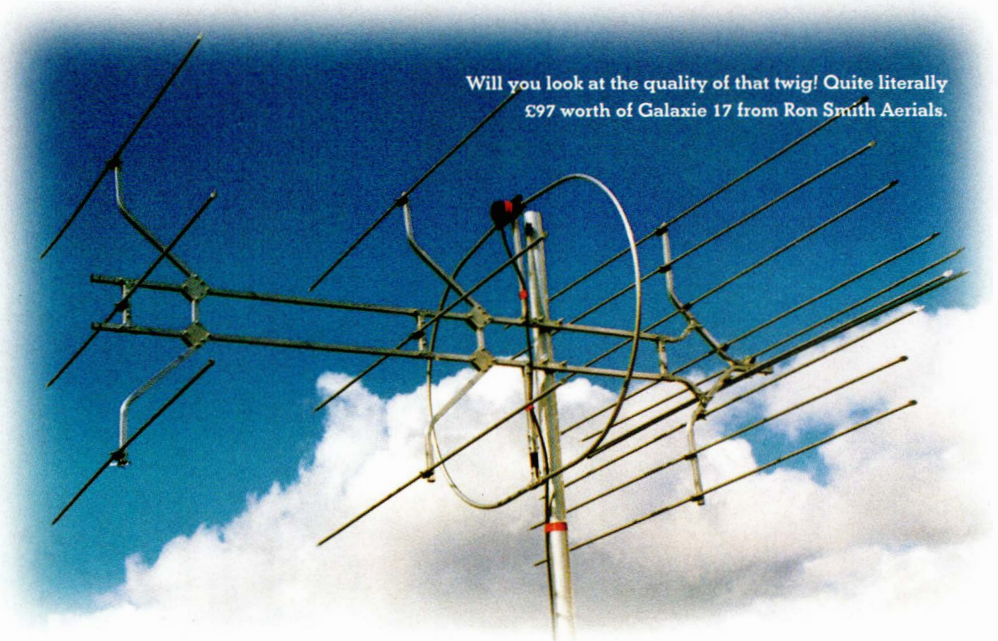
Even with a flat roof and a substantial chimney stack, this posed more problems than I anticipated. For a start, the chimney was twice as big as I'd imagined, and longer cable was required to tie on the lashing brackets. But with the help of a friend (thanks Pete), it went up in a little over two hours, holes through the parapet 'n' all. As I had a tuner with signal strength metering, getting the angle right was fairly straightforward.

Alas, there was no way I could bring a sin-

gle feed into my house for amplification prior to splitting off for separate rooms. Any split results in lower signal strength, but I did what I could with one of Ron's little red boxes, and after hammering in many cable clips and drilling several holes in window frames, I got one lead to the living room and one to the kitchen. As it was, I was able to take two unbroken, double-insulated cables from the splitter to the back of each tuner, which resulted in decent signal strength and no noise — which was nice.

Unfortunately most stations put out a distinctly compressed signal to suit the in-car listener. Only Radio Three sounds natural and occasionally dynamic, and even this station is apparently more compressed than it used to be. Still, it's there, dear old Third Programme, and it plays interesting stuff.

The Onkyo tuner is distinctly smooth sounding, its balance is strictly West Coast, and the words 'sparkling' and 'clarity' do not exactly spring to mind. However it is clean, and there's a remote control that can be used



Will you look at the quality of that twig! Quite literally £97 worth of Galaxie 17 from Ron Smith Aerials.

As a novice to this FM radio lark, I started with the reassuringly mature Onkyo T-9090II tuner, a magnificent wooden-cheeked machine with myriad buttons and lights. I spent half an hour just tuning in its 20 presets and trying to figure out what some of the stations were called. There are plenty to choose from in London, not including the plethora of pirates that appear at the weekends. You can barely hear the majors above 'big shouts going out' on a Saturday night.

There's a lot of good stuff out there. Even Jazz FM (or is it JFM? I can't remember but at least now it occasionally plays jazz) spins some decent tunes sometimes, although too many of their DJs are called Johnny.

to govern volume, should one belong to the couch potato fraternity.

However, when I tried Audiolab's £750 8000T (Best Tuner above £250 in last month's British Hi-Fi Awards), the Onk didn't hang about. The relatively young Audiolab trounced it with a dynamic, open sound that made even the seriously compressed stations listenable. I have to get up to change channels, and there aren't so many buttons or lights, but this tuner has a proper tuning knob and sounds excellent. Always wondered what a Naim would sound like... I think I feel a tuner round-up coming on... Hey, where did I get that tweed jacket and pipe? *Ron Smith Aerials* ☎ (01582) 36561 ▲



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# Personal **Paul Messenger** peels back another layer of the loudspeaker onion, and reports upon his findings.

# Messages

**E**ach time I do a speaker group test for *Choice*, I learn something about the speakers themselves, something about loudspeakers in general, and something about the methodology we use to carry out the reviews. On this occasion I found two good reasons to focus this column on the latter.

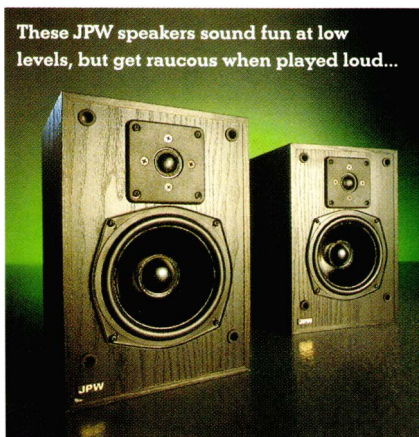
Our speaker reviewing methodology has evolved over the years, becoming streamlined to the point where it is, to all intents and purposes, a formal procedure. It seems pretty well accepted throughout the hi-fi industry as a decent attempt at a nearly impossible job, and it is recognised that we are as fair as possible to all comers.

The cornerstone of the review is the 'blind' listening test, which on the surface, at least, should eliminate personal prejudice and ensure a level playing field for all candidates. It's a very useful tool, for sure. In addition to keeping the reviewer's own prejudices at bay, it should mean that the speakers are at least *playing* on the same field. However, after this latest group test, the flatness of that field has come into question.

I've long been aware of factors that limit blind loudspeaker testing, many of which can be ascribed to the often quite dramatic differences in frequency balance that exist between one speaker and another. The differences arise not only from the design itself, but also from its interaction with the listening room. This makes it impossible to equalise loudness levels accurately between one model and the next, while more seriously, the specific balance of any one model acts as a frame of reference against which the next model in the test is scrutinised.

The heart of the problem is that the ear/brain is very sensitive to balance shifts in the short term, but actually quite accommodating over the longer haul. In the course of some twenty minutes' exposure, even the most experienced panellist is apt to pick up primarily on tonal balance characteristics, often to the virtual exclusion of subtler but more insidious long term effects.

Those factors alone provide a convincing explanation for the often anomalous results of the 'blind' listening tests, and are the reason why I always carry out additional 'hands-on' tests. I also measure the frequency balances of speakers, in situ across the listening zone, drawing all strands together to build



up a much more complete picture than any twenty minute snap-shot.

This time around, two changes have served to highlight a structural weakness of the blind test sessions, with potentially much further reaching implications for the way we choose our loudspeakers. Because we reviewed three Missions, three KEFs, two B&Ws and three from the Richer Sounds group, the similarity between members of the same family, and the differences between one family and another, in both measured and perceived balance, was thrown into sharp relief.

In the blind tests the Missions were consistently criticised for their dull presentation, in line with their measured balances, while the much more forward JPWs were clearly preferred. As was the KEF midband.

Why do manufacturers choose to balance their particular ranges so differently? The



clue came when we brought in a budget CD player and amplifier to carry out some hands-on listening. Immediately the Mission-style balance started to make sense, presumably because the speakers' relatively restrained treble is less inclined to reveal the limitations of the more compromised source and amp.

And what was already true when listening at fairly modest levels, became all the more obvious when volume levels went up. The JPWs became decidedly uncomfortable, KEFs rather edge-of-the-seat, while the baby Missions seemed to come into their own.

This has numerous implications. It emphasises the importance of trying to choose loudspeakers in your own system context, as well as pointing out that the speakers are very much the slaves of the rest of the system. Of course, this is a major reason why different reviewers frequently come to different conclusions.

Much more heretical is the suggestion that there may not be such a thing as a 'correct' loudspeaker frequency balance, and that a key factor to consider when choosing loudspeakers is how loud you like your music. If you like it loud, go for something fairly restrained in the presence and lower treble; if you like to listen quietly, you might get on better with a more forward, up-front presentation.

Another implication is that the arbitrary 'consensus' loudness level we use during our listening tests will inevitably suit some speakers better than others, and the chosen level is at least as significant a source of prejudice as the driving system components. Also, I believe, it partly explains why B&Ws have done so consistently well in my listening tests over the years, since they tend to deliver a consistent 'middle of the road' balance which just happens to suit our normal listening level very well.

Testing this level-dependency hypothesis is going to take a little time, but I'll try to talk the Editor into setting up the appropriate listening tests. The more I think it through, the more it seems to fit with the experiences of numerous designs, with Rehdeko and Shahinian probably representing the opposite extremes. It's certainly going to add an extra dimension and perspective to my next group test, and hopefully represents the peeling back of a couple more layers from the speaker reviewing conundrum. ▲

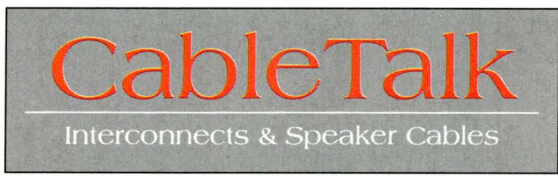


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Please quote HFC 07/96



# The Jimmy Hughes Experience

It started as a small step for Jimmy Hughes, but it might become a giant leap for audiophile kind, if his adventures with £19 speakers prove fruitful. . .

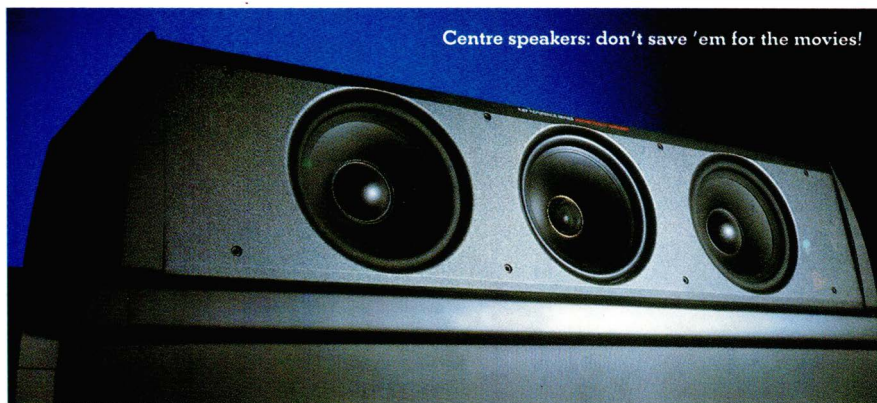
Upgrades usually involve replacing an existing item with something better and, invariably, more expensive. So there's little hope of getting a worthwhile improvement on the cheap. If you have a good £300 amplifier it's unlikely, though not impossible, that replacing it with a £150 model will transform the sound of your system. But what about adding something that expands on what you've got already? Like a new component that doesn't replace an existing item, so much as enhance what's already there? The key is to find a weak area of performance that can be improved simply and cheaply. Easier said than done, I know. But for a while I've had a hunch that there might be a weak aspect of conventional two-speaker stereo that could be exploited.

I've wanted to try a centre speaker for years now, but always hesitated. Wouldn't it work only if fed from a discrete, centre-derived mono source? Would it lead to a narrowing of the stereo image? I didn't want to incur the added cost and complexity of a surround sound processor; I just hoped for a firmer, more solidly-focused central image, with greater projection of vocals and solo instruments.

Although centre-channel speakers are very much flavour of the month, thanks to home cinema, the idea of them is almost as old as stereo itself. In the very first *Hi-Fi News* annual, published at the end of 1965, there was an article by John Crabbe, entitled *Whither Stereo?* This considered some of the pros and cons of conventional, two-speaker stereo, in particular the difficulty of maintaining a solid, narrow central image when the listener sat to one side of a pair of loudspeakers.

Interestingly, Mr Crabbe returned to the subject in his *Sidelines* column (*Hi-Fi News*, May '96), where again he highlighted the same problem. Clearly, 30 years of 'advances' and 'breakthroughs' still haven't solved one of stereo's most fundamental limitations!

It could be argued that if a pair of speakers is set up properly, they should image well enough not to need a centre channel for reinforcement. Yet for several reasons, many good systems don't produce a sharp, cleanly-defined central image.



Anyway, adding a couple of centre speakers (fed with straight 'stereo' signals) proved a success. It took some experimentation before my new additions sounded right, but with levels correctly adjusted, the results were very impressive. Initially the centre speakers sounded too loud, so I kept adding resistors to lower volume levels, ending up with about 30 Ohms in series. This is a rough guide, since much depends on the efficiency of both speakers being used.

Because in my arrangement, the centre speakers are effectively in parallel with the main speakers, and fed with an identical signal, having the centres too loud will reduce separation. They should just reinforce the centre image, not dominate in their own right. I can't overemphasise how vital it is to get the loudness ratio between main and centre channels right. You want the centre channel about 10dB to 20dB quieter than the main speakers to ensure seamless integration; the centre of the soundstage should solidify without it being obvious what is occurring.

What sort of speaker should you use for a centre channel? Principally, I wanted something that sounded free and lively with good dynamics, but with limited bandwidth. With luck, something dirt-cheap too. I actually used a couple of inexpensive car speakers, £18.95 the pair!

This centre channel seemed to make the music sound firmer and more solidly placed in space. I had the centre drive units placed to match my main speakers, firing away from the listening seat towards the rear wall. I placed one on the floor and the other about

a metre higher, pointing upwards slightly to create a sense of height.

As well as the improvement in focus and precision, the speakers created their own kind of spacious ambience. Pointing the drivers forward made the centre channel rather direct and explicit, losing all sense of airy openness. As an experiment I took just one of the speakers to a friend's house and played it to a group of hi-fi enthusiasts. (The effect works well with just a single drive unit connected to either right or left output.) The improvement was quite mesmerising. I always know when a gathering of people is impressed by the sound it is hearing: everyone stops talking and listens!

Aside from the sonic benefits of a more solid central image, the music in itself gained extra presence and authority, compelling attentive listening. Both music and performance were transformed into something far more interesting and eventful.

Yet the precise nature of the change proved curiously elusive; in a 'with' and 'without' A/B comparison, few if any listeners could say exactly what was being altered. Everyone felt it just sounded better, though centrally placed solo instruments showed that the image had more substance.

One immediate question springs to mind: if you can get this kind of result with a cheap drive unit, wouldn't it be even better if a proper hi-fi speaker was used? Perhaps control and refinement could be improved. But I chose a simple drive unit because I wanted discretion, and used it 'open baffle' to eliminate cabinet resonances. ▲





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# Paul Miller's Oasis of Sanity

Paul Miller introduces his new Virtual Instrument loudspeaker testing procedures.

**A**ny debunking of wooden hockey pucks, hearth rugs, space-age snake-oil, and other charmed devices currently recommended to enhance your listening pleasure, will have to wait another month. For now, the Great White Chief has decreed that this month's Oasis be reserved for a discussion of our new loudspeaker lab tests (reviews start on page 57).

Why have we introduced them? In the first instance, to bring speaker measurement procedures in line with those for CD players and amplifiers, using the type of Virtual Instrument (VI) technology described in issue 143. The new procedure will enable us to tackle one or two tricky areas of performance, including the measurement of loudspeaker distortion, that have not been considered until now.

In the longer term, our computer system will store comprehensive data on the performance of each loudspeaker, and, importantly, the *load* it presents to an amplifier. This will enable us to model and predict the behaviour of certain amplifier/cable/loudspeaker combinations. During future amplifier tests, it should be possible to recreate the characteristics of specific B&W, KEF or Mission speakers in a programmable load, and observe how the performance of a test amplifier is affected. Imagine how long it would take to compare all the permutations of ten amplifiers and ten pairs of loudspeakers in the 'real world'!

For now, let's take a look at the technology behind the bar-graphs in this month's test. The Relative Loudness and Maximum Loudness bar-graphs are almost self-explanatory, but the figures are not simply obtained by measuring the speaker's sensitivity at a single frequency (typically 1kHz at 1m distance for a 2.83V input). Instead, I have designed a program that calculates the RMS value of the speaker's output, from 200Hz to 12kHz, after applying a 'human loudness contour' to

account for the varying sensitivity of our hearing to different frequencies.

As a result, differences in the bar-graph values should genuinely reflect how 'loud' each speaker sounds under nominally identical conditions. The Ease of Drive category is derived from a measure of the total load represented by the loudspeaker. Though speakers are rated at a nominal eight Ohms or four Ohms, that specification allows for drops of 20 per cent below this figure and

phase with the output voltage. If this coincides with a drop in impedance then the amplifier may be severely taxed, causing an increase in distortion or premature operation of protection circuitry. A combination of data from the impedance and phase tests gives us the bar-graph value.

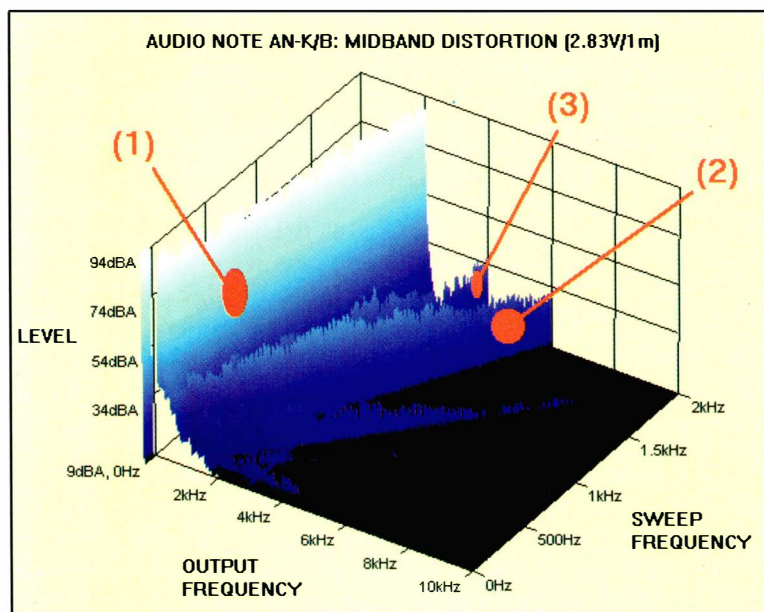
Last, but by no means least, there's the thorny topic of distortion. Did you know that one loudspeaker may suffer ten times more distortion than another superficially similar design, when driven under the same conditions? Or that a loudspeaker typically produces ten times if not one hundred times the distortion of a typical amplifier?

To this end, our loudspeakers will be subject to two separate Distortion tests. The first uses a full audio band sweep to pick out sudden jumps in distortion associated with system and mechanical resonances. A slice through this data set is shown in the 3D plot (left), which reveals the mid-band distortion (0.1-0.2 per cent) suffered by an Audio Note AN-K/B speaker as it handles a sweep from 200Hz to 2kHz (1). A varying third harmonic (2) holds sway over a less prominent second harmonic (3) in this instance.

Our second distortion test will use gated tone-bursts to gauge the dynamic behaviour of the loudspeaker. The use of custom VI programs also allows the tone-burst to be seized by the microphone and isolated from any reflections that arrive afterwards, ensuring that any distortion is derived solely from the speaker and not a combination of the speaker and the room.

Our loudspeaker tests are still under development, as are the computer modelling studies to predict favourable and potentially disastrous amplifier/speaker combinations. The goal, as always, is to rationalise more of the arcane ways of hi-fi, in order to help you, the readers, buy hi-fi with greater satisfaction. ▲

*Do you have a subject matter for the Oasis? Please contact P. Miller via E-mail on 100576.3021@compuserve.com*



takes no account of wild variations (to 50 Ohms or more) caused by the crossover network and/or system resonances.

Traditionally, the speaker's impedance is measured from the variation in voltage of a swept sine wave (fed from a high impedance source) at the loudspeaker terminals. However, this fails to take into account the speaker load 'seen' by an amplifier under *dynamic* real life conditions.

For our tests I have written a VI program that outputs and analyses a dynamic noise signal covering all frequencies at once. The program is self-calibrating and accurate to 0.001 Ohms. A second VI program then calculates the phase-shift between current and voltage, caused by the reactive component of the speaker's load. At some frequencies a loudspeaker may cause the amplifier's output current to be up to 60 degrees out-of-







# Write on!

READERS DIG DEEP INTO THEIR BUREAUX, EXTRACT QUILLS AND VELLUM, SCRIBE VOLUBLY, AND THIS IS THE RESULT . . .

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### The Magic Roundabout

Some months ago I bought a Stands Unique equipment support acting upon another magazine's five-star review. To say I was gutted when I read Malcolm Steward's dismissal of the support (issue 151) is an understatement — I'd wanted Mana Acoustics on a budget, and to be honest, anything would have sounded better than the previous set-up, which included wobbly book shelves. However, to find out my support had no audiophile pretensions at all left me shaken for days. The February *HFC* remained largely unread and the stand didn't receive its twice-weekly dusting for some time.

But it's all swings and roundabouts. Some months before the above purchase, I had plumped for a JVC AX-A662 amp. Funds wouldn't stretch to an Arcam Delta 290 with phono stage, and £310 did seem something of a bargain. It was a lonely life — friends with Naim and Audiolab mocked my 'Japanese rubbish'. How sweet it was to read Sircom and Miller's glowing appraisal of the '662 in the May issue. Of course, it hasn't changed the attitude of my friends, who continually jeer "you've been reading too many hi-fi magazines again, Jules." It just goes to show...

Julian Gray

Moseley, Birmingham

### Controversial Creek

We were most concerned to read the review of Creek's 4240SE amplifier in your May issue. Your findings completely contradict ours and those of hi-fi journalists overseas.

In April we thoroughly tested the 4240SE using both analogue and digital sources. We employed equipment that is known to work well with Creek designs, and over a four-hour period, a broad selection of music was auditioned without any trace of your reviewer's criticisms emerging.

All our panel was astonished at the level of realism achieved. Particularly impressive was this amplifier's ability to allow graphic portrayal of such vital musical considerations as phras-

ing and rhythmic integrity. We were also left in no doubt as to whether a musician was in command of his instrument, thanks to the sheer expanse of effortless soundstaging and musically coherent detail.

One panellist expressed his disappointment at your apparent lurch towards tabloid-style journalism, more usually associated with the increasingly dubious *What Hi-Fi?*

None of us understands what 'grainy' sound is. As hi-fi is about music it would make much more sense to describe what one hears in musical terms wherever this is possible. To do so would be no more or less confusing than using obscure hi-fi jargon. *The Panel at The Den*  
Keighley, West Yorkshire

*The difference between your test and ours is that you partnered the Creek with ancillaries that highlight the strengths of the 4240SE; our test was designed to determine the absolute characteristics of all the amplifiers. If we had wanted to write 13 rave reviews, we would have created 13 complementary systems, but that would defeat the object of the blind test. In addition, your 4240SE was auditioned in isolation; ours had a dozen other amplifiers to contend with. AS*

### A400 Shocker

In the May issue *Help!* section, one of your writers stated that the Pioneer A400 was not a real power amp. I would like to make the following observations.

The A400 has no preamp stage; it is a stereo power amp with a passive potentiometer.

The letter from your reader (Amplified Improvements) specifically asked about the use of a preamp. You recommended that he purchase an integrated with a switchable preamp stage.

I feel that this is totally inappropriate; a dedicated preamp with an A400 would be a much more cost effective upgrade than an integrated with a preamp, the latter being compromised, surely, by a power supply connected to both pre and power stages.

Your writer goes on to recommend bi-amplification. A good preamp partnered with an A400 will out-perform the suggested amplifiers in most areas, and a second one would give a significant upgrade.

Tom Evans, Trichord Research

### Linn Satisfaktion

I beg to differ with the advice given to Ashley Conning in *Help!* (Gift Horse Overloaded), May. Like him, I have KEF's 102/2 Reference speaker.

You suggest that he auditions an Audiolab 8000A — but this can't push low bass into the KEF 102/2. The Technics SU-A900 is even worse, with practically no bass. I had them both, and was going to ditch the speakers when two retailers lent me a gaggle of amps. What really brought the 102/2s to life was the Linn Majik. There was no comparison! I suppose if it can drive Linn speakers it'll drive anything...

My only complaint was a lack of sparkle. However, I was so impressed that I have since invested in the LK100. After dozens of amplifiers over the years, I feel satisfied at last.

A J Barnes,

Sunbury-on-Thames

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# Next time your CD player jumps - we'd like to suggest a four letter word



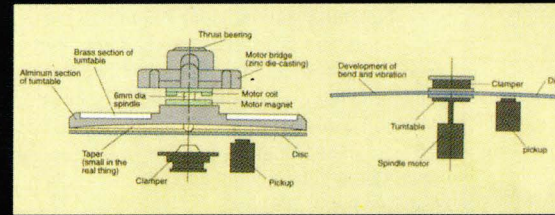
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The gold units featured in this photograph are available as a special order option



# Carbon copy

Jason Kennedy takes home the Wilson benesch record player for a bit of Fille Mal Gardée and Physical Graffiti.

**W**ilson benesch is the company that put carbon fibre on the hi-fi map, and its enthusiasm for this incredibly stiff and light material knows no bounds. The *Wb Turntable*, *ACT* arms, and the recently introduced range of cartridges, use carbon fibre wherever it makes a difference. The arm tube and headshell are made of it, the cartridge mounting and body use tiny, precisely machined bits of the material, while the deck's subchassis is a phenolic resin honeycomb, sandwiched in carbon fibre.

A great deal of engineering and design underpin this product.

The £1,499 *ACT Two*

tonearm has a unipivot bearing consisting of three balls supporting a single ball. The counter-weight sits close to the bearing but surrounds it with horns on either side.

The taper of the arm tube into the headshell is beautiful—even the finger lift is moulded from the same piece. The curved arm rest, with its nylon saddle and safety clip, is more stylistically and practically complete than most of its peers.

The £1,750 *Wb Turntable's* sandwich subchassis is supported by three damped springs, and is kept from rotating by the combined efforts of the arm lead and a small, adjustable Kevlar strap. The Papst motor is suspended by a three-point sprung cradle, that can be adjusted so the belt runs centrally on the spindle. It is fed by an external power supply that, by virtue of a 'comms link', can be used to power a forthcoming phono stage module. The platter is made up of two pieces of aluminium, the joint between them being moulded to achieve a perfect fit. *Wb* seems to have thought of everything.

The cartridge in this case is the £1,499, top o' the range *Carbon*, featuring a Benz-Micro moving coil gen-

erator. Its body is made of the same material as the arm, which should ensure a good mechanical path for energy dispersal.

## Sliced bread

I've been using the Wilson benesch *ACT One* arm (the die-hard, armrest-free version) on a *Voyd* for some time now. And I have to say I think it's the best thing since silver-wired SMEs—even with less-than-exotic copper cable inside. It is one of the least characterful audio components I have come across (that's about the highest praise I can give), so I was intrigued to hear the complete record player. It took a while to set up, but once completed, I plugged its

output into a Michell *Iso HR* phono stage, and let it take me away.

The *Wb* combo is assured and confident, and it never sounds out of its depth.

Throw it the most mangled sax solo, and you will enjoy pain-free playback—depending on what's in the groove, of course! The sound is subtle and revealing, especially in the upper midrange, where it has a lightness of touch that's rare among audio components. It keeps time nicely if not emphatically, and it can play loud as well as silent with the right material.

## Spot the difference

One way of spotting a decent hi-fi component is to check its ability to reveal differences between similar recordings, or even different pressings of the same recording. I gave the *Wb* a go at the latter with a couple of Decca SXL 2313s, and it made a good stab at pulling out the tonal variations beneath the rather noisy surface of these old LPs. One evening I had something of a Led Zeppelin fest (these things still happen, I'm afraid), and the variations in those recordings was quite staggering: they go from



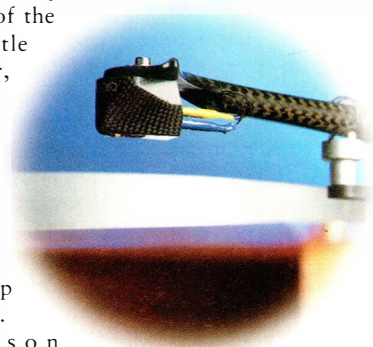
That Wilson benesch Turntable in full. Below: details of the sleek unipivot tonearm and cartridge.

dynamic, open naturalness on *I* to compressed brightness on *Presence*, with no shortage of alternatives along the way. *III* is nice too; I'd like to hear an original pressing of that album.

## How good is good?

As I had the *Wb* arm base on the *Voyd*, I made some comparisons by switching arm and cartridge between the two decks. The outcome favoured the dynamic and robust *Voyd*, making the *Wb* sound rather light and insubstantial. The latter is certainly nimble, but doesn't quite have the energy of the three-motored title holder. However, it's as neutral as a Pink Triangle and possibly better resolved than a Linn. The *ACT Two* arm and *Carbon* cartridge are undoubtedly up there with the best.

This Wilson benesch combo extracts music very effectively, and its high-tech materials undoubtedly contribute towards resolving power. As a package it's worthy of comparison with many of the best turntables available—and a very good reason for bidding adieu to digital audio! ▲





# Batteries

This month **Alan Sircom** sees the system of a man whose day job is in hi-fi. Looks like he takes his work home, readers!

**Y**ou might be surprised to learn how few employees of the hi-fi industry keep a killer audio system at home. Of course, these folks get their fill of superb equipment in the course of their daily travails, but the lack of domestic audiophilia is a persistent brow-furrower when you consider the attractive prices sometimes available to those in the trade.

Ian Bolt, of Micromega UK, is a notable exception. By day his company purveys fine audio electronics, but by night Ian relaxes in a front room stuffed with some of the most sophisticated high-end hi-fi around.

Micromega ships in the ultra-sleek and not very inexpensive Jeff Rowland amplifiers from the States, in addition to the finest French digits, so it is not surprising that Ian's system sports equipment from both marques. Behind the scenes we find black and blue Stirling cables — another, sometimes neglected, part of the Micromega arsenal.

I was really surprised, however, to find the comparatively low-brow Micromega Stage *Drive 3* transport, and *DAC* digital converter, slotting into a system where a £10,000 player wouldn't be out of place. The sound of the player is smooth, transparent and satisfying, yet it provides gusto and bravado when required. I suspect that the sound of this new transport mechanism surprised Ian as much as myself; normally one would specify a Classic Line *Duo* or *Trio* rather than Stage components, but the Classic components are currently being approved for CE marking, and all existing stock has been sold. By the time this article hits the streets, the new Classic Line products will be on sale, and Ian's system may well change once again (see Update, page 7).

With a plethora of digital inputs available, Ian is using the digital output of Micromega's Stage *Tuner*, and feeding it through the Stage *DAC*. While it may seem perverse to digitise the tuner signal and then

# Included

convert it back to analogue, Ian thinks it's justified — the two-box tuner compares very favourably with his classic Yamaha *CT-7000* airwave plucker from the '70s.

The AES/EBU input of the *DAC* is taken up with the *Drive 3*, and the conventional 75 Ohm co-ax input being fed from the *Tuner*, so you would think the remaining Toslink optical input could languish in peace. Not so. This finds gainful employment fondling the digits of a Pioneer *CLD-1950* LaserDisc player, when LD is used for the odd film or rock video. Elsewhere in the room, a Sharp LCD projector and screen can be quickly lashed up or hidden away as required.

Taking pride of place in this system is an SME *Model 20* turntable, with SME *Series V Gold Standard* pick-up arm, Lyra *Parnassus* cartridge, and a mature Jeff Rowland *Consummate* phono stage powered by a custom power supply. Why SME? Because Ian knows that he is unlikely to buy another turntable, and the SME is stunningly well built. Currently Ian is rounding up all the records he has always promised himself from the '70s and '80s.

At the heart of Ian's hi-fi is the seriously expensive Jeff Rowland *Coherence* preamplifier, complete with battery power supply. This fantastic-looking piece of kit comes complete with a removable front panel, that can become the ultimate remote control thanks to a wired computer-style 'bus' wire.

Jeff Rowland's name crops up again on the power amplifier: the £5,000 *Model 2* stereo power amplifier, and its matching £2,500 battery power supply. Although not as well-known as amps from Krell and Mark Levinson, the Jeff Rowland designs deserve greater attention, not least because of their clean, dynamic yet controlled sound.

Many pundits consider Jeff Rowland to be the finest amplifier for driving Wilson speakers; Ian Bolt certainly thinks so, as he uses a pair of Wilson *WATT 3/PUPPY 2* enclosures. These models have

recently been replaced by the *System V* in Wilson's catalogue, but Ian sees no reason to have his *WATT* main unit and *PUPPY* subwoofer upgraded to *System V* status — especially when the system sounds as good as it does.

Back to cables again. Normally, Ian uses black Stirling virtually throughout the system, although at the time of our visit, he was experimenting with the cost-no-object Transparent Music Wave *Ultra* speaker wires. The only other cables that come close to the mark in Ian's system are XLO's *Reference*, deployed with balanced CD-to-DAC and DAC-to-preamp links.

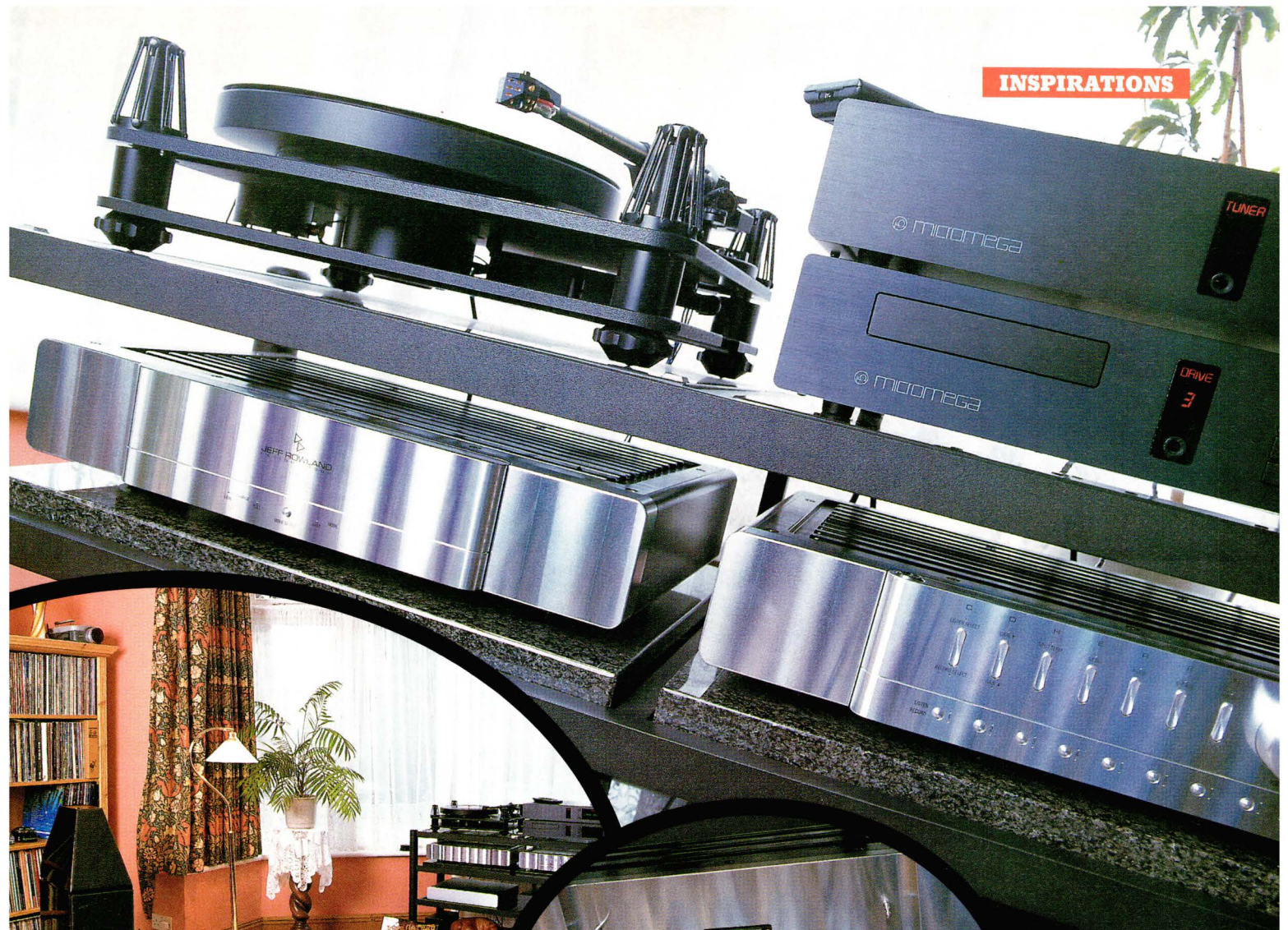
Ian's system does everything required of a first-rate high-end outfit. It is subtle, sophisticated and well-controlled, yet also capable of getting really close to a full-range sound — or as close as you can get in the living room of a medium-sized, suburban town house. I was impressed by the bass: in the listening room, low frequencies were deep, rhythmic and tidy, but thankfully the rest of the house didn't join in with the beat. Just as well, really — Ian's kid and cats have yet to discover the joys of extended LF! ▲



## Ian Bolt's System – The Full Story

SME <i>Model 20</i> turntable, SME <i>Series V Gold Standard</i> arm, Lyra <i>Parnassus</i> cartridge, Stirling phono interconnect	c.£6,000
Jeff Rowland <i>Consummate</i> phono preamp	£3,000
Micromega <i>Drive 3</i> CD transport	£1,000
Micromega <i>DAC</i> digital converter	£700
Micromega <i>Tuner</i> (fed through the Micromega <i>DAC</i> , above)	£700
Yamaha <i>CT-7000</i>	£n/a
Pioneer <i>CLD-1950</i> LaserDisc player (fed through the Micromega <i>DAC</i> , above)	£600
Jeff Rowland <i>Coherence</i> line preamplifier	£15,000
Jeff Rowland <i>Model 2</i> stereo power amplifier	£5,000
Battery power supply for <i>Model 2</i>	£2,500
Wilson <i>WATT 3/PUPPY 2</i> loudspeakers	c.£13,000
Cables by Stirling, Transparent and XLO	c.£2,500
<b>THE BIG FIGURE</b>	<b>c.£50,000</b>





Below: Wilson WATT 3/PUPPY 2 speakers. Right: Coherence and remote.



Above: Jeff Rowland Consumer phono preamp and PSU, beneath the SME Model 20, and Micromega Drive 3 with DAC.



**We Want Your System!**  
Have you got a story to tell about your hi-fi equipment? If so, we would like to hear from you. You needn't own a high-end monster system, as long as you can tell us a great story about how you got started in hi-fi, and how you came to purchase the equipment you own now. Please send us a summary of your system's components, and an outline of your story, with a photograph if possible, to: Hi-Fi Choice Inspirations, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 19 Bolsover Street, LONDON W1P 7HJ.



# £1000

## starter systems

There's more than one way to spend a grand on hi-fi. **Malcolm Steward** investigates three totally different approaches to system building – from a music lover's perspective.

So Lady Luck has cast a windfall of £1,000 at your feet, and you have wisely decided to blow the lot on a quality hi-fi system. What you can't decide is exactly what you're going to buy, or where you'll buy it from. The easy option would be to waltz into a department store and grab a convenient one-make package. Alternatively, you could don your Bargain Hunter apparel, and visit one of those pile-em'-high bargain outfits. The adventurous option would be to venture into specialist retailer territory, clutching some CDs, and painstakingly mix'n'match your own separates system.

Well, we set out to obtain with our notional grand a good quality CD playing system, that would pump you up and nurture your desire to get into music more seriously. In other words, a system that would make you sit up and listen, rather than a collection of boxes that occupy shelf space and see occasional service providing background music.

The one-make system we selected came from Denon — the funky little *F10* package. We picked this because the company's lifestyle products usually perform well, and have the sort of styling that make them far more appealing than most of the anonymous matt black midi faction. Our bargain hunter's system came from the day-glo empire known as Richer Sounds, and featured components from its own-brand and exclusive ranges. The third system was suggested by Simon Byles, proprietor of Kingston-Upon-Thames specialist dealer Infidelity, and included items from manufacturers Micromega and Rega.

### The One-Make System

Typical 'one-make system' buyers probably imagine that setting up a hi-fi is a complicated task. They'll guess that buying a one-make package simplifies things, by guaranteeing compatibility and ease of assembly, because "everything is designed to work together". However, the sussed audiophile knows that a true separates system is often no more complicated to assemble, while offering better performance and greater scope for subsequent improvements. The Denon system tries to bridge that gap: it has a stylistic uniformity that will attract the technophobe, while its separate boxes increase appeal for the more tuned-in buyer.

In fact, it's unfair to compare this system to the typical one box midi. The £1,000 Denon *D-F10* package consists of discrete, individually-powered components that connect together using regular phono leads. And its amplifier actually has regular binding-post connectors for the speaker cables!

What you get with the Denon is a matching CD player, RDS tuner, single cassette deck and amplifier, finished in sleek brushed aluminium, and partnered by an equally smart-looking pair of compact, two-way loudspeakers. It looks like a 'real' hi-fi that's shrunk to shoe-box proportions.

It does, however, acknowledge some of the requirements of mass-market buyers, without upsetting audiophiles. The amplifier has tone controls, and the tuner has RDS facilities. It is, nonetheless, a simple system to operate: there's little on the front panels that you could truly describe as superfluous.

