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Of Systems And Headphones

THE FINEST HI-FI MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

ESSENTIAL SPEAKERS!

We pick the ultimate big and small boxes



SCOOP Trichord's CD Revelation



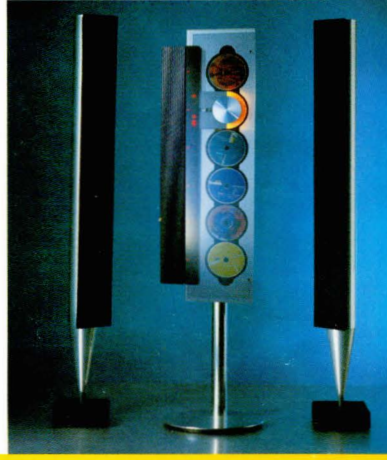
REVEALED Krell's Champ Amp



RATED Ten Top Interconnects



PLUS Six Amazing Systems



Buyer's Guide

Our Experts Name The Best Hi-Fi 2,000 Products ● 300 Best Buys

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DECEMBER 1996 £2.99

Concert



**The Jamo Concert Series.
HEAR...SEE...RELAX&ENJOY...**

Advanced technology, innovative design and refined workmanship is not always the perfect recipe for success, we believe a little more is required.

The Concert series has enabled Jamo to produce a range of loudspeakers which will reproduce music that is clean and neutral. The dynamic range transparency and sound stage are all raised to a higher dimension.

The successes attained by the Jamo development team is the result of efforts to design high-quality loudspeaker components which are critically matched to one another.

It is an honour for us to introduce this new generation of loudspeakers to you...

... **Jamo Concert 11, Jamo Concert 8 and Jamo Concert Center.**

THE SOUND OF EXCELLENCE - Made in Denmark.

Jamo® "THE
SOUND
OF
EXCEL-
LENCE"

Editor's Notebook

Stan Vincent adopts a metaphorical lotus position to reflect on the power of music, and other things . . .



1996 will be remembered as the year in which my parents discovered CD. For a number of months they've been quizzing me elliptically about the merits of portable units compared with full-size machines, whether CD would work with existing equipment — queries indicating their readiness to join the digital set. Being a dutiful son, I have attempted to answer their questions to the best of my ability, but remained puzzled why they would want to invest in CD when they already have a substantial collection of records and tapes, and a basic but decent audio system.

My mother's birthday was the excuse they needed, and having decided that flexibility was the name of the game, they commissioned me to source a good-quality personal CD player. (I picked the £200 Technics SL-XP600 for its long battery life, great sound and handy wireless remote control.) It was duly dispatched with a handful of CDs to get the ball rolling.

Well, I couldn't believe their response. I'd figured they'd be pretty pleased with their new toy, but hadn't expected outright ecstasy, nor that my normally mild-mannered mum would start enquiring about neighbours' social schedules just so that she could crank up the volume and sing along. This £200 portable has given my folks a whole new outlook on music they've known for years.

I must confess this was a surprise. Indeed, their reaction has cast new light on one of my long-held theories, which concerns the needs of different people to hear a certain level of music reproduction quality. Musicians, for example, seem to need only limited amounts of 'hi-fi' to enjoy recorded music. Their training allows their brains to 'fill in the gaps' between what they hear and what they know they should hear. Follow that to its logical conclusion, and 'higher-fi' should make little difference to the basic level of enjoyment. Yet despite my parents being accomplished semi-

professional musicians, and despite the fact that for many years they have owned decent record- and tape-playing apparatus, CD has elevated their musical enjoyment to a new level.

In the light of this, I have reshuffled my preconceptions. Hi-fi is not just about presenting the most complete picture of a musical performance. It is about communicating the spirit of the performance. The human brain is adept at filling in gaps in music, but the more gaps it has to fill in, the harder it must work.

If your brain is working hard, there's no way you can enjoy yourself at the same time. So the real power of hi-fi is the way it takes the effort out of listening to music. It presents the most lifelike representation of a performance, so that cognitive centres can get on with the business of feeling emotion in a piece, rather than trying to make sense of it in the first place. The better your hi-fi system, the more powerful the feelings it'll allow you to experience. Really, it is that simple.

Trompe l'œil

I would just like to clear up any confusion there may have been about an advertisement that appeared on pages 70 and 71 of our last issue. Entitled 'Five Stars For Value', it was contrived to look like an editorial feature giving buying advice, with a box-out panel listing 'The 20 Best Hi-Fi Dealers In The UK'. Regrettably, for an inexplicable reason, the parties who provided this puff omitted the usual 'advertisement' strapline, but I regret its content was nothing but commercial, and the contents of the page in no way represented the editorial views or policies of *Hi-Fi Choice*. Caveat emptor, my friends.

Hello London!

It's a big *Hi-Fi Choice* welcome to Christina Bunce, who has joined us as Production Editor from Nexus Media in Swanley, Kent. Christina brings to the office a cheery disposition and, thankfully, some new albums to play on the office system.

In this month's issue

Many audiophiles find musical tastes broadening when their system starts to sing. That's certainly been the case for our *Inspirations* candidate this month, Rob Dowse. On page 54 you'll discover how his eclectic taste in hi-fi

has led to an equally unusual music collection.

The Hi-Fi Show, held at Heathrow's Ramada Hotel during September, was a roaring success, as you'll read in Jason Kennedy's *Show Report* on page 11. (The Live 96 show at Earl's Court, meanwhile, appears to have disappointed all but cellphone groupies.)

Also in this issue we have a group test of 14 speakers priced between £400 and £1,000. Starting on page 66, it includes a discussion of how stand-mounts compare to floor-standers at this price level. Then we have six integrated systems your lounge or bedroom must hear, ten interconnectables ideal for the average £1,000 system, and a world exclusive review of Jamo's superb *Concert 8* speakers.

May there be peace in your world, and pleasure in your listening this month!

Stan Vincent

HANDBAGS AT DAWN?