When I switched it on, the favourable impressions remained. This system doesn't set out to be a go-for-broke, audiophile holy grail, but it does aim to deliver — and succeeded in delivering — an eminently respectable musical performance. Unlike a typical midi, the Denon sounded quite comfortable playing at levels adequate to fill a

Denon's One-Make System — the superb D-F10 (£1,000), complete with speakers.







Infidelity's Specialist System: Micromega Stage 4 CD player, (£599), Rega Elex amplifier (£398) and Rega Kyte speakers (£198). Budget extra for decent stands and cables!

medium sized room, with no sense of strain or impending failure.

Further enhancing the system's appeal was a well-judged tonal balance, with sweet if not unequivocal treble; a pleasant, decently informative midband; and a lower register that was considerably more extended and controlled than I had expected. The kerb side of Dr John's piano, for instance, sounded full bodied and appropriately fulsome. His voice, however, tended to show the system's limited resolution. While he sounded unmistakably like Dr John, there was a reduction of character evident, which stripped out those idiosyncrasies that make you sit back and smile whenever you hear them.

The system also rounded off Black Grape's edges, diminishing the amount of detail you hear when listening to the disc on a more revealing system. However, the *D-F10* maintained the music's vital rhythmical integrity, bouncing along with admirable enthusiasm and control. It conveyed the music's message, and maintained my interest in the proceedings, despite a perceived tendency to limit dynamic contrasts.

Nonetheless, I'd happily recommend this Denon to anyone looking for, well, this kind of system. It looks the business, it's well featured and it does the job better than you might expect. Compared to a full-on separates system it has limitations, but to its credit, it conceals them cleverly. Thanks to its approachable, balanced presentation, it involves you in the music, and draws attention to what it does well, rather than highlighting those areas where it's not so capable. I reckon it makes the grade.

☎ Denon (01753) 888447

### The Specialist System

Infidelity suggested a system from two manufacturers, both of whom hold distinctly individual ideas about how their products should present music.

The Micromega *Stage 4* is the least expensive of the company's bitstream-powered *Stage* series. This £599 confection is a discrete-looking, minimalist design that offers an easy upgrade path. You can progress it to *Stage 5* or *6* (integrated player) status, or to *Drive 3*, at which point it becomes a stand-alone transport. I've long respected this cost-effective upgrade concept, and I admire the consummate way it has been implemented here. If the bug bites and you decide to advance to *Stage 5* or *6*, your player will be fitted with improved circuitry that elevates its musical performance.

As in the good old days of record players, the source is the most sophisticated component here, the leader to which the £398 Rega *Elex* amplifier and £198 Rega *Kyte* speakers play second and third fiscal fiddles. While the *Kytes* hold Best Buy status in the *Hi-Fi Choice* Directory, the *Elex* has fared less well, being described as "forward, hard and unforgiving". That suggests its presentation is unpleasant, but in my opinion, the *Elex's* forthright nature is a positive attribute. However, you do need to find a set of speakers that won't push things too far. I would argue that an amp overdosing on zest is preferable to one that submerges musical detail and energy in a blanket of unnatural warmth. Regardless, this amplifier is another minimalist offering, whose black casing, faint grey legends and red LED indicators are a perfect complement to those of Micromega.

The *Kyte* speaker is a truly compact box that *Choice* described as having splendid timing and coherence, and sounding very explicit and informative. Enough said, apart from mentioning that this compact two-way also produces a respectably sturdy low end performance when parked on suitable stands, like Atacama *SE24s*. It won't shake your windows loose, but it's sufficiently robust to prevent the system sounding pinched and gutless on exuberant music. If you like a system that sounds fast and light on its feet, the combination of *Elex* and *Kyte* might well suit.

With the *Stage 4* in the driving seat, the system proved deliciously responsive, and of the three on test, the most adept at grabbing rhythms and timing information by the scruff of the neck. It certainly shone on the Black Grape album, sounding agreeably fluid and on-the-button when conveying bass lines and percussion. The same speed that took care of rhythmic matters also provided snappy vocal articulation, rendering Messrs Ryder and Leveridge's oral exchanges with impressive clarity.

While there might have been room for discussion about its cosmetic disposition at times, there was no question that this system put listeners in touch with the music. The level of communication it achieved here was worth every penny of its slightly over-budget price. Dr John's vocal stylings came across cogently, and his voice seemed filled to overflowing with character and conviction. Similarly, while his piano had fine timbre and authority — albeit without the weight that more extended speakers can deliver — his playing sounded simply superb. ▶▶



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◀ His phrasing, touch and dynamics were sensitively conveyed, making the system's portrayal absolutely satisfying in musical terms.

Again, this seemed a function of the system's speed. It's some time since I heard a set-up at this price that grabbed my attention by demonstrating a true capacity for handling instrumental leading edges correctly. It sailed through Van Morrison's *In The Garden*, catching the distinct characteristics of the choked bass guitar and two acoustic guitars. Each has a peculiar 'flavour', and the system's deft handling of the leading edges and decays of notes highlighted these flavours to good effect. Its response to dynamic changes made an equally worthwhile contribution to the music's impact.

This system sits on a knife edge. It attempts to convey a wealth of musically relevant information and, given the restrictions of tiny speakers, it succeeds. However, this leaves some aspects of its presentation rather exposed. It's not the sort of system that will hide any rough edges in a performance or recording, it doesn't sweeten music's lemons, and I appreciate that its dynamic and temporal agility might make it a little too exuberant for ears tuned to gentler presentations.

☎ *Infidelity* (0181) 943 3530

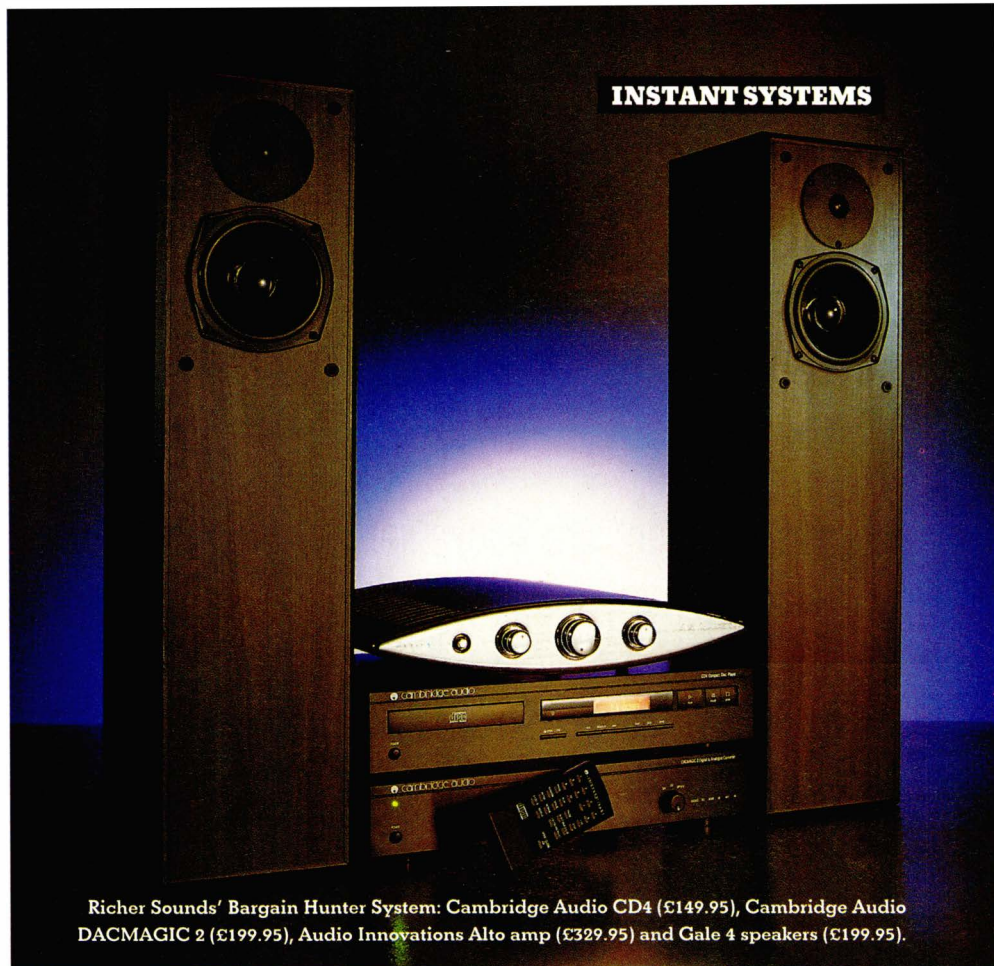
### The Bargain Hunter system

The Richer Sounds system comes in at just under £930, leaving you enough change from the notional budget to buy speaker cables — the only items not included in the package. Every component in the system, right down to the interconnects, is either a Richer Sounds exclusive or is manufactured by the Audio Partnership, the chain's sister operation.

The system's front end is a £149.95 Cambridge Audio *CD4* connected through a £19.95 Cambridge Audio Digital Connector to a £199.95 Cambridge Audio *DACMAGIC 2* external DAC. A pair of £29.95 Cambridge Audio *Pacific* interconnects lead to a chrome finished, £329.95 Audio Innovations *Alto* amplifier, feeding £199.95 Gale 4 loudspeakers. I added Cable Talk speaker cables, which Richer Sounds stocks, to finish off the ensemble. That's all you'd need apart from an equipment rack, because the Gale 4s don't need stands.

The *CD4*'s fascia is devoid of all but the most fundamental controls, and is best described as functional. Its back panel is rather more interesting. It sports two phono sockets for analogue output, and a BNC digital output. The *DACMAGIC 2* has two electrical inputs — both BNC — and one Toslink optical. You don't normally find BNCs on low or even mid-priced players, but my experience suggests they're worth the money. Another unusual feature is the *DACMAGIC 2*'s provision of balanced audio outputs via XLR connectors.

The Audio Innovations *Alto* amplifier provides a real contrast to the staid cosmetics of the CD player and DAC. Like the Cambridge components, though, the ampli-



Richer Sounds' Bargain Hunter System: Cambridge Audio *CD4* (£149.95), Cambridge Audio *DACMAGIC 2* (£199.95), Audio Innovations *Alto* amp (£329.95) and Gale 4 speakers (£199.95).

fier is still a minimalist device, providing users with the means to do no more than is absolutely necessary. Scope for system expansion comes down to three line level inputs and two tape loops. Rated at 35 Watt per channel, it seemed to drive the Gale 4s to decent levels without running out of breath. And those Gale 4s do no harm to Richer Sound's attempt to address more up-market customers. Here's a £200 box that comes ready for bi-wiring and sand-filling: all good for tweak appeal and fine-tuning.

The system has a seriously refined quality; playing Dr John I was highly impressed by the weight of the piano, the controlled blare of the horn section, and the open, transparent rendering of his voice. It sounded significantly more expensive than it is.

Refinement, poise and communicative ease were also evident with Christy Moore. The system sounded lucid and persuasive, with detail flowing freely, while the presentation remained relaxed and easy. A full-blooded tonal balance and good dynamic behaviour helped here: the system's controlled top end and generous bass didn't lose their composure with level changes.

There were times when it didn't push my enjoyment button so firmly. I'd point an accusatory digit at the amplifier for this lapse. It just didn't shift into the right gear for Black Grape. The *Alto* sounded a little laid-back, and couldn't seem to imbue the rhythm section's contribution with the requisite amount of get up and go. In other respects its musical performance was hard to fault, although the *CD4* did have trouble tracking parts of this well-played and not especially clean disc.

This system proved thoroughly capable

despite my reservations regarding its temporal acuity. The individual components seemed harmoniously matched and provided you're not overly sensitive to slightly reticent timing you'll probably find it highly satisfactory. If you're a funk freak I'd suggest you swap the *Alto* for an amplifier with a bit more verve. But if you prefer Mary Black to Black Grape, then this rig deserves a hearty recommendation. ▲

☎ *Hi-Fi Direct* (0171) 827 9827

### CONCLUSION

So, where should you invest that £1,000? If your decision is influenced by quantity as well as quality you'll have to opt for the Denon *F10*. In addition to CD it gives you a cassette deck and a tuner as alternative sources. It looks good and, usefully, it sounds good too. But it's not a purist system and if you're after sound quality above all else, you'll be better served by a conventional separates system.

The choice narrows now to the Richer Sounds system and the one suggested by *Infidelity*. Richer's system is a proficient performer and the least expensive of the two, but I think it's held back by the *Alto* amplifier. That shouldn't pose any problems because the speakers and in particular the CD player are more than capable of working happily with something different.

If it were my money, though, I would find the extra couple of hundred quid and plump for the Micromega and Rega combination. I was never 100 per cent certain about the *Elex*, although I started to find it more appealing after two or three days of continued use. My brief was to find a system that would encourage someone to become more involved with their music, and this is the one that best fits that description.



# Let The Music Play On and On...

CD multiplayers are convenient, but can the latest models match conventional machines for sound quality? Jonathan Jordan tests five.

Think back over a decade, when the prime source of musical refreshment was vinyl LP. A proud owner would cue up the disc, but enjoy no more than half an hour of uninterrupted music before getting up out of the chair, shuffling towards the hi-fi, dusting Side B and, finally, lowering the tone arm for another 30 minutes. It wasn't all bad, though — at least your beer glass didn't stay empty for long!

The arrival of CD made this ritual obsolete, and as maximum playing time rose to 74 minutes, life expectancies of carpets increased around the world. Features such as direct track access and remote control made CD a clear winner in the convenience stakes.

Technology progressed, and a few years later came the CD multiplayer, which introduced an affordable jukebox concept to our lives. However, the early players offered little by way of sonic finesse, and most found employment only as background music providers for pubs and restaurants.

The big question is: have things changed for the better? Although there are now machines that can play continually for five days, this test is pitched at a more sensible level: machines that hold five or six discs. They're certainly convenient, but do they have any musical ability? Using an Audiolab 8000C/8000P pre and power amplifier, Acoustic Energy *Aegis One* Speakers, Chord

Co. *Cobra* interconnects and Nordost *Flatline* cable, each machine was given the opportunity to state its case. After all, what's the point in settling down for an evening of non-stop music, if your player makes you jump from your chair in frustration?

## JVC XL-F216

£200

JVC's *XL-F216* can hold up to five discs. Once the tray is opened up, your albums are mounted horizontally onto a rotating carousel, which is controlled by a disc-change button. This JVC is the largest machine tested in this group, and it is built to a fair standard. The large fascia has been garnished with a wide range of buttons, and a small centrally mounted display provides details of which disc is playing, track times and so on. There is a headphone socket, complete with a volume control, but the machine lacks a digital output at the rear.

Operating the JVC *XL-F216* is easy, with remote control available for true couch potatoes. Changing between discs is a slick process accomplished in just under six seconds, making this player the quickest of the group. Thank goodness, thought I, flipping through disc after disc in a desperate attempt to find music that sounded natural.

The biggest problem with this machine is bass. It doesn't lack clout; rather, the low-end is too full and bloated. Each kick of the bass drum is over-proportioned, while bass guitar lingers and flaps for too long, booming as unpredictably as bangers at a firework display.

This lack of control also degrades lower mid-range definition. When Stuart Copland darts around his drum kit in any Police track, you are unaware that each drum he is hitting actually has a different tone. Vocals attempt to fight their way through this barrage, but end up sounding diluted and weak. This is a shame, because when you play a track with little or no bass — such as Suzanne Vega's *a*

JVC's new XL-F216 shown relaxing on a bed of large kiwi-fruit-flavoured CD, yesterday.





## CD MULTIPLAYERS

cappella version of *Tom's Diner*, the JVC sounded fine. When a band is added into the equation, however, things start to go horribly wrong, and Liam Gallagher's cries throughout *Wonderwall* sounded depressingly sibilant and strained.

The treble is smooth and refined, but it lacks power, and sounds timid. Soundstaging is not particularly impressive, either. There is no depth or width to speak of, and all you get is a mid-speaker central image.

Despite its good operation and build, the 216 failed to impress me with its music. Obviously it has not been designed for systems that are placed under close scrutiny, though maybe its shortcomings would be less obvious in a background-music situation. Although this machine is very convenient to use, its lack of sonic finesse lets it down at the last hurdle.

### JVC XL-F216 - OUR VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £200

- ▲ A big, well built and easily-operated multiplayer; materially, it is good value.
- ▼ Bass overblown and under-controlled; lacks finesse.
- ✉ JVC (UK) Ltd. JVC House, JVC Business Park, Priestley Way, London NW2 7BA
- ☎ (0181) 450 3282

### harman/kardon FL 8300 £280

Unless you have a super-flat stomach, beware! The *FL 8300* has a mighty CD drawer that might catch you in the gut... While most of the other machines in this group present only a modest tray or a svelte magazine, the h/k slides out a massive platter that extends 25cm (ten inches). It holds five discs, and loading in the first four is dead simple. The disc skip button, however — which rotates the carousel — is craftily hidden, along with all the other controls, somewhere under this massive drawer. So locating and using this crucial function is just a little tricky.

Otherwise, this struck me as a well designed machine. With the exception of the power button, all controls feel sturdy, and

Kenwood presents the only magazine you can load into home hi-fi and car stereos. Not as good as Hi-Fi Choice, though...

the casework is of a decent gauge. In addition, there's a coaxial digital output, a headphone socket, and the luminous display can be dimmed or turned off completely. The remote control is comprehensive, and the option to change discs while one is playing ensures a continual music program. Swapping between discs is accomplished efficiently, in less than seven seconds overall.

In fact, the *8300* will probably keep you happily entertained for quite some time. Some players sound very confined, but not this one. The soundstage is open and deep, but not excessively wide. Imaging lacks precision, although it segregates instruments and singers with a fair degree of accuracy.

Bass frequencies may not be thunderously deep, but they are tuneful and quick, and don't have an adverse effect on the lower midrange. This allows more throaty vocalists, of the Leonard Cohen genre, all the low-down power they require. On the other hand, The Cranberries' Dolores O'Riordan

appears full of expression, albeit with a slightly loose edge to the upper portions of her voice.

After prolonged listening, you feel that the Harman lacks a measure of spirit and energy in the upper mid frequencies. With rock, pop and contemporary styles, this lack of body isn't obvious, but a symphony orchestra will reveal its shortcomings, leaving the *8300* sounding rather tired. Top-end detail is good, although there isn't enough intensity to send shivers down your spine. That said, the h/k does have a most natural treble.

The *FL 8300* does have blemishes, particularly in the midrange, but its good bass and open soundstaging make an acceptable sound. Minor skipping problems aside, it's a pleasure to use, and definitely the best sub-£300 player here.

### h/k FL 8300 - OUR VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £280

- ▲ Open-sounding multiplayer with great bass.
- ▼ Some lack of image focus; lacks mid-band imagery; occasional tracking skip noticed.

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

### Kenwood DP-M570 £250

h/k's multiplayer may sound great, but how do you remove that difficult fifth CD?

The only magazines I enjoy are the sort you read. However, Kenwood's *DP-M570* multiplayer relies on the other definition of that noun, meaning that to play a maximum of six CDs, you must load them into a small



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NAD's 515 may not be the prettiest of the pack, but it sounds much smoother than it looks.

plastic box, roughly the size of a paperback, that can be transplanted easily into a car CD changer. The individual trays contained within the cassette are made from delicate grey plastic, and locating each CD takes skill and patience.

Beneath the cassette, the 5570 sports an additional, conventional-style single CD loading drawer, which means you can play a further CD without having to eject the cassette. The comprehensive luminous display is complemented by myriad buttons controlling every option, but many of these are too tiny to speed up operation. However, a headphone socket with variable volume control is a useful inclusion. The general build quality is quite disappointing, and a slight tap to any part of the casework will deliver a rasping rattle.

Once in use, the Kenwood is hampered by a slow, noisy changeover between discs — at around 14 seconds the Kenwood is the tardiest of the test group. This might not seem slow, but considering Damon Hill gets a new set of tyres and a full tank of fuel in less time, it reminds you just how long you're left waiting. When a disc is finally playing, the Kenwood sounds powerful and forward at first. The speakers are worked hard pumping out the bass, but on closer listening, the bass turns out to be all bark and no bite. The shifts between notes on a bass guitar riff, for example, are not accurately portrayed, and although the thumpy bass generates rhythm, it is neither quick enough nor sufficiently defined to leave you totally satisfied.

The soundstage comes well forward from the speakers, but the vital elements of depth

and width are not evident. Every vocal line can be followed, but the midrange is somewhat compressed.

The dynamic range of singers like Pavarotti are not complemented by the Kenwood's presentation. The higher frequencies lack refinement and intensity; this multiplayer steers clear of sounding overbearing or harsh, yet sadly it fails to deliver a free-flowing and intricate treble.

Indeed, when this player is let loose on Radiohead's *The Bends*, it never sounds happy. The thrashing bass guitar is apparent, but so uncontrolled as to cloud the midrange, making drums, vocals and guitars appear recessed and lacking in vitality.

Simple acoustic repertoire is more faithfully reproduced, but even here, it can't resolve all the necessary detail, or effectively separate vocals from any instrumentation. A recent billboard caption suggests 'Power is nothing without control.' Unfortunately, this is a lesson the 5570 needs to learn.

#### KENWOOD M5570 - OUR VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £250

▲ Initially powerful and forward sound; thumpin' bass.  
 ▼ Slow CD change; disappointing build; sound fails to live up to initial expectations.

✉ Trio-Kenwood (UK) Ltd, Kenwood House, Dwight Road, Watford, Herts WD1 8EB  
 ☎ (01923) 816444

**NAD 515** **£350**

No prizes for guessing which machine has the most bluff appearance of this group. That said, the NAD 515 does score by being the easiest to use. For starters, the large drawer only comes out 18cm (seven inches), so you

don't get butted in the belly. Furthermore, the tray is mounted below the buttons and display window, so all functions are always visible. And its *pièce de résistance* is the disc skip button that rotates the loading carousel: this is mounted into the lip of the drawer itself. Loading discs can be mastered in a matter of seconds. Although plastic, the front panel feels rugged, and all buttons are logically arranged. The casework, finished in slightly abrasive matt grey, feels solid to the touch. At the rear is a coaxial digital output, which gave pleasing results when hooked up to an external digital converter.

A characteristically simple remote handset allows complete armchair operation, and the NAD has enough about it to keep you planted in your seat. Within seconds of use, I noticed how it resolved more detail than its competitors. Throughout Oasis's *Wonderwall* it brought out tiny instrumental particulars missed by others. Upper reaches were more succinct, and although the NAD manages to keep treble informative, it doesn't overstep the mark.

At the other end of the frequency spectrum, bass delivery was direct and well projected. Maybe it was not the deepest I have ever heard, but it raced along fast enough to make bass guitars sound involving and fluid. Vocalists from Pavarotti to Chrissie Hynde were clear and controlled, though more midrange energy would have helped. Sudden transients or pace shifts caused the 515 no problems, and although it was smooth and controlled, it didn't suffer from a lack of dynamic power.

Though I liked its tonal balance, the 515's soundstage wasn't up to the standard set by harman/kardon's *FL 8300*. The 515 has inherent musicality and pleases the ear, but it fails to lay bare the inner workings of a mix. On The Pretenders' *Isle of View* acoustic compilation, for example, the NAD managed to project a wide field of music and offer stable imaging, but didn't create great depth. Orchestral pieces, such as Dvorak's



# MS

Mordaunt-Short

In June 1996 WHAT HI-FI? compared the new Mordaunt-Short MS25i to eleven of its closest rivals



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<http://www.mordaunt-short.com/>







*Symphony No. 9*, came across effectively during laconic passages, but once the conductor's baton started waving, the soundstage shrank back into two dimensions.

Swapping between discs took less than seven seconds, and the only operational complaint was the half-second delay between pressing the button on the remote and the machine responding.

The NAD isn't cheap at £350, but it does manage to offer both serious listening pleasure and convenience. The soundstaging may not be of the first order, but the manufacturer's rigorous attention to detail, and the design's musical competence, makes it a great companion for music lovers. If you're seeking a mature-sounding multiplay, the NAD is well worth considering, and firmly deserves Recommended status.

#### NAD 515 - OUR VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £350

▲ One of the most musical multiplayers around.  
 ▼ Imagery could be better; not cheap; 'functional' NADdy styling not to all tastes.

✉ NAD Marketing Ltd, Adastral House, 401-405 Nether Street, London N3 1QG  
 ☎ (0181) 343 3240

#### Sherwood CDC6050R £200

Sherwood's CDC6050R holds five CDs, and like the h/k has a massive drawer that protrudes over 25cm (ten inches). However, as the disc skip button sits above the drawer, loading discs is straightforward. For £200, the Sherwood is built well and specified highly. There is an optical digital output at the rear, and extras include a headphone socket with variable volume control. The central blue display is easy to read, and mechanically, the Sherwood performs well, swapping between discs in less than seven seconds. The styling doesn't break any new ground, though, and the graphics suffer a slight degree of overkill. The buttons on the

Watch out stomach, here comes the drawer of the Sherwood 6050R! Breathe in as you open the player, or you might be in for a surprise.

## CONCLUSION

CD multiplayers have come a long way since their early days, and every machine tested here, with the exception of the Kenwood DP-M5570, was easy to use. Loading up several of your favourite discs and just sitting back is a wonderful experience, and I have to admit that it's all too easy to become a couch potato.

If you're not too fussed about absolute sound quality, the £200 Sherwood 6050R definitely fits the bill. Upping the ante to £280 will buy you the harman/kardon FL 8300, which despite its faults managed to provide good listening pleasure.

And if you can afford it, the £350 NAD 515 is always a pleasure to use, while communicating musical essentials in fine style.

It's worth keeping in mind that although a CD multiplay provides some luxury, this is not without its price. Good single-deck CD players at comparative prices will outperform their multiplay rivals with ease.

That said, the gulf between single and multiplay CD players is getting smaller. For the sheer ease of use offered, I would happily spend an evening with either of the Recommended products.

Both the harman/kardon FL 8300 and the NAD 515 treat music seriously, and although the multiplay as a genre has yet to reach the pinnacle of sonic prowess, the best models are getting closer all the time.

facia are a little small for easy operation, but I spent most time operating this machine with its comprehensive remote control.

Even though the listening volume level was matched for each machine, the Sherwood sounded a touch louder than its rivals. Basslines were prominent, but they didn't extend down too far, and nor was the bass particularly tuneful.

Consequently, it was difficult to follow the notes of a bass guitar. For the most part, mid frequencies were projected effectively from the speakers, and although vocals sounded powerful, the Sherwood offered little by way of vocal dynamics. Acoustic pieces sounded fine, but demanding tracks such as The Cranberries' *Zombie* were painted in a clouded, muddled and unenthralling manner, and there was even a nasal tint to some of the vocals.

Finally, the treble lacked any degree of detail or polish. Against the backdrop of the powerful midrange, all high frequency content sounded pretty weak and lacklustre. Even worse, orchestral strings managed to pick up a metallic edge.

The Sherwood's soundstage extended a way forward, but there was a noticeable lack of width. Furthermore, with gutsy rock, the 6050R's soundstage contracted, and the image became too central. The sound on offer is far from refined, but although it has its shortcomings, the Sherwood does at least try to make the music involving.

Sherwood's CD multiplay is well built, well equipped, and even though it lacks a captivating, tonally accurate sound, neither is it brittle, gutless nor offensive. If convenience is your ultimate goal, and you're prepared to live with less than average sound, the 6050R is great value. If you want more engaging sound, however, realising your dream will require a larger cash outlay. ▲

#### SHERWOOD 6050R - OUR VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £200

▲ Very good build, especially for the price; zingy sound.  
 ▼ Could do with being far more subtle, polished and musically engaging.

✉ Hi-Fi Direct, Richer House, Hankey Place, London SE1 4BB  
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# Help!

Malcolm 'Guru' Steward seeks the great audio truth for the benefit of all hi-fi kind — cor!

Send your hi-fi queries to 'Help!' at the usual address (page 3) or 100433.1130@compuserve.com. We regret that we cannot answer individual queries on a personal basis.

## Query of the month

### Trouble down below

My system originally consisted of a Rotel RCD-965BXLE Discrete CD player, NAD 304 amplifier, and Mission 780 speakers on Atacama SE24 stands. It had trouble playing deep bass notes on CDs by Portishead, Massive Attack, Leftfield, etc. and produced nasty buzzing noises from the speakers. Mission repaired them several times and even replaced them with 780SEs but to no avail. I upgraded my amplifier to a Cyrus III but the problem persisted.

The bottom line is that Mission now tells me that my system simply can't handle this sort of music at high volumes. Is this the best I can expect from one of the UK's top manufacturers? Diluk Dias, via the Internet

*Freed from the constraints of vinyl, record producers often put ridiculous levels of bass onto tracks. Most compact speakers just can't cope with it: they have neither the cone area nor coil excursion necessary to deliver those frequencies at high volume levels.*

*To appreciate Massive Attack at massive volume levels you need incredibly robust loudspeakers. I'm currently using tri-amped Naim DBLs and their fifteen-inch bass drivers have no problems with deep bass at high levels. The Shabinian range — the mighty Diapason, in particular — and active ATC speakers also soak up the sort of musical abuse that fries most speakers. In the above cases, however, you're talking about damaging your bank balance to the tune of around £7,000, before you add the cost of a suitable system to partner the speakers.*

*A real-world solution is to exercise more restraint with the volume control (it'll only save your hearing in later life) and use a more modest but beefier speaker such as Tannoy's 633 II or the Wharfedale Valdus 500.*



Wharfedale's rockin' Valdus 500.

### Stand by for action

My system consists of a Marantz CD-63SE CD player, Arcam Alpha 6+ amplifier and Ruark Sabre speakers. Can I leave the electronics constantly powered, as there is no standby facility, but there is a big difference once the components are warmed up? Could I damage these units by leaving them on?

Could you also offer advice on suitable stands for the

speakers? I've had conflicting opinions regarding solid and open-frame stands.

Finally, I have all this equipment and my Nicam TV and VCR connected to a multi-plug rail from one mains socket. Is this likely to compromise sound quality?

Roman Akert, Dorset

*I can't advise you to leave your hi-fi constantly powered, just in*

A turned-on Arcam amp, yesterday.



*case freak circumstances result in your home going up in flames. That said, my own system hasn't been powered-down in years. In fact, the effects of large surges of current drawn when equipment is switched on often cause components to fail prematurely. The exception is valve equipment, which should not be left permanently powered.*

*When it comes to stands, Ruark itself recommends Partington Trophy and Target HJ stands for the Sabre. I prefer rigid, open frame stands, because of the snappy timing and dynamics they provide — but try solid stands and see which you favour.*

*Regarding your mains connections, I prefer not to have a TV connected to the same socket as hi-fi equipment. And if you're talking about a multi-socket distribution block when you say a 'multi-plug rail' I'd recommend changing it for a Stands Unique four-into-one mains plug, or a high quality distribution block that uses conventional three-pin mains plugs. Kimber Kable, and a number of dealers, make particularly fine examples.*

### T for two?

Currently I have a Philips CD-473 CD player, an Exposure XVII pre-amplifier and XVIII power amplifier, a Nakamichi BX-12Se cassette deck and Ruark Talisman 2 speakers. I want to upgrade the CD player but am not sure which model would best suit my system. I've considered the Pink Triangle Ordinal DAC but I'll have to find a transport to match it in the future. I could buy a Micromega T-DAC now and the matching T-Drive later but I can't find a review on this combination and it's hard to get a demo with my current amp and speakers.

It seems easiest to buy an integrated player and I've short-listed the following: Micromega Stage 6, Naim CD3, Meridian 506 or the Arcam Alpha 5+.

N. H. Wrobel, via the Internet

*I've heard the Micromega T-Drive and T-DAC in a similar system to yours and they seemed ideally matched. However, as far as we can tell the Micromega T-series is no longer in production. Likewise, Micromega's Stage 3 has been replaced by the Stage 6. This also merits consideration and, because it can be converted to work as a dedicated transport, provides a cost-effective upgrade path if you really want*



## THE FRONT END

to finish up with a two-box player. Finally, the Naim CD3 also excels in the timing area and is similarly well suited for the system you own.

### Short but sweet

I want a CD player and amplifier for my Epos ES14 speakers. What is the best combination?  
*Jaume Moreno i Roca, Spain*

The ES14s were designed using Naim amplification — NAC32 preamp with HiCap power supply and NAP250 power amp — and I think this is still the sort of drive to which they respond most keenly. The partnership of revealing amplifiers and speakers necessitates a quality CD player and I'd recommend either the Naim CDS or CD2.

Another option would be Exposure amplification teamed with a CD player from Micromega. This would give you a cosmetically similar sound, with the same kind of rhythmically and dynamically cohesive musical presentation the ES14s relish.

### The Five Year Plan

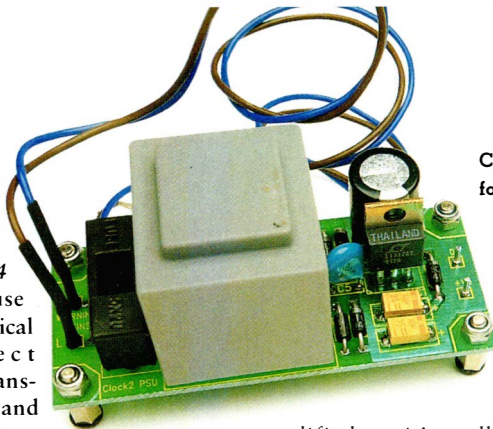
I have a system I like, but think it's time to make it even better. Mostly bought in 1991, it consists of a Meridian 200 transport, '93-vintage Audiolab

8000 DAC, Audiolab 8000C and P amplifiers, and KEF 103/4 speakers. I use Wonderlink optical interconnect between the transport and DAC, and Omni interconnects between the amps. Speaker cables are Astral Blue Space and Time.

I have wide-ranging tastes in music but listen mainly to mainstream rock, pop and classical. I appreciate my system's strong midrange and clarity. With a budget of around £1,000, should I improve my speaker cables — silver? — and interconnects, or buy a good table — Mana? At present I'm using a Target table. And should I consider the Clock 2 upgrade for my transport and replace the foam in my speakers with Deflex acoustic padding?  
*Lien Ber Luen, via the Internet*

Having experienced, as have many others on the Hi-Fi Choice team, the effects of Mana's excellent support furniture, my money's on the table upgrade if you're after dramatic improvements.

You have nothing to lose by having your transport Trichord



modified, as it's well out of its guarantee period. However, before investing money here, try using its coaxial output instead of the optical connection. I think you'll find that gives significant gains in clarity and precision. As to modifying your KEFs, the only advice I can proffer is suck it and see — provided you're confident about dismantling and reassembling them.

### Consult the Oracle

My system consists of: an Oracle Alexandria III with Rega RB300 arm and Audio Technica AT-OC5 cartridge on a Target wall shelf; Meridian 206 CD player; Cambridge P40 amplifier; and KEF Q60 speakers on stands connected with QED 79-Strand cable.

I intend to upgrade the amplifier to a Cyrus III. Can you suggest a good phono transformer for the OC5? My real question, though, concerns replacement speakers. A friend who travels the world has told me about a Phase Linear model he heard. I think they retail for around £1,400 but dealers don't seem to know much about them. Do you have any information?

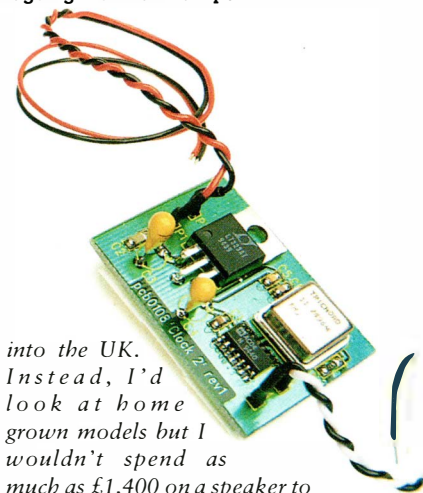
*Steve Knight, London*

The Cyrus III needs a step-up device for moving coils and my favourite always used to be Ortofon's T5 transformers, which are no longer available. Sadly I know of no suitable inexpensive alternatives so you'll need to look at an active device. This will cost more, but the Moth RIAA pre-amplifier is a good value option at £199 or £249, with uprated power supply. An alternative would be to change from the now discontinued AT-OC5 to a moving magnet, such as the Rega Elys, or high output moving coil cartridge, like Denon's DL-110 or the superb DL-304.

As far as I know no-one imports Phase Linear speakers

## HELP!

Can Trichord's Clock 2 save the day for an ageing Meridian transport?



into the UK. Instead, I'd look at home grown models but I wouldn't spend as much as £1,400 on a speaker to use with a modest integrated. You'd do better buying speakers around £400 — such as the Mission 734 or Heybrook Trio — and putting the £1,000 left over towards front-end and amplifier improvements. Whatever you settle on, though, change your 79-Strand — it's a budget speaker cable and not appropriate for a system such as the one you are currently planning.

### Get a grip

My current system comprises a Micromega Stage 3 CD player, Audiolab 8000A amplifier and Tannoy 609 speakers. It sounds pretty good but I believe the speakers are limiting the system. I have £1,000 to upgrade and want a pair of speakers that are dynamic, with plenty of slam, but which can also sound refined when the need arises. The Mission 753s sounded good at the Bristol Hi-Fi Show but I've also heard them sounding poor with harsh, detached treble. Would they suit my Audiolab or do they need an amplifier with more grip?

*S. Rivett, Norfolk*



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**Doug Brady**  
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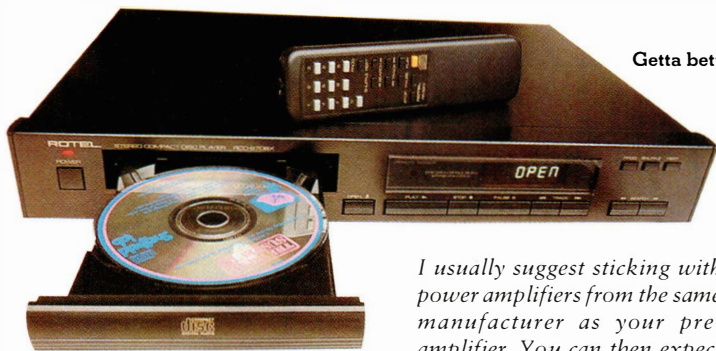
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Getta betta balance with Rotel's RCD-970BX CD.

**HELP!**

### Get a grip (cont.)

I have somewhat mixed feelings about the Tannoy 609 and the Mission 753. Both speakers shine when the system and room are working in their favour, but are unforgiving in other circumstances. Both seem to appreciate largish rooms and muscular amplifiers.

Given your present system I wouldn't spend £1,000 on speakers right now. I'd think first about adding, say, an 8000P power amplifier, which would provide more musically rewarding results. Only then should you think about replacement speakers. I'm rather impressed by the Neat Petite IIs and these would be worth considering later, when your bank balance has recovered from the amp upgrade.

Otherwise, simply replace your Tannoys with a more modestly priced speaker that will fit in better with your system. Look at the Mission 733, the Epos ES11 (although this would really benefit from an improved amplifier too), the Origin Live OL2AS, and TDL's RTL3.

### Audiolab alternatives

My system presently comprises a Meridian 206 Delta Sigma CD player, Audiolab 8000A amplifier and Royd Abbott speakers, bi-wired with Kelvin K19 cable. I am happy with the overall balance of the system but would like a bit more control and extension in the bass. I am considering adding an Audiolab 8000P, using the 8000A as a pre-amp, replacing it with the 8000Q when funds allow. What other amplifiers would you suggest I audition as an alternative to the 8000P? My budget is around £1,000. Ian Brewster, via the Internet

I usually suggest sticking with power amplifiers from the same manufacturer as your pre-amplifier. You can then expect the two units to work optimally together. However, the 8000A isn't a capricious beast so mixing and matching shouldn't pose any real problems. Try the Exposure Super VIII, a pair of Arcam's Delta 290Ps to bi-amp your speakers, one of Heybrook's Signature series amplifiers, or check out the Moth Thirty Series 100W mono power amplifiers reviewed in issue 155.

### Start me up (slight return)

My system comprises a harman/kardon 6100 amplifier, Denon TU-280 tuner, Kenwood KX-54 tape deck and a Pioneer PD-5300 CD player. I'm using a twenty-year-old pair of Philips loudspeakers, which I consider good but not good enough. I'd like to upgrade the system but don't know whether to start with the CD player or speakers.

I've listened to some Mission speakers and I liked the 780SEs for their musicality but they have been discontinued here in Holland. I heard the 751s but they sounded a bit sharp — maybe they needed running in. I found the 731s and 732s entertaining but not delicate enough for classical.

My room doesn't allow me to use floorstanders. My musical tastes vary but as I listen to organ I like clean, detailed bass more than lots of bass. I can spend £200 on a CD player or £350 on loudspeakers.

Derkjan de Haan, via the Internet

Your budget allocation is a bit askew: you're heading for a sideways shift rather than a significant upgrade. Spending £350 on the CD player and £200 on the speakers will give you a better balanced, more capable system. I'd recommend

you try a combination such as the Rotel RCD-970BX CD player, with a pair of Mordaunt-Short MS20i loudspeakers, which ought to give you the musicality you desire, and well controlled, surprisingly extended bass.

Compare the Rotel with players such as the Denon DCD-1015 and the Pioneer PD-S703, and put the speakers

up against models such as the Tannoy 632, Rega Kyte, and the JPW AP2.

### Budget boost

I have a Marantz CD-63 CD player and Mission 731 speakers driven by a NAD 310 integrated amplifier. I am looking for a clearer midrange and treble, and a little more loudness, but I only have £150 to spend.

## DEALER DECISIONS

### A trio of top dealers solve a reader's conundrum

#### The Query

For the last three years, my hi-fi has been in storage while I worked in Asia. Upon seeing my Tannoy SRMs and Meridian 206 Bitstream CD player I had an urge to get them connected, but my Quad 44/405 pre-power amp was not to be found. One insurance cheque later, I am in need of about £1,500 worth of amplification to match the above.

I listen to anything from Dub to Bach, and I am going into ProLogic. I am all ears for suggestions — maybe a top-end surround amp, but do they have the sound quality for audio use?

Bob Roberts, West London

#### Solution #1

You need have no concerns regarding top-end AV amplifiers being suitable for serious hi-fi use; in fact it is the processor that is usually below par. Our choice would be the five channel Magnum A500 (5x120w) MOSFET amplifier, that allows easy switching from stereo to AV.

For a high quality processor in your price range, we would suggest the Harman/Kardon AVP2. This should be excellent with the Tannoys and prepares the way for the ultimate add-on — a REL Stadium II subwoofer.

Laurie Wolfe, Hertford Music, Hailey, Hertfordshire

#### Solution #2

We recommend an amplifier which provides seamless integration of AV and audio-only sources, such as the Arcam Xeta One and Yamaha DSP-A2070. An alternative would be the Arcam Delta 290 integrated amplifier with a Xeta Two processor. The hi-fi performance will be improved, while retaining sufficient video switching for most situations.

Aside from Tannoy centre and surround speakers, we would also recommend checking out Definitive Technology and KEF Reference ranges. The new range of AV speakers from Linn, while stretching the budget, are excellent and should also be auditioned. When funds permit, a Miller & Kreisel or KEF sub-woofer should be auditioned, preferably at home.

Steve Carroll, Congleton Hi-Fi, Cheshire

#### Solution #3

The Meridian 206 is an excellent CD player and Naim amplification would realise its full potential. Also, the Tannoy's dual concentric drive units need controlling, which Naim would do perfectly. So, opt for the Naim NAC 72 and NAP 140 pre/power amplifier combination.

If ProLogic is more important than stereo, investigate Arcam's Xeta One. A quality centre channel speaker and surrounds from Mission would complete the ProLogic package.

I feel AV amps are not best for audio use, but listen for yourself. You can always add a ProLogic decoder to the Naim for the best of both worlds...

Frank Moran, Overture Hi-Fi, Oxford

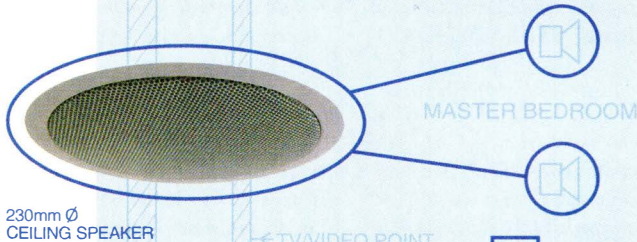
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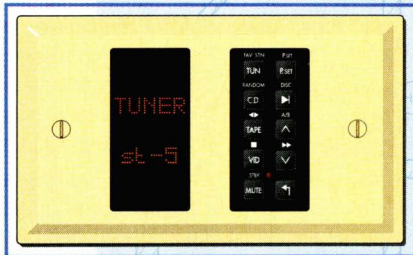
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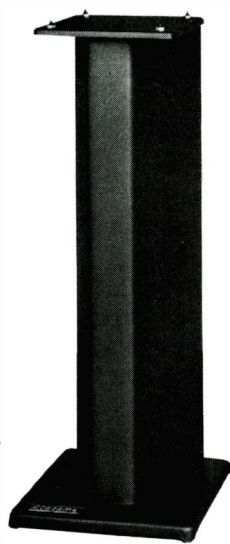
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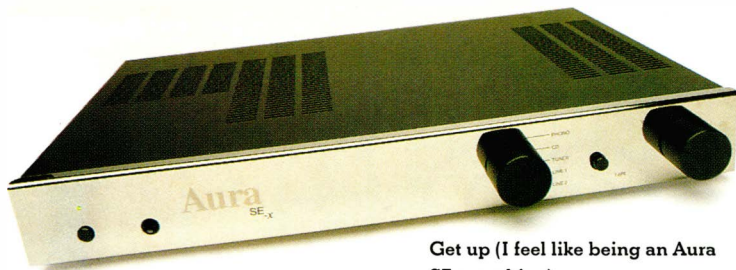
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Get up (I feel like being an Aura SE<sub>x</sub> machine).

I could buy either a Rotor RA930AXII or a Kenwood 3020SE (on special offer). Alternatively, I could buy Mordaunt-Short MS20 speakers for £120 on sale: would these give me the sound I want? My listening room is only 3m by 2m and I listen to rock, pop and dance music.

Phillip Reed, Devon

I'd say look at speakers. The Mordaunt-Short MS20's bigger cabinet will pay dividends in a system like yours. With them, your NAD amplifier should provide better low-end performance, paying dividends further up the spectrum.

An amplifier upgrade may seem more logical, but the improvement the Kenwood 3020SE provides isn't really that dramatic.

#### Style-conscious stereo

I have £1,000 to replace my stolen amplifier and speakers, and to add a CD player. I'd welcome some stylish recommendations as I'm keen on appearance. The components should work well with my Manticore Mantra turntable.

Duncan Kay, Essex

Aura's elegant VA100 amplifier and CD100 CD player fit perfectly within your budget, leaving you around £270 a pair of B&W's DM602 speakers.

Ultimately, though, it's how the system sounds that matters, so don't let the absence of a dashing demeanour tempt you away from a component that excites you musically.

#### CDs to stun by

I have a Marantz CD-50SE CD player, Pioneer A-400 amp, Dual CS-505II turntable with Audio Technica AT-110E cartridge, B&W DM600 speakers,



DNM interconnect and Cable Talk Concert 2 speaker cable.

I'm stunned by the musicality and enjoyment I get from my vinyl LPs compared to CDs. However, I need to buy a new CD player and I'd like one that will match the musical performance of my turntable. I have £300 to spend.

Paul Wood, Hampshire

I reckon that most CD players fail to deliver that indefinable 'rightness' that turntables offer. However, some do sound musically persuasive. One such machine is the popular £349 Rotor RCD-970BX, thanks to its robust tonal balance and open midrange.

Others in your price range that I'd suggest auditioning are the Sony CDP-761E, Denon DCD-1015 and Pioneer's Legato Link PDS-703.

#### Bringing up Baby

My system comprises a Pioneer PD-7700 CD player, a Pioneer A-400x and baby Sony speakers. What speakers would you recommend as a good match for my system? How about the 'Best Buy' Mission 733s? Could you also suggest a CD player as an upgrade? I listen to modern music and like rock with plenty of deep bass.

Greg Quimio, Brisbane, Australia

The Mission 733 is well suited your amplifier: it's easy to drive and generous at the low end. Other speakers you should listen to include the Tannoy 633 II, Mordaunt-Short MS30i, and Rega EL8. You might also enjoy the TDL RTL2.

If you're chasing serious bass you'll need a suitably tight-sounding, well controlled CD player. Start with the Rotor RCD-970BX and work your way up the price ladder to the

Micromega Stage players and Arcam's Alpha 5 Plus and 6 machines, or even a Naim CD3 or Meridian 508.

## HINTS AND TIPS

### Jimmy Hughes finds monophonic music is perfect to set up a pair of stereophonic speakers.

It's sobering to reflect on the historical origins of loudspeaker positioning for optimum stereo presentation. As long ago as 1956, F H Brittain and D M Leakey wrote articles for *Wireless World* on the subject, entitled *Two Channel Stereophonic Sound Systems*. Stereo in the home wasn't a reality until about 1958, yet Brittain and Leakey laid down basic principles that are still being followed slavishly today.

I must be one of the few enthusiasts anywhere in the world not using the Brittain and Leakey arrangement — see my past articles on using speakers in reverse. Though I prefer a different layout to Brittain and Leakey, their tried-and-tested method does have a number of advantages — principally in the creation of a solid narrow image when both speakers are fed with an identical mono signal. This is of crucial importance when it comes to creating a wide, stable, precise left-centre-right stereo soundstage.

If your speakers are optimally set up, you should hear a narrow centre image when a mono signal is played. Generally this will only be achieved if the speakers are angled (toed-in) so their axes cross at an imaginary point in or in front of the main listening area.

With speakers flat against a wall and pointing straight down the room, an arrangement often employed in British homes, you won't achieve a narrow centre image with mono recordings, but effectively create a 'double mono' effect. As a result, stereo soundstaging will be less pin-point precise than it could be, with vague centre placement and poor 'spread' between left/right channels.

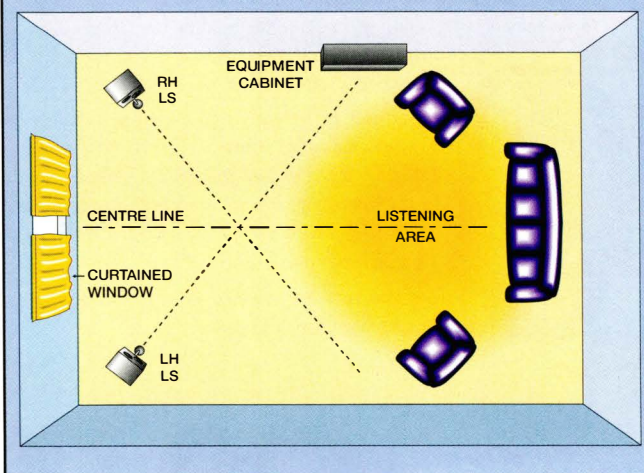
Whether it is wholly desirable to achieve a narrow centre image with two speakers is a moot point, as live sound is never so precise. But a narrow centre image does ensure that you hear exactly how a recording was miked and mixed stereophonically, by allowing the speakers to recreate the subtle shifts of amplitude and phase the ear uses to locate sounds.

Try this experiment. With a mono recording or radio broadcast, see how narrow your phantom centre image sounds. You should hear a thin narrow central line of sound and not be aware of two spaced loudspeakers — only an image between them.

If you don't get a clear impression of a centre image, check for correct speaker phasing then angle each enclosure in or out until the image snaps into focus. If possible, alter the distance between your listening seat and the speakers, moving closer or further away to see what happens.

A narrow centre image with two-speaker mono will not necessarily result in a more pleasing overall sound, but things should be more precise. And this should allow you to hear the music exactly as it was recorded.

Experiment with toe-in for perfect sound!





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# that personal touch

Rob Tribe scoops up some of the sexiest new personal tape and CD players, to see which should be nestling in your holiday luggage.

Sir Cliff Richard, despite liking both tall and small speakers, would be shocked at the rapid changes in personal stereo technology. In the days when he was wired for sound, Dynamic Bass Boost was just a twinkle in Mr Sony's eye, in-the-ear headphones were something that only deaf people wore, and the great man's musical version of *Wuthering Heights* was seen as a fantastical dream that could only come true in a mad world. Regrettably, this is a mad world.

So what's happening with the personal stereo, 17 years from its inception? Nowadays we have come to depend on personals to serenade us as we lie on a sun-kissed beach, or to alleviate stress in today's loud, crowded, commuter world. Personals come in all shapes and sizes, and at all price points. A French pen-pal of mine bought one that fitted around the tape: the tape was actually bigger than the unit, it cost ten pounds, and I knew it would break within a day. But after I had sold it to him I thought it wise not to mention this...

Choosing a good personal is not always easy. Successful designs are a rare combination of good engineering and value-conscious specification, and although none but the most expensive designs approach the performance of separates hi-fi, there are vast differences in the type of sound these small boxes can reproduce. Throw CD players into the picture and shopping for personal audio becomes a task of Herculean proportions. However, this is where we come to the rescue, with a collection of the best models from the latest ranges, together with seasoned advice for those in search of 'sounds to go'.

AIWA HS-PX357 - OUR VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£55
◆	Good tone controls make for exciting sound. Headphone volume control is hard to use; no rechargeable battery.
✉	Aiwa (UK) Ltd, 5 Heathrow Summit Centre, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 0LY
☎	(0181) 897 7000

What the *HS-PX357* lacks in style, it makes up in sound quality. It shares the Ear Guard feature and Dolby noise reduction of its bigger brother, the *HS-PX557*, but omits 'Super Bass'; instead, the '357 sports a 'Multi-Sound Processor', which in practice is a four-way pre-set equalisation system.

The case is plastic, and similar to that of a personal I owned a few years ago. I must confess I dropped that one accidentally, and it has never worked properly since. So this unit probably won't take as much rough and tumble as Aiwa's metal-cased '557.

The in-lead remote is small and has less functions than that of the '557, and while the headphones are lightweight and of good quality, they leak too much sound outside the ear.

I found it rather difficult to set the volume level on the unit so that the volume control in the lead worked over an acceptable range. On both Sonys tested here, you need only set the volume to full on the main unit, and then the whole range is available on the remote. On both Aiwas, the volume cannot be turned down completely from the remote, which is frustrating if the unit is in your pocket.

The '357's greatest asset is its Multi Sound Processor. 'Classic' mode is like a Signal Directmode on an integrated amplifier, 'Pop' boosts the mid-bass and middle but keeps treble under control, 'Rock' again increases mid-bass but leaves the middle and treble flat, while 'Jazz' gives the low-end a big boost and gently tweaks the treble.

It's easy to find a satisfying setting for the

Aiwa HS-PX357: impressive sound and useful tone controls for an affordable price.





tape you're playing, and in my book, this makes the '357 a better choice than the '557. It's cheaper, offers better control of the sound, and doesn't drown your music in bass. That makes up for the lack of rechargeable battery — instead, it takes two AAA cells. Incidentally, for an extra £15, you can pick up an *HS-PX457*, which includes all of the 357's features, as well as a rechargeable battery.

**AIWA HS-PX557 - OUR VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £85

▲ Rugged, stylish appearance; useful battery, good ergonomics.  
 ▼ Disappointing sound for the price.

✉ Aiwa, 5 Heathrow Summit Centre, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 0LY  
 ☎ (0181) 897 7000

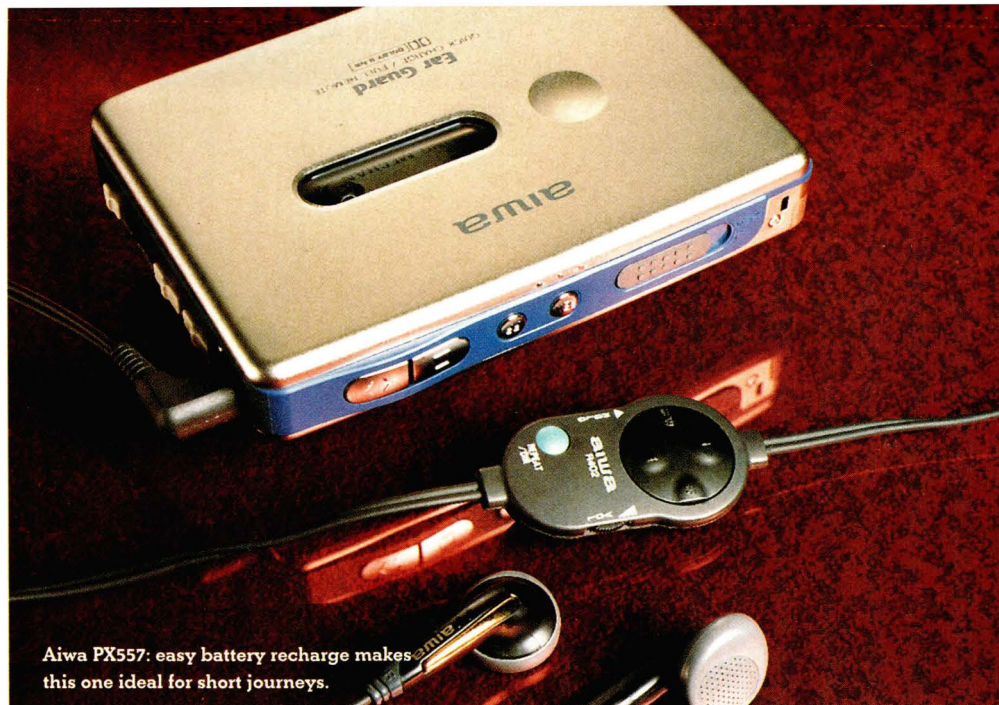
Aiwa has always made good tape personals. Each new range sports innovations, and the most successful of these carry over to the next series. The result has been a continuous refinement of Aiwa's products, so each year its personals have just got better and better. The *HS-PX557* continues in the tradition of a good quality product at a reasonable price, and with its stylish design it certainly looks more exclusive than its £85 price tag would suggest. The metal casing seems tough, and the matt finish should resist the scratches and dents that personals tend to amass.

Like many units of this ilk, the '557 includes headphones with a remote control in the lead, and a rechargeable battery that claims to offer two hours of playback after ten minutes of exposure to mains juice — ideal for short journeys. There is also a case for normal batteries: in this instance two AAAs. I must say this personal doesn't go a bundle on new features, sticking to old favourites such as Dolby noise reduction and a battery power indicator. However, there is Super Bass for bombastic tunes, and an Ear Guard feature that aims to protect your eardrums from sonic excess. Unlike other volume limiting systems — which as a breed will become compulsory under pending European legislation — Ear Guard doesn't leave you struggling to hear the music on a crowded bus or train.

So this Aiwa has good looks aplenty, and ergonomic styling right down to the little indent for your thumb, to prevent the unit from shooting out of your hands like a bar of soap. However, its sound quality isn't up to the standard of previous years' models, or even this year's cheaper Aiwa option.

Even without bass boost, the '557 has a lot of low end. Normally this isn't such a bad thing if there is sufficient treble to go with it. However to my ears, the tonal balance is tilted too far towards the nether frequencies, so the Super Bass effect only smothers the music with pounding oomph.

The '557 sounds a lot better than other personals, even at this price range, but for an Aiwa, and in comparison to its cheaper sibling, alas it doesn't live up to expectations.



Aiwa PX557: easy battery recharge makes this one ideal for short journeys.

**SONY WM-EX1HG - OUR VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £200

▲ Superbly made, stylish, great sound, excellent remote.  
 ▼ Shiny case may be susceptible to fingerprints and scratches; just replaced by WM-EX2.

✉ Sony Consumer Products Group, Sony UK Ltd, The Heights, Weybridge KT13 0XW  
 ☎ (0181) 784 1144

If you have £200 to spend, this is the Walkman you should buy. It is beautifully styled, with a casing so shiny you could use it as a shaving mirror. Of course, this sheen will show up each and every fingerprint, but a cleaning cloth and pouch are included. Playback controls are hidden behind a sliding bronze panel, lending a futuristic, rugged air. Auto Music Search is a big bonus when you're trying to find your favourite track.

There's a remote control in the lead, but this one incorporates a digital readout to tell you which functions are selected, and allows access to the four sound equalisation functions: 'Flat', 'Vocal', 'DBB1' (Dynamic Bass Boost) and 'DBB2'. (These functions may

only be addressed from the remote, so if you want to replace the standard headphones you'd have to give up on tone controls.)

The Vocal setting boosts the middle frequencies, while DBB1 and DBB2 give you two types of bass, but ultimately it comes down to a matter of personal preference, as this machine sounds good in all modes.

At this price you'd expect Dolby circuits to reduce tape hiss without cutting off too much treble. All too often, lesser players' Dolby destroys the highs. Overall, sound quality is brilliant: both pre-recorded and home recordings come across well, with good separation between instruments, spacious soundstage, and excellent tonal balance.

The rechargeable battery offers extended playback after a relatively short charge, and the charger itself is as swish as the Walkman. When you pay £200 for this kind of product, you expect it to perform well, and the WM-EX1HG surpasses all expectations.

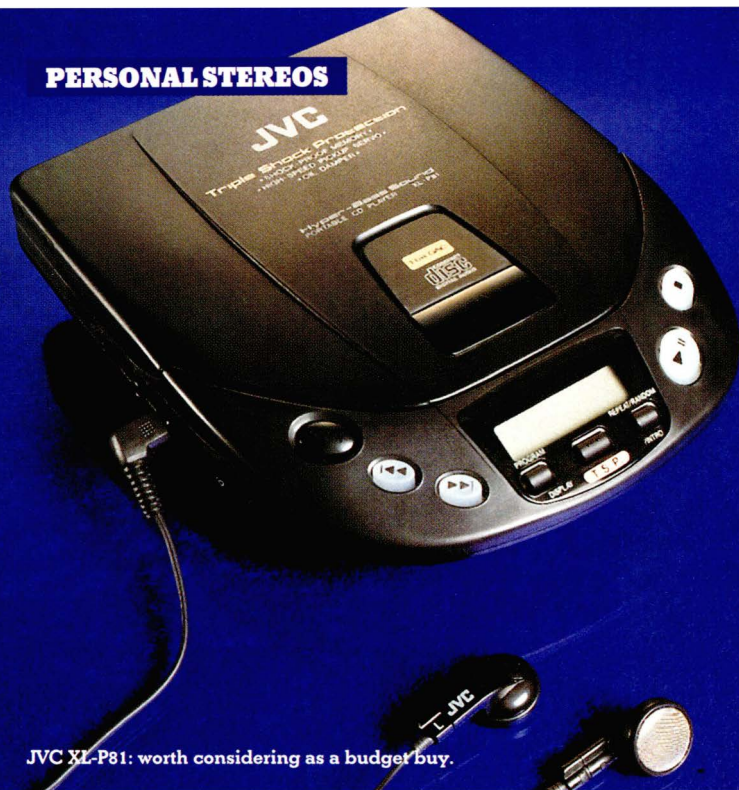
At the time of going to press, Sony informed us that the WM-EX1HG has been superseded by the WM-EX2, which has very similar specs, and costs £20 less. But if you're quick, you may still find the original!



Sony WM-EX1HG: superb performance from this silver surfer.



## PERSONAL STEREOS



JVC XL-P81: worth considering as a budget buy.

### JVC XL-P81 - OUR VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £130

- ▲ Good roster of features, and apparently high technology input.
  - ▼ Headphones are flimsy; skip protection is ineffective; no remote control.
- ✉ JVC UK Ltd, JVC House, JVC Business Park, Priestley Way, LONDON, NW2 7BA  
 ☎ (0181) 450 3282

While many CD portables have boastful front-panel graphics advertising macho microchip technology within, this JVC tops them all with its 'High Speed Pickup Servo'!

I have to admit that I was sometimes baffled by the way this unit operates. Take its anti-skipsystem, for example, dubbed 'Triple Shock Protection' (TSP). This turns itself on automatically when the unit is plugged into its mains adapter, but when you operate on battery power (four rechargeable AAs, supplied in the carton), you have to turn on TSP yourself. Surely the control logic of this should be inverted?

TSP includes three components: signal buffer chip, high-speed pickup servo, and an oil damping system. Regrettably, its performance when jostled is not up to the standards of the Sony and Sanyo in this test.

The machine's 'Hyper-Bass Sound' lives up to its name, but unfortunately, the small standard-issue headphones are not powerful enough for the job. They distort at high volume, provide muddy bass, overdo the treble, and suck out all the middle.

There is no remote control built into the headphone lead, which reinforces the fact that this isn't the most useful unit for those on the move. At this price, however, it's a reasonable purchase for kids who want a CD player in their bedroom. Just remember that for £20 extra, you could have the added features and performance of the Sanyo player.

## Buying a personal

With so many models on the market, picking the right one can be an arduous task. In the past I have experienced loads of hassle while buying, worst of all in shops that refuse to let you hear a personal tape or CD player before buying. Don't be fooled by glossy exteriors, flashy lights or millions of features: the only way to buy one of these gizmos is to listen to it — with its own headphones!

Also, it's a good idea to conduct this audition using your own favourite music, ideally a piece that you know really well. When you find the personal that plays your tune like you want to hear it, you have found the unit you should buy.

Finally, don't be fooled by price. Many of the £60 personals perform as well as or better than their £150 counterparts. That's yet another good reason for auditioning as many as possible!

## Upgrading your personal's headphones

It's a fact of life that some personals come with good headphones, and some don't. Maybe one reason for Aiwa's success in personals is the quality of their supplied headphones: they handle a good range of frequencies, offer solid bass performance, and only stop working when you tread on them. However, you'll often improve the sound of all but the cheapest personals by substituting a pair of after-market cans; and for those who wish to follow this path, there are many options available.

Here are a few points to remember above all others. First, don't buy anything without listening to it first. Second, ensure that your chosen headphone has a 3.5mm plug, the standard size for personals. Many will come complete with an adapter to the 6.3mm size that is standard for hi-fi equipment's headphone sockets. Third, have a thought for your fellow commuters or beach bums: many headphones leak sound like a Russian nuclear plant leaks radiation, and there is nothing more annoying than hearing someone else's drum'n'bass compilation on the train. Fourth, try to make sure that if you're wearing your headphones in the street, they don't make you look like a Radio One DJ from the '70s.

For those who are super serious about ear-hugging sound, you can't do much better than Vivanco's *SR200ifl* or Sennheiser's *HD565 Ovation* models, both priced at £140. Each one offers a clear, tight sound, but to my ears the Vivanco has the edge.

At the other end of the price scale you'll find beyerdynamic's *DT111 Gamma* (£25), which incorporates a sliding volume control in its lead. This gives good sound, and offers an excellent budget alternative.

However, if you want to be seen around town in the correct head-gear, plump for a pair of Sony's innovative *MDR-D77* (£120). These cans have a sleek, egg-shaped design, and fold away so small that they defy the laws of physics. They don't distort the sound, and in terms of mass they are lighter than an American beer convention. Also, the *MDR-D77* is supplied with special connecting leads, that will interface with Sony's non-standard jack sockets for their in-lead remoted controls (like you'll find on the *WM-EX1HG*).

And don't forget that functions accessed solely via the in-lead remote control, such as the aforementioned Sony's *DBB1* and *DBB2* modes, may no longer be available if you change headphones. That is, unless the remote control unit has a socket for a new pair of headphones, as it does on the Sanyo *CDP-550*.



Boisterous beyerdynamic



Vivacious Vivanco



Sexy Sony



Sleek Sennheiser



## PERSONAL STEREOS

### SANYO CDP-550 - OUR VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £150

▲ Useful DSP facility enhances sound; headphones are easily upgraded.

▼ Supplied headphones are flimsy; casework plasticky.

✉ Sanyo (UK) Sales Ltd, Sanyo House, Otterspool Way, Watford WD2 8JX  
 ☎ (01923) 246363



Resplendent with high-tech-sounding features like 'Hyper Digital Anti Shock', Sanyo's CDP-550 is a good alternative to the Sony D-777. It shares many similar features with Sony's impressive player, but adds some of its own to make a very attractive proposition.

First, and probably most important, are the DSP (Digital Signal Processing) modes. DSP, the aural equivalent of monosodium glutamate, can make an average sound stunning, and with Sanyo's implementation, I think most people will find a sound that they like. There are three modes, excluding a direct sound: these are 'LIVE1', which adds more bass; 'LIVE2', which adds more ambience; and 'LIVE3', which increases both bass and ambience — an interesting effect. Unlike the D-777's, the Sanyo's DSP options don't increase treble, and provide a very reasonable sound. Whether the headphones are up to the job is a different matter.

As with the Sony cans, the headphones have a remote control unit within their lead, but the actual in-ear transducers are small and insubstantial. However, because the wired remote control has a headphone socket in it, you can unplug the supplied ear-pieces and replace them with your own favourites.

At this price level it's inevitable that the CDP-550's casework is plastic, so you wouldn't want to throw this in your bag with too much abandon. Even so, it still seems more rugged than some of its counterparts. The 'Digital Anti-Shock Protection' works really well, and you shouldn't have too many problems listening on the move. You can see how much music is in the buffer on an LCD panel on the front of the player.

Supplied with a bizarre-looking long rechargeable battery, the CDP-550 will also run from two AA batteries, and into the bargain you get a handy carry case and strap. So despite the small and puny headphones, this is a good player with broad appeal.

### SONY D-777 - OUR VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £320

▲ Very slim, compact design; good battery life; ten-second signal buffer.

▼ Sound quality suspect; unpleasant bass boost effect.

✉ Sony Consumer Products Group, Sony UK Ltd, The Heights, Weybridge KT13 0XW  
 ☎ (0181) 784 1144



It's an inescapable problem with CD personals that when you try to use them on the move, the fragile CD reproduction system finds it hard to give uninterrupted play-



Sanyo CDP-550: makes it easy to find a sound you like.

back. The laser pick-up loses its way when jogged, and interrupts the music with almost every step you take. Recent years have seen the arrival of computer-chip sound 'buffers', which store the CD's digital signal for a few seconds in an attempt to keep the music playing, even if the laser beam has temporarily lost its way. However, the effectiveness of this fix depends on how many seconds of music the buffer chip can accommodate. Three seconds is a start, but ten seconds — as offered in Sony's D-777, under the soubriquet ESP ('Electronic Shock Protection') — makes a big difference. I would not recommend you go jogging with the D-777, but it certainly handles the commuter journeys with ease: it skips only when seriously jostled.

This Discman is little thicker than a CD case, and as such, is a lot slimmer than many other CD personals, although you would need gargantuan pockets to accommodate it. The casework is metal, which means you can

sling it in a bag with an easy conscience.

Unfortunately, I have to report that this CD player doesn't sound as good as Sony's WM-EX1HG tape personal. Although the D-777 offers two bass boosts, these increase the already abundant treble, making many CDs hard on the ear. The earphone pads tame the treble a little, but do not subdue it.

The D-777 incorporates many of the features found on a full-sized CD player, such as 'Track Shuffle', 'Intro Play' and 'Repeat', but it also has features that really benefit a CD portable, like 'Resume', which remembers where you last stopped the CD.

Two rechargeable batteries are included, but with the help of a snap-on, two-AA battery casing, the D-777 can run for a few weeks of average use. Inevitably, functions such as ESP and Resume consume more juice.

Despite its fierce treble, the D-777 has many appealing features, of which the greatest is its superior portability. ▲

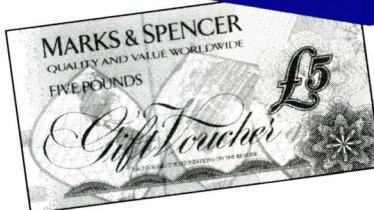
Sony D-777: makes its rivals look positively overweight!





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The system comes complete with £250 *SX-F1WD* acoustic suspension loudspeakers, which sport a

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First runner-up will receive the £900 *AV-29SX1* 68cm Dolby Pro-Logic TV. This super-flat-screen Nicam TV handles PAL and NTSC signals, and features 3D-Phonic for lounge-friendly surround.

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The HR-J825 Nicam VCR.



## THE QUESTION

**What does JVC stand for?**

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- b) Japan Video Company
- c) Japan Victor Company
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*All postal entries must arrive by first post, Friday 26th July, 1996.*

## COMPETITION RULES

- The Closing Date for this competition is Friday 26th July, 1996.
- Winners of the JVC competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, 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.
- The JVC competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd., JVC UK Ltd., nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
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# Saucy speakers

Paul Messenger rounds up Britain's hottest, best-selling boxes, and puts them head to head with the most exciting newcomers. Ultimate speakers? We got 'em! Lab tests by Paul Miller.

This Grand Trial by Peer Group gives us an opportunity to sort the men from the boys in budget speakers. Since we have included a number of previously tested models, this has also given the opportunity to ascertain whether products have changed over the months; several have, some quite significantly.

Our reviewing procedures have been thoroughly revised for this issue. The standard programme of blind and hands-on listening tests, room measurements, and engineering inspection, has been extended significantly. Now it includes a separate in-depth technical investigation in Paul Miller's 'virtual instrument' laboratory (see his Oasis of Sanity, page 23). We also carried out additional 'hands-on' listening sessions using a budget component system — see Alternative Sources below.

In the group there are three best-selling models each from market leaders Mission and KEF, plus another three from the Richer

Sounds operation (this retail group has a large share in budget hi-fi, and tends to sell its own specifically-sourced speakers).

B&W's brand-new 302 and nearly new 601 are both storming up the sales charts.

## THE CAST LIST

B&W DM302 .....	£130
B&W DM601 .....	£200
GALE Model 4 .....	£200
JPW Mini Monitor .....	£60
JPW Gold Monitor .....	£80
KEF Coda 7 .....	£129
KEF Coda 8 .....	£189
KEF Coda 9 .....	£299
MISSION 731 .....	£130
MISSION 733 .....	£300
MISSION 751 .....	£300
MORDAUNT-SHORT MS10i .....	£140
REVOLVER Beretta .....	£100
TANNOY 631SE .....	£170

Mordaunt-Short's new MS10i looks a very strong replacement for the highly successful MS10, while Tannoy's SE variation on its budget 631 Best Buy shows what a little extra cash can achieve. The Revolver Beretta helps put its bigger selling rivals into context.

The £300 price ceiling doesn't provide designers with a great deal of flexibility. All but one therefore follows the standard two-way format of main driver (bass/mid) plus tweeter; only KEF's Coda 9 adds an extra bass driver. Nine of the fourteen are stand-mount miniatures, with an internal volume of six to ten litres. Two are close to the old standard bookshelf size (around 15 litres). The other three are floorstanders, the two two-ways being around 20-25 litres internal volume.

Thanks to our panel: David Inman (Castle), Robin Marshall (Mission), Richard Dunn (NVA), Gary Mardell (Mordaunt-Short), Graham Foy (Mordaunt-Short), Ken Weller (B&W), and Laurence Dickie (B&W).

## How did we do the tests?

With fourteen speakers waiting in line, the 'blind' listening tests were spread over two separate days, allowing a number of repeats.

The speaker stands used with the bookshelf models were Slate Audio, and Atacama SE24s.

The main reference system used for the blind tests, and some hands-on work, consisted of the usual collection of Mana-supported Naim and Linn components, viz: Linn LP12 turntable, Naim ARO tonearm, Linn Arkiv cartridge, Naim CDS CD player, NATO1 tuner, NAC52 preamp and NAP135 power amps.

Further hands-on tests, to investigate matters of system synergy, were carried out using a 'budget' CD-based system, as detailed on the right.

## THE LISTENING TEST

### Alternative Sources

This month we carried out additional 'hands-on' listening sessions, using a typical budget component system, of the sort likely to end up driving these boxes in most people's homes. We used a Marantz CD63SE CD player and Arcam Alpha 5 amp, and though they couldn't match dynamic and bandwidth resolution of the Linn/Naim rig, this exercise provided another fascinating insight into the black art of system matching.

## Albums we listened to

### Leftfield

Leftism

### Christy Moore

Live at the Point

### Joan Armatrading

Joan Armatrading

### Tom Waits

Rain Dogs

### Sibelius/Maazel/VPO

Symphony No. 6

### Cambridge Singers/Rutter

There is Sweet Music

### Gershwin/Mehta/LAPO

An American in Paris





B&W DM601



B&W DM302



JPW Mini Monitor



Mission 731



Mordaunt-Short MS10i



Tannoy 631SE



Revolver Beretta



KEF Coda 7



KEF Coda 8



JPW Gold Monitor



Mission 751



Gale Model 4



KEF Coda 9



Mission 733





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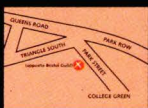


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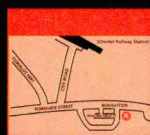
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# B&W DM302

From a global perspective, B&W currently seems to be Britain's most successful hi-fi speaker builder. Yet this very export-oriented operation has hitherto avoided getting involved in the marketing maelstrom of seven-litre budget miniatures, which now seem to hold sway over the UK sales scene.

The 302 therefore represents a major change. It's pitched directly at the key £130 price point currently dominated by KEF and Mission. It's not only the heaviest but also the biggest of the four competitors tested here, and throws down the gauntlet with no intention of taking prisoners.

There's also a gimmick which sets the 302 apart from its rivals, although the term 'gimmick' perhaps sells short a very clever

way of using plastics moulding technology to engineer a performance advantage. 'Prism' is the name B&W has given to a rear panel moulding which looks like the interior of an anechoic chamber (from inside the box, that is), with large intruding wedge-shapes. The main idea is to break up, distribute and disperse the 'first reflection' soundwaves from the back of the main driver cone, so that their unwanted contribution is less coherent and frequency-focused, thereby reducing subjective 'boxiness'.

The vinyl-covered wrap is a rather meagre 12mm thick, although the heavy back certainly adds some structural integrity. The front is attractively sculpted to minimise width and present a clean appearance (grille on or off), and it incorporates a small slot-shaped port. The rear-mounted

driver fixing arrangements, however, look and feel less promising.

If the 302's enclosure engineering is arguably more advanced than that used in the more expensive 600 series models, the drivers used here are considerably more prosaic. The main driver uses a 95mm flared, doped paper cone, steel frame and decent size magnet, while the tweeter has a 25mm soft fabric dome — all pretty standard stuff.

## Sound Quality

Not everyone's favourite by any means, the 302 didn't attract much serious criticism either, and therefore emerged as one of the most notable successes of the blind listening tests. It has a lot

to do with balance, where the 302 comes very close to the ideal. Although voices sound just a little shut in (a wise precaution for a budget speaker), such a well-tailored balance ensures that instruments and voices assume their natural perspectives. There's also less tendency for the sound to deflect attention away from the music.

That said, there are limitations to what such low-cost engineering can achieve, and the tweeter certainly sounds less sweet than the type fitted to the 601. There's not the same dynamic expressiveness, either, and although the 302's bass is quite even, it is not particularly discriminatory and tends to plod along at times.

The balance was again the key factor in a good result with the budget system, even if the top end seemed a trifle insistent. The speaker could be driven pretty hard without obvious distress, but did show some congestion and hardening.

## Conclusion

Probably the best balanced miniature currently around, if not the most involving, the 302 is an undoubted success and bound to become a leading contender for the best seller slot. Do note, however, that the amplifier load is very demanding.



## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** ★★★★★☆

£130

▲ Outstanding balance and a very nice bit of styling too.

▼ Some lack of drive and dynamics; build could be sturdier; a demanding load.

✉ B&W Loudspeakers, Marlborough Road, Churchill Industrial Estate, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 8TR  
 ☎ (01903) 750750

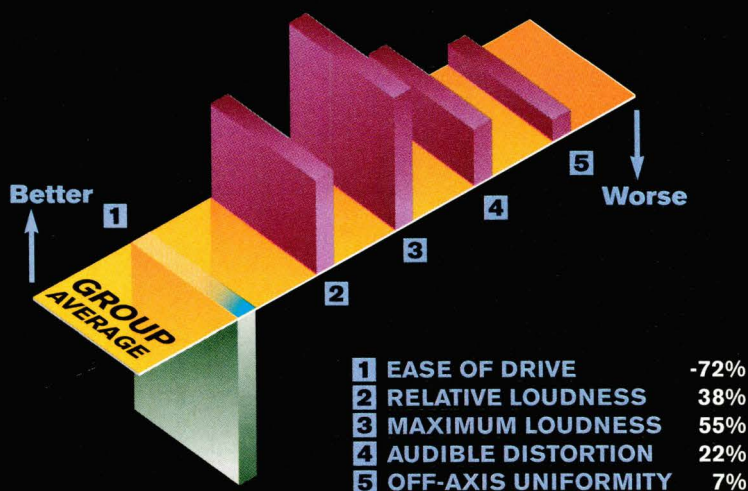
## THE LAB REPORT

The forward response of the DM302 suggests a light and breezy sounding loudspeaker, with a hint of extra treble being maintained both on and off the horizontal listening axis. The mid-treble starts to look slightly less tidy, however, so the DM302 loses out just a little in the uniformity stakes. It will go pretty loud, though (89dB/2.83V), as long as your amplifier is prepared to wrestle with what is the most demanding load in this 14-way survey.

High-ish phase angles persist, peaking at +46 degrees at 110Hz, where the impedance settles at ten Ohms. A similar angle occurs at 3.3kHz, where the impedance is around 13 Ohms. In between these swings, the dynamic impedance drops as low as three Ohms, specifically between 180 and 320Hz, where many run-of-the-mill amplifiers will be sorely tested.

Distortion is modest throughout the upper midband (typically <0.9 per cent) and very low through the treble (<0.2 per cent), although peaks as high as three to four per cent were recorded in the 180-320Hz impedance 'danger zone'! Nevertheless, if your amp can handle the job, the DM302 looks like a classy number. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES





# B&W DM601

As the smaller brother of the DM602, which was reviewed and enthusiastically Recommended in our last loudspeaker group test (issue 152), B&W's DM601 comes in at a fraction under £200.

With an internal volume of around 14 litres, it's about twice the size of the miniatures, with implications for extra bass and loudness capabilities. Its immediate competitor in this group is the KEF Coda 8, which is similar in size and a tenner less in price, but the B&W package offers an altogether more substantial piece of engineering (nearly 30 per cent heavier!) alongside much more advanced driver technology, which implies a rather better deal all round.

Cast alloy frame drivers are a rarity at

£300, never mind £200, and the 601's main driver also features a big magnet to drive a stiffly-suspended 120mm Kevlar cone (a gold-coloured, plastic-bonded woven material), similar to those found previously only on B&W's upmarket monitors. A hefty metal ring forms part of the fixing arrangement, and gives a very professional appearance, but conceals rather flimsy, coarse-pitch woodscrews.

The proportions of this box look a little old-fashioned (perhaps classic is the right word), but the cosmetics are well up to date, with a lumpy textured finish to the full baffle moulding, and a clever grille implementation. The enclosure and build quality also are above the budget norm: the foam-lined box is built from 13mm chip-board, while the front panel is a combination of structural plastics backed by 12mm MDF, giving fine rigidity. The plastic moulding incorporates a small flared port. Bi-wire terminals feed a simple PCB crossover with tag connections to the drivers.