On page 21 we report on Verity plc's revolutionary flat-panel speaker technology, 'nxt', among whose principal applications will be in-car audio and domestic AV installations. Just as we were putting away our pens and pencils at the end of this issue, however, there came a fax from Noise Cancelling Technologies [UK] Ltd (NCT), whose US parent claims to have been working on 'Flat Panel Loudspeaker Technology' for over two years. At a press launch in late October, the company claims it will unveil "fully-equipped vehicles" and "Flat 'Picture' Technology for Home Audio". Afterwards, I have no doubt patents will be compared...



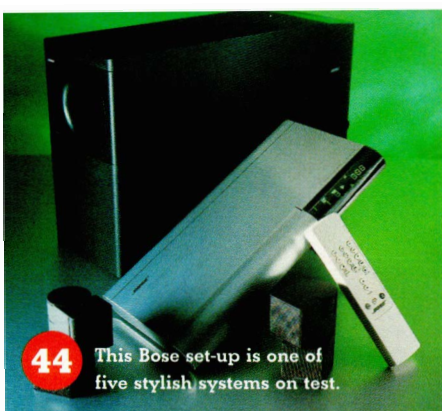
Flattening perspective



The flat response



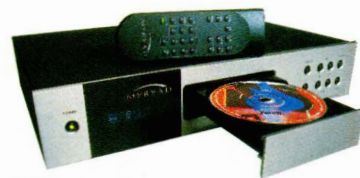
We were honoured to be voted Hi-Fi Magazine Of The Year at the CETI Industry Awards, Harrogate, May 1996. Cheers!



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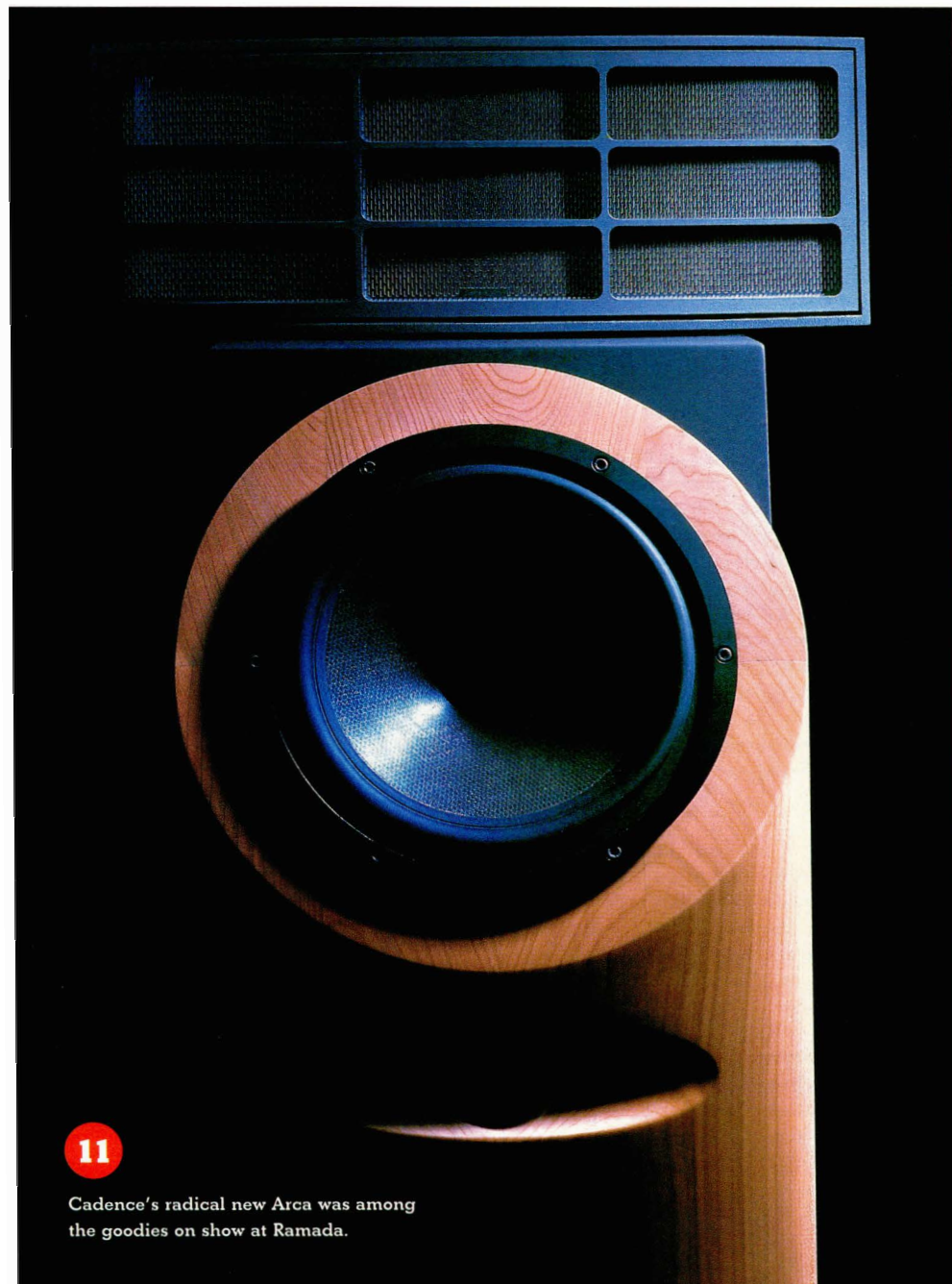
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WIN!WIN!WIN!

£600 worth of excellent Vivanco headphones must be won!



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WIN!WIN!WIN!

Over £2,400 worth of superb systems must be won!



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Update

RUPERT MURDOCH OWNS NEWSPAPERS AROUND THE GLOBE, BUT ONLY MALCOLM STEWARD HAS THE LATEST HI-FI STORIES.

In brief

The British Federation of Audio has stepped onto the Internet to showcase the work of the British hi-fi industry. Its site includes details of UK manufacturers and distributors and can be browsed at <http://www.british-audio.org.uk>

The Scottish Hi-Fi Exhibition will take place from Friday, November 15 to Sunday, November 17, at the Royal Scot Hotel, Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh. Admission is free and the show will include an in-car exhibit in a separate marquee. ☎ (0131) 556 7901

Audioprism's *CD Blacklight* is a lightweight, phosphorescent mat that's claimed to be probably the best CD tweak yet. It physically damps the CD/clamp interface, cuts static and cancels stray light, all for £39.95. ☎ (01702) 200934

Aiwa has opened a Customer Information Centre complete with a consumer helpline. Trained staff are available to offer advice on portable audio, hi-fi separates, audio and home cinema systems, and VCRs, to existing and potential Aiwa customers. ☎ (0990) 902 902

Sanyo's *CDP455* is, according to GfK figures, the UK's best selling personal CD player. Selling for £119.99, it comes with a car kit and an AC adapter, and features Sanyo's three-second digital anti-shock system. ☎ (01923) 246363

Titan has introduced two new models to its hand-made loudspeaker range. The £1,000 *Tower T/4* and £3,000 *Maxi T/4* join the £600 *Mini T/2*. All use anodised aluminium drivers and come in a selection of

CDM + DAC = CD



Audiolab's 'spot the difference' competition.

Audiolab has included key features from its *8000CDM* CD transport and *8000DAC* in its new integrated CD player — called, unsurprisingly, the *8000CD*.

The new machine features a freshly developed, 20-bit resolution filter and a 128-times oversampling, single-bit, dual differential DAC chip from Crystal Semiconductors. This incorporates a high-performance digital filter and delta sigma modulator. The latter handles data culled from a CD-ROM drive that uses a three-beam laser and a linear motor, all controlled by Audiolab's own software.

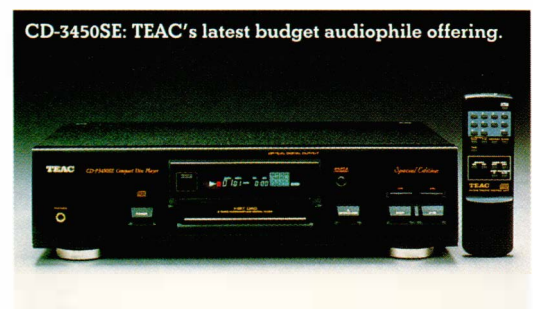
To negate the effects of having digital signal processing and sensitive analogue circuits in close proximity, the designers paid special attention to chassis and PCB design, taking particular care with grounding and the analogue output filter to maintain low crosstalk and noise along with smooth frequency and phase response.

The *8000CD* sells for £999.90 and comes with an S/PDIF digital output, which allows for a potential upgrade with the addition of an *8000DAC*. Anyone seeking further information about the player should note that Audiolab now has a new phone number: ☎ (01480) 415600

UK tweaked TEAC

Built in Japan but to a stringent British design brief, the Teac *CD-3450SE* aims to delight audiophiles on a budget. This special edition model has an output stage that incorporates Burr-Brown op amps designed by Peter Hawkins, late of Kinshaw Electronics.

The DC-coupled, servo-controlled machine offers a one-bit DAC, eight-times oversampling filter, TOS-link optical digital output, centre-mounted mechanism, full-function remote control, a variety of programming functions, and a headphone jack — all for £199.95. ☎ (01923) 819630



CD-3450SE: TEAC's latest budget audiophile offering.



Could the MS10i be a budget Classic?

Classic sounds

Mordaunt-Short has released a special edition of its popular *MS10i* loudspeaker, catering for consumers demanding a rosewood-finished model.

However, the *MS10i Classic* provides more than just improved cosmetics. For starters, the elegant cabinet — finished with an environmentally sound, reconstituted veneer — is also slightly deeper than that of the original speaker, and has a longer reflex-port tube. These give the *Classic* extra extension at the bass end of the spectrum.

A completely revised crossover using audiophile grade components provides an 'exceptionally smooth tonal balance' that, while still lively and exciting with rock, aims to provide a more refined insight into the instrumental colour of classical and jazz music using acoustic instruments. The new network is also bi-wirable.

Available now, the *MS10i Classic* costs £279.99. ☎ (01705) 407722; <http://www.mordaunt-short.com>

Copland reaches a solid state

Well known for its range of elegant valve amplifiers, Copland has now released its first fully-solid-state design. The CSA8 is an entry-level integrated based upon the valve-transistor hybrid CSA14. The latter was designed as a solid-state amplifier but used two low-voltage valves in the input differential section of its voltage amplifier stage. These have been replaced in the CSA8 with semiconductors, which, while bringing the soundstage forward, have, says the maker, nonetheless safeguarded the smooth sonic character associated with Copland products.

To minimise the signal path, all expendable controls have been ousted. All that remain on the front panel are an on/off button, an Alps volume control, and the input selector that caters for five sources. Toshiba output devices provide 60W per channel of class A/B power. Two finish options are available: the 'classic' silver or satin black with gold legends.



The price of £949.95 will, Copland hopes, encourage buyers to consider partnering the amplifier with the soon-to-be-released CDA277 CD player. ☎ (0181) 947 5047

Diamond geezers

Wharfedale's ground-breaking baby, the *Diamond*, now 14 years old, has fathered a whole range of new entry-level loudspeakers. There are now four models bearing the *Diamond* name, ranging in price from £99 to £199. All of them feature a new construction technique utilising moulded ground-rock polymer baffles.

The range opens with the £99 *Diamond 7.1* and £139 *Diamond 7.2*. Both are two-way bookshelf designs. The 7.1 uses a laminated, polished-cone woofer with a Mylar dome tweeter. The enclosure uses a newly designed symmetrical rear port that enables the speaker to play louder. The 7.2 is a similar design but has a deeper, eight-litre cabinet and a bass-mid cone moulded from mineral loaded co-polymer. It also has a larger, 25mm silk-dome tweeter.