## Sound Quality

Ironically, the 601 was outscored by the cheaper 302 in the blind listening tests, which I believe is largely the consequence of a rather less even overall balance. However, one half of the panel praised scale and a sense of authority, and a soundstage

which seemed to fill the end of the room, unconstrained by the position of the speakers.

"Lumpy but good-hearted" perhaps sums it up best, and once the ear and brain have had time to compensate for the balance anomalies (one of the problems with blind panel testing), the strength of those classy drivers comes through. It's not the best-timed sound around, but does convey subtle textures and dynamic shading in the mid-band, if less so in the bass.

The 601 was pretty good with our budget system, too, offering an expressive, involving if slightly 'shut-in' midband and quite a sweet treble — much more so than the 302. Generous loudness is available, though pushing hard does exaggerate a tendency to harden and become more aggressive.

## Conclusion

The DM601 has much more in common with its bigger 602 brother than its baby 302, er, sister. Both 600 series models lose out a little in overall balance terms, but benefit from more convincing midband dynamics. My first impression favoured the 302, but extended listening soon revealed the ultimate superiority of the more expensive, more interesting and more involving 601.



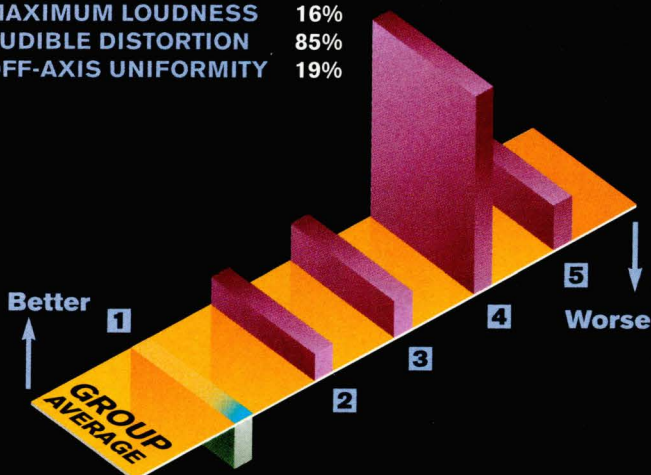
## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £200

- ▲ Great main driver for the price, involving and communicative midband.
- ▼ Balance could be more even; shape looks a little dated.
- ✉ B&W Loudspeakers, Marlborough Road, Churchill Industrial Estate, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 8TR
- ☎ (01903) 750750

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-18%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	12%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	16%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	85%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	19%



## THE LAB REPORT

The DM601's reflex port features a lower-Q resonance than the DM302, with the result that bass reinforcement — centred on a rather low 41Hz — is somewhat broader. As a result, the DM601 might well benefit from free space siting, though experimentation with placement will yield the best results as ever. The DM601's response is smoother overall, particularly through the upper midrange and in the treble when measured 30 degrees off the horizontal axis.

You'll not get high SPLs from the DM601, but an estimated in-room maximum of 103.5dBA should still be possible with a 100W amplifier, without driving it into the ground. The 'average' impedance of the DM601 is a lot higher at 15.3 Ohms, with a minimum of 4.2 Ohms at 200Hz, though, and oddly enough for a first-order system, phase angles as high as -43 degrees and +65 degrees were recorded at 1.2kHz and 2.3kHz respectively, leaving an anomalous +63 degree current/voltage lag at the 3kHz crossover frequency. Fortunately, at this point, the impedance rests at a manageable 15 Ohms. Distortion is damn low, however, at typically less than 0.2 per cent under dynamic conditions right through the midband and treble. Paul Miller



# Gale Model 4

Just as we're getting used to floorstanding speakers selling for a few pence under £300, Richer Sounds ups the ante by bringing out one at less than £200 — no more than you'd end up paying for a pair of name-brand miniatures and the stands to put them on.

This speaker may carry the Gale name, but it bears no relationship whatsoever to that chrome-trimmed '70s style-setter. Rather, it's one of several brand names now owned by Richer's manufacturing division.

Following the example set in January's *Sessions*, someone had taken the trouble to add several kilos of ballast to a compartment in the base of these speakers prior to shipping. One can't blame manufacturers for trying to get the very best possible performance out of their products, but these review samples are not exactly representative of what you get from the shops.

The Gale 4 looks significantly smaller than its two (notably more expensive) floor-standing competitors in this review. A decent set of spikes is included, but the 'footprint' is a minimal 15cm — a powerful extra incentive to add the ballast.

From the outside, the main driver looks little different from the surface-mounted unit with pressed-steel frame and 95mm doped

paper cone, found in the JPWs. Closer examination reveals bolts instead of wood-screws, but sadly these have not been properly tightened. There's also an enormous potted magnet. The tweeter is a classy 19mm fabric dome device, and bi-wiring terminals are available, but the crossover components themselves look very ordinary.

The *Model 4* is a basic two-way, with additional help from a port set high up at the rear. The bottom quarter of the 15mm chip-board cabinet is a separate ballast cavity, so only the top 'three-quarters' part is acoustically active. The wood-print vinyl finish has a slightly greenish tinge here, while a chamfered baffle edge is the only concession to styling.

### Sound Quality

The Gale did poorly on the blind listening tests, finding itself at the bottom of most lists, with unanimous criticism directed towards its forward 'shouty' midband and a 'one-note' bass which didn't really seem to integrate properly.

The hands-on work did little to change this adverse judgement, although it's certainly true that an initially hostile reaction to a very 'in yer face' balance does begin to temper after a while. Despite the overall lack of warmth and richness, the ear/brain tends to readjust to the unfamiliar presentation.

The midband does have some coherence, and the forwardness is helpful in projecting detail when playing quietly — but by the same token this puts you off playing at loud levels. The bass remained detached and ploddy throughout, and changing over

to our 'budget' source and amps brought little if any change in the overall character.

### Conclusion

What might have seemed okay in a one-off *Sessions* context has suffered under trial by peer group. Small drivers with big magnets tend towards aggressive forwardness, and I can't help wondering whether a long, thin box with a port at one end behaves more like an organ pipe than yer classic reflex Helmholtz resonator.



**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £200

▲ A lot of speaker for your money; promising ingredients.  
 ▼ Disappointing sound; has detached 'one-note' bass and aggressive midband.

✉ Hi-Fi Direct, Richer House, Hankey Place, London SE1 4BB  
 ☎ (0171) 827 9827

## THE LAB REPORT

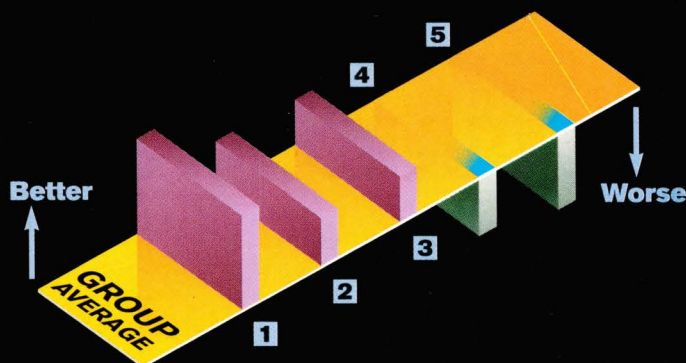
Oddly enough, Gale's *Model 4* demonstrates arguably the smoothest midrange responses of all the speakers in this test. It is also pretty sensitive at 88.3dB/2.83V, and will achieve peak levels of around 104dB in the average room with comparative ease. Generally speaking, the *Model 4* is easy to drive with a controlled impedance that never rises above 12 Ohms beyond 200Hz, but which drops to a minimum of just 5.3-5.6 Ohms, 170 to 330Hz.

So why the disappointing results on audition? The depression in mid-treble output might emphasise any high treble while, off axis, these irregularities are exaggerated. Distortion is a big problem, too. Up to 400Hz, the *Model 4* registered an all-time high figure of 3-3.5 per cent (second to fourth harmonics), improving to just 1-1.5 per cent midband. This is in line with the results obtained with the JPW speakers which, incidentally, use similar mid/bass drivers.

Then there's the port: tuned to a sharp 40Hz but suffering a spurious resonant peak as high as 300Hz. Sub-20Hz, there's a -35 degree phase angle which could also trip up some amplifiers. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	41%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	21%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	19%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-24%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-32%

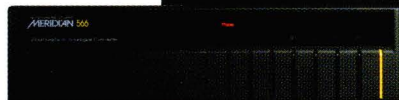
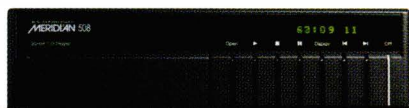




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# JPW Mini Monitor

**R**icher Sounds doesn't participate in the gathering of industry sales statistics, but since this major-league hi-fi retailer is reckoned to account for around a third of overall sales, it seems only right to include three of its best selling speakers alongside the rest.

The *Mini Monitor* is the sixty pounder, which is less than half the price of the mainstream miniatures — about the price of a decent pair of stands, no less. However, since you still get two drive units and a crossover network all screwed into a little box, one is apt to scratch the head and wonder: why pay more?

Style is certainly one element lacking here. The box is traditional chipboard throughout, covered in traditional woodprint vinyl. With traditionally squared-off edges and corners, design is not the word that springs to mind. However, for sheer functional cost-effectiveness, based on the considerable mass-production experience of the British OEM suppliers in cutting, wrapping and sticking woodprint vinyl chipboard, this offering looks hard to beat.

The ingredients are very basic but entirely adequate. The sealed box is fabricated from 12mm woodprint vinyl chip-

board, lightly filled with fibrous damping material. A single pair of terminals feeds an ultra-simple crossover. By opting for sealed box loading, JPW is sacrificing midbass output in the interests of a tighter balance. This kind of speaker is less likely to sound boomy, but close-to-wall siting is more or less essential to reinforce the midbass region, and that in turn introduces some midband coloration.

The main drive-unit uses a 95mm doped paper cone and small magnet on a pressed steel frame, while the plastic-chassis tweeter has a small 14mm dome/annulus diaphragm under a phase compensator.

## Sound Quality

The little *Mini Monitor* came out surprisingly well in the blind listening tests, for several of the same reasons that the *Gold Monitor* did well the previous day. The tight, dry bass may lack some dynamic expression, but it times well and keeps rhythms under good control. Elsewhere the balance is a bit bright and scrappy, lending a rather thin overall character to the proceedings, but what the *MM* lacks in dynamics, it makes up for in overall coherence.

Indeed, it's fair to say the *MM* did slightly better than the *GM* under blind conditions. That's not to say it's necessarily a better speaker — it's not — but the *Mini Monitor* does tend to disguise its limitations rather more artfully, which is arguably no less important. The balance is just a little less bright overall, for example, and

while it lacks the bass drive, purpose and discrimination of the *Gold Monitor*, somehow the *Mini* manages to sound less boxy at the same time.

With our budget front-end the *Mini* performed capably enough, and seemed better matched to these components than the rather more aggressive *Gold*. That said, the sound was a bit small, bright, lacking in air and spaciousness, and its dynamics were unconvincing.

## Conclusion

One helluva speaker for sixty quid, the *Mini Monitor* isn't the prettiest or most interesting looker around, or the last word in ultimate sonic excitement. But it's no slouch, either, and an artful balance cleverly disguises its limitations.



## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £60

▲ Excellent material value and a good balance of positives.

▼ Can sound a bit small and thin, especially with budget components.

✉ Hi-Fi Direct, Richer House, Hankey Place, London SE1 4BB

☎ (0171) 827 9827

## THE LAB REPORT

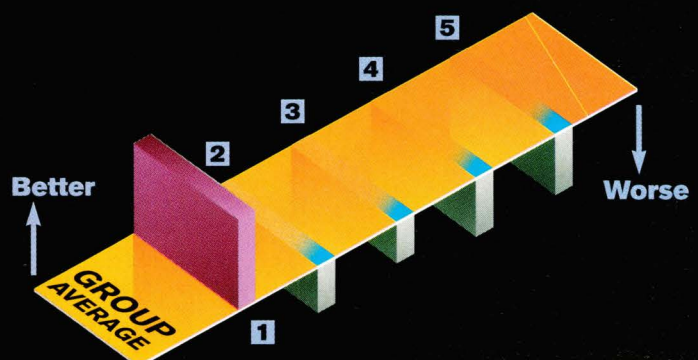
JPW rates this budget *Mini Monitor* at 6 Ohms, which is rather too harsh, bearing in mind that the 'average' impedance for the entire 20Hz-20kHz band works out at 11 Ohms. There's a momentary low of 5.3 Ohms at 240Hz, following the system resonance at 92Hz, but the phase angle never exceeds 20 degrees when the impedance drops below 6 Ohms.

So the *Mini Monitor* represents an easier load for your amplifier than perhaps JPW would suggest. And with a sensitivity of 87dB/2.83V — very generous for a sealed-box enclosure of this limited volume — you should be able to sustain levels between 101-102dBA using up to 75 Watts of amplification in the average room. Bookshelf mounting is recommended if only to smooth out the speaker's upper-bass hump (150-250Hz), but at least its mid and treble look surprisingly well integrated.

Off-axis, the trace becomes a little less uniform, as the *Mini Monitor* suffers a slight depression throughout the upper mid, while its treble exhibits some peakiness. Back on-axis, distortion reduces with increasing frequency and even falls to around 0.25 per cent at HF for peaks of 96dBA — a good result for such an inexpensive design. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	38%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-18%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-16%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-26%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-25%







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# JPW Gold Monitor

JPW has more than a handful of budget baby bookshelf-size speakers in its range. Many of these have picked up *Choice* flags over the years, the *Gold Monitor* included (issue 130). This is hardly surprising when you place the little £80 *Gold Monitor* alongside the big sellers at around £130. It's not quite as big, and not as interesting looking either, but the money saved will go a long way towards buying a pair of stands.

Perceived value is only part of the equation, of course, but there's no denying you get plenty of it here. However, the main reason for the very competitive price is that the *Gold Monitor* is one of three Richer Sounds specials in this group test.

The ingredients are inevitably a very common denominator, with the sealed box construction consisting of woodprint vinyl-wrapped 12mm chipboard, lightly filled with fibrous damping material. A single terminal pair feeds an ultra-simple crossover with commercial-grade wiring, but the choke is generous and all is hard-wired.

The choice of sealed box loading is unusual — only JPW uses it in this test group. All the others employ some form of port loading to augment midbass output. Among several implications, the sealed box loading provides a more extended but drier

bass alignment, which makes close-to-wall siting mandatory.

The *Gold Monitor's* main driver, whose woodscrews were not particularly tight, is a 95mm doped paper cone, with a small magnet on a pressed steel frame. The more tightly fixed tweeter has a small 19mm soft fabric dome and a metal chassis. Both are simply (and cheaply) surface-mounted onto the baffle front. The grille looks innocuous enough, but the slim plastic frame is chamfered around the outside (acoustically wrong) edge, and is best left in the carton.

## Sound Quality

The *Gold Monitor* was well liked by half the listening panel, which praised its open and coherent delivery. The other half raised doubts over a lack of 'body' and richness, and the thin and slightly 'fizzy' top end. The bass is undoubtedly tight, dry, fast and quite extended, but has more than a trace of boxiness too. Voices sound clear but also a bit bright and relentless, as well as thin and a little congested.

The treble quality is pretty good, but the quantity proved a little strong for some tastes, and did become a little wearing over the long haul. Dynamics are not really on the agenda, so the end result somehow lacks scale despite the audibly good bass extension.

A notable problem is that the fatigue factor became much more obvious when we substituted a 'budget' CD player and amp. The 'in yer

face' quality of the *Gold Monitor* tends to highlight the limitations and inadequacies of the sources all too clearly.

## Conclusion

Given the size and bass loading technique, modest sensitivity, power handling and loudness capability are inevitable, and the *Gold Monitor* is probably better suited to a smaller room than the one used for the tests — perfect for the teenage bedroom budget system, methinks.

Which is not to say it can't work very well in the family lounge too, the only real caveat being that it might be too revealing to make an ideal match with some budget components. Here, the even cheaper *Mini Monitor* might give the better balanced end result.



## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £80

- ▲ Fine material value, and a fast, involving sound.
- ▼ Maybe too up-front and revealing for budget gear.
- ✉ Hi-Fi Direct, Richer House, Hankey Place, London SE1 4BB
- ☎ (0171) 827 9827

## THE LAB REPORT

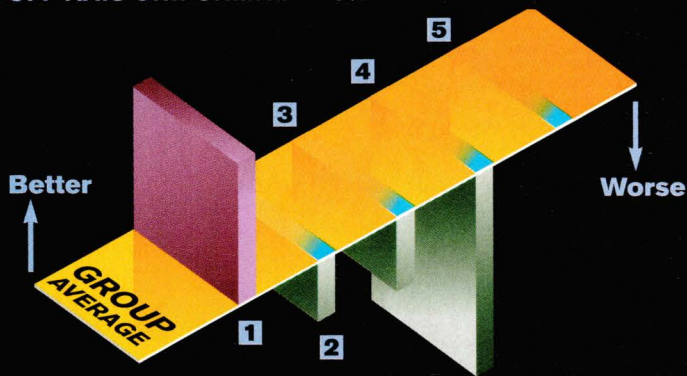
The *Gold* version of JPW's mini monitor series features a different soft-dome treble unit that, by all accounts, has influenced the entire performance of the box. Distortion, for example, is now dominated by a strong second harmonic that reaches some two to three per cent through the treble — ten times higher than the preceding *Mini Monitor*. Neither are the two drive units especially well integrated, for the *Gold Monitor* suffers a noticeable loss in output around what I presume is the crossover frequency at 2.5-3kHz.

This, in turn, accounts for the slightly lower 86.6dB sensitivity, while serving to expose the brighter-sounding treble. This is precisely what was observed on audition, I might add, and an effect which is aggravated by off-axis listening.

The general impedance trend for the *Gold Monitor* mirrors that of the *Mini Monitor*, though in this instance, JPW has decided to quote an eight Ohm nominal impedance. Phase angles are all held within 30 degrees, although there's a peak at 115Hz that's linked to a massive surge in bass distortion to 11 per cent. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	61%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-25%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-31%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-86%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	0%





# KEF Coda 7

An obvious Best Buy when we reviewed it in detail last November, KEF's £130 Coda 7 has actually been topping the loudspeaker sales charts for well over a year now. In doing so, it has wreaked a complete transformation in the company's UK market share.

The Coda 7 is a little larger than some of its competitors, with a curvaceous moulded front panel that's both functional and fashionably attractive (providing you don't mind leaving the grille off).

The only real criticism in our earlier review concerned the rather lightweight build quality, which appeared to place ease of assembly ahead of long-term mechanical integrity. This is unlikely to prove a handicap under normal domestic use, but review samples do go through the mill. The pair that

came down from the office had certainly done the rounds, and one had developed a buzz when subjected to swept sine-wave signals. A second, new pair was therefore requested for this review.

The two Coda 7 pairs looked to all intents and purposes identical, although the packing carton revealed one small but possibly significant detail. Whereas the original was made in Denmark, our current pair claims Belgium as country of origin. (Both the larger Codas are made in England.) Measurement showed small differences too: the new pair was just a little duller at the extreme top end.

The main driver has a pressed frame, decent size magnet and 100mm doped paper cone, while the tweeter has a 25mm fabric dome. The drivers are mounted from the rear of the baffle, keeping the shapely front nice and smooth, while the baffle itself is glued into the 12mm vinyl woodprint box wrap.

## Sound Quality

Last time around the Coda 7 swept the table, but things were definitely tougher as it now had to fight against rival top sellers and the latest competition. Results were still very respectable, thanks to the exceptional midband voicing which remains this design's standout feature. There was, however, more qualification this time around, especially with regard to the bass and dynamic performance.

The overall sound is generous but somehow insubstantial — shades of the Chinese takeaway syndrome perhaps — with a rather amorphous bass quality: this is by no means lacking in weight, but it is short on solidity and discrimination. Simple material is handled quite well, with pleasing openness, good focus and only modest coloration. More complex and bass heavy material, however, tends to become rather muddled and confused.

Our 'budget' front end didn't do the Coda 7 many favours either. The open midband tended to sound a bit thin, crude and edgy, though the bottom end provided a generous thump. Interestingly, in careful A/B comparison, the latest samples' slight loss of high frequency output (minus 2dB above 7kHz) provided a noticeable increase in perceived mid coloration.

## Conclusion

Although still a doughty contender, time has given the competition a chance to catch up and in some respects overtake this established favourite. Meanwhile, events have focused attention on the lightweight construction, suggesting that a Recommended rating should replace the original Best Buy.



## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £129

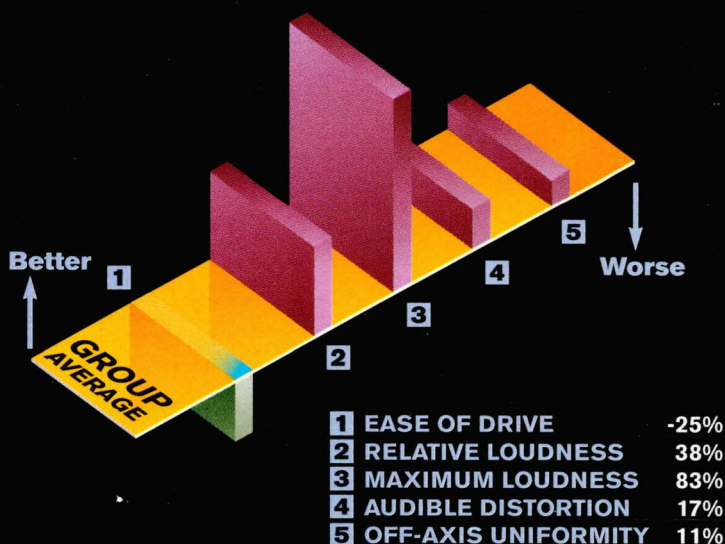
▲ Beautifully voiced midband; styling is functional and fashionable.

▼ Build is lightweight, bass is vague, slightly less 'air' than before.

✉ KEF Audio (UK) Ltd, Eccleston Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6QP

☎ (01622) 672261

## HOW IT COMPARES



## THE LAB REPORT

In contrast with other speakers in this test — Mission's in particular — the surprisingly high 91dB sensitivity claimed by KEF was actually matched on test (90.6dB/2.83V/1m across third octave bands 17-29, to be precise). This, plus the speaker's slight emphasis of upper mid energy and excellent off-axis uniformity, endows the Coda 7 with a bright and lively sound. With 70-100W amplifiers in charge, a pair of wall-mounted Coda 7s will realise musical peaks up to 105dBA in the typical room (but don't try this at home, kids! — Ed).

Swings in impedance are limited, occurring at the sharp port resonance of 50Hz (5.0 Ohms), at 250Hz (4.1 Ohms) and 6kHz (7.1 Ohms) to a maximum of just 17 Ohms at 85Hz. Meanwhile, the wildest phase angle amounts to around 40 degrees at 100Hz, where the impedance is high enough at 13.6 Ohms not to cause the amplifier any grief. Distortion is also pretty low, at just 0.3-0.8 per cent across the band at 96dBA. Then again, to achieve this output SPL, an amplifier will be ticking over at just 3W. Paul Miller



# KEF Coda 8

KEF has realised that one way of adding perceived value and style to today's loudspeakers is to use moulded plastics to create the 'soft-look' front panels that characterise the Coda range. The *Coda 8* and *9* share the same front baffle and back, even though one is a two-way bookshelf and the other a three-way floor-stander. In reality, one could argue that this £190 *Coda 8* has more in common with the best-selling *7*, since both are two-way ported bookshelf models. There is a £60 price difference between them, but this would easily go towards the larger main driver and box used in the *Coda 8*.

This speaker doesn't quite match the sales volumes of its smaller sibling, but it has been shooting up the charts in recent months, and is currently a leading player in the sub-£200 sector. In this particular review group, its closest competition is clearly the B&W *601*. The *Coda 8* would be yours for a tenner less, looks a bit cuter and is slightly larger inside, but the B&W is much heavier and its driver technology makes the KEF look decidedly prosaic.

KEF's enclosure is based on a 12mm vinyl woodprint wrap, with thin and fairly resonant plastic panels front and rear. Some extra wrap stiffening is supplied by an O-brace fitted just inside the back panel. This

allows the back to be screwed firmly in place, instead of the flimsier grommet arrangement used in the *Coda 7*. But there is some evidence to suggest the change came about through the necessities of production rather than original design intention.

The curvaceous baffle cleverly avoids acoustic discontinuities, while the cunning grille may be clipped into position if desired, but leaves no telltale evidence if unused. The rear-mounted main driver was indifferently fitted by small screws that could have been tighter. The unit has a generous magnet, pressed frame and a 120mm doped paper cone — nearly half as big (again) in area as that used in *Coda 7*.

of an open, neutral and very well proportioned midband. It is more open at the top end than the latest *7*, and a little too bright and edgy for some of our listeners. It also seemed rather too forward and up-front when driven by our budget system, the result being a little too edge-of-seat for relaxation. Again, the bass turned out to offer more weight than definition.

### Conclusion

KEF has opted to increase bandwidth rather than sensitivity in up-scaling the *Coda 7*. The result has more weight and air, and an even flatter midband. Bass quality and engineering content remain reservations, but a Recommendation is clearly appropriate.

### Sound Quality

*Coda 8* did pretty well in the blind listening tests, scoring better than its two siblings and providing worthwhile extra bass weight over most of the competition. However, as with the other *Codas*, questions were raised about the quality of the bass, which didn't so much drive the music along as follow behind in its wake. There was a limited dynamic contrast and a distinct notion of softness — so they're unlikely to appeal to techno fans.

Happily, the *8* follows the now established *Coda* tradition



VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£189
▲ A very even and open midband; good weight and 'air'.	
▼ Bass quality is suspect and build rather lightweight.	
✉ KEF Audio (UK) Ltd, Eccleston Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6QP	
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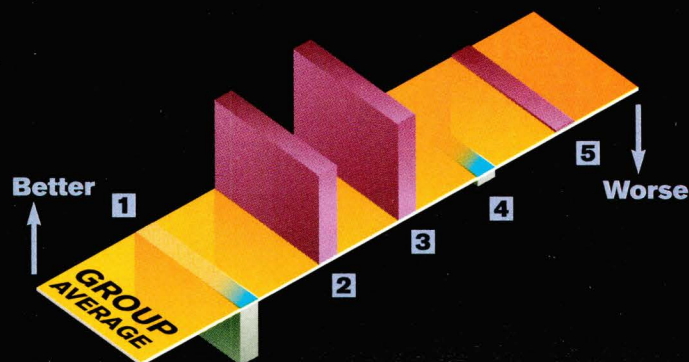
## THE LAB REPORT

Far from being a larger version of the *Coda 7*, the *Coda 8* displays a technical footprint which is entirely its own. Distortion, for example, is closer to that of the *9* with a slight increase from 0.6 to 1.3 per cent at low frequency. The low-Q tuning of the reflex port is broader in output than the *Coda 7* and *9*, and it's set at a low 40Hz. This may explain the less explicit nature of the *Coda 8*'s bass, although the lively cabinet structure is not likely to do it any favours either.

Otherwise, the slightly lumpy 1-3kHz region and mild emphasis to its high treble all serve to add extra character. These foibles are ameliorated by listening slightly off, rather than directly on, the speaker's axis. At 89dB/2.83V, the *Coda 8* doesn't prove to be as sensitive as KEF would have us believe. Then again, if the sensitivity measurement were centred on its 1-3kHz 'bump', perhaps the result would be closer to 91dB. And with impedance minima of 4.1 Ohms and phase angles as high as 45 degrees (100Hz), the *Coda 8* is no doddle to drive either. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES

- |   |                     |      |
|---|---------------------|------|
| 1 | EASE OF DRIVE       | -24% |
| 2 | RELATIVE LOUDNESS   | 38%  |
| 3 | MAXIMUM LOUDNESS    | 41%  |
| 4 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION  | -3%  |
| 5 | OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY | 1%   |





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# KEF Coda 9

As the largest and most expensive model in KEF's highly successful *Coda* series, the *Coda 9* carries a £299 pricetag and features a floorstanding enclosure; there's no need for stands.

Cleverly, KEF decided to use the same front and back panels for its *Coda 8* and *9* models, and thereby spread out the tooling costs. In the *8*, the panels sandwich a simple bookshelf size wrap, whereas the *9* fixes them on the front and back top of a full floorstanding enclosure. It is effective, no question, but perhaps less elegant.

KEF charges £110 more for the *9* than for the *8*, which might seem a bit strong for the amount of additional woodwork and spike set involved. Then you realise that there's an extra bass driver lurking inside the box, which serves to activate a large lower rear port through a coupled cavity arrangement. Conceptually, the end result is much like a bookshelf speaker with a built-in subwoofer, although the poor space utilisation of the coupled cavity approach indicates that it will augment rather than extend the bass available.

The spikes are adequately fitted, provided care is taken not to over-tighten (the 20cm footprint could have been more generous). The whole thing feels rather light-

weight for its bulk: at under 10kg its total mass is 20 per cent lighter than that of the similar size/price Mission 733. Although construction is quite complex, the side panels are only 12mm chipboard.

The main (visible) driver has a 120mm doped paper cone with flared profile, which is mounted in an occlusive pressed steel basket, driven by a generous magnet and fixed from behind with very small screws. The tweeter has a 25mm soft fabric dome, and single terminals feed a quite complex PCB crossover.

### Sound Quality

The black hear-through curtain takes no prisoners, so the *Coda 9*'s large box and extra bass driver remained invisible to a rather unimpressed panel. In the end, the *9* was actually marked below its smaller, cheaper stablemates. Indeed, several panelists commented that it lacked real bass extension, and thought that the fair amount of boxy coloration affected voices in an adverse way.

It's not a disaster by any means, but certainly a disappointment in context — especially as much of the criticism was directed at a bass that seems able to provide ample weight, but with little poise, precision or timing. The adjective 'thumpy' cropped up several times, and lower registers had an amorphous, grumbly quality — somewhat reminiscent of the passive subwoofers this design in part resembles.

The criticisms were less severe when the speakers were driven from our lower resolution budget components, although the characteristics were still evident. The hands-on work did at least confirm a very healthy

loudness capability, accomplished with just a little edginess and without obvious aggression, even if the bass remained ill-defined.

### Conclusion

Take one pair of *Coda 8*s and build them into floorstanding enclosures which incorporate subwoofers: it sounds like a tempting recipe, well worth the extra £110. In practice, however, things haven't worked out quite the way you think. The *Coda 9* delivers less than the sum of its parts, and comes across as a victim of limited build quality.



**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £299

▲ It does go loud, and with reasonable decorum, too.  
 ▼ Bass is poorly defined and midband rather coloured. Lightweight construction.

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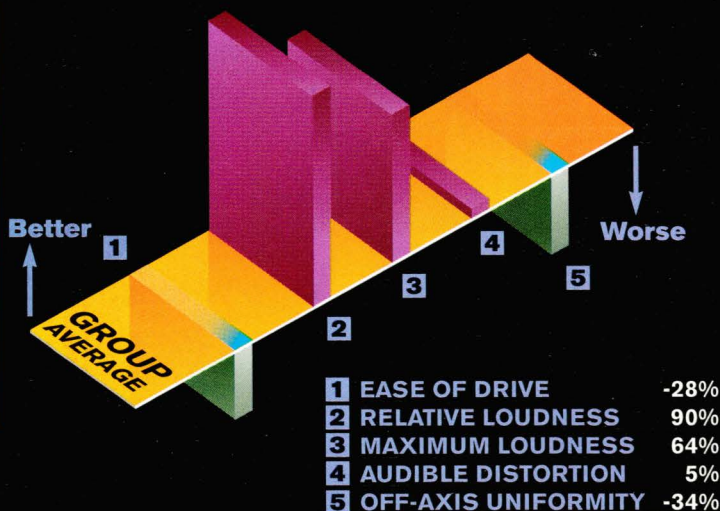
## THE LAB REPORT

The influence of KEF's coupled-cavity bass loading is revealed through twin LF dips at 22Hz and 60Hz in the dynamic impedance trend. The latter corresponds to the tuned frequency of the *Coda 9*'s reflex port, while the former is a function of what is, in effect, an acoustical bandpass filter.

Sensitivity is high at 90dB, although this figure is bolstered by the raised presence of its midband (but depressed upper midband/lower treble) and — in common with the other *Codas* — a dynamic impedance that drops as low as four Ohms through the upper bass. The maximum phase angle swoops to around 40 degrees through the upper bass at 100-150Hz and midrange at 900Hz, with a perfectly 'driveable' 30 degree angle appearing at the 3kHz crossover frequency.

With plenty of headroom in tow, the *Coda 9* is barely stretched in reproducing clean peaks at 96dBA, where midband distortion falls to as low as 0.3 per cent. Distortion through the bass, however, is somewhat higher at 1 to 1.5 percent. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES





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# Mission 731

Reviewed originally just over a year ago (issue 141), Mission's £130 731 failed to receive the *Choice* accolades awarded to its illustrious 760 series predecessors. However, the 731 has gone on to become the second-best-selling speaker around.

At roughly the same size as its predecessors, the 731 is a little smaller than the immediate competition. It applies the same basic two-way 'upside down' driver configuration that Mission pioneered and others (eg Tannoy, KEF) have since followed.

Despite more compact dimensions, the 731 seems to be in the same weight class as the Mordaunt-Short and B&W boxes. A black-vinyl, wood-print, wood-based top/base/sides wrap is sandwiched between moulded plastics front and back panels, although the enclosure construction and driver mounting arrangements are unusual and pretty ingenious.

Perhaps uniquely, the main driver is mounted onto the back rather than the front of the enclosure, or more precisely: onto four of six hollow struts that form part of the back panel moulding and travel right through the inside to just behind the front panel. The latter moulding covers all this and accommodates the tweeter, the purpose being primar-

ily to isolate baffle and tweeter mechanically from the vibrations generated by the main driver. Both the struts and the rear panel shaping should help spread internal standing wave modes.

The main driver looks very similar to that fitted originally, but measurements reveal an important change: a significant drop in impedance (and hence a rise in current consumption) which allows for a much-needed boost in the midbass output. The tweeter output, meanwhile, has been lowered slightly.

The box is built from a substantial 15mm chipboard wrap, covered in vinyl woodprint. Cleverly radiused edges combine with a subtle shaping of the baffle and grille mouldings to give an attractively 'softened' appearance without exaggerating the curves too much.

### Sound Quality

The 731 again received a rather lukewarm reaction from the listening panel, but for different reasons than last time. A pretty decent bass response was now in evidence, with some power and dynamic expression, even if it came across as a bit stodgy.

The midband is expressive and voice inflections are reproduced well. But at the listening levels we use for the panel tests, the overall sound was rather dull and shut in, especially with vinyl sources. There's also a slight treble 'sting', all of which helped keep enthusiasm at bay.

The big surprise came when the 731

was connected up to our 'budget' system. The whole balance and timing seemed to gel much better and the system delivered fine air and spaciousness, with no unwelcome aggressiveness. The hands-on work also confirmed that this speaker seems to perform better when it is driven hard, whereupon it seems to come to life and delivers a powerful and coherent soundstage.

### Conclusion

The current 731 is certainly a different speaker from the example we originally reviewed, and a better one too. Even if it didn't impress our listening panel to any great extent, it did show a strong affinity for our 'budget' system, creating a happy symbiosis which clearly deserves Recommendation.



**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £130

▲ Upgraded bass driver gives a welcome performance boost.  
 ▼ Can sound a bit thick and shut in; tweeter isn't great.

✉ Centraforce Ltd, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED  
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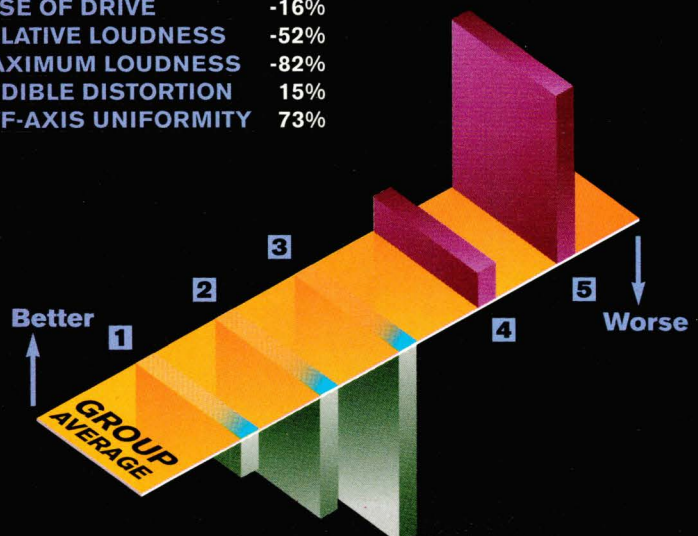
## THE LAB REPORT

By way of policy, Mission chooses to measure its responses off the normal speaker axis while rating sensitivity between 100-500Hz instead of the 500-8kHz used in our procedure. Fortunately, our computerised tests did throw plenty of light on the panel's opinion. Because the 731 demonstrates a loss in output between 1.5-8kHz, its overall sensitivity is closer to 85dB/2.83V, rather than the claimed 89dB. At higher treble frequencies there's an abrupt rise in its response, peaking at around 12kHz. Hence the 'shut-in' sound and treble 'sting'.

Once again, because of its fairly low sensitivity, the 731 will need a reasonably powerful amplifier to give of its best. The consequent dips in impedance (4.2 Ohms/230Hz and 4.7 Ohms at the port resonance of 55Hz) and phase angles as high as 26 degrees at 5.3 Ohms (160Hz) may cause a budget amplifier some strain, prompting a harder but potentially 'livelier' sound. In my opinion, a six Ohm nominal rating would be more appropriate than Mission's eight Ohms. With a capable amplifier, however, the 731 benefits from the low distortion (typically <0.9 per cent) that characterises all the Mission models in our test. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES

- |   |                     |      |
|---|---------------------|------|
| 1 | EASE OF DRIVE       | -16% |
| 2 | RELATIVE LOUDNESS   | -52% |
| 3 | MAXIMUM LOUDNESS    | -82% |
| 4 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION  | 15%  |
| 5 | OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY | 73%  |





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# Mission 733

**M**ission's 733 earned itself a Best Buy tag when it first came in for review back in February 1995, for two main reasons. First, there were precious few £300 floorstanders around at the time, and the 733 was a big, handsome and well built example of this increasingly common breed. The sound may not have been the last word in dynamic enthusiasm, but was exceptionally well balanced through the vital upper-mid to treble region — and clearly better than the very similar bookshelf-size 732 model in this respect.

For a big yet inexpensive woodprint vinyl-clad box, it's very good looking, thanks to the clever way the edges have been rounded off. A plastic sub-baffle is held by eight tight woodscrews, clamping the main driver, and also fixing through the mechanically decoupled tweeter faceplate, giving very tidy and clean lines. A second moulding adds a very large port, with a built in vane designed to minimise turbulence.

The box shape ensures a decent, stable footprint and keeps the drivers well off the floor. Unlike earlier generations of Mission floorstanders, the 733's spike/washer combination can be properly tightened without stripping the threads.

The main driver has a 120mm clear plastic cone, a pressed steel frame and a decent size magnet, but the 28mm ring/dome tweeter feels a bit feeble, mechanically. The enclosure is not as big as it looks in acoustic terms, since the lower 30cm or so is blanked off by a shelf (which helps stiffen the four long panels). Rough calculation suggests an actual enclosure volume of around 25 litres, which is the classic large bookshelf size. In a very real sense this can be seen as a repackaging of that traditional configuration, albeit one which comes complete with built in support furniture.

The box itself feels pretty solid, with substantial 19mm chipboard panels throughout, and a further brace between the sides up behind the main driver adding extra stiffness. Internal damping is provided by a single sheet of foam lining the rear panel, and a foam ring around the outside of the port. A simple three-element crossover is built into the back of the bi-wire terminal block.

### Sound Quality

Considering its previous Best Buy status, the 733 gave very disappointing results in the blind listening, actually scoring lower marks than the little 731, with unanimous criticism of a heavy and thick bass which completely dominated the overall sound.

The hands-on work gave greater opportunity to experiment with siting, and a firmer and more even bass delivery was achieved. But the sound remained rather dull and shut in, nonetheless. However, this does have the virtue of avoiding any tendencies towards

aggressiveness, even when playing at highish levels with the budget electronics.

### Conclusion

Disappointing sound quality let this new pair of 733s down, and the reason isn't hard to find, since the relative treble level is 1-2dB or two lower than in our original pair, and balance is rather less even, too. As mentioned in the first paragraph, the mid-to-treble balance was crucial to the original's success, but this latest pair is more like our earlier 732, and less satisfactory in consequence.



**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★☆☆☆  
**VALUE** ★★☆☆☆  
**PRICE** £300

▲ A good looking big floorstander at a very competitive price.  
 ▼ Latest samples are duller than before, and the result is rather thick and shut-in.

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## THE LAB REPORT

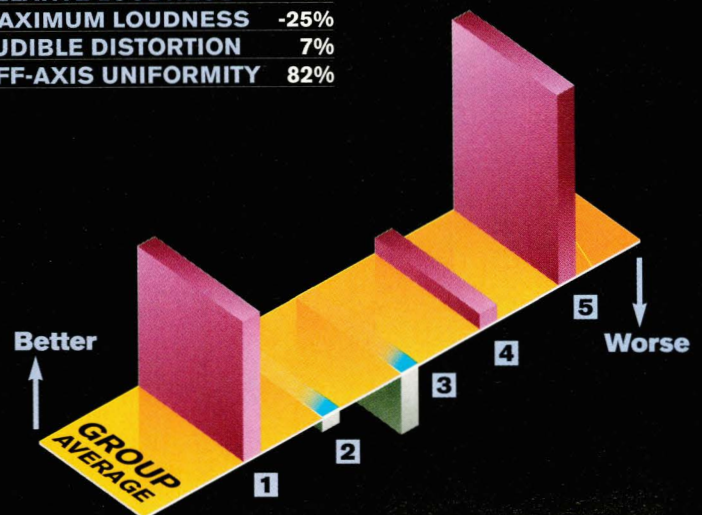
Any amplifier quaking in its boots at the thought of driving either the 731 or 751 can rest easy with the eight Ohm 733, whose impedance dips to a manageable 5.7 Ohms at 190Hz, and an equally passable 6.4 Ohms at the reflex resonance of 50Hz. The speaker's midband sensitivity is also a little higher at 86.8dB/2.83V/1m, which suggests a good 102-103dBA will be achievable in the average room when the speaker is partnered by a 100W amplifier.