The *Diamond 7.3* is a £199 floor-stander, which will be launched simultaneously with the *Diamond 7A*, a powered, active design. All the new models, says Wharfedale, offer low coloration and go deeper and louder more cleanly than their competitors. ☎ (0113) 260 1222



Wharfedale Diamond 7.1. Poly, put the kettle on...

NAD's powerhouse 317

Claiming "outstanding power to drive almost any loudspeaker in bridged or bi-amp mode", the model 317 is the newest integrated amplifier from NAD. Let's deal with the Watt count first: the quoted continuous power into eight Ohms is a respectable 80W that rises to 250W per channel into two Ohms for short-term peaks. However, bridge the 317 and you get 240W into eight Ohms. If those figures seem familiar to you spec heads that's because the 317's power stage has been lifted from the NAD 214 power amplifier.

At the front end, the 317 provides six line-level inputs including two tape circuits with bi-directional dubbing. Pre-out and main-in sockets allow users to separate the pre-amplifier and power amplifier stages for upgrading.

The 317 can be remote controlled but a handset is not provided with it — you could use the controller from the NAD 116. The amplifier also provides defeatable tone controls, NAD's Soft Clipping circuitry and the NAD Link system communication bus. Another familiar feature is the grey paint job. The price is £469.95. ☎ (0181) 343 3240



NAD 317 — serving suggestion.

DVD disc fulfilment

If you're kicking your heels waiting for DVD to hit the streets you'll be pleased to hear that JVC has announced its intention to start producing DVD discs at its Sacramento and Tuscaloosa plants in April 1997. The initial rate of production will be 600,000 discs each month although the two plants have a joint potential capacity for producing more than 12 million discs per month.

The move is part of the company's 'Fulfilment Strategy', which aims to develop DVD software and promote the spread of the new medium. The scheme includes a range of activities from authoring and mastering to production and distribution. As part of this effort, JVC (JVC Disc America) established a Fulfilment Center for disc packaging and distribution in Atlanta.

In brief

finishes. Full information and demonstrations are available from the manufacturer.

☎ (01702) 206870

Wharfedale's Modus range grows with the addition of the *Modus Powered Sub-Bass*, an active subwoofer for home cinema use. An internal 150-Watt amplifier drives two 170mm long-throw units in a bandpass enclosure. Complete with line- and speaker-level inputs the speaker sells for £349.95.

☎ (0113) 260 1222

Canon's new *S-R100* surround-sound effects speaker is a corner mounting design with a paintable full-length grille. Inside its structural plastics enclosure are a 130mm mid-bass driver and a 14mm tweeter harnessed to Canon's acoustic mirror system, which provides the speaker with wide dispersion both horizontally and vertically.

☎ (01256) 841300

Technics *SA-EX300* is a new entry-level, RDS-equipped AV receiver that delivers 40W to each of the front channels and equal power to the surrounds. It costs £249.95 on its own or £379.95 as part of a package including five speakers. There's also an *SA-EX500* at £349.95 and an *SA-EX700* at £449.95 if you need more power. The *SA-EX100* is a non-surround receiver costing £199.95.

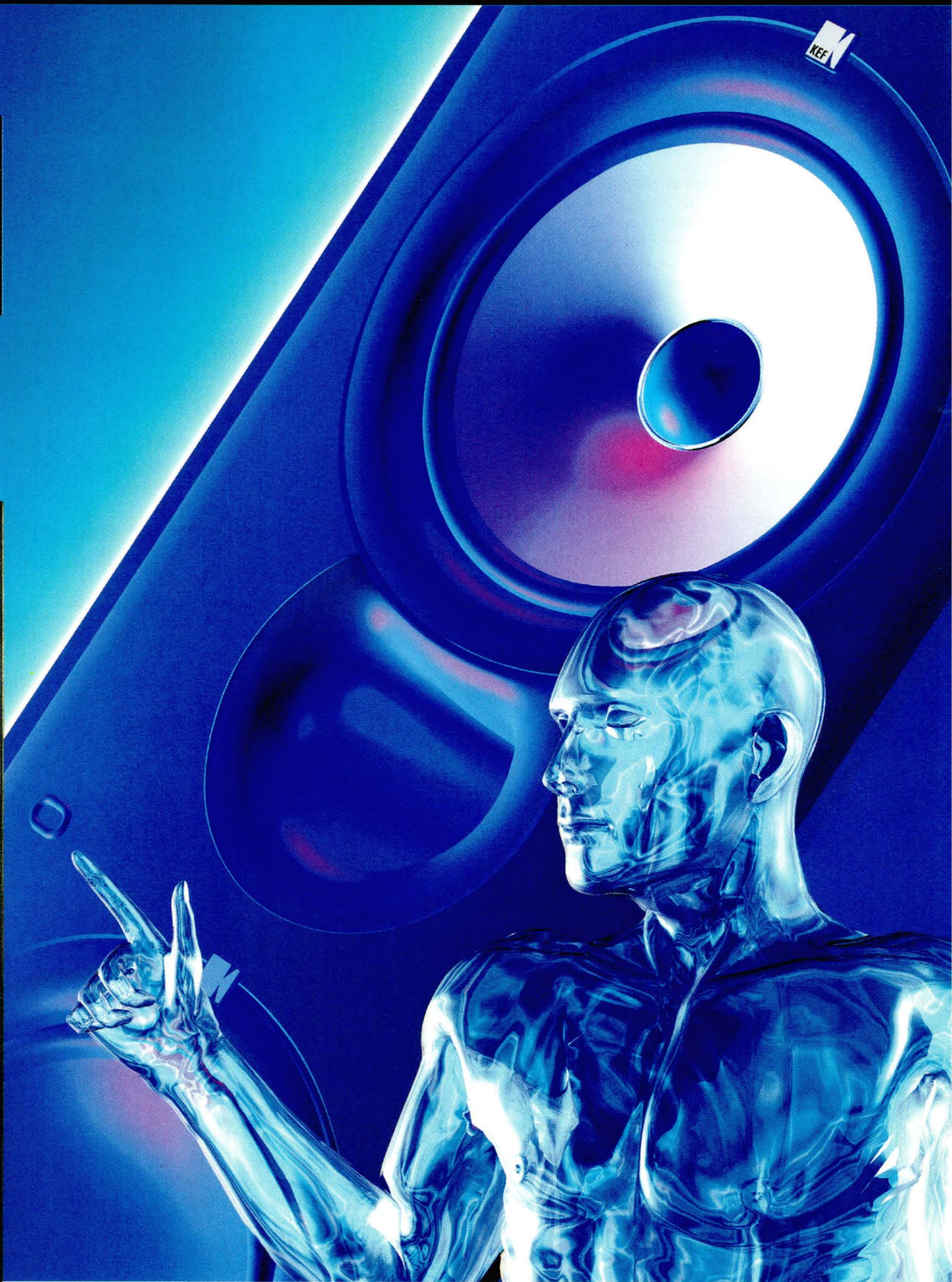
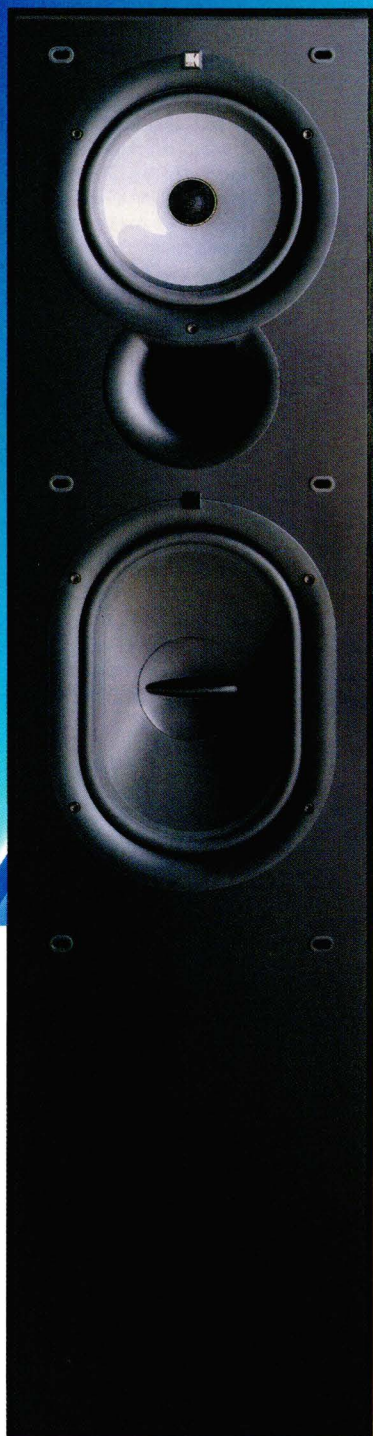
☎ (0990) 357357