Reinforcing our original report from issue 139, the impedance trend for the 733 shows 'blips' at 290Hz and 1.08kHz. The latter, as previously suggested, could possibly represent a break-up mode of the bass/mid driver. Either way, this coincides with an (inaudible) glitch in the speaker's forward response which, otherwise, is rather better balanced than either the 731 or 751. Treble distortion is significantly higher at 1-2 per cent, however.

Paul Miller

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	60%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-4%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-25%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	7%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	82%





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# Mission 751

Our original tests on this luxury compact speaker took place nearly three years ago, and turned into a real saga due to some variations in early production samples. Things should certainly have settled down by now, and the 751s we were given for this test provided almost identical measurements to the samples we listened to in January 1994.

Mission's 75-series speakers are quite different from the budget price 73-series covered elsewhere in this group test. The 751 is the only model which features real wood finish (on flanks and top), and it uses the advanced transverse-fold cabinetwork originally introduced with the 753.

Beauty can be more than skin deep, and the 751 turns out to be just as solidly built as it looks. It is comparatively small in size, but weighs more than any of the other stand mounts assembled for this test. A 'compact' box and main driver inevitably put a ceiling on bass slam and loudness capabilities, but have their own compensating advantages.

The narrow enclosure wrap (front, back, base and veneered top) is made from very hefty 19mm MDF, while the veneered and heavily chamfered sides are a full 25mm thick, with additional bituminous

mass/damping pads. Tight bolts hold the drivers in place, and on the main unit eight of them clamp the pressed frame via a steel clamp ring. Light foam lines the rear panel of the front-ported enclosure, hiding a good quality crossover with bi-wire terminals and hard wiring throughout. The advanced main driver sports a 98mm plastic cone main driver with its decent size magnet, while the tweeter uses a 25mm plastic dome.

## Sound Quality

Although not the cheapest route to audio nirvana, the 751 is certainly good for its size, and it performed 'above average' on both blind listening days. It's not particularly neutral, however, and reactions to its basic balance did vary from one listener to another.

The 751's strength lies in the bass, where that solid enclosure really seems to keep things clean and tight. Low bass is scarce, of course, but the upper bass is free from boom and overhang, impressively solid, lively and driving, and with good powers of analysis. A decent ability to discriminate dynamics succeeds in conveying a surprising sense of scale from such a small speaker. Hands-on experiments suggested that the choice of partnering stands can play a significant role in determining the net bass quality.

Like other Mission designs, the midband on the 751 sounds a little shut in, but this factor undoubtedly helped give good results when driven by our bud-

get price CD player and amp. Perhaps the most consistent criticism, however, is of a rather bright mid/upper treble: the tweeter sounds quite sweet, but had the same obvious 'sizzle' reported in issue 126. Whether that's a good or a bad thing may be a moot point, depending on personal taste and partnering equipment.

## Conclusion

No other group sample beats the looks of the 751, and its ultra-solid build is reflected in the tight, clean bass. The treble 'sting', however, might not suit every taste or system. And whatever you do — don't skimp on the stands.



### VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★  
**VALUE** ★★★★★  
**PRICE** £300

▲ Great looking, very compact and solid; very entertaining sound.

▼ Pricey, needs good stands, extreme top is a bit too obvious.

✉ Centralforce Ltd, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED

☎ (01480) 451777

## THE LAB REPORT

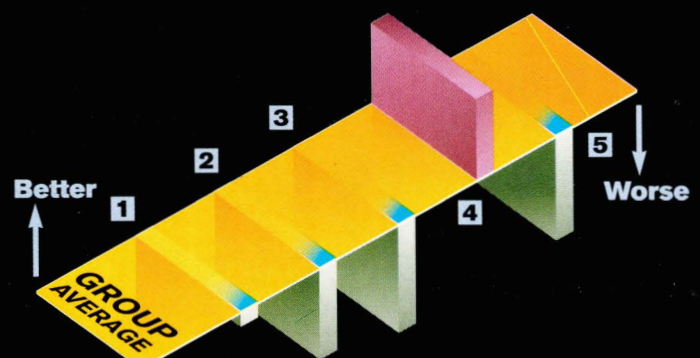
In many respects, the technical performance of the 751 bears comparison with the budget 731. In addition, it benefits from a boost of over 1dB in mid-band sensitivity and even lower distortion of just 0.2-0.6 per cent across the entire audioband at 96dBA. Indeed, aided by the rigid cabinet and superior LF driver, Mission's 751 boasts the lowest bass distortion (typically 0.3 per cent) of all the speakers compared in this test, even around the reflex resonance of 50Hz.

Yet the slightly depressed upper midband of the 751 looks familiar, as does the treble spike at 12kHz — features that were apparent in the listening tests. This tailored response is maintained off-axis, though at 30 degrees the 'sting' is reduced by 4dB or so, encouraging a smoother overall balance.

In terms of load, the 751 is tough but not fierce with a minimum of 4.5 Ohms at 250Hz and a phase angle approaching 24 degrees at 160Hz, where the impedance drops to 5.4 Ohms. A voltage/current angle of 40 degrees was recorded around 3-4kHz, but the impedance proved a little gentler at 11-16 Ohms. Wimpy amplifiers beware! *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-5%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-39%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-46%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	35%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-53%





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# Mordaunt-Short MS10i

**M**ordaunt-Short's pretty little £130 MS10 has occupied a permanent position up near the top of the speaker sales charts since its introduction. Our review and Recommendation goes back a little over two years (issue 130), but given the fierceness of the competition in this sector of the market, an update of Mordaunt-Short's baby was inevitable.

Enter the MS10i ('i' for injection, allegedly), which carries a cheeky £140 asking price — £10 more than the hot competition from KEF, Mission and B&W. The new contender looks almost identical to its predecessor: it is very neatly detailed and finished, essentially conservative and restrained, with just the gilt of the badge and anodised metal dome tweeter by way of decoration. The 10i looks a bit naked with grille removed, but the latter fits snugly and gives the baffle a very smooth acoustic profile.

The whole thing feels exceptionally solid — among the immediate competition only the slightly larger B&W 302 is heavier — and this is confirmed by close scrutiny. The box wrap is only about 11mm thick, but the front baffle arrangements are a masterpiece of mechanical integrity: a moulded plastic front with an integral main driver frame is held by four massive woodscrews to a sub-

stantial (15mm) inset vertical brace.

A single terminal pair feeds a simple hard-wired crossover which is tag-connected to the drivers. The bass/mid unit has a 90mm plastic cone with integral moulded surround, a protuberant phase compensating pole-piece extension, and a nicely open frame behind as well as a decent size magnet. The magnet behind the 25mm metal dome tweeter is unusually large.

## Sound Quality

The 10i scored significantly better on one listening day compared to the other, which says a lot about the practical exigencies of blind panel testing. Was it the change of stands, the different personnel, or even the influence of alternative preceding models?

Whatever, the 10i did very well considering its price, with a most attractive overall balance that manages to sound up-front and open without suffering unduly from attendant harshness. The bass does not go to any extreme depths, but this becomes unimportant with the lively and tuneful qualities of what bass there is. The 10i can sound a bit boxy when driven hard, but it keeps up to speed.

More surprising, perhaps, is the fact that such a small speaker can deliver such a good sense of scale, which could be the result of above average coherence and dynamics. The top end is quite sweet and very well judged in relative level — an important point because recent M-S babies have tended towards dullness, as the company

has struggled to get enough output from its tweeters. The 10i has licked this problem (partly by dropping the impedance, it's true), and the result is altogether more open and entertaining. It does get a bit edgy when hammered hard, but holds together well nonetheless.

This speaker worked well with our 'budget' system components too. Perhaps a little up-front for some tastes, but a kickin' little box for all that.

## Conclusion

I reckon the MS10i is Mordaunt-Short's best miniature since the 3.10, a top seller in the late '80s. Despite costing a tenner more than its peers, it may well put the company back on pole position.



## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★★  
**PRICE** £140

▲ Lively, coherent and entertaining; good build for the price.

▼ Can sound a bit forward, could have more bass weight.

✉ Mordaunt-Short Ltd, 3 Ridgeway, Havant, Hants PO9 1JS  
 ☎ (01705) 407722

## THE LAB REPORT

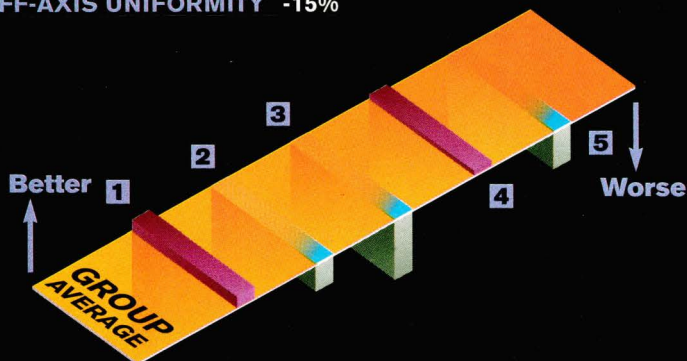
This 'injection' version of the MS10 has a rather lumpy-looking response, particularly between 800 and 1.2kHz, where there is a mild boost in output, possibly as a result of an uncontrolled cone resonance. Either way, this may explain Mordaunt-Short's optimistic 88dB/1W specification which, in practice, works out closer to 86.8dB between the 500Hz-8kHz third-octave span used for our calculations.

The high frequency end of things looks a little less 'peaky' than with several other speakers in this test, but there is a steady decline in output beyond 14kHz. Mordaunt-Short has successfully squeezed a little extra output from the tweeter by reducing its impedance, for the MS10i is unusual in having its minimum of 4.7 Ohms at 15kHz, leaving the typical upper bass/lower midband 'sag' at a minimum of 5.9 Ohms.

This seems friendly enough, yet at lower frequencies, there's a very abrupt phase swing about the initial and most significant peak at 35Hz in the impedance spectrum, below which the adverse phase angle (typically >45 degrees) could trip up some unsuspecting budget amplifiers. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	5%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-11%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-25%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	2%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-15%





# Revolver Beretta

**R**evolver is not yet among Britain's biggest selling speaker brands, it has to be admitted. But the sales charts reveal that it is doing surprisingly well for a brand which is relatively new to the speaker business.

The name comes from a now extinct turntable manufacturer, but the real force behind the operation is marketing company RAM, an experienced and successful distributor of imported electronics brands.

The *Beretta* looks a bit anonymous and shows obvious genre similarities to the JPW and Gale models, but by the same token the *Beretta* clearly represents good value for money at only £100. It is very similar to Revolver's £140 *Colt*, reviewed and Recommended in issue 148, and the two models actually have the same enclosure.

Cheaper drivers and build (woodscrews rather than bolts fixing the drivers) on the *Beretta* shave a full £40 off its final asking price.

This is a standard, two-driver, rear-ported miniature, slightly larger than some but still very similar to the stereotype that has dominated the UK scene for the past decade. Finish is plastic rosewood (or something to that effect), with the emphasis on the plastic — somehow vinyl finish remains more acceptable when kept as close to black as possible.

The box is built solidly from chipboard, with a 15mm front baffle and 12mm wrap. Post-forming adds a little elegance around the front panel, but the drivers are simply woodscrewed flat against the front, with no rebating to smooth the profile. The grille doesn't appear particularly helpful either.

The *Beretta's* main driver has a modest magnet and pressed frame with 95mm doped paper cone, while its tweeter is a small dome/annulus affair of a type commonly found in low budget speakers (but nonetheless uncommonly capable in performance terms). All is hard-wired internally, via a simple crossover fitted inside the terminal block.

## Sound Quality

The *Beretta* came through the blind tests with good results overall, especially since this is very much a budget product. There's a certain crudeness about the

mid and top, and the presence (voice) band sounds a little shut in, which put off some members of the panel. The *Beretta* also tended to sound a little congested when things got complex.

Its bass, however, is a real strength, sounding firmer, less congested and more informative than most of its competitors. Rhythms are treated quite well, and although genuine deep bass is not on the agenda, this speaker handles dynamic shading with some success.

Things were slightly less satisfactory when using the budget CD player and amp, as the *Beretta* somehow tended to highlight the limitations of the front end, with a rather relentless top end and a big but somewhat thick and heavy overall effect.

## Conclusion

Although it's not the prettiest or most techno-credible miniature around, the *Beretta* is unquestionably good basic material value for money. It makes a thoroughly honest attempt with the music, and manages to deliver a better bang than most for your bucks. The main reservation concerns its less than ideal combination with our 'budget' front end, so do audition in context before purchase.

## VERDICT

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★★  
**PRICE** £100

▲ Good material value, and one of the better babies for bass.

▼ Not the prettiest package around; mid and top are a bit coarse.

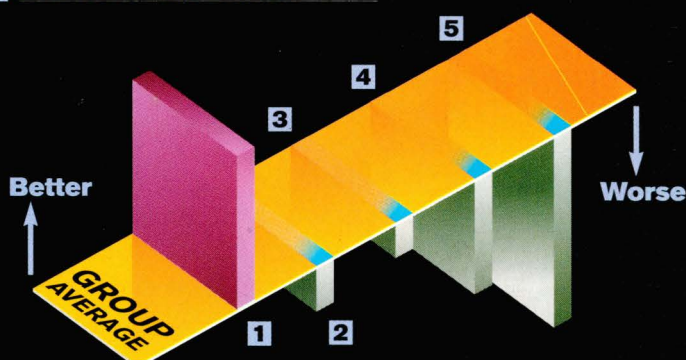
✉ Revolver, Aura House, 77 Dane Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 7BP

☎ (0161) 973 0505



## HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	67%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-18%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-13%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-48%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-81%



## THE LAB REPORT

The *Beretta* behaves just like a reflex-loaded version of the JPW, with a marginal improvement in sensitivity (87.2dB matches Revolver's 87dB specification).

There is also a similarly slight improvement in bass distortion from JPW's three per cent to 1-1.5 per cent for the *Beretta*. There is a burst of distortion (three to four per cent) associated with a treble peak at 12kHz, incidentally.

The gentle second-order bass roll-off of the JPWs is traded for a sharper fourth-order in this reflex system. Revolver's smooth, low-Q port resonance, however, encourages a broad reinforcement in bass output at a 52Hz centre frequency, with a drop in impedance to an entirely manageable 6.3 Ohms with no adverse phase angle. Indeed, phase angles across the board are all within +/- 40 degrees with a worst-case -37 degree shift at 1.1kHz (16.2 Ohms), which is unlikely to prove troublesome. Either way, Revolver's conservative six Ohm rating should be promoted to eight Ohms. *Paul Miller*



# Tannoy 631SE

The success of the standard 631 was confirmed in the confident Best Buy rating that emerged from our April 1995 review (issue 141). Tannoy, meanwhile, has been busy working out some improvements, and has now come up with a £170 'Special Edition' version. On the 631SE, the extra tweaks and fairy dust add £20 to the basic price.

A standard port-loaded two-way box with inverted drivers (main above tweeter), the 631SE feels a pretty lightweight affair. It is constructed in the current Tannoy idiom by forming a wrap for the sides, front and back (made from 15mm vinyl woodprint chipboard), and sandwiching this between plastic top and base mouldings. An important SE tweak, however, is a beefing-up of the top surface by means of an MDF insert — sensible since the standard plastic affair always seemed to vibrate a little too much for its own good.

The base moulding is cleverly arranged to accommodate a bi-wire terminal block with a captive link for conventional two-wire connection. It also incorporates mounting lugs for the matching stand, as well as internal trays for mounting and securing the components of the crossover, which is more elaborate in this SE version. The down side is that

it can be awkward to make a good mechanical connection with stands other than Tannoy's own.

The main driver has an 85mm plastic cone and pressed steel frame, but this SE version uses a new double-magnet system to increase flux, with the intention of improving midrange resolution. The tweeter has a big magnet and a c.23mm metal dome under a removable mesh cover. The enclosure is port loaded at the rear, and a neat looking grille is set on short stalks.

### Sound Quality

Small but quite classy, the 631SE recorded some pretty good listening test results, albeit with the occasional voice of dissent. As one may expect from such a small speaker, bass is not this Tannoy's main strength. But it is competent in a modest way, hanging on with decent pace and timing. There's also a welcome freedom from the sort of boxy quality that seems to afflict many small speakers. Just don't expect too much authority and punch.

Midband refinement is what this speaker is all about. The 631SE reveals one of the best judged balances around, giving a very natural, just slightly laid back effect, with sufficient coherence and dynamic range to keep the interest and involvement high.

The result might be a little light on immediacy and excitement, and some may find the whole experience a little too restrained — one panelist requested a little more 'sparkle'. The 631SE succeeds instead through sub-

tlety and delicacy, with a hear-through midband clarity that stays unforced yet continues to inform well down into the mix.

The most impressive result came when I tested the Tannoy with our 'budget' components, with which this speaker somehow managed to sound quite subtle and smooth, adding a firm, dry bass and an open, unforced and unboxy character.

### Conclusion

Without the standard 631 model available for comparison, it's difficult to say for sure exactly what the SE changes have achieved. The impression that it's improved comes from the fact that the Tannoy 631SE offers just about the most refined sound in this test.



**VERDICT**

**SOUND** ★★★★★☆  
**VALUE** ★★★★★☆  
**PRICE** £170

▲ Laid back yet involving and informative; welcome refinement.  
 ▼ Costs a few quid more and sounds a wee bit small.

✉ Tannoy Ltd, Rosehall Ind Est, Coatbridge, Strathclyde ML5 4TF  
 ☎ (01236) 420199

## THE LAB REPORT

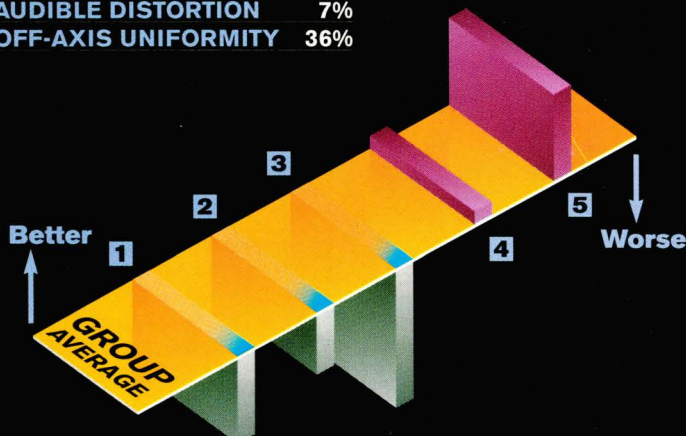
Tannoy quotes a minimum impedance of four Ohms for its 631SE, which proves to be pretty realistic. In practice, there's a low of 4.4 Ohms at 240Hz, but the trend never rises above eight Ohms from 130Hz to 2kHz. Beyond this point there's a peculiar 'blip' noted in the impedance trace at 2.3kHz, which could be caused by a misterrmination in the cone. Tannoy's 88dB sensitivity is a little less realistic, however, with 85.7dB being recorded here after number-crunching the output between 500Hz and 8kHz.

As with Mordaunt Short's MS10i, the slightly lumpy midband/treble response of the 631SE could give rise to 'alternative' sensitivity figures. In this case, the speaker has a boost around 4kHz with small depressions situated either side at 1.8kHz and 6kHz. The upper treble also demonstrates a slight boost but this, if not the other 'lump', is smoothed over by listening slightly off the horizontal axis.

Bass distortion is still a little high at 1-1.3 per cent (re. 96dB) but proves uniformly low (typically <0.2 per cent) at HF. Incidentally, do avoid highly capacitive speaker cables with the 631SE. *Paul Miller*

## HOW IT COMPARES

- |   |                     |      |
|---|---------------------|------|
| 1 | EASE OF DRIVE       | -37% |
| 2 | RELATIVE LOUDNESS   | -25% |
| 3 | MAXIMUM LOUDNESS    | -58% |
| 4 | AUDIBLE DISTORTION  | 7%   |
| 5 | OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY | 36%  |







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# Conclusions

Focusing tightly on the marketplace best sellers, this project has proved very enlightening indeed, with trial by peer group, as ever, proving a most effective tool. In fact, it has thrown up a number of interesting generalisations, over and beyond the specific reviews.

First there's the relative failure of the three floorstanders in the blind listening tests. Several factors may explain this: the panel could simply have reacted adversely to 'something different', bearing in mind that these floorstanders need to be further away from walls than the stand-mount miniatures. It is also possible that the floorstanders could have done better in a room with a concrete floor. Such grey areas will always exist, ensuring that loudspeaker

reviewing can never be an exact science. However, it does suggest that the miniatures with their lower box contributions are still likely to prove the better bet at these prices.

Which in turn raises the issue of stands themselves, and the very significant extent to which they modify, often unpredictably, the sound of the speakers they are supporting. We used a combination of Atacama SE24s (good value; keeps the system price competitive with floorstanders) and Slate Audios (expensive but reasonably predictable and impeccable performers); however, there are many alternatives, any of which might prove ideal with a given speaker and system.

I have been doing these speaker reviews for at least eight years, but each project still seems to bring new insights. Okay, so I'm

slow, but hopefully I'll get somewhere in the end! Normally we test only one model from each manufacturer, but this best seller round-up has three KEFs, three Missions and three models from Richer Sounds.

That the members of each group showed a strong family resemblance is no surprise. But in the hurly burly of umpteen hands-on listening tests a pattern started to emerge which tends to link each group to its own 'preferred listening level'. This, in turn, has considerable implications for the blind panel testing. There's insufficient room here to explore this further, so I've devoted my column this month (page 19) to a closer examination of why some folk like KEF while others like Mission — and why B&W always does well in my blind listening tests.

## Best Buys

They don't come any cheaper than the JPW Mini Monitor (£60), and while the sound is not particularly expansive, it is pretty coherent in its modest way. The JPW Gold Monitor (£80) is more capable, but also more nervous and edgy with it. The Revolver Beretta (£100) suffers similarly prosaic presentation, but sports better balance and fine bass performance.

Move up the price ladder and structural plastics add extra design possibilities. The even-handed B&W DM302 (£130) scored high on the blind tests, but for sheer brio and coherence the new Mordaunt-Short MS10i (£140) is hard to beat. However, if something more laid back suits your taste and system, the Tannoy 631SE (£170) offers refinement commensurate with its price.



B&amp;W DM302



Mordaunt-Short MS10i



JPW Gold Monitor



Tannoy 631



Revolver Beretta



JPW Mini Monitor

## Recommended

The Mission 731 (£130) has been improved and now joins the Recommended lists, as an obvious choice for those who like their music loud. The market leading KEF Coda 7 (£129) has been relegated from the BBs, with some reservations over the build and the bass, but its fine open voicing continues to merit Recommendation.

And if you like the 7, the Coda 8 (£189) is even better, with similar voicing but wider bandwidth. If you're looking for a bit more punch and dynamic drive, the fine drivers in the B&W DM601 (£200), or the super-tuff (and pretty) cabinet of the Mission 751 (£300) could well provide the solution.



Mission 731



Mission 751



KEF Coda 7



KEF Coda 8



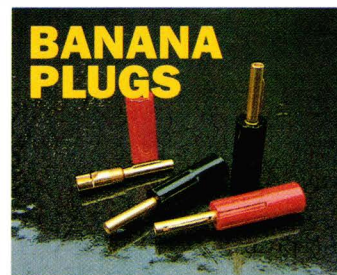
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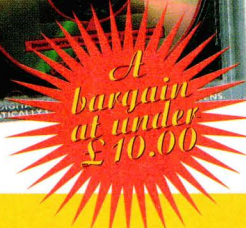
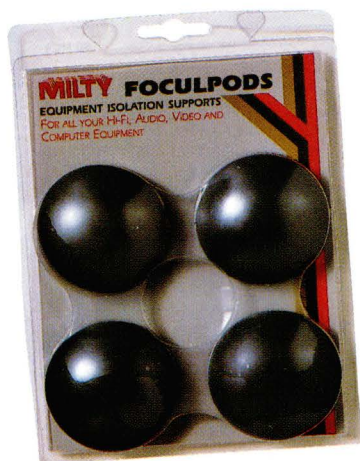
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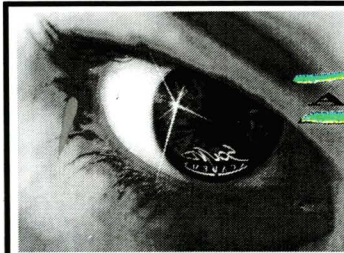
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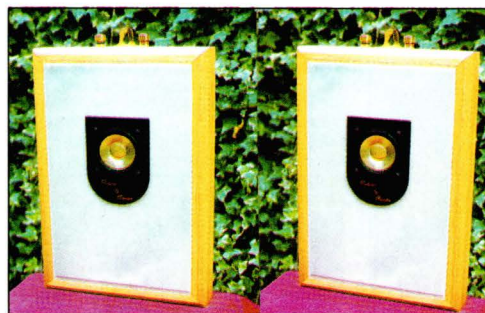
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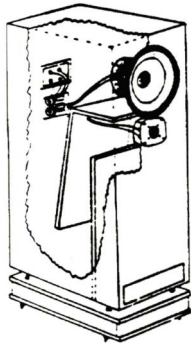
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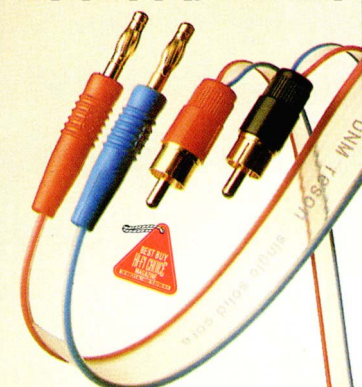
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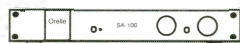
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'BEST BUY' Hi-Fi Choice  
 50W RMS/Ch integrated amplifier £449.00

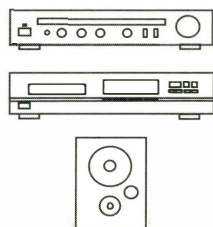
**£50\* voucher with any Orelle product**

**7 days money back guarantee!**

\*To be redeemed against any other in store purchase

**upto 50%**  
 on selected products  
 call for details

## Star Buy - Amazing value!



Denon PMA250III  
 +  
 Denon DCD315  
 +  
 KEF Coda 7

van den Hul The Storm interconnect cable  
 +  
 speaker stands  
 +  
 speaker cables

All components in this system are well reviewed

**Only £399.99**

**Save £116**

Usual Price £516  
 Other systems also available at incredible prices!

## B&W

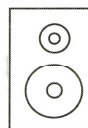
Free stands worth £40 with these superb speakers



**DM601** £199.95  
 ★★★★★ WHAT HI-FI?



**DM602** £299.95  
 ★★★★★ WHAT HI-FI?



## Mail Order

We accept cheque and all major credit card.

Simply pick up your phone and order

**Free Delivery\* above £250**

\*Excludes offers UK mainland only

## van den Hul Unique CARBON technology for ultimate performance

**CS122**  
 speaker cable

**Carbon Hybrid**  
 Magnificently transparent  
 Hi-Fi News & RR  
 They're fab  
 Hi-Fi Choice

**£11.99/m**

**Skytrack**  
 bi-wire  
 speaker cable

**Carbon Hybrid**  
 speaker cable  
 at an incredible  
 price of **£5.49/m**

**The FIRST**  
 Pure CARBON  
 interconnect

★★★★★ What Hi-Fi?  
 ★★★★★ Hi-Fi Choice  
 unique & wonderful

**£159.99** (0.6m)

Full van den Hul range available

**Free delivery\*** for orders over £50

Demonstration-no problem

\*UK mainland, VDH products only

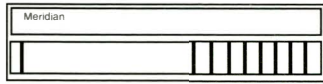
**Sound Sense Sales Hotline Tel: 0171 402 2100**

350 Edgware Road, London W2 1EA, Nearest Tube: Edgware Road. Fax: 0171 724 7750  
 Open: Monday to Saturday 10a.m. to 7p.m.

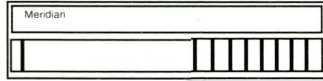


# Meridian

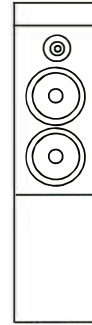
## Sound & Style in perfect harmony



**506 CD player**  
18 bit delta-sigma  
Conversation System  
RRP £950



**500 CD Transport**  
High Precision Transport  
featuring SPDIF, AES/EBU  
& optical outputs  
RRP£1195



**DSP5000**  
Digital Loudspeaker

3-Way Active System  
with 3x 75W per channel  
32 MHz Digital Sound Processing  
Remote Control Operation

**A truly unique product**  
RRP £3350 (Rosewood)

# XTC

## Ultimate High-End audiophile products

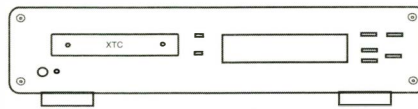
".....this one offers a combination of upmarket  
sound and looks which many will find hard to resist  
-a stunning start for a new name.

★★★★★ **WHAT HI-FI?** April '96

".....a smooth but detailed sound with plenty  
of variety in tonal colour and shading."

**Hi-Fi World** April '96

CDT-1/DAC-1  
£1250/£1000



**CDT-1**  
CD Transport



**DAC-1**  
18 bit DAC

### Other XTC products

#### PRE-1

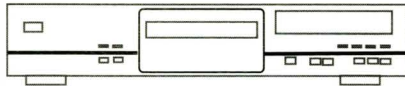
Single Ended Class A  
Remote Control preamplifier  
RRP £1000

#### POW-1

Quad channel 175W RMS  
multi-function power amplifier  
RRP £2000

# Technics

## Technically superior, Sonically outstanding

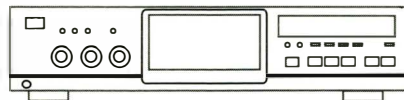


#### SL-PG480A

MASH DAC, Remote Control

★★★★★ **WHAT HI-FI?**

£139.95



#### RS-BX501

Dolby B/C & Pro HX, 2-Head, Full Logic

'HIGHLY RECOMMENDED'  
**WHAT HI-FI? Awards 1995**

★★★★★ **WHAT HI-FI?**

£199.95

### Full Technics range available

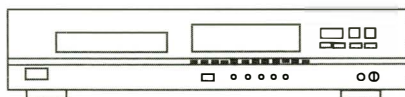
TUNERS from £149.95  
TAPE DECKS from £199.95  
CD PLAYERS from £119.95

#### RS-BX601

3-Head Tape Deck  
Usual Price £249.95  
**Now £199.95**

# Denon

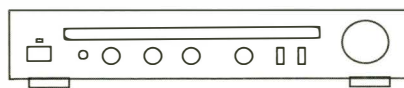
## British design\*-the secret of great sound



#### DCD-825

'RECOMMENDED' Hi-Fi Choice  
'AWARD WINNER '96' Hi-Fi Choice  
'HIGHLY RECOMMENDED' Hi-Fi News & RR

£239.95



#### PMA-250III

'RECOMMENDED' Hi-Fi Choice  
'RECOMMENDED upto £160'  
**WHAT HI-FI? Awards 1994**

£159.95

### Full Denon range available

TUNERS from £119.95  
TAPE DECKS from £159.95  
CD PLAYERS from £149.95

Demonstration-no problem

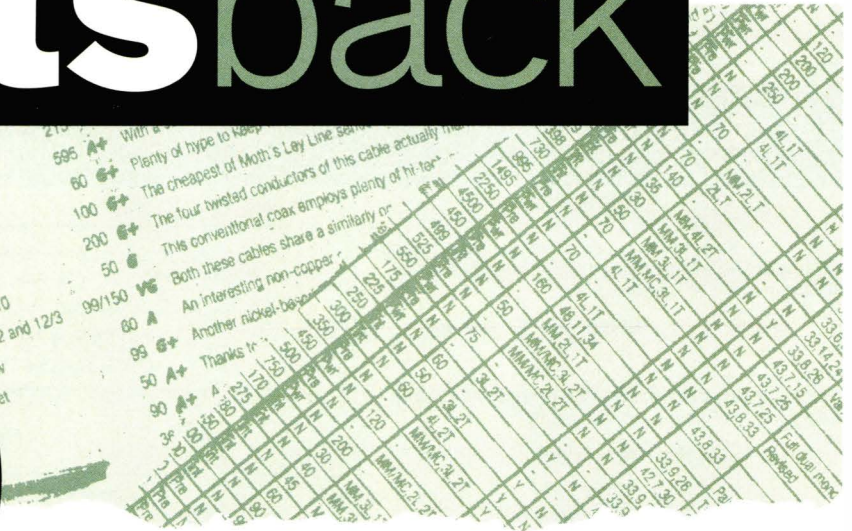
\*DCD-825, PMA-250III, PMA-350II & PMA-450SE

## Sound Sense Sales Hotline Tel: 0171 402 2100

350 Edgware Road, London W2 1EA, Nearest Tube: Edgware Road. Fax: 0171 724 7750  
Open: Monday to Saturday 10a.m. to 7p.m.



# Factsback



**E**ver wanted to look back at a *Hi-Fi Choice* review or needed some sound independent advice to make up that 'Best Buy' system? Factsback is a new service designed to help you through the ever-increasing list of available products. Now, all our reprints over the last 12 months are instantly available to you via your fax (or fax/modem) 24 hours a day. You get the review you need, just when you need it.

### How much will it cost?

The cost of our easy-to-use service is 39p per minute off-peak and 49p per minute at all other times. The pages you will receive have been designed to keep user costs to a minimum. We regret that Factsback is not available to overseas readers. The Factsback system was put together by Starcomm Ltd (01132) 940600



### Now available on **Factsback**

- ① Every *Hi-Fi Choice* test review from April 1994 to the present. Complete with prices, Best Buys and Recommendations.
- ② Every feature, Help page, Write On page, Editor's Chair, Sessions, Statements and column printed since April 1994.
- ③ Quick or in-depth system index. Includes the length of each article.



### How *Hi-Fi Choice* **Factsback** works

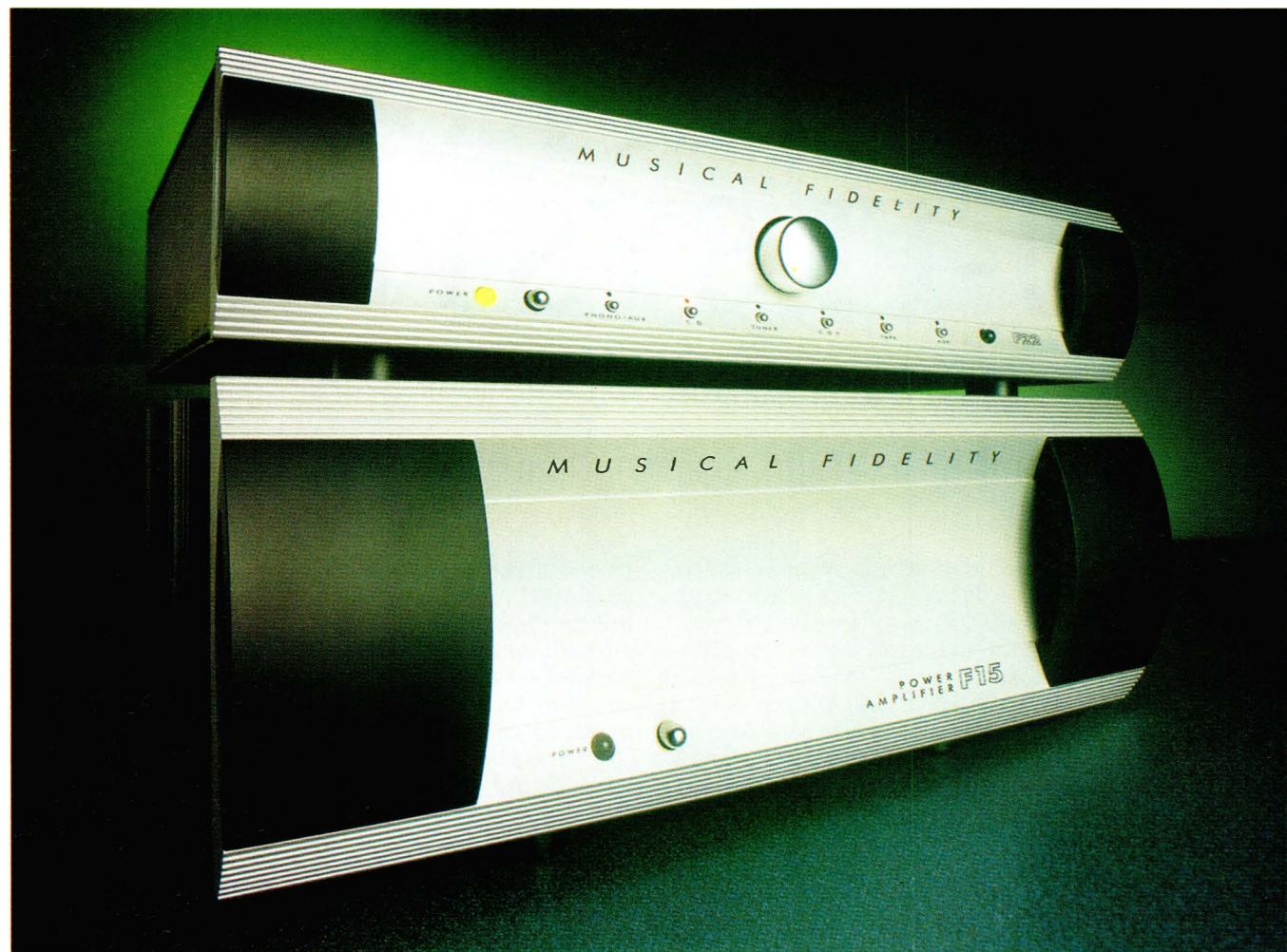
- 1 Call the Factsback system from the handset of your fax machine. The handset must be switched to 'tone'.
- 2 Following voice prompts, select either an index of documents or specific documents by a known document number from the keypad of your fax machine.
- 3 Factsback delivers your choice of documents to your fax machine complete with coversheet.

**TRY IT NOW! CALL**

**0891 616518**



# THE DIRECTORY



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<b>LIST OF REVIEWED PRODUCTS</b>	<b>p104</b>	<b>DACS</b>	<b>p111</b>
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<b>PREAMPLIFIERS</b>	<b>p105</b>	<b>HEADPHONES</b>	<b>p112</b>
<b>POWER AMPLIFIERS</b>	<b>p105</b>	<b>HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS</b>	<b>p113</b>
<b>CABLES</b>		<b>SUBWOOFERS</b>	<b>p115</b>
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>	<b>p106</b>	<b>STANDS &amp; SUPPORTS</b>	<b>p116</b>
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# 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.

**B**uying 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.

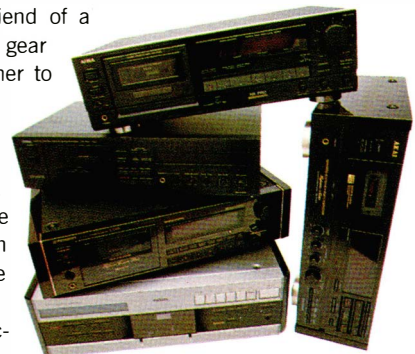
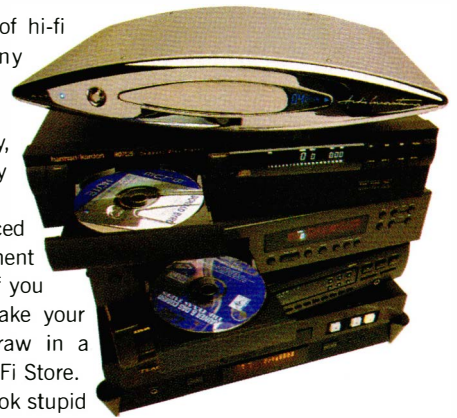
You're not going to look stupid if you're a first-time buyer. You need only a little faith in your ability to recognise the difference between

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 123), 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 96). 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 104). 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 123) to book a demonstration of the products you are interested in.



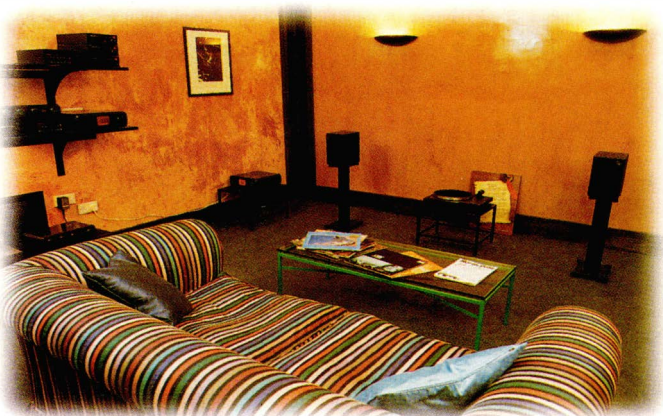
tion of your own CDs (or records), chosen more for familiarity than for being stunning recordings.

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's sound can be dramatically different in your home and the 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 of 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

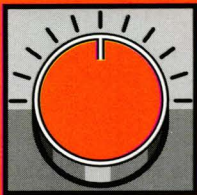
Do not commit the cardinal sin of dashing into your local dealer, magazine in hand, demanding to purchase Best Buy CD player A, Best Buy amplifier B and Best Buy speakers C. This is unlikely to result in your long-term satisfaction. Our policy at *Hi-Fi Choice* is that one must consider the hi-fi system 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 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!