Denon promises "affordable Pro Logic quality" from its £299.99, RDS equipped, *AVR-600RD* AV receiver. The remote controlled unit incorporates Denon's *Dynamic Discrete Surround Circuit* in which the front channels are handled as separate analogue signals amplified by three 50W power amps. Two 15W amplifiers handle the rear channels. ☎ (01753) 888447

Revox returns to the UK through the Musical Design Company, a new venture headed by Micromega boss, Ian Bolt. Products include the *Evolution* and *Emotion* systems, multi-room components, and the *Elegance* high performance separates range. No-compromise separates are promised later this year.

☎ (0181) 502 1439

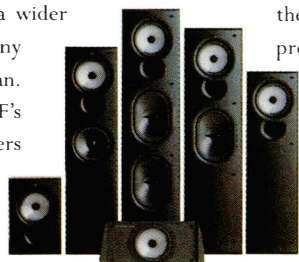
Clearly
better.



When one of the best loudspeaker engineering teams in the world advances its state-of-the-art technology, you'd expect the result to outperform the competition.

It does.

KEF's new Q Series, with its distinctive clear cone Uni-Q® drivers, delivers a more precise stereo image, over a wider listening area, than any conventional loudspeaker can. This latest advance in KEF's patented technology delivers even smoother midrange response and clarity that's simply stunning.



From bookshelf to 3-way floorstander, the entire range is magnetically shielded for Home Theatre use. And because aesthetics are integral to good design, the two largest models incorporate KEF's new 'racetrack' bass unit. With the performance of an 8 inch driver in the space of a 6 inch, it preserves the slim, elegant Q Series design.

With the new Q Series, the competition have been decisively out-classed.

The difference is clear.

Q
SERIES



The experience
of sound

Denon denotes another SE

Denon has replaced its popular *PMA-250III* budget audiophile amplifier with the *PMA-250SE*. The new 30W model is said to provide a more consistent performance over a wide range of loads, thanks to an updated power supply. It claims to offer greater dynamics, and to deliver even better performance with CD players and loudspeakers that are likely to partner it. The *SE* is priced at £159.99 in line-level guise but can have a phono input fitted by the dealer for an additional £14.99. ☎ (01753) 888447



The latest Denon to be blessed with SE status.

Home Cinema from ProAc



ProAc's front line is now complete.

ProAc customers who wish to expand into home cinema can now do so with a centre-channel loudspeaker designed to complement the company's Studio and Response models.

The *Response CC One* (£599) uses magnetically shielded drivers — two 130mm bass units flanking a 19mm, soft-dome tweeter — mounted in a reflex loaded, well-damped, fibre-board cabinet measuring 178mm tall, 445mm wide and 192mm deep. Standard finish is black with others to order.

With an eight Ohm impedance and 89dB sensitivity, the *CC One* is easy to drive. ☎ (01280) 700147

More buttons than you can count from Onkyo.



Onkyo takes THX to the street

Onkyo has two new products for the keen AV enthusiast. The first is the *TX-SV828THX* receiver, which costs £1,299.95 and provides 90 Watts to the front three channels and 50W/ch to the rears. Features include eight audio and four video inputs, along with a programmable remote control, on-screen graphics and an intelligent power management system that fires up the AV system when you turn on the TV. Seven digital surround modes using a 24-bit DSP chip are fitted, including Dolby Pro-Logic, Home THX, Dolby Pro-Logic Theatre, Hall, Live Arena and Studio.

If you'd like to add AC-3 capability, there's the *ED-901* AC-3 decoder, which is designed to work with the *TX-SV828THX* and Onkyo's *TX-SV919THX* receiver. The *ED-901* comes with two input selectors for audio and video sources (S-Video compatible), plus coaxial and optical digital inputs for DVD use. A *D-SUB25* cable is supplied for connection to the receiver. The unit sells for £699.95. If you're a late-night movie watcher and can't play your system loudly enough, the *ED-901* also has a Midnight Theater mode to boost whispers and compress bangs. ☎ (0181) 343 3240

A Castle to Keep



Something to Keep the TV sounding sweet, from Castle.

Castle's first AV speaker is the *Keep* centre channel. Fully shielded and measuring 475mm wide, 170mm tall and 280mm deep, it uses two 130mm, cast-chassis, high-power bass-mid units, with injection moulded diaphragms — similar to those in the *Harlech* — flanking a 25mm polyamide laminated dome tweeter.

The speaker is available in nine real wood veneers. Standard finishes of black, mahogany, cherry, walnut, natural, medium and antique oak cost £249, while rosewood and yew cost £299. The introduction of the *Keep* does not, however, indicate that Castle is planning a wide range of AV models. The company recognised the need for a centre channel speaker to match its existing range but has no plans to add a surround sound model to its line-up.

Also new is the *Eden*, a stand-mount, reflex loaded two-way. Its 25mm MDF cabinet measures 500mm tall, 240mm wide and 300mm deep, and contains similar components to the recently introduced *Avon* model. These include a bass-mid driver with a carbon fibre cone and the company's new polyamide-laminated, horn-loaded 25mm dome tweeter. A tightly specified, bi-wireable crossover completes the picture. A standard finish *Eden* sells for £449 while a deluxe finished example — rosewood or yew — costs £529. ☎ (01756) 795333

Tube Icons

Vintage Radio Restoration has introduced a new range of midi-sized valve amplifiers called *Ikons*. The roster includes a line-level preamplifier, a phono and line-level preamplifier, and two class A monoblok, SE power amplifiers — one pentode, the other triode connected.

All the units share the same compact case and are hard-wired throughout with silver-plated PTFE wire. They also feature high quality components including gold-plated connectors, polypropylene signal capacitors and Alps pots. The pentode power amplifier uses 5881 valves giving 10W output, while the triode design uses EL34s for 5W output. Both have fully regulated power supplies.

Prices start at £1,645 for the line-level pre-amplifier and a pair of either type of power amplifiers. A built-in phono stage is £200 extra. ☎ (01903) 501158



In brief

The *D-M03* is yet another classy looking compact system from Denon. The champagne gold micro costs £499.99 and comes with a one-bit, front-loading CD player, RDS radio, auto-reverse Dolby B cassette, a 20W per channel amplifier, full remote control and two-way speakers. ☎ (01753) 888447

The *PA100* is a new power amplifier that forms part of a revised range of products from Aura. Available in black (£699) or chrome (£749) finishes, the slim-line, MOSFET design offers 100W per channel or can be bridged to deliver 250W mono. ☎ (01903) 207133

Acoustic Energy's £149.95 *AE107C* centre-channel design is designed to be used above or below a TV. This two-way, ported speaker features magnetically shielded 110mm mid-bass and 25mm HF units. Bi-wire connections are fitted into the low resonance, black finished enclosure, which uses 18mm MDF throughout its construction. ☎ (01285) 654432

ATC has a new, no-compromise power amplifier said to release the full potential of its passive loudspeakers. The *SPA2-150* uses a novel topology designed by the company's technical director, Tim Isaac, based on grounded-source FETs in the output stage. This enables the amplifier to deliver over 200 Watts while keeping distortion components 95dB below the signal level. Also new is an upgraded version of the *SCM20* loudspeaker designated the *SCM20sl*, the suffix reflecting its incorporation of *Super Linear* magnetic material. This development aims to counter the efficiency loss caused by eddy currents circulating in the pole piece and front plate of drive units. ☎ (01285) 760561

Ixos *607* low-profile loudspeaker cable represents a new concept in cable versatility, says distributor, the Path Group. It contains two OFC conductors, each of which has 192 strands of pliable 0.1mm wire. One side of the sheath is covered in adhesive protected by a backing tape, which can be removed when you want to stick the cable to a nook or cranny in your living room. It costs £1.95 per metre. ☎ (01494) 459981

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Ramada they come...

Jason Kennedy took his Box Brownie and notepad to September's Heathrow Hi-Fi Show. Here's his report!

This year's 'Hi-Fi Show 96' (hosted as ever by *Hi-Fi News & Record Review* at the Ramada Hotel, Heathrow) was a busy and positive occasion. The exhibitors, consisting largely of small hi-fi companies, seemed much happier than they have been in recent years. There is a clear belief that things are on the up, which must mean that export markets are beginning to buzz.

There were simply loads of new products on display and in action, so it's hard to know where to start. I guess amplifiers are as good a jumping-off point as any, and as you'd expect, there was a healthy showing on the valve-amp front. **GATE** is a British manufacturer of push-pull triode and pentode monoblocks with a matching preamp. Its 300B-equipped **TR201As** cost £2,820 a pair. The longer-established outfit **Tube Technology** unveiled the **Affinity** range of fully-encased amps, which includes both pentode and triode-coupled designs with prices starting at £1,050 for the **S-18** power amp, or £1,240 for the **S-18i** integrated.

Marantz was having fun with its **Model 7** and **9** retro designs, playing them with a **Garrard 401/SME mkIII** and **Tannoy Red Monitor** speakers to create a definitive 1960s high-end system. More up to date was the **Arion Nereus** 300B SE integrated model, at under £2,000 with a nice stone facia. **Audio Note's** substantial **Ankoru** is a parallel-845-triode, single-ended monoblock

built over here in the Japanese style. It costs a cool £14,500. **PSC** is bringing in the **American Audioprism** range of beautifully-made tube designs: the **Mantissa** pre and **Debut** power amps come in at under £4,000 for the pair.