## Sessions and Statements

Products that have been reviewed in Sessions or Statements or any non comparative test are not eligible for the Best Buy and Recommended accolades. However, this does not mean that they are not of excellent quality, and many of them go on to prove as much in group tests. So do not discount products that aren't flagged — they may just be waiting for their chance to shine.





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-R58K	200
JVC AX-V68K	230
JVC AX-A4728K	250
Kenwood KA-1060	140
Kenwood KA-2060R	170
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200
Kenwood KA-3060R	230
Luxman A-312	200
Luxman A-331	250
Magnum IA120	249
Marantz PM-34	150
Marantz PM-44 M IIse	200
Marantz PM-43	200
Marantz PM-53	250
NAD 312	200
Nakamichi OMs	200
Onkyo A-801	200
Pioneer A-103	130
Pioneer A-203	150
Pioneer A-303R	200
Pioneer A-300X	230
Rega Brio	229
Rotal RA9358K MkII	250
Sony TAF211B	150
Sony TAF244B	200
Sony TAF444E	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
Creo 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	250
Kenwood KA-4060R	480
Kenwood KA-V3700	300
Kenwood KA-5050R	350
Lescon 380X	255
Lescon Stereo 383X	495
Lescon Quattro	290
LFD Integrated Zero	499
Luxman A-353R	350
Luxman A-373	400
Magnum Quartet	329
Marantz PM-63	300
Marantz PM-700AV	450
Mission Cyrus III	500
Moth 30 Integrated	320
Musical Fidelity E10	300
NAD 314	260
Onix OA30	300
Onix OA21S	430
Onix OA31	480
Onkyo A803	260
Onkyo A-911	350
Onkyo A850	370
Orallo SA-100	449
Pioneer A-400X	300
Pioneer A-503R	300
Pioneer A-602	350
Pioneer VSA-701S	500
Pro-ject Model 7	259
Rega Elax	398
Rotal RA9708X	300
Sony TAF542E	400
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 A	549
Alchemist Kraken Anniv	549
Alchemist Nemesis	650
AMC CVT3030	529
Audiolab 8000S	650
Creo IMP703	538
DPA Renaissance	595
Exposure XX Super	699
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699
Harman-Kardon HK660	650
Heybrook Integra	555
Kenwood KA-V7700	600
Lescon Quatra Plus	655
LFD Int. Zero (Ph)	679
Linn Majik-1 (Line)	524
Linn Majik-1 (Phono)	593
Lynwood Opal	685
Magnum Class A	599
Meridian 551	695
Micromega Tempo 1	700
Monrio MJ	695
Musical Fidelity E100	599
Myriad M1120	530
Naim NAIT	549
Nakamichi IA2	600
Pioneer VSA-D802S	600
Quad 77A	700
Rose Scion	545
Shearpe Phase 2	649
Stemfoort Audio SF60	549
Teac A-BX7R	700
Triangle TE60SE	650

£701 to £1000

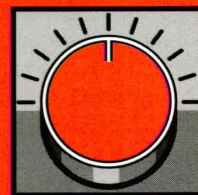
Alchemist Forseti	899
Arcam Xeta One	999
AVI S2000MI	799
Chimera X-90	800
CR Developments Romulus	998
Electrocompaniet EC1-2	990
Exposure XV Super	799
Harman-Kardon HK680	1,000
LFD Int. Zero LE	799
Micromega Tempo 2	900
Minstrel Ultra Linear	900
Monrio MC-200S	895
Naim NAIT R	724
Rega Elicit	730
Sonic Link DM30	725
Stemfoort Audio SF100	849
Teac A-BX10	999
Thule IA100	949
Woodside ISA230 Disc	899
Woodside ISA230 Line	899
YBA Integre Line	999

£1001 to £2000

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	1,899
Audio Innovations S500	1,199
Audio Innovations S700	1,199
Audio Note Oto SE	1,500
Chimera X-100	1,200
Copland CSA-14	1,099
Copland CTA-401	1,699
EAR 859	1,595
EAR 834	1,599
Electrocompaniet EC1-2SF	1,440
LFD Integrated 1	1,099
Meracus INTRARE	1,095
Minstrel Partridge	1,499
Monrio MC-205	1,500
Musical Fidelity A1000	1,399
Sonic Frontiers SFC-1	1,795
Triangle Nemo Allion 02	1,550
Tube Tech Unisys S'Line	1,399
Tube Tech Unisys	1,399
Unison Research Simply Two	1,148
Unison Research Simply Four P	1,495
Unison Research Simply Four T	1,545
YBA Integre	1,199

Over £2000

Aidyton OPERA	2,595
Electrocompaniet EC1-1	2,233
Electrocompaniet EC1-1 SF	2,485
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

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
Creo PMP003	385
Creo HMP003	388
Creo MMP002	439
Creek OBM-8	99
Creek OBM-9	110
Creek P42	279
Crimson CS610C	450
Denon PMA-425R	230
DPA DSP200S	495
EAR 834P	399
EAR 834L	449
Grant CD10	482
Harman-Kardon AP2500	499
Inca Tech Oberon Pre	350
LFD Linestage LSO	499
Lumley Reference PP70	325
Lumley Reference PP40	325
Lumley Reference PP1	325
Michell Iso	420
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 106	349
Naim NAC92	448
Onix OA24	400
QED Vector One	199
Rose RV-23	450
Rotal RC9708X MkII	175
Rotal RC9808X	350
Rotal RC9908X	500
Sentec PP9 RIAA MM	500
Technics SU-C1000	350
Thomson TIP2000	500
Unison Research Simply Phono	495

£501 to £2000

Aidyton 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	700
Art Audio VPL	741
Art Audio Conductor Phono	950
Art Audio VP1	752
Art Audio Conductor	1,250
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	550
Audiolab 8000PPA	900
Audiolab 8000QQ	1,100
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
Creo CMP004	799
Creo 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	1,466
Electrocompaniet EC-4 SF Line	1,790
Electrocompaniet EC-3MC	1,953
Exposure XX	799
Exposure XVII	849
Exposure XIV	1,400
Fullers Pre 1	599
Fullers Pre 1+	649
Gamma Acoustics Era Std	999
Graaf WFB Two	1,100
Grant G100P	764
Heybrook SIG CA	649
Heybrook SIG CAP	829
KAL Magician	550
KAL Harlequin	750
LFD MC1 Phonostage	949
LFD LS1 Linestage	999
LFD PPS	999
LFD Phonostage MC2	1,499
LFD Linestage LS2	1,599
LFD Linestage LS2P	1,750
LFD Linestage LSB	1,999
Linn Kairn Pro	998
Linn Kairn Preamp	1,398
Lumley Reference LV1	1,000
Lumley Reference L/R PV1.5	1,350
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
Michell Argo	730
Michell Iso HR	895
Michell Argo HR	1,339
Michi RHC-10	795
Michi RHQ-10	995
Michi RHA-10	995
Micromega Tempo P	1,250
Monrio ADN	595
Monrio PLUR1-L	950
Musical Fidelity E200	599
Musical Fidelity F22	999
Naim NAC92R	579
Naim NAC72	670
PS Audio 6.1	799



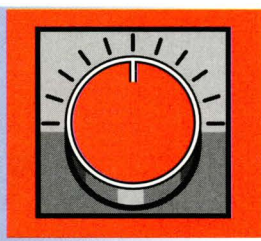
In search of amps?  
There's a stack to  
choose from!



PS Audio 6.2	899
PS Audio Phono Link	899
Quad 77PR	850
Roksan ROK-L2.5	995
Rose RV-23A	525
Sentec PC9 RIAA MC	600
Sentec SC9	800
Shearane Phase 6 Pre	895
Shearane 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
Sumo Ulysses II	629
Sumo Athena II Line	767
Sumo Polaris III	898
Sumo Athena III	987
Sumo Artemis OP	1,695
Sumo Audiomedea III	1,810
Sumo Model Five	1,830
Technics SU-C2000	700
Tesserae TAADA	1,500
Tesserae TALA	1,500
Tesserae 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 MM	881
Woodside SC27 MC	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

**Over £2000**

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-12	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
Lumley Reference L/R M100	2,250
Lumley Reference L/R LS2	3,250
Lumley Reference L/R PS2	3,550
Lumley Reference L/R M140	4,250
Lumley Reference ST150	4,350
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
Meracrus PRETARE	2,195
Meridian 601	2,750
Naim NAG82	2,058
Naim NAC52	3,190
Roksan ROK-L1.5	2,250
Sonic Frontiers SFL-2	3,795
Sumo Model Ten/M	4,080
Tesserae TAP-A	5,300
YBA 1 Pre	3,750



**Power Amps  
Up to £500**

Alchemist Kraken/Pte	380
Alchemist Kraken/mono	380
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr A	499
AMC 2445	299
AMC 2030	449
Arcam Delta 290P	400
Creek A42	279
Crimson CS 620C	450
Denon PMA-75SR	350
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	428
Onix OA401	400
Rotel RB970EX MkII	225
Rotel RB980EX	450
Technics SE-A1000	400

**£501 to £2000**

Alchemist Forsetti Pwr	1,250
Arión EOS Export Mk II	1,299
Arión Triton Mk II	1,399
Arión Tycho Pwr Mk II	1,850
Art Audio Quintet	1,393
Art Audio Quintet SE MB	1,500
Art Audio Concerto	1,669
Audio Innovations Ser 800	999
Audio Innovations First Audio	1,749
Audio Innovations Ser 1000	1,799
Audiolab 8000P	750
Audiolab 8000M	800
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
Co unterpoint 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 XVII Super	849
Exposure XVII (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
Meracrus 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	722
Naim NAP180	1,016
Naim NAP135	1,576
Naim NAP250	1,576
Onix OA601	699
Onix OA801	849
Papworth TVA50	1,425
PS Audio 100 Delta	1,499
Quad 77SA	600
Quad 707	800
Roksan ROK-S1.5	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	550
Rotel RB990EX	750
Sentec PA9	1,000
Shearane Phase 3	619
Shearane Phase 5 Mono	879
Sonic Frontiers SFS-40	1,695
Technics SE-A2000	1,100
Thorens TTA2000	550
Thorens TRA3000	2,000
Thorens TRA3000	2,000
Thule PA200	1,798
Tube Tech Unisits Pwr Amp	1,099
Onix OA401	400
Rotel RB970EX MkII	225
Rotel RB980EX	450
Technics SE-A1000	400

**Over £2000**

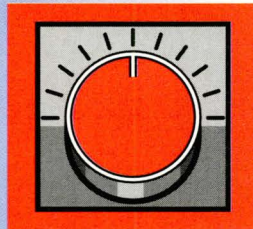
Adyton CORDIS 1.6	3,495
Alchemist Alchemist Stereo	3,995
Alchemist Alchemist Mono	8,995
Art Audio Tempo	2,499
Art Audio Quintet SE	2,500
Art Audio Maestro	3,524
Audio Innovations Ser 1000SE	2,499
Audio Innovations Second Audio	3,299
Audio Research VT60	2,645
Audio Research D-200	3,248
Audio Research V35	3,355
Audio Research V70	4,480
Audio Research D-300	4,800
Audio Research VT130	5,994
Audio Research D-400II	6,600
Audio Research VT150	7,200
Audio Research V140	8,960
Bryston 8B-NRB	2,195
Bryston THX8B	2,400
Bryston THX10B	2,299
Classe Audio Audio 10	3,399
Classe Audio Audio 15	4,639
Classe Audio Audio 25	7,690
Classe Audio Audio M-700	9,968
Classe Audio Audio M-1000	3,500
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	7,000
Conrad-Johnson Premier 12	2,099
Copland CTA-505	2,495
Counterpoint Solid 2E	2,995
Counterpoint NPS-200E	3,575
Counterpoint SA4	4,125
Counterpoint Nat Progress	4,395
Counterpoint NPS-400E	8,995
Counterpoint NPM-E	2,181
Credo PMP102	2,509
Credo PMP252	4,250
DNM PA2BE	5,250
DNM PA2BS	5,650
DNM PA2BS-1	2,195
Dynavector HX75	3,995
Dynavector HX1.2	4,699
EAR 509 Mk II	6,999
EAR 519	2,115
EAR 549	2,300
Electrocompaniet AW1000MB	3,983
Electrocompaniet AW1000MB-SF	4,195
Electrocompaniet AW2500MB	4,673
Electrocompaniet AW2500MB-SF	4,900
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	2,199
Electrocompaniet AW180MB-SF	4,000
Exposur IV	3,999
Exposur XVI	2,100
Gamma Acoustics Space Ref	3,455
Graef 5050	3,760
Grant G350A	2,880
Grant G200AMS	4,956
Jadis JA-30	5,290
Jadis JA-80	7,759
Jadis DEFY-7	4,375
Jadis JA-200	3,690
KAL Emperor	5,843
Krell KSA-50s	7,987
Krell KSA-100s	9,500
Krell KSA-200s	9,500
Krell KSA-300s	3,200
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 MC7300	2,855
McIntosh MC7306	3,195
McIntosh MC7106	3,425
McIntosh MC275	3,595
McIntosh MC300	3,765
McIntosh MC2600	5,395
McIntosh MC500	6,265
Meracrus TENTARE	2,245
Meracrus 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
Shearane Phase 1 Pwr Ref	2,199
Sonic Frontiers SFS-80	2,895
Sonic Frontiers SFS-160	5,495
Tesserae 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

NAD AV316	450
NAD AV216THX	470
NAD 916	500
NAD 208THX	1,000
Onkyo A-S620	700
Onkyo A-SV810PRO	900
Rotel RB956AX	400
Sony TA-AV590	399
Sony TA-AV570B	400
Technics SA-GX470L	400
Yamaha DSP-A590	349
Yamaha DSP-A780	599
Yamaha DSP-A2070	1,099

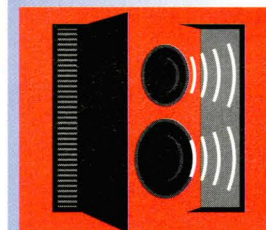
**AV Receivers**

Denon AVR-900	350
Denon AVR-1000	520
Harman-Kardon AVR-20	499
Harman-Kardon AVR-25	699
Harman-Kardon AVR-30	1,000
JVC RX-416VBK	270
JVC RX-616RBK	350
Kenwood KA-V570	300
Kenwood KR-V6070	350
Kenwood KR-V7070	400
Kenwood KR-X1000	1,300
Marantz AV600THX	900
Marantz SR-82	900
NAD AV713	480
NAD 917	550
NAD AV716	600
Onkyo TX-SV424PRO	400
Onkyo TX-SV525PRO	650
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 Amplifiers  
Integrated AV Amps**

Arcam Xeta One	1,000
Denon AVC-1530	480
Denon AVC-2800	800
Harman-Kardon AV1200	499
JVC AX-V6BK	230
Kenwood KA-V3700	300
Kenwood KM-X1000	400
Kenwood KA-V7700	600
Marantz MA500THX	250
Marantz MM-500	400
Marantz PM-711AV	450
Marantz SR-73	600
NAD 912	200



**AV Loudspeakers  
Centre Channel Speakers**

B&W 2001FS	120
B&W Solid HCM1S	125
B&W CCG	200
Boston Acoustics 404V	100

Enhance your existence with some of this amazing surround sound gear.





Boston Acoustics CR1	100
Boston Acoustics Centre 6	130
Boston Acoustics 525V	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 Centre 160	170
KEF 200C	699
Kenwood CS-6	150
Linn Centrik	298
Meridian DSP5000C	1,595
Meridian DSP6000C	4,500
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 1/2 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	229
Canon S-KT1	279
Celestion CS2	149
Celestion Style Series	699
Dali Surround Sound Sys	1,240
GLL Arena AV	89
Harman-Kardon HT-1 System	2,500
Jamo SP50	140
Jamo Centre 18	150
Jamo System 4000II	230
Jamo System 4000SII	240

Jamo Art	250
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 AV2	300
JPW AV1	300
JPW AV4	400
JPW AV3	400
KEF 80C	129
Kenwood THX System	2,800
Linn Tukan	449
Linn Keidid	649
Mordaunt-Short CS-1	115
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 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	400
Boston Acoustics SW10	450
Boston Acoustics 595X	455
Canon S-B20	200
Jamo SW400e	330
Jamo SW300SYSII	350
Jamo SW505e	400
Jamo SW500 SYS	450
Jamo SW600e	530
JBL P560	399
JPW Satellites	80
JPW Subwoofer	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
Kenwood CM-SES	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
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	18



**CABLES Analogue Interconnects**

Arion SA0.5	75
Arion SA1	125
Arion SA2	199
Arion SA2	199
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	25
Cable Talk Advanced 2	35
Cable Talk Improved 2/T	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
Ixos 603	75
Ixos 601	20
Ixos 604	40
Ixos 602	60
Ixos 603/10	100
Mission Quartet	552
Mission Stranded	1,183
Naim NAC05	49
Nordost 2-Flat	99
Nordost Flatline Gold	199
Nordost Super Flat Biwire	30
Nordost Blue Heaven	50
Nordost Red Dawn	80
QED 42 Strand	120
QED FI-4	250
QED 79 Strand	20
QED RI-4	23
QED Qudos	5
QED Qudos Profile 8	30
QED Qudos Terminated	43
Sonic Link AST150	50
Sonic Link AST175X2	50
Sonic Link AST150X2	80
Sonic Link Grey	150
Sonic Link Care Music	200
Sonic Link Blue	200
Sonic Link Derwent/spkr	200
Sonic Link Care Music BiWire	300
Tech + Link OFC79	1
Tech + Link OFC42	1
van den Hul The Clearwater	50
van den Hul The Magnum	265
van den Hul The Wind	330

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 75	150

**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 Figi-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
Monsterc Datalink 100	45
MoTh Layline Datalink	140
Nordost Moonglo Digital	135
QED Dignith	20
Sonic Link Light Brown	30
Sonic Link Green	50
Trichord Pulsewire 75/D	64
van den Hul MV Videolink 75	30

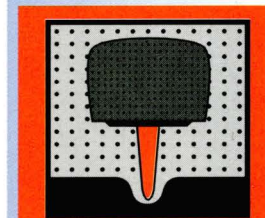
**Speaker Cables**

Arion LSO.5	12
Arion LS1	30
Arion LS-2	50
Arion AN-B	165
Audio Note AN-SP	1,270
Audioquest F-14	45
Audioquest Type 4	75
Audioquest Midnight Hyperlitz	260
Cable Talk Overture 2	4
Chord Rumour	8
Chord Flatline Gold	9
Chord Flatline Twin	16
DNM LBCB500	170
DPA IS19	275
Haybrook Heywire	4
Ixos 603	2
Ixos 601	3
Ixos 604	5
Ixos 602	5
Ixos 603/10	20
Mission Quartet	9
Mission Stranded	20
Naim NAC05	5
Nordost 2-Flat	5
Nordost Flatline Gold	17
Nordost Super Flat Biwire	9
Nordost Blue Heaven	58
Nordost Red Dawn	99
QED 42 Strand	1
QED FI-4	2
QED 79 Strand	2
QED RI-4	3
QED Qudos	3
QED Qudos Profile 8	5
QED Qudos Terminated	33
Sonic Link AST150	40
Sonic Link AST175X2	50
Sonic Link AST150X2	80
Sonic Link Grey	90
Sonic Link Care Music	150
Sonic Link Blue	200
Sonic Link Derwent/spkr	200
Sonic Link Care Music BiWire	300
Tech + Link OFC79	1
Tech + Link OFC42	1
van den Hul The Clearwater	50
van den Hul The Magnum	265
van den Hul The Wind	330

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 1012GK	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 K5	54
Nottingham Analogue Tracer I	98
Ortofon VMS2	10
Ortofon OM-5E	16
Ortofon OMP-5E	17
Ortofon OM Pro S	21
Ortofon OM10 Super	25
Ortofon OM Night Club S	32
Ortofon 510/P	32
Ortofon OM Night Club E	37
Ortofon Concord Pro S	40
Ortofon Concord NC S	55
Ortofon 520/P	55
Ortofon OM20 Super	60
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	60
Ortofon Concord NC E	60
Ortofon OM30 Super	80
Ortofon MC10 Super	85
Ortofon 530/P	85
Pickering TE-15	20
Pickering VE-15	25
Pickering T-E	28
Pickering V15-DJ	25
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	55
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 SC35C	28
Shure ME95ED	38
Stanton 500EL	34
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 lo IIV	1,395
Audio Note lo Ltd V	2,950
Audio Technica AT-OC9	245
Audio Technica ART-1	944
Audioquest MC5	250
Audioquest 404L	599
Audioquest 404IMX	899
Audioquest 7000NSX	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 Recca	225
DNM Reson Etile	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



**CARTRIDGES Up to £100**

Arcam C77	30
Arcam C77MG	40
Arcam E77	50
Arcam E77MG	60
Arcam P77	63
Arcam P77MG	73
Audio Technica AT-91	13
Audio Technica AT-95E	19

If you've got a separate system, good quality interconnects will make a huge difference.





Kiseki PHS	899
Koetsu Red T	1,550
Koetsu Red K Sig	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	2,297
Koetsu Signature	3,218
<b>Linn K9</b>	<b>109</b>
Linn K18/II	197
Linn Klyde	449
Linn Arkiv	998
<b>London Decca Maroon</b>	<b>199</b>
London Decca Gold	239
London Decca Maroon Dp	259
London Decca Gold Dpd	299
<b>London Decca S Gold</b>	<b>339</b>
London Decca S Gold Dp	399
London Decca Jubilee	999
Lyra Lydian	699
<b>Lyra Clavis Da Capo</b>	<b>1,069</b>
Lyra Parmassus	2,295
<b>Militek Aurora</b>	<b>299</b>
Militek Olympia	399
Nottingham Analogue Tracer II	175
Nottingham Analogue Tracer III	350
Nottingham Analogue Tracer IV	550
<b>Ortofon MC3 Turbo</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Ortofon MC15 Super II</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Ortofon 540/P</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Ortofon MC2SE</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Ortofon MC25FL</b>	<b>210</b>
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	250
<b>Ortofon MC30 Supreme</b>	<b>350</b>
Ortofon MC2000II	650
<b>Ortofon MC3000II</b>	<b>950</b>
<b>Ortofon MC5000</b>	<b>1,500</b>
Ortofon MC7500	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	150
Pickering XL-4004	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	200
<b>Roksan Conus Black</b>	<b>130</b>
Roksan Shiraz	975
Sumiko BPS	250
Transfiguration AF-1 Mk II	1,595
Transfiguration Supreme	1,995
<b>van den Hul MM-1</b>	<b>250</b>
van den Hul MM-2	299
van den Hul DDT-II	699
<b>van den Hul MC-10</b>	<b>799</b>
<b>van den Hul MC-One</b>	<b>999</b>
<b>van den Hul MC-One/II</b>	<b>1,149</b>
<b>van den Hul MC-Two</b>	<b>1,349</b>
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
<b>van den Hul Grasshopper IIGLA</b>	<b>2,999</b>
van den Hul Grasshopper IIICHN	3,400
van den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	3,450

<b>Sony TC-K415B</b>	<b>180</b>
Sony TC-WR545B	200
Teac V395CHX	100
Teac V-610	129
Teac R-560	180
Teac W-760R	180
Technics RS-TR373	200
<b>Technics RS-BX501</b>	<b>200</b>

<b>Over £200</b>	
Aiwa AD-F850	230
<b>Aiwa AD-S950</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Arcam Delta 100</b>	<b>899</b>
<b>Denon DRS-640</b>	<b>210</b>
Denon DRS-760	260
<b>Denon DRM-740</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>Denon DRS-810</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>Harman-Kardon TD420</b>	<b>280</b>
Harman-Kardon TD450	350
Harman-Kardon TD470	450
<b>JVC TD-V562BK</b>	<b>220</b>
JVC TD-W718BK	250
<b>JVC TD-V662BK</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>Kenwood KX-5060S</b>	<b>235</b>
Kenwood KX-W8070S	280
<b>Kenwood KX-7060S</b>	<b>329</b>
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
<b>Nakamichi DR3</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>Nakamichi DR2</b>	<b>750</b>
Nakamichi Dragon	2,350
Onkyo TA-RW311	320
Onkyo KR-609	350
Onkyo TA250	350
Onkyo K-W606	370
<b>Onkyo K-611</b>	<b>430</b>
Pioneer CT-W603RS	230
Pioneer CT-W803RS	300
<b>Pioneer CT-S630S</b>	<b>300</b>
Pioneer CT-M601R	380
<b>Pioneer CT-S830S</b>	<b>500</b>
Pioneer CT-95	1,000
Sony TC-WR645S	250
Sony TC-K511S	250
<b>Sony TD-K611S</b>	<b>300</b>
Teac V-1030	250
Teac W-6000R	450
Teac V-8030S	650
Technics RS-TR474	220
<b>Technics RS-BX601</b>	<b>250</b>
Technics RS-TR575	280
<b>Technics RS-BX701</b>	<b>300</b>
Technics RS-BX747	350
Technics RS-TR979	400
Yamaha KX-W482	249
<b>Yamaha KX-580</b>	<b>249</b>
Yamaha KX-W952	599

Kenwood DP-M5570	250
Kenwood DP-5060	250
<b>Luxman D-322</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Marantz CD-53</b>	<b>200</b>
Marantz CC-45	250
NAD 510	189
<b>NAD 502</b>	<b>239</b>
NAD 512	250
Onkyo DX-710	200
Onkyo DX-703	240
Philips CD163	100
Philips CD711	120
Philips CD721	130
<b>Philips CD740</b>	<b>170</b>
Pioneer PD-77	100
<b>Pioneer PD-103</b>	<b>140</b>
Pioneer PD-203	160
<b>Pioneer PD-S504</b>	<b>200</b>
Pioneer PD-M603	250
<b>Rotel RCD-930AX</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Rotel RCD-940BX</b>	<b>250</b>
Sanyo CPM2403	200
Sony CDP-M302	130
<b>Sony CDP-312</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Sony CDP-561E</b>	<b>200</b>
Sony CDP-C325M	230
<b>Sony CDP-C345</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Sony CDP-761E</b>	<b>250</b>
Teac CD-P1100	140
<b>Teac CD-P3200</b>	<b>150</b>
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
<b>Technics 1278</b>	<b>250</b>
Yamaha CDC-555	199
Yamaha CDC-655	249

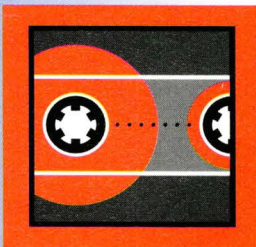
<b>£251 to £500</b>	
Aiwa DX-C100M	500
<b>AMC CD6</b>	<b>349</b>
<b>Arcam Alpha One</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Arcam Alpha 5 Plus</b>	<b>470</b>
<b>Audio Innovations Alto</b>	<b>399</b>
<b>Audio Innovations Alto Chr</b>	<b>449</b>
Aura CD100	500
Creek CD42	400
<b>Denon DCD-1015</b>	<b>300</b>
Grundig CDC14	300
Harman-Kardon HD7325	299
Harman-Kardon FL8450	300
Harman-Kardon HD730	300
<b>Harman-Kardon HD7425</b>	<b>349</b>
<b>Harman-Kardon HD7525</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>JVC XL-Z874BK</b>	<b>300</b>
JVC XL-M408BK	300
<b>Kenwood DP-7060</b>	<b>380</b>
<b>Marantz CD-63MKII</b>	<b>270</b>
Marantz CD-1010	300
Marantz CD-1020	334
Micromega Minium CD	350
Musical Fidelity E60	300

<b>NAD 514</b>	<b>370</b>
NAD 517	400
<b>N kamichi MB4s</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Onkyo DX-7210</b>	<b>280</b>
Onkyo FL8300	280
Onkyo DX-C711	290
<b>Onkyo DX-7510</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Onkyo DX-750</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Oratec CD-100</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Pioneer PD-S703</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Pioneer PD-M703</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Pioneer PD-S904</b>	<b>400</b>
Pioneer PD-DM802	450
<b>Pioneer PD-S901</b>	<b>499</b>
Pioneer PD-TM3	500
<b>Rotel RCD-965BX</b>	<b>300</b>
Rotel RCD-970BX	375
<b>Rotel RCD-965BX D</b>	<b>375</b>
Rotel RCD-965BX LED	425
<b>Sony CDP-XA2ES</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Teac CD-5</b>	<b>350</b>

<b>£501 to £1000</b>	
Arcam Alpha 6	600
<b>Arcam Delta 250</b>	<b>750</b>
<b>Arcam Delta 270</b>	<b>800</b>
DPA Renaissance	895
Harman-Kardon HD7625	550
<b>Harman-Kardon HD7725</b>	<b>800</b>
Kenwood DP-J2070	600
Linn Mimik	798
Luxman D-373	550
Marantz CD-72 Mk II	600
<b>Meridian 563</b>	<b>750</b>
Meridian 506	875
<b>Meridian 200</b>	<b>895</b>
Micromega Stage 1	550
Micromega Stage 2	700
Micromega Stage 3	900
Musical Fidelity E600	599
Naim CD3	977
Nakamichi MB2s	700
Onix CD33	999
Pioneer PD-F100	600
Quad 77B	700
Quad 77M	900
<b>Sony CDP-CX100</b>	<b>770</b>
<b>Teac VRDS-10</b>	<b>800</b>
Teac VRDS-10SE	850
Technics SL-P2000	1,000
Thule CD100	849

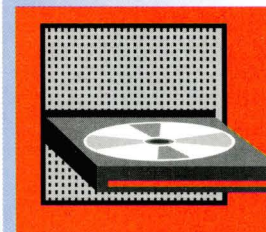
<b>Over £1000</b>	
AVI S2000MC	1,249
Copland CDA-288	1,799
Jadis JS-1	8,068
Krell CD-DSP Mk II	5,000
Krell CD DSPII 5000	5,000
Krell KPS20i	4,990
Luxman D500XS	9,500
Marantz CD-10	1,200
Marantz CD-16	1,400
Marantz CD-15	3,000
Marantz CD-23	4,000
McIntosh MCD7008	2,195

McIntosh MCD7009	2,635
Meracus ALURIGA	1,295
Meracus FLAGRARE	2,495
Meracus AMAGO	3,995
Meracus IMAGIO	4,495
Meridian 606	1,350
<b>Meridian 508</b>	<b>1,475</b>
Micro-Seiki CD-M2DC	3,695
Micro-Seiki CDM2000X	4,689
<b>Mission Disc/Dacmaster</b>	<b>1,900</b>
<b>Musical Fidelity FCD</b>	<b>1,499</b>
Naim CD2	1,977
Naim CD5	3,751
Pioneer PD-95	2,500
Roksan ATT-DP3P	1,495
Teac VRDS-20	1,299
YBA 2	2,999
ADT Drive 1	3,499
ATD Drive 1	3,499
Audio Alchemy DDS III	700
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,400
Audiomeca Damnation	950
Audiomeca Damnation SE	1,100
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,199
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,250
Audiomeca Kreatura	1,299
<b>Audiomeca Kreatura SE</b>	<b>1,450</b>
<b>Audiomeca Mephisto</b>	<b>2,100</b>
<b>Counterpoint DA-11E</b>	<b>1,495</b>
DPA Enlightenment	635
Jadis JCDT	8,000
Krell KSP20i/1	1,100
Krell MD-20	4,999
Krell MD-10	7,990
Krell KPS 20T	8,400
Krell DT-10	9,090
<b>Linn Karik</b>	<b>1,497</b>
<b>Meridian 500</b>	<b>1,095</b>
<b>Meridian 602</b>	<b>1,750</b>
Micromega Drive 1	700
Micromega Drive 2	1,000
<b>Pink Triangle Cardinal</b>	<b>795</b>
<b>PS Audio Lambda tr</b>	<b>2,250</b>
Roksan ATT-DP3	1,295
<b>Teac VRDS-T1</b>	<b>550</b>
Teac VRDS-7	599
<b>Teac P-700</b>	<b>900</b>
<b>Teac P-2S</b>	<b>4,000</b>
<b>Theta Data Basic II</b>	<b>2,298</b>
Theta Data III NTSC	5,345
Theta Data III NTSC/PAL	5,879
Thorens TCD2000	900
<b>Wadia 8</b>	<b>3,195</b>
Wadia 20	4,370
XTC CDT-1LE	1,250
<b>Arcam Black Box 50</b>	<b>480</b>
<b>Arcam Black Box 500</b>	<b>750</b>
<b>Counterpoint DA-10E</b>	<b>1,895</b>
Linn Numark	1,075
<b>Pink Triangle Ordinal</b>	<b>837</b>
<b>Pink Triangle DaCapo</b>	<b>1,536</b>
<b>PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD</b>	<b>2,650</b>
<b>PS Audio Ref Link</b>	<b>4,550</b>
<b>Teac D-T1</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Tichord Pulsar Ser One</b>	<b>1,395</b>



**CASSETTE DECKS**  
Up to £200

Aiwa AD-F450	120
Aiwa AD-WK727	170
Denon DRM-540	160
Denon DRM-580	200
Dual CC8000 RS	200
Goodmans Delta 700W	100
Goodmans GSW650	130
Grundig CCF3	200
Grundig CCF3	200
JVC TD-W218BK	170
<b>JVC TD-X372BK</b>	<b>170</b>
JVC TD-R472BK	200
JVC TD-W318BK	200
Kenwood KX-W4070	170
<b>Kenwood KX-3060</b>	<b>170</b>
Kenwood KX-W6070	200
<b>Luxman K-322</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Marantz SD-53</b>	<b>200</b>
Pioneer CT-S330	170
Pioneer CT-W503R	200
<b>Pioneer CT-S430S</b>	<b>200</b>
Sony TC-FX211B	100
Sony TC-K215B	130
Sony TC-K311B	130
Sony TC-W445B	150
<b>Sony TC-K461S</b>	<b>180</b>



**CD PLAYERS**  
Up to £250

Aiwa XC-300	150
Cambridge Audio CD4	150
Denon DCD-315	150
<b>Denon DCD-825</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Denon DCD-825</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Denon DCD-825</b>	<b>240</b>
Dual CD1135RC	140
Dual CD1150RC	150
<b>Dual CD1000RS</b>	<b>170</b>
Dual CD1180RC	180
Eclipse CD101a	80
Goodmans Delta 700	110
Goodmans GCD360R	120
Grundig CDI1	170
Harman-Kardon HD710	250
JVC XL-V184BK	120
<b>JVC XL-V284BK</b>	<b>140</b>
JVC XL-F116BK	180
JVC XL-F216BK	200
<b>JVC XL-V574BK</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>Kenwood DP-2060</b>	<b>160</b>
Kenwood DP-R4070	200
<b>Kenwood DP-3060</b>	<b>200</b>



CD players are getting better and cheaper all the time.







B&W CWM6i	240
B&W Solid HCM1	249
<b>B&amp;W DM602</b>	<b>300</b>
B&W Solid Powerbass	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
<b>Castle Durham 900</b>	<b>300</b>
Celestion 7 MkII	239
<b>Celestion 9</b>	<b>269</b>
Celestion Impact 20	279
Celestion 11	299
<b>Celestion Impact 23</b>	<b>300</b>
Cerwin Vega HT120	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 Int IV Sat	300
Jamo Classic 4	250
Jamo Art	250
Jamo D265D	300
Jamo 307A	300

JBL TLX50	250
JBL TLX60	300
<b>JPW AP3</b>	<b>230</b>
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
<b>Mission 733</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Mission 751</b>	<b>300</b>
Monitor Audio Monitor 7 Gold II	245
Monitor Audio MA100G	280
Monitor Audio Sub JW/200/92	300
<b>Monitor Audio MA201</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>Mordaunt-Short MS30i</b>	<b>275</b>
Mordaunt-Short HT50	275
Mordaunt-Short MS25i	300
NAD 802	249
Pioneer CS-7030	230
<b>Pioneer S-4UK</b>	<b>250</b>
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
<b>Rega EL8</b>	<b>298</b>
Rogers LS33	249
<b>Royd Minstrel</b>	<b>259</b>
<b>Royd Merlin</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>System Audio 905</b>	<b>250</b>
<b>Tannoy G33/II</b>	<b>300</b>
<b>TDL RTL2</b>	<b>300</b>
Visonik David 8001	228

Wharfedale Modus Five	259
Wharfedale Valdus 500	299
Yamaha NS10M	250
ZIP A1T	219
ZYP A2S	275
ZYP A25T	295
<b>£301 to £500</b>	
Advent Legacy 2	349
Advent Laureate	499
Allison CD7	380
<b>Allison AL120</b>	<b>420</b>
<b>Audio Innovations Alto</b>	<b>329</b>
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
Bose 301 VM	380
<b>Bose 305</b>	<b>430</b>
Bose Ammass AM3 II	500
<b>Bose 401</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Boston Acoustics SW10</b>	<b>449</b>
Boston Acoustics SubSat 6	449
<b>Castle York</b>	<b>370</b>
<b>Castle Severn</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Celestion 15</b>	<b>389</b>
Celestion Impact 25	399
Celestion Impact 30	429
<b>Celestion SL6Si</b>	<b>429</b>
Celestion SC6i	449
Celestion CS8i	499
Cerwin Vega VS10	350
Clements 300si	395
<b>Dall 104B</b>	<b>370</b>
Dawn Audio Chorus BS	482
<b>Epos ES11</b>	<b>445</b>
Faraday SG	345
<b>Faraday Siren</b>	<b>445</b>
Fullers Sultan	399
Fullers Sultan H.E.	439
GLL Imagio IC120	420
Grundig BX3 Mk II	350
<b>Heybrook Trio</b>	<b>373</b>
<b>Heybrook Heylo</b>	<b>389</b>
<b>Heybrook Heystak</b>	<b>499</b>
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
<b>Jamo Classic 8</b>	<b>400</b>
Jamo D365D	400
<b>Jamo Silhouette</b>	<b>450</b>
Jamo Atmosphere	450
Jamo BX150A	450
Jamo BX200A	500
<b>Jamo 477A</b>	<b>500</b>
JBL TLX151	350
JBL TLX70	400
JBL TLX161	400
JBL TLX171	500
Jordan Watts JHFLG	420
<b>JPW Ruby 1</b>	<b>500</b>
KAL Mini-Ref MKII	395
<b>KEF Q30</b>	<b>379</b>
<b>Kenwood LS-500G</b>	<b>500</b>
<b>Keswick Audio Aria II</b>	<b>329</b>
Linn Tukan	449
<b>Lumley Reference LM4</b>	<b>375</b>
Lumley Reference LM5	499
Manticore Minaret	480
<b>Mission 734</b>	<b>430</b>
<b>Mission 752</b>	<b>500</b>
Monitor Audio Monitor 9 Gold II	350
Monitor Audio MA302	400
<b>Monitor Audio MA202</b>	<b>450</b>
Monitor Audio MA303	500
Monitor Audio Monitor 14 Gold II	500
<b>Monitor Audio MA700 PMC</b>	<b>500</b>
Mordaunt-Short MS40i	450
<b>Musical Technology Harrier</b>	<b>400</b>
Origin Live OL-1AS	399
Origin Live OL-1A	399
<b>Origin Live OL-2A</b>	<b>470</b>
<b>Origin Live OL-1</b>	<b>499</b>
<b>Pentachord A</b>	<b>469</b>
Pioneer S-80	370
Polk RT8	400
Polk LS 4x Surround	449
Polk RT10	500
Prof Monitor Co TB1	481
QLN QuBic 222	375
<b>Rega ELA Mk II</b>	<b>498</b>
Rogers LS55	429
<b>Rogers Studio 3</b>	<b>499</b>

Roksan Roksan 1	495
Royd The Squire	349
Royd Doublet	449
<b>Royd Swordsman Plus II</b>	<b>329</b>
Ruark Icon	359
Ruark Sabre II	449
<b>Ruark Templar</b>	<b>499</b>
<b>SD Acoustics SD3R</b>	<b>399</b>
Sony SA-W90	350
Sony SSA1L	450
Spendor 2020	399
Tannoy Subsat3	399
Tannoy G36	419
Tannoy G37	499
<b>TDL RTL3</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>TDL Studio 0.5</b>	<b>499</b>
Technics SB-M300	350
<b>Technics SB-M500</b>	<b>450</b>
Triangle Titus T2e	325
Triangle Comete T2e	475
UKD-Opera Prima	450
Wharfedale Modus Seven	339
Wharfedale Modus One-Three	439

<b>£501 to £800</b>	
<b>Acoustic Energy AE1</b>	<b>764</b>
Advent Heritage	579
Allison CD8	550
Allison AL125	650
Allison AL130	800
Audio Note AN-K/SP	699
<b>Audio Note AN-J/B</b>	<b>799</b>
B&W CDM1	600
B&W P4	675
Bose SE-5 Ser II System	760
Bose Ammass AMS11	760
Boston Acoustics SubSat 7	549
<b>Castle Chester</b>	<b>700</b>
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
<b>Dawn Audio Chorus FS</b>	<b>698</b>
<b>Epos ES14</b>	<b>675</b>
Faraday FS10	795
Fullers Pharaoh 1	649
GLL Imagio IC130	530
<b>Harbeth BBC LS3/5A</b>	<b>699</b>
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799
<b>Heybrook Quartet</b>	<b>575</b>
Infinity SM125	550
Infinity SM155	650
Jamo Oriel	650
Jamo 507A	700
JBL TLX181	400
Jordan Watts JH200	510
JPW Ruby 2	700
JVC SX-911WD	660
JVC SX-500 Spirit	700
KAL Mini-Tower	619
KAL Compact Ref	650
KAL Tunejal	795
<b>KEF Q50</b>	<b>529</b>
KEF LS3/5a	649
<b>KEF Q70</b>	<b>729</b>
<b>Keswick Audio Volante</b>	<b>629</b>
Keswick Audio Torino	759
Linaeum LFX Wood	649
<b>Linn Kellidh Passive</b>	<b>649</b>
Lumley Reference LM6	650
Meridian A500	695
Mission 735	600
<b>Mission 753</b>	<b>700</b>
Monitor Audio Studio 2	600
Monitor Audio MAG901	800
<b>Mordaunt-Short MS50i</b>	<b>550</b>
Naim S-NAXO 3-6	719
Naim S-NAXO 2-4	719
<b>Nsat Petite</b>	<b>595</b>
Orelle Orator II	699
Origin Live OL-2	649
<b>Pentachord B</b>	<b>519</b>
Pentachord Pentode	729
Pioneer S-200	600
Polk RT12	600
Polk RT16	800
<b>Polk LS50</b>	<b>800</b>
Proac Tablette 50	599
Proac Studio 100	699
QLN 313	600
QLN 929	700
QLN Classic One	800
Quad Q7710L	600
<b>Rogers AB1</b>	<b>549</b>
<b>Rogers LS3/5A</b>	<b>699</b>
<b>Rogers Studio 5</b>	<b>699</b>
Roksan Ojan Sub	795
<b>Roksan Ojan 3 Black</b>	<b>795</b>
<b>Royd The Sorcerer</b>	<b>595</b>

<b>Royd Abbot</b>	<b>665</b>
<b>Ruark Talisman II</b>	<b>749</b>
Shahinian Super Elf	790
Spendor 2030	599
Spendor LS3/5A	630
<b>Spendor S20</b>	<b>760</b>
Spendor SP3/1	795
Tannoy G25	595
<b>Tannoy G38</b>	<b>599</b>
Tannoy D100	649
<b>TDL Studio 1</b>	<b>699</b>
UKD-Opera Seconda	550
UKD-Opera Riferimento	595
UKD-Opera Operetta	660

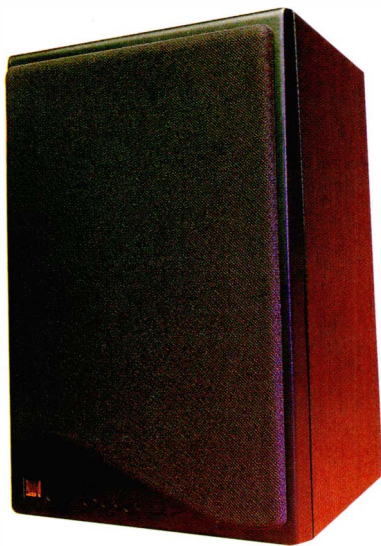
<b>£801 to £1500</b>	
Acoustic Energy AE2	950
Apogee Centaur Minor	1,345
ATC SCM10	995
<b>ATC SCM20</b>	<b>1,499</b>
Audio Note AN-J/SP	999
<b>Audio Note AN-E/B</b>	<b>1,299</b>
Audio Physic Step	1,299
Audiovector 2X	850
<b>Audiovector 3X</b>	<b>1,500</b>
B&O Beolab 4500	1,200
B&O Beolab 6000	1,450
<b>B&amp;W P5</b>	<b>875</b>
<b>B&amp;W Matrix 805 V</b>	<b>995</b>
B&W DM604	1,000
B&W P6	1,095
B&W Solid 800ASW	1,500
Bose Ammass AM7	830
Bose 601 MKIII	880
Canon S-75	899
<b>Castle Howard S2</b>	<b>1,100</b>
<b>Castle SL600si</b>	<b>820</b>
<b>Celestion 300</b>	<b>1,099</b>
Celestion 700SE	1,435
Cerwin Vega DC15	850
Cerwin Vega 1515	1,300
Chord SysAudio Sig	850
Clements Reference 1	995
Electrocompaniet The Cube	1,396
<b>Epos ES22</b>	<b>1,185</b>
Fullers Sphinx	839
Fullers Pharaoh 2	1,200
Harbeth HL-K6	975
Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,259
Harbeth HL Compact 7	1,329
<b>Heybrook Sextet</b>	<b>1,129</b>
Impulse Kora	1,095
<b>Infinity Kappa 6.1i</b>	<b>995</b>
Infinity Kappa 7.1i	1,195
<b>Jamo 707A</b>	<b>900</b>
<b>JBL L20</b>	<b>850</b>
JBL L40	1,100
JBL L60	1,200
JBL L80	1,300
<b>JBL L90</b>	<b>1,300</b>
JBL L90	1,500
<b>Jordan Watts JH400</b>	<b>820</b>
Jordan Watts JH400M	970
JPW Ruby 3	1,000
JPW Ruby 4	1,300
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
Linaeum LSII	991
Linaeum LFX Corian	1,399
Linn Kellidh Aktiv	1,144
<b>Linn Kaber Passive</b>	<b>1,389</b>
Lowther Fidelio	1,465
<b>Lumley Reference LM3</b>	<b>895</b>
Magnepan SMG-C SE	990
Magnepan MG-0.6 SE	1,370
Manticore Matisse	1,390
<b>Meridian DSP6000</b>	<b>850</b>
<b>Monitor Audio Studio 6</b>	<b>900</b>
Monitor Audio MAG902	1,000
<b>Monitor Audio Studio 12</b>	<b>1,000</b>
Monitor Audio MAG903	1,300
<b>Moral 704/2</b>	<b>1,000</b>
Origin Live PIZZAZZ	975
Philips DSS930S	1,300
<b>Pink Triangle Ventrical</b>	<b>896</b>
Pioneer S-400	950
<b>Polk LS70</b>	<b>1,200</b>
Proac Response 1S	999
Proac Studio 150	1,399
<b>Prof Monitor Co LB1</b>	<b>998</b>
QLN Signature	1,000
QLN Prestige	1,500
QLN Sig Splitfield	1,500
<b>Rega XEL</b>	<b>1,040</b>
<b>Rogers Studio 7</b>	<b>899</b>
Roksan Ojan 3 Rosewood	995
Roksan Ojan 3X Black	1,195
Roksan Ojan 3X Rosewood	1,395



Whereof one cannot speak, thereon one must be silent...