There was plenty of action on the transistor front as well, with **DPA** introducing its **Enlightenment** pre/power at £1,690 and the range topping **DSP5000S** combo at £5,000. The latter is the culmination of eight years' R&D and incorporates a Cubed Class A output stage.

Chord Electronics has reduced the price of entry to its extensive range with the **CPA 1800** (£1,730) and **CPA 2200** (£2,290) preamps, plus the **SPM 400** (£1,290) and **SPM 600** (£1,680) power amps, which incorporate balanced connections and dual-die mosFETs. **Copland** also has dropped into the realm of affordability with the **CSA 8** solid state integrated, a 60W creation based on the **CSA 14**.

Shearne Audio has broken the £500 barrier with the **2.5** integrated at £498: casework is less lavish than usual and output down to 45W, but sound quality is said to be as good as ever.

ATC now has the £2,500

- ① Cadence Arca, Indian electrostatic.
- ② Retro fun: Marantz Model 9, Tannoy Red.
- ③ Full size Grande Utopia from JM Lab.
- ④ PT's Integral amp and Numeral CDP.
- ⑤ Tryactiv's mould breaking 321S.



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◀ **SPA2-150** power amp to match its **SCA2** pre, and Electrocompaniet has introduced a sub-£1,000 integrated, the **ECI-2**, alongside new pre/power amps and a speaker.

New source components were mostly of the digital variety but a couple of turntables appeared, including a **Systemdek 1 960** with acrylic platter and Moth arm for £500, and the **Audio Note TT1**, a suspended design based on the Systemdek **1IX900**, with another **Moth** arm and a range of **Goldring** built cartridges called **IQ**. At the unequivocally heavyweight end of the scale **Nottingham Analogue** had the extraordinary **Anna Log** at £5,500. Built from cast iron and alloy it's claimed to have a 40kg platter!

The CD player market saw the arrival of no less than two new players from **Pink Triangle**, the £999 **Numeral** and the £2,099 **Litoral**, the latter incorporating technology from the *Da Capo* DAC. French source specialist **Audiomeca** introduced the **Talisman** CD transport or player (£1,850/£2,150) and something called the **Tube Extension** (£899) which appears to function like the **Musical Fidelity X10-D** and sits between player or DAC and amplifier.

Passive preamp specialist **Audio Synthesis** showed the Sony-**XA3ES**-based **Transcend** transport (£1,395) and **Heybrook** unveiled the latest addition to the **Signature** range, an £898 CD player with real wood veneer.

Alchemist also joined the digital ranks with two players: the £579 **Nexus** and £2,000 **Forsetti**. Meanwhile tube specialist **Alema**, of **Silver Night** fame, introduced a Guy 'Voyd' Adams-designed CD player (£4,250) under the somewhat confusing **DAC** brand.

New loudspeakers were all around. **Rogers** launched its stylish new baby, the **db101** (£399), in a variety of tasty finishes, alongside a more audiophile-oriented, carbon-fibre-tweetered range called **Avanti**; prices start at £533 for the **C6/20** bookshelf. At the other end of the scale **Cadence** tops its range with the **Arca** (£14,500) electrostatic/dynamic hybrid, and France's **JM Lab** competed for 'biggest speaker of the show' awards with the **Grande Utopia**, which stands 1.75m tall and weighs 180kg. Not quite so big but hardly diminutive was the **Bravura Virtuoso** (£2,995), a folded horn with 104dB sensitivity and a single Lowther **PM6C** drive unit. **Woodson**, an Italian company new to these shores, made some good noises with the balsa-wood drive units in its flagship **Orchestra** design. And some interesting new technology came to the fore in the **Carrington 5** (£2,000) from **Aeon Acoustics**, which has 'tubular starform' cones and a form of ABR unit that is claimed to boost sensitivity by eight dB. **Keswick Audio** showed the range-topping **Zero 2** (£6,000), a high-tech creation that bares a passing resemblance to the Wilson-

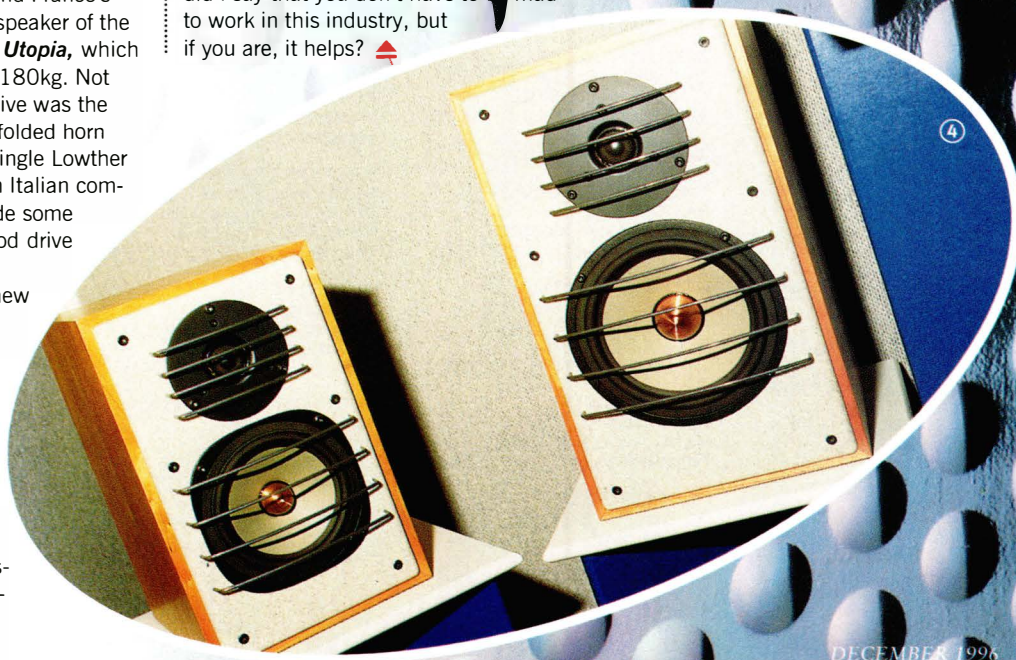
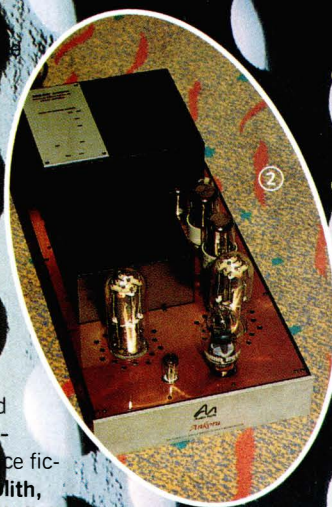
benesch **ACT One** but is about the size. **Ruark** had a couple of newbies, the £559 **Templar** and £799 **Prologue One**, the latter built to match the *Dialogue* centre channel speaker. Max Townshend was having fun with the tweeter of the **Credo Plasma**, a £5,353 offering that avoids ozone-inducing problems of earlier plasma-type units. He also showed the extraordinary **Seism Sink** multi-tier stand (£1,000).