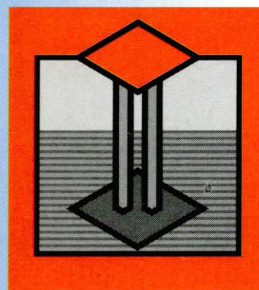






Speak softly and carry a big stick...

Monitor Audio Studio 50	4,000	Deadrock 701	40
Naim DBL Active	7,414	<b>Fi-Rax R4</b>	<b>250</b>
Proac Response 3.5	4,250	Ixos 800	35
Prof Monitor Co MB1P	4,681	Ixos 701	40
Prof Monitor Co BB5P	6,754	Ixos 711	60
QLN Artec 1600	4,500	Ixos 802	70
<b>Quad CSL63</b>	<b>3,450</b>	Ixos 803	90
Rehdeko RK145	4,250	Ixos 802P	100
Rehdeko RK175	7,750	Ixos 703	100
Shahinian Hawk	4,950	Ixos 803P	110
Shahinian Diapason	8,350	Ixos 804	110
Sonus-Faber Guarneri	5,500	Ixos 713	130
Sonus-Faber Extrema	5,991	Ixos 804P	140
Sound-Lab Dynastat	3,790	Ixos 704	140
Sound-Lab Pristine II	6,990	Ixos 705	170
Spendor SP9/1	3,400	Ixos 714	190
Tannoy GRFM TW	3,500	Ixos 715	230
Tannoy Canterbury 12	5,500	JPW Add-on	50
<b>Tannoy Westminster TW</b>	<b>6,000</b>	JPW 3 tier	80
Tannoy Canterbury 15	7,000	JPW 5 tier	100
TDL Ref Standard-m	4,999	Mana Acoustics Sound Frame	125
Thiel CS3.6	3,899	Mana Acoustics Mini Table	150
Thiel CS3.6	3,899	Mana Acoustics Sound Table	235
<b>Triangle Octant Tx6</b>	<b>3,950</b>	Mana Acoustics 2 Tier Amp stand	325
Wilson WAP Puppy II	5,600	<b>Mana Acoustics Reference Table</b>	<b>350</b>
Wilson Puppy 5	7,290	Mana Acoustics 3 Tier Amp Stand	450
Wilson WAT 5	8,800	Mana Acoustics 4 Tier Amp Stand	500
		<b>Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand</b>	<b>600</b>
		Mana Acoustics 6 Tier Amp Stand	700
		Projekt A3	125
		Projekt A4	165
		Projekt A5	205
		Projekt A6	245
		QLN Modulux	125
		<b>Quadraspire Q4</b>	<b>200</b>
		Sound Organisation 2022	60
		Sound Organisation 2230	70
		Sound Organisation 2021	75
		Sound Organisation 2030	95
		Sound Organisation 2060	115
		Sound Organisation 2550	125
		<b>Sound Organisation 2038</b>	<b>130</b>
		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
		<b>SoundStyle Select 6105</b>	<b>280</b>
		<b>Stands Unique Sound Tower</b>	<b>249</b>
		<b>Target B5</b>	<b>175</b>



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
<b>Audiophile Furniture Base</b>	<b>480</b>

If your components need cossetting, you should invest in one of today's snazzy hi-fi stands.



Ruarik Broadsword II	899
Ruarik Paladin	1,099
<b>SD Acoustics SD5</b>	<b>1,235</b>
Sonus-Faber Minuetto	898
Sonus-Faber M Amator	1,498
Spendor SP2/3	899
Spendor SP2/4	930
Spendor SP1/2	1,330
<b>Tannoy D500</b>	<b>1,470</b>
<b>TDL Studio 1m</b>	<b>899</b>
<b>Thiel SCS</b>	<b>1,379</b>
Thiel 2	1,499
Thiel CS-5	1,499
<b>Totem Model One</b>	<b>995</b>
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
<b>Vandersteen 2Ca</b>	<b>1,395</b>

£1501 to £3000

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
ATC SCM20 Tower	1,999
Audio Note AN-E/SP	1,599
Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749
<b>Audio Physic Tempo</b>	<b>1,999</b>
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
<b>Bose 901 VI</b>	<b>1,650</b>
Boston Acoustics Lynfield 300L	2,000
<b>Castle Winchester</b>	<b>1,650</b>
Celestion Kingston	2,500
Clements Reference 7	1,995
Dawn Audio Symphony	1,995
ECA SERVO A.2	2,450
<b>Epos ES25</b>	<b>1,655</b>
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	1,799
Helius Syrius II	2,395
Helius Syrius I	2,850
Impulse Lali	1,595
Impulse Ta'us	2,695
<b>JBL Ti 1000</b>	<b>1,600</b>
JBL L100	1,800
JBL Ti 2000	2,000
JBL Ti 3000	2,700
Jordan Watts JH1 + 1 Aspect	1,730
Jordan Watts JH1 + 1 Aspect K	2,310
Jordan Watts Aspect JH1 + 1	2,745
KAL Warlock	1,600
<b>KEF 104/2 REC</b>	<b>1,799</b>
KEF Model Three	1,999
KEF Model Four	2,999
Kenwood LS-1000G	1,700
Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,135

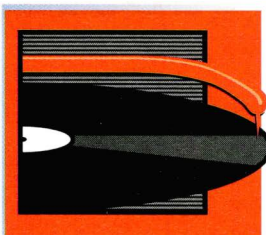
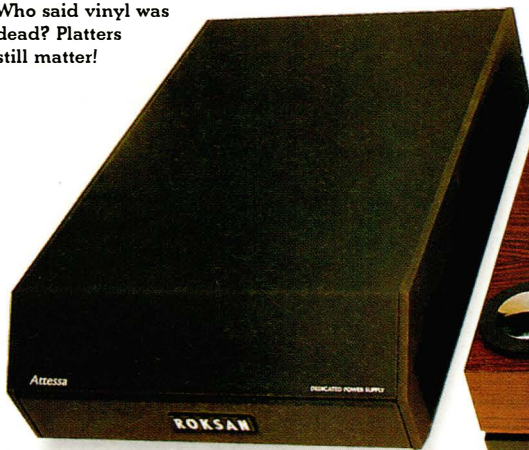
Lowther Academy	1,805
Lowther Bel Canto	2,035
Lowther Delphic	2,525
Lumley Reference LM2	2,500
Magnepan MG-10 SE	1,650
Magnepan MG-1.5 SE	1,780
Magnepan MG-2.7 SE	2,650
Martin-Logan Aerius	2,288
Martin-Logan Stylos	2,993
<b>Meridian DSP5000</b>	<b>2,995</b>
Monitor Audio Studio 20SE	2,200
<b>Mordaunt-Short Performance 860</b>	<b>1,695</b>
Naim SBL Active	1,743
<b>Naim SBL Passive</b>	<b>1,876</b>
Origin Live Conqueror	1,600
Pentachord P column	1,649
Polk LS90	1,700
Posselt Albatros	2,200
Proac Studio 200	1,850
Proac Response 2S	2,000
<b>Proac Response 2.5</b>	<b>2,700</b>
<b>Prof Monitor Co A81</b>	<b>1,598</b>
QLN Reference	2,000
QLN Ref HDII	2,500
Rehdeko RK115	1,550
Rehdeko RK125	2,750
Rogers LS5/9	1,531
Rogers Studio 9	1,549
Ruarik Crusader II	1,599
<b>Ruarik Equinox</b>	<b>1,849</b>
Ruarik Accolade	2,699
<b>SD Acoustics SD1E</b>	<b>2,695</b>
<b>Shahinian Arc</b>	<b>1,675</b>
Shahinian Obelisk	2,490
Sonus-Faber Electa	1,790
Sonus-Faber Amator	2,992
Spendor SP7/1	1,990
Spendor SP100	2,030
Tannoy Sterling TW	1,750
Tannoy D700	2,100
Tannoy Edinburgh TW	2,700
<b>TDL Studio Monitor m</b>	<b>2,449</b>
Thiel CS2.2	2,749
Triangle At'nis	1,950
Triangle Altair	2,850
UKD-Opera Caruso II	2,250

Over £3000

Allison I.C. 20	5,500
Apogee CDD Subwoofer	3,490
Apogee Stage Sub	3,645
Apogee Centarus Slant 8	3,700
<b>Apogee Caliper Sig</b>	<b>3,998</b>
Apogee Stage 1 GS	4,100
Apogee Centaur Major	4,980
ATC SCM50	3,499
ATC SCM100	4,149
ATC SCM50A	4,999
<b>ATC SCM100A</b>	<b>5,699</b>
Audio Physic Virgo	3,399
Audio Physic Terra	3,499
Audio Physic Avanti	5,599
Audio Physic Caldera	9,999
Audiovector 6	4,600
<b>B&amp;W Matrix 801s3</b>	<b>3,795</b>
B&W Silver Signature	5,000
Boston Acoustics Lynfield 500L	4,449
Bravura Brio	4,750
Bravura Accelerando	5,500
Definitive BP2000	3,600



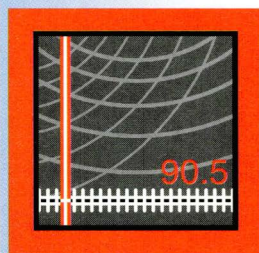
Who said vinyl was dead? Platters still matter!



**TONEARMS**

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 LI 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	425
Manticore Magician1	750
Manticore Magician2	850
Moth Arm	95
Moth Mk III	146
Naim ARO	992
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	763
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

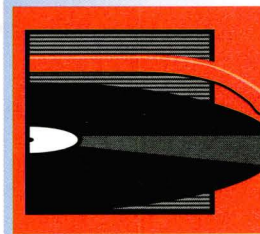


**TUNERS**

Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	220
Arcam Delta 280	399
Audiolab 8000T	800
Aura TU80	350
AVI S2000MT	599
Day Sequerra FM Ref	5,937
Day Sequerra S B'dcast Mon	14,640
Denon TU-260L	120
Denon TU-215RD	150
Denon TU-380RD	200
Goodmans GST650	90

Goodmans Delta 700	100
Grundig TI2	170
Harman-Kardon TU930	180
Harman-Kardon TU950	200
Harman-Kardon TU9400	299
JVC FX362BK	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	400
Musical Fidelity E500	399
Musical Fidelity FT	899
NAD 412	190
Naim NAT03	566
Naim NAT02	1,028
Naim NAT01	1,645
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
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	120

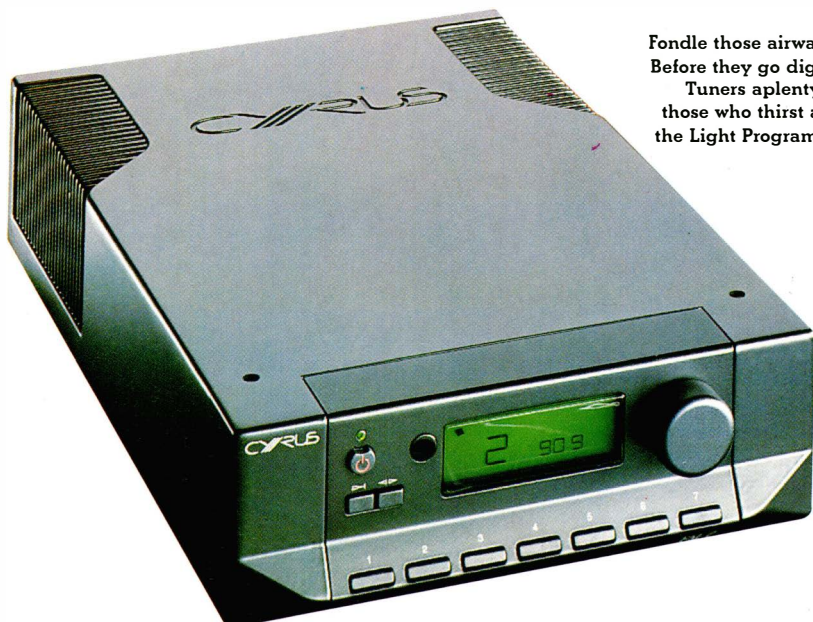


**TURNTABLES**  
Up to £500

Akai AP A950	179
Ariston Pro-1200	160
Dual CS3700/3701	85
Dual CS435	130
Dual CS503-2	170
Dual 505-4 UK	200
Dual CS750-1	350
Dual Golden II	500
Genexa Lab-710	60
Genexa Lab-810	70
Goodmans Delta 700	55
Grundig TT1	180
Kenwood KD-492F	100
Linn Basik	349
Michell Mycro	435
Moth Alamo	175
Moth Turntable	199
Moth Kanoor Mk II Arm	249
Moth Kanoor 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
Sony PSLX150H	90
Sony PSLX431B	150
Systemdek I/920	136
Systemdek IX/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 W/UK	200
Thorens TD166 W/UK/BC	200
Thorens TD166 W/UK/AT	270
Thorens TD166 W/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 Mantra	950
Manticore Magister	3,990
Michell Mycro/arm	577
Michell Gyrodek/arm	825
Michell Gyrodek/arm	967
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 TD3001/UK	770
Thorens TD520	900
Townshend MkIII Rock	799
Voyd 0.5	3,940
Voyd Reference	6,962
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

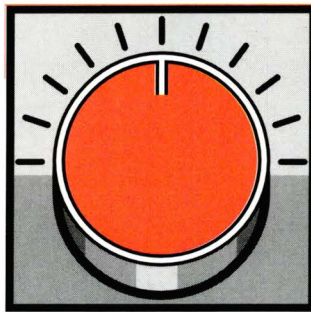


Fondle those airwaves!  
Before they go digital!  
Tuners aplenty for  
those who thirst after  
the Light Programme.

Remember that all  
entries printed in **RED**  
refer to hi-fi products  
that we have reviewed.  
Turn to page 104  
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 available 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	MC PHONO INPUT:	POWER OUTPUT (W):	FACTSBACK NUMBER:
LINE INPUTS: Amount of input sockets for non vinyl sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.	If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving coil (low output) cartridges.	Lab tested power output in Watts per channel.	information page.
MM PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving magnet (normal output) cartridges.	If amp is couch potato ready.	RECEIVER: If an amp has a built in radio tuner.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: If an amp is can friendly	If an amp is can friendly	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback	

## INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	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-like 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 Shearpe 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 120	530	Despite an ultra-modern appearance, the old-fashioned cold, dry transistor sound.	5			●	60		154
Naim Nit 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
Orelle 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	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE INPUT	POWER SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK (W)	RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
4 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		
Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier sounds forward, hard and unforgiving.	4	●	●	●	●	50	116		
4 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		
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	
4 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		
Yamaha AX-490	250	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		

## PREAMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE INPUT	POWER SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK (W)	RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
4 Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380	Quirky Class A design with an equally warm and colourful sound.	4	●	●	●	●				124
4 Audio Innovations L1	369	Reviewed with S800 Anniversary — Explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole	4	●	●	●	●				1300 145
Audiolab 8000C	520	Distinctive, stark neutrality that will not appeal to all. Good value engineering.	5	●	●	●	●				97
Audiolab 8000Q	1,000	Tested with 8000M monoblocks	6	●	●	●	●				1301 145
4 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
4 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
4 Copland CTA-301MkII	1,349	Sweet sounding - but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●	●	●	●				1630 151
4 DPA DSP200S	495	Dramatic but detailed and transparent sound belies modest power rating (tested with DPA-200S).	6	●	●	●	●				124
4 EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with £3499 509 Mk II - see comments in power amp section	4	●	●	●	●				63
4 ECA Vista	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system (tested with Lectern).	5	●	●	●	●				1302 145
Exposure XVII	849	Superbly rhythmical; maybe a tad overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super	5	●	●	●	●				142
4 Jadis JP-30MC	5,978	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (tested with JA30).	5	●	●	●	●				60
Krell KRC-2s	4,190	This is an exquisitely refined and transparent design (tested with KSA-50S in Statements)	6	●	●	●	●				141
Meridian 501	625	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. Tested with 555	5	●	●	●	●				1303 145
Meridian 562V	895	Transparent and capable preamp, also features 6 digital inputs	9	●	●	●	●				140
4 Moth 30 Passive	149	Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy (tested with 30/Stereo 60).	4	●	●	●	●				109
Musical Fidelity E200	599	Weighty, luxuriant but hardly scintillating. Tested with MF E300	7	●	●	●	●				1304 145
NAD Monitor 1000S	349	Sounds a little restrained.	5	●	●	●	●				124
Quad 34	414	Good filtering and above average tone controls, but lacks detail and dynamics	3	●	●	●	●				44
Quad 66	897	Amplifier with classic lineage but compromised by an equally dated, soft and undynamic sound (tested with 606).	6	●	●	●	●				124
4 Rose RV-23	450	You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price.	3	●	●	●	●				77
Rotel RC970BX MkII	175	Confident, consistent sound. reviewed (in Sessions) with RB970BX MkII power amps	5	●	●	●	●				144
Rotel RC980BX	375	Powerful, expansive but lacks poise, control and detail - disappointing (tested with RB980BX).	5	●	●	●	●				109
4 Sumo Athena IIB	767	Tested with Polaris III. Big, natural and tidy sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	6	●	●	●	●				1305 145
Thorens TTP2000	500	Minimalist shoebox preamp, rhythmical, warm balance. Tested in Sessions with TTA2000	4	●	●	●	●				139
Woodside SC26 Phono	1,931	Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency (tested with STA35).	5	●	●	●	●				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
4 YBA 2 Pre	1,699	Superbly finished, good space and transparency. Needs transformer for MC cartridges (tested with £2150 2 Pwr).	4	●	●	●	●				56
4 YBA 1 Pre	3,750	Tested with £4250 1 Pwr - see power amp section for comments.	5	●	●	●	●				62

## POWER AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE INPUT	POWER SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK (W)	RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
Acurus A150	1400	Price includes RL11 preamp with which it was tested. Powerfull remote control US combo with a slightly forward inclination	1	●	●	●	●	150			151
4 Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless.	1	●	●	●	●	60			124
4 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
4 Audio Innovations S800	1300	Reviewed with L1 — Explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole remarkably well	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 (tested in Statements). Tube design	1	●	●	●	●	35			1179 136
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1	●	●	●	●	67			1630 151
4 DPA 200S	750	Dramatic but crisp, open sound belies power rating (tested with DSP-200S).	1	●	●	●	●	60			124
4 EAR 509 Mk II	3,499	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with £2599 802).	1	●	●	●	●	100			63
4 ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1	●	●	●	●	50			1302 145
Exposure XVIII Super	849	Slight dullness and hardness, but great 'boogie factor'	1	●	●	●	●	70			142
4 Jadis JA-30	2,880	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange (tested with £5978 JP30).	1	●	●	●	●	30			60
Krell KSA-50s	3,690	Stretches the performance margins of difficult speakers - state of the art at the price	1	●	●	●	●	50			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
4 Moth 30 Stereo/60	549	Tested with 30 Passive. Modular system gives cracking results	1	●	●	●	●	60			109
Musical Fidelity E300	699	Tested with E200. Weighty, luxuriant but hardly scintillating	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, but no mad cow!	1	●	●	●	●	250			124
Rotel RB-970BX MkII	225	Tested with RC970BX MkII in Sessions (see preamp section)	1	●	●	●	●	60			144
Rotel RB-980BX	475	Sound is expansive but lacks poise, control and fine detail - disappointing (tested with RC980BX).	1	●	●	●	●	120			109



## POWER AMPLIFIERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MM PRONO INPUT	MC PRONO INPUT	HEADPHONE CONTROL	POWER SOCKET	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Sumo Polaris III	898	Tested with Athena IIB. Big, natural and tidy sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	1				164	1305 145
Thorens TTA2000	550	Tested with TTP2000 (see preamp section) in Sessions	1				35	139
Woodside STA35	1,323	Synergistic with SC26, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency. More poise than grunt (tested with SC26).	1				35	100
YBA 3 Power	1,199	Tested with £1250 3 Pre - see preamp section for comments.	1				45	72
YBA 2 Power	2,150	Superbly finished, but with slightly softened bass (tested with YBA 2 Preamp).	1				70	56
YBA 1 Power	4,250	Well finished pre/power amp with front rank imaging and transparency (tested with YBA 1 Preamp).	1				85	62



## Cables

Cables are not accessories, but an integral part of a system. Inevitably some cables are better than others. The best cable for your system will only be found through trial and error, but by combining our recommendations with those of a dealer, you will end up with something suitable. Generally speaking, budget to spend about ten per cent of the total system cost on cables.

■ Analogue interconnects are the leads that connect source components to amplifiers and pre to power amps. The cables in this section are priced for a one-metre terminated pair.

■ Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs, and are

traditionally coaxial with a 75 Ohm impedance. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.

■ Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary with brands.

B

**Best buy**

R

**Recommended**

KEY	SOLID CORE:	FACTSBACK NUMBER:	BACK ISSUE:
SYMMETRICAL: A twisted pair of conductors.	single or multiple individually insulated strands.	The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
COAXIAL: A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.	COPPER: Material used for conductor.		
STRANDED: Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.	SILVER: Material used for conductor.		
	DIG CABLE TYPE: O - optical digital, E - electrical digital.		

## CABLES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>Analogue Interconnects</b>											
Audio Note AN-A	29.50	Not especially impressive, warm but well rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is not unclear	●		●		●			108	
Audio Note AN-C	59.50	Neutral but lacking in subtle texture and unable to distinguish fine detail					●	●	1687	131	
Audio Note AN-S	139	Up-beat and enthusiastic sound with satisfyingly deep and grumbly bass	●				●	●	1687	131	
Audio Note AN-V	219	15 individually insulated silver strands make up this very clean and dynamically unchallenged cable	●		●			●	1687	131	
Bandridge AL421	5	Light and airy sound lacks authority, splashy treble			●			●	1688	131	
Bandridge AL426G	10	Gold plated plug OFC version of AL421 with same ineffectual sound quality			●			●	1688	131	
Bandridge SG AL4720	13	4N OF copper, full smooth balance but a little plodding and relentless, lacks panache			●			●	1688	131	
Bandridge SG+ AL4820	25	4N OF copper, distinctly teutonic, thrusting detail forward but still plodding and relentless			●			●	1688	131	
Chord Chameleon	68	Anomalous treble with a dry but vaguely sibilant quality, sometimes sounds smooth, sometimes harsh!				●		●	108		
Chord Solid	99	Thin but very stiff with excellent resolution of subtle timbral detail and fine dynamics			●			●	108		
DNM TCC75	34	Price for 0.75m length. High resolution cable, but best in short runs due to higher than average series impedance				●	●	●	1690	131	
DPA Slink	41	Slightly bright and zingy sound with flat soundstaging and hollow sounding bass, vocals and strings sound convincing though					●	●	1690	131	
DPA White Slink	75	Highly expressive, very easy on the ear and attractively detailed though not entirely characterless at high frequencies					●	●	1691	131	
DPA Black Slink	220	Initially dark and meaty but becoming lucid and transparent with running in. Quad geometry, Gore-tex dielectric	●				●	●	1691	131	
Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble			●	●		●	1692	131	
Ixos 103	40	Even handed and generous sound, bass has a well rounded, bouncy quality			●	●		●	1692	131	
Ixos 101	100	A cable with personality, its veiled and shut in quality brings an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike			●	●		●	1693	131	
LFD Spirolink I	35	Price for 0.7m length. Dynamic but smoothly detiled performance, but gives the impression of looking down on the music					●	●	1694	131	
LFD Spirolink II	70	Price for 0.7m length. Strong and confident sound enhancing bass depth and subtlety, concentrates of the meat of the music	●				●	●	1694	131	
LFD Trilink	150	Price for 0.7m length. Warm and luxurious sound but a little too fruity in balance, treble is a little subdued, bass detached	●				●	●	1695	131	
Linn Phono to Phono	47	Encourages a delicate performance underpinned by a strong and authoritative bass			●			●	1695	131	
Monster Interlink 200	20	Colourful in an appealing rather than contrived sense, bass is slightly over-blown, large and ingratiating sound stage	●		●			●	1696	131	
Monster Interlink 300	30	Richer, smoother more civilised sound than 200 with improved articulation and reduced sibilance	●		●			●	1696	131	
Monster Interlink 400	40	Compromised by a grainy top end, treble and vocal range sound particularly sharp and untidy	●		●			●	1697	131	
Monster Interlink 500	50	Sounds rather good, providing a livelier and more interesting account of music than most sub £100 cables	●		●			●	108		
Monster Interlink 800	80	Not as bright or aggressive as the 400 but treble is tranquilly lumpy, muted and manipulated - odd cable	●		●			●	1697	131	
Monster Interlink Reference 2	100	Easy on the ear but rather contrived, slightly clanky treble fails to integrate with the smoother but splodgy midband	●		●			●	1697	131	
Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full and big sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy	●		●			●	108		
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed enough but there's a sense of distance between the music and the listener, vox are course rather than liquid	●		●			●	108		
Panasonic RP-CA910	50	Uncongested and even handed balance if slightly flat imagewise, retains impact but has a vaguely untransparent quality			●	●		●	108		
SonicLink Crimson	55	Using PTFE insulated nickel conductors this is a rather matter of fact cable that can inject a little bit of mirth	●				●		1698	131	
SonicLink Blue HPMC	115	Flat and matter of fact, but grasps music firmly and remains in control. Not very 'hear through'. Nickel conductors					●		1698	131	
SonicLink Black	165	Encourages an upbeat and snappy sound that's driven by leading edges, full and rumbustious bass maintains an even tempo				●		●	1699	131	
Tara Labs Prism 11	45	Very compatible cable that wins through with a naturally balanced and realistically dynamic sound. 6N purity copper	●				●	●	1699	131	
Tara Labs Prism 22	56	Delivers a fresh and detailed sound with clear and bright treble giving it a free, quick and dynamic character			●		●	●	1700	131	
Tara Labs Quantum CD	75	Lacking in obvious vices, neutral and transparent, there's also a good solid bass. Vox are not always as intimate as possible	●				●	●	108		
Tara Labs Prism 33	90	A pedestrian cable that sounds lively but muddled. Quite dynamic, quite rich, quite smooth but also quite indistinct			●		●	●	1700	131	
Transparent Audio Music Link	119	No aggressive nasties to tax the ears, neither does it sparkle with inspirational detail. Only suited to low output impedances			●		●	●	1701	131	
van den Hul The Storm	25	Price for 0.8m length. Rich and warm but bass is rolled off, however there's plenty of drive and high frequencies are clean			●		●	●	1701	131	



CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments						ISSUE NUMBER
			SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	
van den Hul The Source	50	Price for 0.8m length. Good foot tapping sound that accurately reflects the life of the music without throwing detail at you	●		●		●	108
van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of information but lacks dynamic punch	●		●			1702 131
van den Hul The Second	225	Wonderfully open and relaxing but also intimately detailed, slightly softens percussive dynamics	●		●		●	1702 131
XLO Type 150	50	A restrained but useful cable for taming lively CD players, dynamics lack freedom, treble lacks clarity			●		●	1703 131
XLO Type 0.1	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals					●	1703 131
<b>Digital Interconnects</b>								
Audio Note AN-V	110	Ostensibly an analogue cable but gives a meaty and natural performance when used for digital duty	●				●	E 1704 131
Audioquest Video X	40	A decent level of detail, imparts a gentle lift from vocal to high treble that can sound a little splashy			●		●	E 1705 131
Audioquest Video Z	60	The very best available, with an expressive sound, but generously priced.	●	●	●	●	●	E 108
Audioquest Optiink Z	120	Good level of midband detail but frequency extremes lack depth and extension.						O 108
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	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 1705 131
Chord Codac	32	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration.			●	●		E 108
Chord Prodac	50	Price for 0.6m length. Lively detailed treble, drives music along confidently with no hint of fizz			●		●	E 1706 131
DPA Opti-link	20	Very similar to Bandridge AL560; sound is lacklustre						O 108
DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound.			●	●	●	E 108
Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colourations, plenty of weight, smooth vox			●		●	E 1707 131
Kimber Cable PSB D'link	39	Priced for 0.5metre. Analogue cable inappropriately pressed into digital service. A visible deterioration in the signal results.			●	●	●	E 108
Kimber Cable KC-1 D'link	55	This cable adopts a woven construction with the addition of a conductive screen. Music lacks detail and spirit.			●	●		E 108
Kimber Cable Opti-link	70	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	136	Priced for 0.5metre. Asymmetric cable that deviates from the 75ohm standard. Not ideal for digital applications.			●	●	●	E 108
LFD Digiink Copper	30	Slightly grainy highly compatible cable with coherent and forward dynamic quality			●		●	E 1708 131
Monster Interlink LS100	45	Well constructed stepped-index fibre with polished ends and connectors. Lean, fuzzy, engaging performance.						O 108
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
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 1709 131
SonicLink Light Brown 75	30	Hampers life like dynamics, stripping out vigour but will never sound harsh			●	●	●	E 1709 131
SonicLink Green	50	Spacious, positive and engaging if a tad over crisp at times, very compelling however			●		●	E 1709 131
van den Hul MC Videolink 75	48	An AV-cum-digital cable that nearly beats QED's DigiFlex, but emphasises sibilants.			●			E 108
van den Hul The First	120	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly dark or cautious compared to some, plenty of subtle information and beautiful integration			●	●		E 1710 131
<b>Loudspeaker Cables</b>								
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
Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical				●	●	1711 133
Audio Note AN-L	29.50	Fruity bass and expressive vocal rendition was appreciated by the panel which was happy to accept its foibles	●				●	1712 133
Audio Note AN-SP	125	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●				●	109
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	●			●	●	1713 133
Bandridge SF LC1259	1	Fresh and open, bubbly and naturally colourful soundstage that's neither forced or unduly edgy. Treble is slightly messy	●			●	●	1713 133
Bandridge Highflex LC2604	3.50	Substantial 6mm <sup>2</sup> conductor produces weighty but ploddy music that lacks transparency	●			●	●	1714 133
Cable Talk 3	3	Easy on the ear but far from lazy, should yield a round, smooth yet colourful sound in most systems				●	●	1714 133
DNM LSCB500	5.95	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire				●	●	1716 133
DPA Black Sixteen	90	Unflappable resolution of fine musical details, there's no dampening of dynamics simply oodles of taut information	●			●	●	1717 133
Heybrook Heywire	4	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven.				●	●	109
Ixos 603	2	Big and expansive sounding cable, full and engaging while retaining a high degree of neutrality				●	●	1718 133
Ixos 604	5	Midrange is detailed and surprisingly smooth but treble is hard and synthetic and the bass no better				●	●	1719 133
Mission Quartet	7.90	Mixed, inoffensive sound, adds guttural resonance to vocals and could be generally more coherent. Bi-wire.				●	●	1722 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			●	●	●	1723 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
Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric with robust full blooded bass, and dynamic too if slightly bright at times				●	●	133



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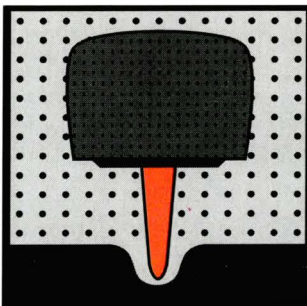
CONNECTIONS

13 John Princes Street, London W1M 9HB (A division of Connection 90' Travel Ltd.)



# CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price (£)	Comments	CABLE TYPE					ISSUE NUMBER
			SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	
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				●	●	1724 133
SonicLink Blue Bi-wire	20	Small sounding and bass light with limited subtle detail and a dirtiness to percussion					●	1724 133
Tara Labs Rectangular SCM	725	Price for terminated 2m pair. Dynamics are exquisite, luxurious smooth sound, brimming with unforced detail					●	1725 133
Transparent Audio Musichord	11.42	Sweet, open and refined treble, a bit of breathy exuberance and can sound slightly lackadaisical				●	●	1728 133
Transparent Audio Wave	22.84	Very close to the sound of 'no cable', one of the very best. Slightly softens treble detail	●			●	●	1728 133
van den Hul The Clearwater	6	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky sounding cable.				●	●	109
van den Hul CS122	19	Smooth and articulate with superb focus and control, its sheer coherence makes it a winner (tested in Sessions)				●	●	153
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				●	●	1726 133
XLO Pro Type 625	4	Lively but natural and relaxed sounding but a hint of congestion at frequency extremes				●	●	1726 133



# Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs; and generally more expensive low and very low output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono input equipped valve 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.

**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.	Most MM cartridges have a stylus that can be removed and replaced	Cartridge output in millivolts.	The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
MC: Moving coil cartridge with a low output only suitable for high sensitivity vinyl disc amplifier inputs.		Cartridge mass can affect arm choice.	
		FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax	

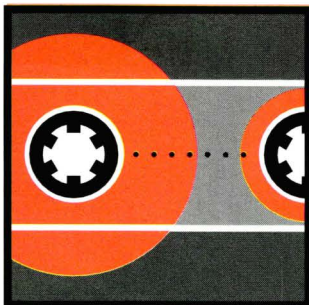
# CARTRIDGES

Product	Price (£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS		OUTPUT (MV)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
			MM	MC			
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 unsuited - 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



# CARTRIDGES

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS MM	OUTPUT MC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
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 deailed 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 implies some mechanical compromise. The sort of facilities that are useful include tape monitor switching and Dolby S.

**Best buy**

**Recommended**

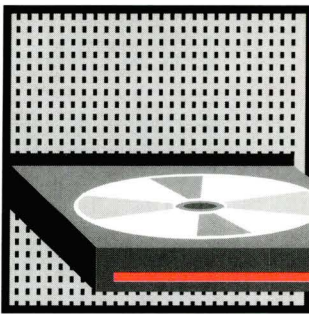
KEY			
DOLBY C: A rather extreme noise reduction system not usually associated with high sound quality.	for cassette recording.	AUTOREVERSE: Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
DOLBY S: A desirable derivative of the Dolby SR professional noise reduction system.	3-HEAD: If you want to monitor a recording whilst you are making it a third head is essential.	AUTO CALIBRATION: The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
DOLBY HX PRO: System designed by B&O to extend headroom	TWIN DECK: Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play, in most instances only one deck will record.	ADJUSTABLE BIAS: Bias can be manually set to suit the tape being used.	

# CASSETTE DECKS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DOLBY HX PRO	DOLBY S	DOLBY C	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	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	
NAD 616	320	Double deck whose music sounded shut in and prosaic, as though its energy content had been ironed flat	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		1648	152
Nakamichi DR3	450	Refined, exquisitely detailed and solid sounding 'budget' Nakamichi 2-head.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		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-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	250	Stable and clean, if bright. Play Trim helps wake up recalcitrant recordings.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1388	146	



# 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.

**Best buy**

**Recommended**

KEY	ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:	AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT:	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:	HEADPHONE SOCKET:	VARIABLE OUTPUT:	MULTI-DISC:	DAC TYPE:	FACTSBACK NUMBER:	ISSUE NUMBER
	For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.	High speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.	For optical connection to an outboard DAC.	Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.	For car users.	Remotely adjustable volume controlled	Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.	Digital to analogue convertor: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH,	The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page	
	Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.								The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.	

## CD PLAYERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEG DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	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 Alpha 6	600	Alarmingly uneven player treats music inconsistently, thanks to harsh mid/top	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	154
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
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and at '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 HD7625	450	Crisply styled, well equipped and slick, sound quality is fast and assured, if slightly 'obvious'	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	154
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	Fleet-footed, but will appear bright in lightweight systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1601 141
Krell KPS 20i	10,000	Forthright, edge of the seat sound with outstanding bass performance (tested in Statements)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	154
Linn Mimik	798	Useful multiroom features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	154
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
Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	154
Meridian 506	950	Crisp, clean and detailed player now seems a little flat and mechanical: a dated balance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	154
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 512	250	Capable of exposing the minutest detail while avoiding excessive emphasis (tested in Sessions)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	154
NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1639 151
Naim Audio CD3	949	The idiosyncratically packaged CD3 is solid and highly articulate. Always has its feet on the ground though	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	154
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
Orelle CD-100SE	549	Articulate and solid performer, with a simple, purposeful; interface and attractive pricing	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	154
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 77	850	This player knows how to sing. Pity the control system is so buggy.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	154
Quad 67	875	Powerful, fluid and captivating sound reminiscent of Meridian's 206.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	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-975	£849	Bright and superficially detailed, this deck can sound coarse and inarticulate	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	154
Sony CDP-361	150	Bantamweight it capable and resolute machine with no serious shortcomings at the price	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	151
Sony CDP-761E	250	Tarted up CDP-561E with less widgets and a slightly overcooked but nonetheless fine performance.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1267 147
Sony CDP-XA2ES	400	Strong-willed, heavyweight sound: not for the feint-hearted	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1642 151



OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT  
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT  
AT&T OPT DIG OUT  
BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT  
HEADPHONE OUTPUT  
VARIABLE OUTPUT  
MULTI-DISC  
FACTSBACK NUMBER  
ISSUE NUMBER  
DAC TYPE

## CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

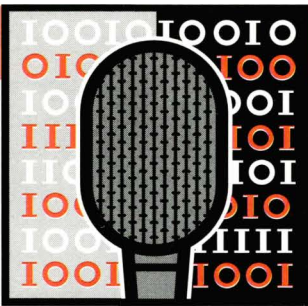
Product	Price(£)	Comments	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE OUTPUT	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	DAC TYPE
Teac CD-P3200	150	A primitive looking CD player, housing 16-bit electronics delivering an equally primitive and 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-7	599	Although bold and outgoing, this player can sound both intrusive yet lacking fine detail	●	●						BS		154
Teac VRDS-10	770	A basic analogue stage compromises performance. Lacks bass energy.	●	●						BS		119
Technics SL-PG480A	150	Competent if not exactly inspiring budget model that has all the features	●	●					●	BS		153
Technics SL-PS770A	250	A mellow sounding player that never quite rouses from its slumber to really tackle the music at hand.	●	●					●	BS	1278	147
Thorens TCD 2000	900	Lacks midband separation and clarity and is short on dynamics but looks great (tested in Sessions)	●	●						BS		154
Thule CD100	849	A little muddled via single ended output, but the sound comes alive when balanced connections are used	●	●				●		BS		154
Trichord Genesis	549	Modified Pioneer PD-S504 that's a bit like a Williams Renault Clio — astonishing at the price (tested in Sessions)	●	●					● ●	BS		155

### 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
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 unafatiguing.	●	●						-		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 2	200	Superb value DAC that makes the jump from good to outstanding if balanced outputs are used (tested in Sessions)						●		Hyb	1521	136
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 HDCD	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
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 from a very capable and natural DAC. 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), and 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 reel-to-reel as the audiophile's 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

**FORMAT:** Type of recorder, see above for descriptions.  
**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.  
**ADC TYPE:** Analogue to digital converter types as per DACs.  
**PORTABLE:** Can be run off batteries but not necessarily personal stereo size.  
**OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for optical cable.  
**ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for electrical cable.  
**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.

## 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	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL INPUTS	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		●	●	1652 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 MDA-JA3ES	800	Full width MD recorder that makes a decent job of recordings but is less impressive with pre-recorded material	MD	BS	BS		●	●	1216 152



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.



KEY

**TYPE:** Operating principle. D - dynamic, E - electrostatic.  
**SUPRA-AURAL:** Style where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.  
**CIRCUMAURAL:** Style which encloses the ear.  
**OPEN BACK:** Offers an open sound but lets in noise.  
**CLOSED BACK:** Keeps out external noise.  
**WEIGHT (G):** Mass in grams  
**IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Load offered to the headphone amplifier. The higher the impedance the louder the sound for a given amplifier output.  
**3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR:** Can be used with mini-jack-equipped components such as personal stereos.  
**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.

HEADPHONES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	CIRCUMAURAL TYPE	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	WEIGHT(G)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	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 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
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
▲ Jeklin 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
▲ Jeklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in long term, despite lack of adjustment.	D	●	●		400	200		63
▲ Jeklin 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

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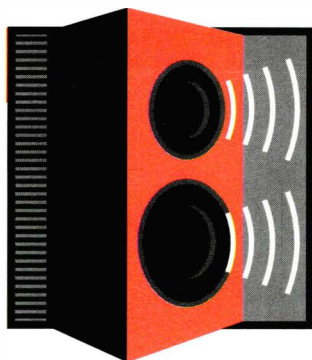


Vivanco UK Ltd, Unit C, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7SS  
 Tel: 01442 231616 Fax: 01442 2355421



## HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TYPE	CIRCUM-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT(g)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
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	<b>Still the one by which others at the price are measured, though now slightly leaden sounding, with a cold treble</b>	D	●	●	●	125	52	●		121
Sennheiser HD565	140	Warm balanced design that lacks the speed of cheaper Sennheisers but is seriously accomplished (tested in Sessions)	D	●	●	●	255	150	●		154
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
Vivanco SR606	40	Although slightly overblown at times, this model is easy on the ears and essentially enjoyable	D	●	●	●	225	32	●	1101	133
Vivanco IR7100	120	Infra-red phones that work well but suffer from the limitations of the medium ie compression and hiss(Sessions)	D	●	●	●	265	-			149



## Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

**A**s the last item in the hi-fi chain, the loudspeaker is merely the slave of what has gone before; it is only as good as the signal it is fed. Nevertheless, the distortions introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be the most obvious. The average loudspeaker consists of an enclosure plus a couple of drive units 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.

Subwoofers augment the bass and come in passive and amplified active form, they are less sensitive to placement than regular speakers.

**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 it is a measure 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	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Acoustic Energy AE1	764	Exceptional mid focus and coherence, but it is pricey and could be more agile.	26,30,18	88	8	48	●			102	
Allison AL100	100	<b>Loud and lively budget wall-mount is big and beefy, but lacks sparkle and refinement</b>	24,33,19	90	4	30	●			94	
Allison AL105	170	Pretty enough in appearance; sonically the AL105 doesn't really make the grade at the price.	24,37,21	90	4	45	●			78	
Allison AL110	220	Compact bookshelf model is a little dry and mid-forward, but bass is extended and solid.	24,40,23	90	4	28	●			102	
Allison AL120	420	Pretty well balanced if slightly mid-forward, but sound quality is disappointing at the price.	28,61,29	●	90	4	30	●		98	
Apogee Caliper Sig	3,998	Remarkable transparency and delicacy; loudness and 'grunt' are a bit lacking.	58,127	●	87	4	30	●		81	
ATC SCM20	1,499	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable.	24,44,31	83	8	28	●			86	
Audio Innovations Alto	329	Styling makes competition look old-fashioned, but sound is thin and cold	20,38,26	88	6	45	●		1653	152	
Audio Note AN-J/B	799	Light damping and local unevenness adds some colouration, but doesn't spoil the very speaker.	38,58,25	93	8	25	●			110	
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	Coherent dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity - but ugly!	36,84,28	●	94	8	20	●		106	
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning.	22,107,47	●	88	8	28	●	1344	143	
Audiovector 3X	1,500	Superior time coherence, a wide dynamic range and exception bass/mid balance.	19,32,98	●	89	8	20	●	1345	143	
B&W DM302	130	<b>highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure</b>	19,32,22	88	4	45	●			156	
B&W DM601	200	Great main driver for the price, entertaining dynamics	20,5,35,5,23	88	6	30	●			156	
B&W DM602	280	Prefers tall stands and space, but offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension	24,49,31	90	8	30	●		1654	152	
B&W Matrix 805 V	995	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low colouration.	33,33,21	87	8	30	●			98	
B&W Matrix 801S3	3,795	Lacks transparency and the drama of the best dynamics, but acoustically a tour de force.	44,100,56	●	87	8	20	●		81	
Bose 305	430	Fine dynamic liveliness and a good room match counter strange imaging and treble.	23,45,28	-	8	40	●			78	
Bose 401	500	Cheaply built but distinctively styled, the 401 suffers from heavy midband.	30,30,76	●	-	4	28	●		110	
Boston Acoustics HD5	139	Pretty miniature lacks boxiness, but is short of drama and dynamic drive.	16,25,18	89	8	30	●			110	
Canon S-30	180	Moulded design has lively coherence, with 'wide imaging stereo'.	23,27,24	90	6	50	●			114	
Castle Isis	230	Expressive with a full upper bass, tonally colourful with a big, dynamic sound (tested in Sessions)	17,35,19,5	87	8	60	●			154	
Castle Durham 900	300	Lovely veneer and lots of engineering create a very upfront, coherent and exciting sound.	22,40,23	90	8	60	●		1162	135	
Castle York	370	Real wood compact has an engaging transparency: fine balance and timing, but could use some authority.	26,43,22	89	8	50	●			110	
Castle Severn	500	Light and bright, but sound is open and communicative. Looks good too.	23,77,20	88	8	47	●		1655	152	
Castle Chester	700	<b>A brilliant throwback, using a horn type approach to provide startling dynamics and coherence.</b>	23,91,25	●	90	8	44	●		98	
Castle Howard S2	1,100	Ably fills the gap between Chester and Winchester; has a rich, laid back balance.	26,104,41	●	90	8	40	●		1078	132
Castle Winchester	1,650	Large for its bass extension but engagingly agile, open and airy.	42,108,23	●	90	8	35	●		90	
Celestion 1	99	<b>It sounds a bit scrappy and untidy, but its heart is in the right place.</b>	16,27,21	86	8	50	●			114	
Celestion 3 MKII	139	<b>Smooth and polished by budget speaker standards, if a bit laid back for some tastes.</b>	21,31,18	88	8	45	●		1036	130	
Celestion 9	269	Nicely presented and fair material value, with impressively flat mid to bass balance.	21,50,25	89	8	30	●			102	
Celestion Impact 23	300	Big, cheap and loud. Sounds coloured and old fashioned, lacks subtlety	28,82,29	89	8	30	●		1656	152	
Celestion 15	389	Big box and but short on subtlety and control though long on both enthusiasms	21,100,25	●	89	8	28	●		114	
Celestion Impact 25	400	Both capable and enjoyable these rock boxes are real contenders in the bang-for-the-buck stakes	27,82,29	●	90	8	43	●		155	
Celestion SL6Si	429	This stereotype luxury compact can sound a bit dull and congested; favours CD.	20,38,27	84	8	30	●			94	



HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTS	BACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
								CLOSE TO WALL		
								FREE SPACE		
Celestion SL600si	820	Some will find this speaker irresistible, but it needs careful system and room matching.	20,37,24		82	8	52	●		68
Celestion 300	1,099	Splendid bass extension and fine panel-like openness, but dynamics and timing are suspect.	21,97,33	●	84	8	20	●		118
Cerwin-Vega VS10	350	Not all that refined but ballsy as heck, these rock boxes have no shortage of gung ho	33,70,29	●	95	6	37	●		155
Dali 104B	370	Lively, rich sounding and communicative. Shame about bland styling and dull balance.	22,86,27	●	93	4	28	●	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	30	●		11
Epos ES11	445	Integral baffle/driver gives remarkable colouration, transparency and speed.	20,38,25	●	87	8	45	●		94
Epos ES14	675	Substantial stand mount delivers delightful midrange focus and delicacy with good bass control.	23,49,29		87	8	25	●		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	22	●	1346	143
Faraday Siren	445	High mass concrete cabinet is let down by imbalance of ageing driver combination.	25,27,46		90	4	48	●		94
Gale Model 4	200	Low cost floorstander, sounds a bit edgy, with detached bass	19,79,22	●	87	8	28	●		156
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699	Still a classic miniature, though not to every taste, and none the better for the recent update.	19,30,18		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	30	●	1037	130
Heybrook Prima	139	Fine pace and timing, but balance is forward and bass is tight.	20,29,18		87	6	50	●		110
Heybrook Solo	199	Untidy bass and treble, but handles complex rhythmic material well.	23,36,23		89	6	28	●		90
Heybrook Trio	373	HBS1 drivers in real wood enclosure give a sweeter and more forgiving sound.	24,47,25		89	8	45	●		118
Heybrook Heylo	389	Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought.	23,73,19	●	88	8	30	●	1658	152
Heybrook Heystak	499	Elegant, highly detailed and level-headed sound, but could use injection of life	22,98,28	●	89	8	38	●		141
Heybrook Quartet	575	Solidly large bookshelf model with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound.	24,41,22		90	8	48	●		122
Heybrook Sextet	1,129	Coherent and highly analytical, partly due to distinct upper-mid forwardness.	27,90,20	●	88	8	25	●		102
Infinity Reference 1i	150	Although not to our tastes, this is a competent speaker, and decent material value	20,34,20		89	6	50	●	1403	148
Infinity Kappa 6.1i	995	Good extension, but bass is fat and slow, and dynamics are unconvincing.	31,95,25	●	89	6	25	●	1080	132
Jamo Cornet 40.4	140	Pretty presentation and a strong box, but poor driver fixing. Decent if bright sound.	20,32,22		89	8	48	●		1038
Jamo BX100A	350	A cracking output for their size these rock boxes can be a tad bright but have decent bass	31.5,54,28		91	8	40	●		155
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom 'n tizz character sounded crude	22,90,29	●	90	4	28	●	1659	152
Jamo 477	500	Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price.	19,77,28	●	88	4	40	●	1549	138
Jamo 707A	900	Superb styling and cosmetics and decent balance apart from detached bass.	26,38,104	●	90	4	25	●	1085	132
JBL Control One	115	Sub-miniature with forward midrange and real bass; price justified by build	24,156,14		87	4	100	●		90
JBL TLX70	400	Startling bass weight from party animal that is let down by rather bland high frequencies	27,88,28	●	88.5	8	50	●		155
JBL L20J	850	Pricey, heavy and a bit laid back, but this is a fine rock 'n' roller which is dynamic and communicative	26,42,28		86	8	30	●	1550	138
JBL L90	1,300	A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a tad crude	24,94,35	●	91	6	23	●		143
JBL Ti 1000	1,600	Performance compromised by over enthusiastic midbass output from port.	20,30,13		89	4	45	●		118
Jordan Watts JH400	820	Piano finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid.	28,38,21		86	8	50	●		106
JPW Mini Monitor	60	Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way	18,27,17.5		86	8	50	●		156
JPW Gold Monitor	80	More informative than Mini Monitor - but fiercer too	18,27,17.5		86	8	50	●		156
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.	19,32,21		87	6	55	●	1572	139
KEF Coda 7	130	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be tauter; build tougher	18,30,23		88	6	50	●		156
KEF Coda 8	190	Outstandingly well balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29		86	6	28	●		156
KEF Coda 9	300	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●		156
KEF Q30	379	Fine focus from Uni-Q driver, but lacks drive and time coherence.	19,73,30		88	6	44	●		126
KEF Q50	529	Compact twin-driver floorstander with Uni-Q treble and a rather midbass, heavy overall balance.	19,83,30	●	89	6	50	●	1573	139
KEF 104/2	1,799	A reference point for dynamics, best without KUBE, suited to many rooms.	28,90,41	●	92	4	50	●		60
Keswick Audio Aria II	329	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24		89	8	20	●	1405	148
Linn Keilidh Passive	649	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive.	20,83,28	●	87	4	22	●	1552	138
Linn Kaber Passive	1,389	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving.	20,90,28	●	87	4	25	●		118
Living Voice Air Partner S	27,000	Outstanding transparency and dynamics from remarkably solid and fast mega horn	64,160,90	●	108	8	40	●		138
Lumley Reference LM4	375	Metal diaphragm and wood veneer; balance uneven upper and has suspect timing.	18,36,22		86	6	44	●		126
Lumley Reference LM3	895	Despite indifferent bass alignment, LM3 is fast, coherent, solid and informative	27,87,28	●	90	8	30	●		106
Meridian DSP6000	8,500	Sophisticated digital design, with a wide ranging, refined and detailed sound. Has onboard amplification	28,133,43	●	-	-	35	●	1226	140
Meridian DSP5000	2,995	State of the active loudspeaker art, a high grade design with unique capabilities. Has onboard amplification	21,90,30	●	-	-	35	●	1226	140
Mission 731	130	Much improved bass but dull top; likes to play loud	17.5,31,18		87	6	45	●		156
Mission 732	200	Attractive presentation but a rather dull and thick sounding speaker, and a tad pricey too.	20,41,30		89	8	45	●	1613	141
Mission 733	300	Duller than before, though still an honest all-round package	20,5,87,30	●	87	8	45	●		156
Mission 751	300	Gorgeous looking, very petite; boogies with a sting at the top	17.5,32,26		87	8	45	●		156
Mission 734	430	Fine all rounder, and good value, but dynamically a bit lazy, and tweeter quality limited.	21,84,33	●	90	8	43	●	1660	152
Mission 752	500	Brilliant style, engineering and sound	20,88,26	●	90	8	50	●	1553	138
Mission 753	700	Gorgeous presentation and potential for open transparency.	21,88,32	●	90	6	45	●		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	40	●	1164	135
Monitor Audio MA202	450	Uneven, informative and easy-listening floorstander delivers decent scale.	22,89,27	●	90	8	50	●	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	45	●	1661	152
Monitor Audio Studio 6	900	Metal diaphragm compact has transparent midband but lacks vigour and drive.	22,35,25		88	8	45	●		118
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000	A real looker, but sound and content are a bit on the small side for the price.	17,92,20	●	90	8	28	●	1349	143
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	Up front, bouncy and a whole lot of fun	18.5,30.5,20		86	8	50	●		156
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150	Prettily finished and inexpensive passive subwoofer is only really useful with sub-miniature speakers	24,58,26		90	8	40	●		128
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Slightly shut in and coloured quality is compensated by fine bass and impressive communication.	25,43,28		90	8	28	●	1662	152
Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,695	Although a very neutral loudspeaker it can, with the right ancillaries, pack a serious punch (Statements)	26,86,35	●	90	6	35	●	1367	146
Morel 704/2	1,000	There's real potential here, but it's not fully realised	23,80,21	●	88	8	20	●	1350	143



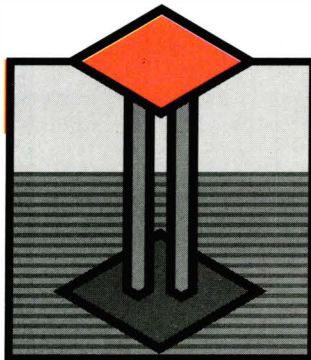
# HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM FLOORSTANDER	FACTS CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER	
Musical Technology Harrier	400	Very pretty package, good measured performance and even sound. Sensitivity is low, and dynamics limp	25,80,23	● 86	8 25	●	1663	152	
Naim SBL Passive	1,821	Lively and punchy - smoother but more upfront than before.	27,89,27	● 88	6 25	●	1352	143	
Neat Petite	595	Among the most entertaining and enjoyable, despite colourations	20,30,18	● 87	6 33	●		102	
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 45	●	1664	152	
Origin Live OL-1	499	Luxury miniature has very good overall balance, sacrificing sensitivity for bass.	20,30,19	● 86	8 25	●		106	
Philips Legend FB720II	200	Liveliness, coherence and fine information retrieval justifies the odd looking baffle.	21,37,31	● 90	6 50	●	122		
Pink Triangle Ventral	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 50	●	1157	139	
Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	● 89	8 25	●	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 22	●	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	22,107,25	● 86	8 30	●	1457	149	
Prof Monitor Co LB1	998	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited.	18,53,25	● 89	4 33	●		110	
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,598	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room.	26,79,43	● 89	6 22	●		114	
Quad ESL-63	2,860	Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without.	66,93,27	● 86	8 34	●		60	
Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative.	19,31,19	● 87	8 50	●		114	
Rega EL8	298	Kyle drivers in compact floorstander gives more bass but less coherence.	17,72,20	● 86	8 55	●		122	
Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20	● 87	8 40	●	1579	139	
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing.	20,82,30	● 89	6 40	●	1083	132	
Revolver Beretta	100	Great bass for the price, a bit crude further up	19,35,22	● 87	8 45	●	156		
Revolver Colt	139	A good all-rounder, if a little bland, and excellent value for money	30,19,22	● 88	6 48	●	1407	148	
Revolver 260	350	A no nonsense presenter of rock with plenty of dynamics, not too refined (tested in Sessions)	21,5,91,6,30	● 89	6 40	●		154	
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	19,57,16	● 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 30	●		118	
Rogers LS3/5A	699	Clever AB1 stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot.	19,31,17	● 82	12 45	●	1354	143	
Rogers Studio 5	699	Luxury finish bookshelf size model has genuine monitoring capabilities.	25,25,48	● 89	8 40	●	1556	138	
Rogers Studio 7	899	Latest variation on classic BBC-monitor theme has beautifully voiced, laid back sound.	30,63,30	● 90	8 30	●		122	
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance.	28,76,46	● 88	8 20	●	1082	132	
Royd Minstrel	249	Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing, a bit bright.	18,69,12	● 86	8 30	●	1167	135	
Royd Merlin	298	Invigorating and exciting design with plenty of upfront detail, but balance lacks warmth and a tad overpriced	20,31,18	● 86	8 33	●	1409	148	
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Extremely musical and communicative speaker that fun to listen to. Aesthetics could use improving though	20,31,18	● 86	8 35	●		139	
Royd Abbot	665	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance.	20,81,30	● 90	8 43	●		118	
Ruark Templar	499	Striking baffle gives decent bass/mid but dull treble; could tame over-bright system.	19,70,27	● 87	8 25	●		122	
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence.	23,84,32	● 88	8 30	●		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 45	●	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 25	●		106	
SD Acoustics SD5	1,235	Bass suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth. Has ribbon tweeter.	20,110,30	● 88	8 30	●	1081	132	
Shahinian Arc	1,675	Occasionally wonderful small floorstanding omni; bright but coherent and revealing.	35,69,25	● 88	6 24	●		110	
Spendor 2020	399	Utilising an oval drive unit in a stylish cabinet this is a neutral design with AV inclinations (tested in Sessions)	18,34,26	● 87	8	●		155	
Spendor S20	760	Maintains Spendor's tradition for peerless mid-to-treble coherence and perspectives..	22,38,26	● 84	8 25	●		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	Balanced, open, unboxy and quite lively, but lacks muscle.	19,34,15	● 87	6 60	●	1616	141	
Tannoy 631SE	170	Very refined midband; maybe too laid back for some	13-19,34,16	● 86	7 45	●		156	
Tannoy 632	189	Clever cabinet avoids boxiness and promotes focus imaging and bass	43,51,27	● 88	20 25	●	1168	135	
Tannoy 633/II	300	Impressive bass and balance from very compact floorstander. Upper midband could be cleaner.	29,75,28	● 89	85 20	●	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 25	●	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 20	●	1355	143	
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000	These awesome horn loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive.	large	● 99	8 38	●		C93	
TDL Near Field Monitor	100	Despite low price, this is an unimpressive performer, poor low frequency resolution and analysis being main flaws	18,30,17	● 87	8 50	●	1043	130	
TDL RTL2	300	Spacious, weighty and enveloping sound if you can accept the laid back balance	20,73,22	● 87	8 25	●	1412	148	
TDL RTL3	400	Bargain price floorstander has rich, heavy and bright sound with a good scale.	20,90,37	● 90	8 25	●		126	
TDL Studio 0.5	499	Tiny floorstanding transmission line lacks coherence or the balance of Studio 1.	20,62,30	● 85	8 40	●		94	
TDL Studio 1	699	Genuinely extended bass from a compact enclosure, very detailed but a shade clinical.	23,77,33	● 86	8 25	●		78	
TDL Studio 1m	899	Transmission line helps bring the best from metal cone driver.	23,77,34	● 86	8 20	●		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 50	●	1413	148	
Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass heavy balance and low sensitivity.	25,78,37	● 100	8 25	●	1666	152	
Thiel SCS	1,379	Class leading coherence and communication, but can sound shut-in and dark	23,92,41	● 87	4 45	●		114	
Totem Model One	995	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size.	17,31,23	● 87	4 28	●		122	
Triangle Octant TXe	3,950	Errs on side of extremism. High sensitivity and beguiling midband make a persuasive case for valve partnership	42,150,19	● 94	4 50	●	1539	137	
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness.	41,101,27	● 88	7 23	●		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	8 130	●		74	
Wharfedale Valdsu 400	199	Goes very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is very thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	25,80,26	● 91	8 30	●	1414	148	
Wharfedale Valdsu 500	299	Offering a large version of events these rock boxes can move plenty of air, albeit not as subtly as alternatives	25,108,26,5	● 91	4 40	●	155		
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun.	14,22,12	● 88	8 30	●		110	
<b>Subwoofers</b>									
B&W AS6	500	Good material value with a fair amount of low bass from 100W active design	45,51,45,5	●		30		154	
Boston Acoustics SW10	450	A little thumpy but transparent with good timing and goes loud (active)	28,5,50,42	●		33		128	
Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass: for high sensitivity speakers	52,19,34	● 86	8 45	●		128	
InfinityRS 10	500	A very cute cube of an active sub but midbass is boomy with no real extension	34,34,34	●		38		128	
Jamo SW600	530	Has some neat styling touches and remote control but deep bass is limited (active)	38,41,53	●		30		154	
KEF Model 30B	500	Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension (active)	38,5,37,43	●		45		154	
KEF AV1	2500	Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky	56,43,50	●		45		128	



## SUBWOOFERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price (£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
M&K VX-7B	450	Baby of a big range this active design delivers deep, plenteous bass albeit lacking in transparency	35,25,37	●	40	154		
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150	Fair value, can help sensitive small speakers but no serious extension to match upper bass	58,24,25	●	85	128		
REL Q-Bass	350	Smashes the price barrier for deep bass performance	40,41,5,40	●	20	154	1670	



## 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, including particle board, glass and all

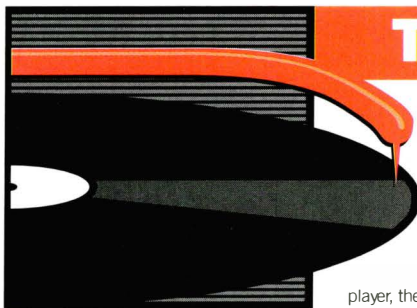
manner of steel tube and section. Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models. Use dealer or manufacturer recommendations to narrow down the choice, but as a rule you want the tweeter at ear height.

**B** Best buy **R** Recommended

HEIGHT (CM):	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM):	FILLABLE:	lead to increase mass, which affects sound.	WELDED:	NUMBER OF SHELVES:	rack or support.	SHELF TYPE:	FACTSBACK NUMBER:	copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	BACK ISSUE:
Height of stand or equipment shelf.	Dimensions of top plate on speaker stand or equipment support.	Some speaker stands can be filled with sand and/or	The better stands and supports are welded rather than bolted together.	The amount of tiers on an equipment	Material that shelves are made of on an equipment rack. Wood generally means MDF.	The Factsback reference for ordering a fax	The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.			

## STANDS & SUPPORTS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	HEIGHT (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>Equipment Supports</b>									
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
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
Quadraspire Q4	200	Easy to live with, and tonally neutral					4	MDF	151
Sound Organisation Z038	130	Too lively and lacking order - but cheap	50	40,84		●	5	Wood	151
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
Target B5	175	Free of colourations, fine grip and good value				●	5	Wood	151
Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand	600	Infinitely upgradable. Persuasive and thrilling				●	5	Glass	151
<b>Speaker Stands</b>									
Alphason Titan S50	100	Excels in the midband and allows voices to come across in a detailed and expressive fashion				● ●			146
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
Gale Reference 600	60	Smooth sounding with impressive bass well suited to less civilised speakers				● ●			146
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
Mana Soundframes	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks these make music effortless and natural, can be stacked for greater effect	5			●			146
Partington Discovery	80	The depth and substance of the presentation truly added to the convincing nature of the system's portrayal				● ●			146



## Tonearms

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 the quality of

its construction and design have 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

EFFECTIVE MASS:	PARALLEL TRACKING:	track the disc in a linear fashion.	PIVOTED:	UNI-PIVOT:	two planes.	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm):	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT:	FACTSBACK NUMBER:
This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.	An arm which allows the cartridge to		Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.	Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in		Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.	Important for accurate cartridge set-up.	The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback.

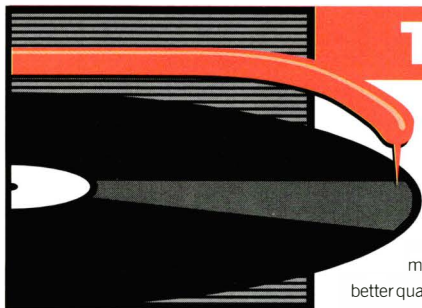
## TONEARMS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT (cm)	ISSUE NUMBER
Alphason HR100S	490	S-shaped arm sounds smooth, but nevertheless reproduces transients with fine attack.	Medium	●	●	229	86	
Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000	Large, solid and well made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness.	High	●	●		79	
Linn Ekos	1,297	Superb, state of the art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths.	Medium	●	●	229	6	



TONEARMS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	PARALLEL TRACKING EFFECTIVE MASS	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT UNI-PIVOT PIVOTED	FAKBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural.	Low	●	237	60
Rega RB300	139	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high end turntables.	Low	●	237	60
Roksan Tabriz Basic	275	Targetted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases - a touch bright though.	Low	●	240	91
SME Series 300-309	657	Beautifully made and finished: fully adjustable and a highly neutral performer.	Low	●	238	79
SME Series IV	936	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low colouration.	Low	●	233	60
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 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, 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 take it off.  
**AUTO:** The record player does it all.  
**SEMI-AUTO:** You share the work: you put it on, it takes it off.  
**SPEEDS:** In RPM to correspond with your platters.  
**SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS:** Sprung suspension to minimise structural interference.  
**EXTERNAL PSU:** Outboard power supply; generally it indicates high quality.  
**SUPPLIED WITH ARM:** Many turntables require a separate arm to be fitted; if not, this tells you so.  
**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.

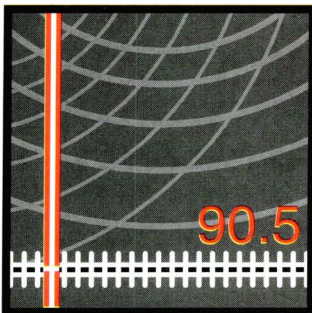
TURNTABLES

Product	Price(£)	Comments	MANUAL	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS	EXTERNAL ELECTRONIC PSU	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE	FAKBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alphason Sonata	835	Good sound in all areas - bass, clarity and neutrality all in top class (tested with HR100S MCS).	●					33	● ● ●	79
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
DNM Rota 2	4,800	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on own table	●					33/45	● ● ●	1328 144
Dual CS503-2	170	Coarse and woolly sound - not inoffensive, but bettered by the CS-505-3.			●			33/45	● ● ●	91
Dual 505-4 UK	200	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph.			●			33/45	● ● ●	103
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200	(Tested with Stugi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended.	●					33/45	● ● ●	91
Linn Basik	349	Strong midband analysis and imagery; clean if sharp treble is matched to a good if occasionally wooden bass.	●					33/45	● ● ●	103
Linn LP12 Basik	745	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●					33	● ●	103
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,345	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains.	●					33/45	● ●	91
Michell Gyrodek	765	Sweet and natural sounding player, well matched with the Rega RB300	●					33/45	● ●	55
Pink Triangle Export	948	The PT100 with built-in PS. Transparent and neutral, but review sample had high motor noise.	●					33/45	● ●	91
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,797	Possibly the most detailed, clear and neutral sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny.	●					33/45	● ●	91
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
Rega Planar 2	198	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●					33/45	●	48
Rega Planar 3	260	The '3 (with RB300 arm) sounds musical in a balanced and coherent manner, needs decent isolation	●					33/45	●	48
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
Roksan Radius/Tabriz zi	855	Musically it offers exceptional performance with a minimum of fuss.	●					33/45	● ●	103
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
Systemdek IIX/900	230	A high performance budget turntable that is particularly strong at fine detail resolution and imagery.	●					33/45	● ●	103
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
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
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
Thorens TD2001	700	Similar to TD320 but much dearer - why? Sound is comfortable but not very detailed.	●					33/45	● ●	91
Thorens TD3001/UK	770	Excellent middle ranking esoterica, with strong all-round abilities rather than excellence in particular areas.	●					33/45	● ●	103
Voyd 0.5	3,940	Cross between standard and Reference Voyds. Superb finish, colourful and dynamic.	●					33/45	● ● ●	1328 144
Voyd Reference	6,500	Voyd's flagship, equipped with three substantial motors, is a strong contender for world's best.	●					33/45	● ● ●	91
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. Though tuners might seem 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.

B **Best buy**

R **Recommended**

**KEY**

**WAVEBANDS:** Only the FM (MHF) bands give stereo hi-fi sound, though AM (MW & LW) are useful for receiving certain transmissions in the UK.  
**PRESETS:** Number of station frequencies that can be stored.  
**RDS:** (radio data system) was 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 your 'twig' during installation  
**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

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## Tuners

Product	Price (£)	Comments	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	FAXBACK 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
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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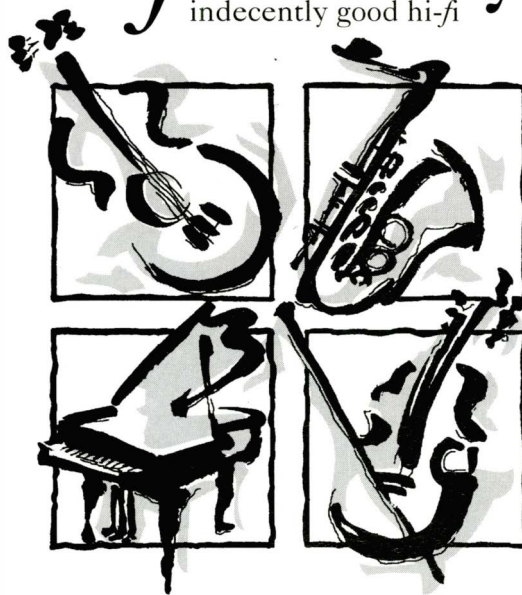
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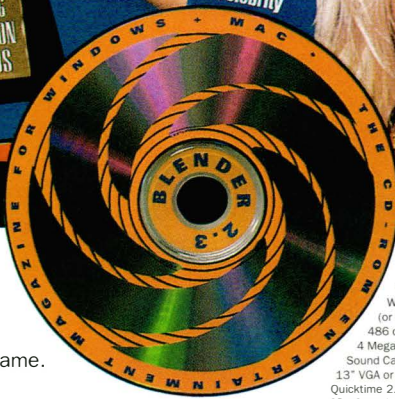
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# HI-FI CHOICE

## **Amplifiers**

While the muscular Miller measures, the swarthy Steward seeks the finest integrated amplifier priced between £100 and £350. The latest contenders from harman/kardon, Grundig, JVC and NAD are subjected to the full force of the mighty *Choice* blind listening test. Read on while we take no prisoners.



**NAD's 314 amp goes under the stethoscope.**

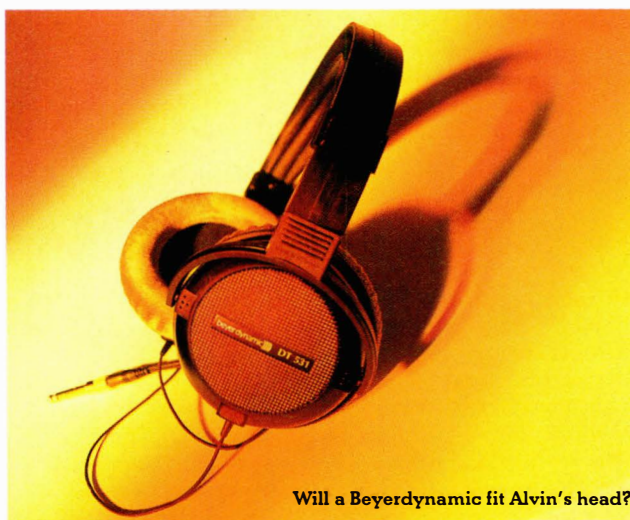


## **Cables**

Once it was just wire. Now, we know that good cables are vital to the sound of the system. Paul Miller and Alan Sircom bring you the definitive round-up of loudspeaker cables under £5 a metre. Find out here which one's best for you!

## **Headphones**

Alvin Gold investigates the world of up-market headphones, checking out the latest offerings from Beyer, Sennheiser, Sony and Vivanco, all priced between £50 and £150. If self-absorbed listening rings your bell, tune in to this channel!



**Will a Beyerdynamic fit Alvin's head?**



## **Tuners**

Fresh from his adventures with the Big Twig (see page 17), Jason Kennedy has gone tuner crazy. Gasp at his latest exploits, as he grapples with five of the latest top-flight ether-pluckers. Find out what state-of-the-art radio really sounds like!

## **Plus**

Jason Kennedy rounds-up the latest and greatest new products in Sessions ■ Paul Messenger picks the best hi-fi systems for around £1,500 ■ The crème-de-la-crème of hi-fi is given the once-over in Statements ■ Win loads of lovely hi-fi in our superb, top value competition. Plus loads, loads more!

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*The September issue is so bright you gotta wear shades, and will be in the shops on Friday 19th July. Don't miss out!*



# Ultra Vivian Scene

Sometimes the most natural sound arises from the least exotic equipment. Zen-like, **David Vivian** ponders this premise.

**A** great excuse used by people who don't want to own a hi-fi is: "I haven't got golden ears; I wouldn't be able to tell the difference". It's a great excuse because although it might sound simplistic to the hardened audiophile, it's actually a tantalising paradox embracing at least one powerful truth and myth.

The truth is the more surprising element, but it is supported by experience. If you like a piece of music enough, it will be enjoyable no matter what you listen on. You don't need a Linn *Sondek*, Naim *Six Pack* and a pair of *DBLs* to set your feet tapping — a £5 tranny will oil your ankles just as well. Come to that, you don't need any procured equipment at all — the mind is the ultimate storage and playback system, capable of infinitely subtle filtering and editing. Can you hum along to it? Try stopping yourself.

The myth is that the natural 'fidelity' of your ears affects your ability to appreciate hi-fi — severe hearing impairment notwithstanding. We don't listen with our ears, we listen with our minds and our emotions. How much we hear depends on how much we want to hear. It's reliant on any number of factors, from immediate environment to mood to natural disposition. Subconsciously, we can block out everything but the tune or scrutinise the subtlest nuances of musicianship and production. Everyone has a preference somewhere between these two extremes. Maybe those who habitually listen hardest are the ones with golden ears — natural born audio engineers or reviewers. But that doesn't make them more susceptible to the pleasures of hi-fi than anyone else.

Linn's Ivor Tiefenbrun made the point so eloquently all those years ago when he first demonstrated his *Sondek* turntable to potential dealers. Conventional wisdom at the time was that if one high-end record player measured within certain rumble, wow and flutter limits, it would sound much the same as the next. Pitch stability was the thing. Any further sonic differences could only be down to the arm and cartridge, and then mostly the cartridge. Some dealers were sceptical that the 'deck', the bit that spun the record, could improve matters much. And, indeed, a few refused to hear any difference when Ivor gave his A-B comparisons. These were men and women who, in some cases, had been selling hi-fi for decades. Positively platinum-eared individuals.



ILLUSTRATION: BRETT RYDER

So Ivor invited ordinary people off the streets outside the shops to come inside, lay down their shopping and have a listen to the blind A-B demo. They weren't asked to analyse what they were hearing as each deck played, merely which one they preferred. Legend, according to Ivor, has it that Linn was favoured every time. Many felt that it sounded more natural. Exactly.

Natural is easy to recognise. It doesn't distract your attention from the music, it *is* the music. We can all instinctively tell the difference between realism and artifice. It doesn't require superhuman powers of analysis or hyper-sensitive lug holes. We know what 'real' sounds like. It surrounds us all the time. Spotting a poor copy requires no effort.

It is, however, all too easy to produce one. I can quite see why some hi-fi first-timers fail to be convinced and turn their back on it, never to return. My guess is that far from not being able to differentiate between their old radiogram and a new-fangled separates system, they can hear differences all too plainly.

Clean and clinical can quite literally be a pain in the ear if you've been used to mellow and mellifluous. Spotlit detail and bags of midrange presence isn't necessarily what you want to hear if what you liked about your old set-up was its sweetness of tone.

Even an expensive hi-fi can be bright, sibilant and hard work to listen to, if its components are poorly matched. Some of the worst systems I've ever heard have had five-figure price tags. Moreover, the people demonstrating them thought they sounded the business. In the end, it's all subjective, of course. But I have this nagging doubt these people are into hi-fi for different reasons than me. With shinier stereo as the goal, they relish the equipment's potential for exaggeration and effect, and as a result the music becomes almost incidental.

My advice would be to keep your needs simple. I think it was Kingsley Amis who said the best way to advertise beer was to say: "It makes you drunk." Hi-fi should make you intoxicated on music. It's as simple as that. ▲



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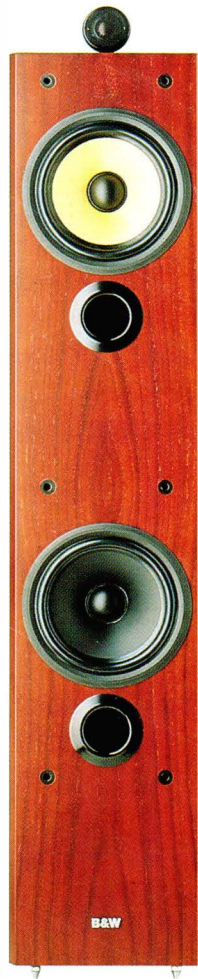
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