Newcomer **Tryactiv** outwitted most of us with the **321S**, a multi-sphere design straight out of science fiction; while another freshman, **Neolith**, demonstrated the potential of the **Infinite Variable Transmission Line** and the **Infinite Tuned Array** in Corian-encased cabinets, priced at £2,999 and above. **Impulse** had a neat little floorstander called the **Maya** (£995) and **Heybrook** brought along a new bookshelf design called **Heylios** at £339.

Interesting demos included **Mana Acoustics'** wall of sound and light, its new ATC active speakers adding considerably to an already well-stocked arsenal of audio firepower. In another room Mana had the superb system offered as a prize in our October issue, and to prove how much of a difference their stands make, they kept levels cranked up throughout the show. Nothing less than 11 is loud enough for those boys.

Pioneer had prototype DVD audio discs 24-bit, 96kHz quality, singing through their **Exclusive** horn speakers and taking turns with a stereo demonstration featuring a pre-production **Precision** CD player, the **A-300R Precision** amp and prototype **Acoustic Precision** speakers. Three-dimensional sound for around £1,300 all in.

'Most bizarre product of the show' award goes to **Nottingham Analogue** for the **Peta** digital to analog converter, which comprises a rotating array of CDs forming a turntable — did I say that you don't have to be mad to work in this industry, but if you are, it helps? ▲



- ① Tube Technology Affinity integrated.
- ② Audio Note Ankoru SE monoblok.
- ③ Keswick Audio's Zero 2 speaker.
- ④ Corian-faced prototypes from Systemdek.



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TDL RTL3 (revised)

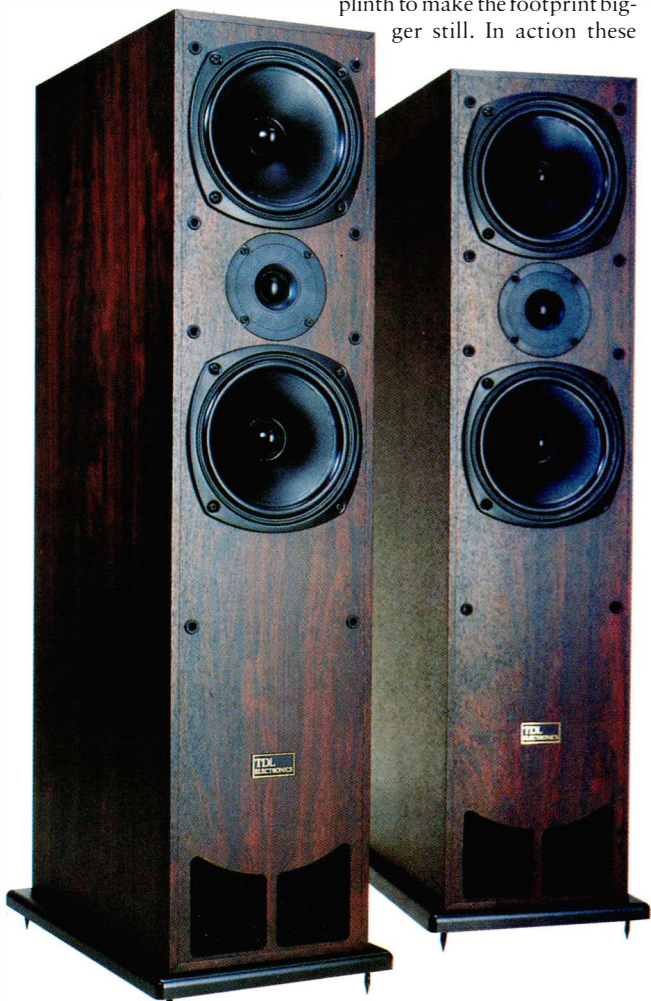
The updated RTL3 still sounds like great value, marrying good bass with an attractive, up-front midband.

£399

TDL's RTL 2 and 3 have proved themselves popular floorstanders since their inception, but the company is not resting on its laurels, and has recently made revisions to both. To the larger RTL3 considered here, changes have included a new tweeter, various upgraded components, and increased efficiency.

The RTL3 is a hefty loudspeaker for the money, measuring a decent 20 by 90 by 37cm, but with a spikeable plinth to make the footprint bigger still. In action these

TDL's updated RTL3: the bigger box with the brighter midband!



Sony MDS-JE500: MiniDiscin' magic

speakers have the bass extension that you'd expect, but trade midrange smoothness for a lively, in-yr-face balance that doesn't suit all material. With the Pioneer A-300R Precision amp they managed to 'disappear' quite effectively, while with Myryad's M1120 integrated, they shifted air in energetic fashion. Compared to GLL IC120 floorstanders, the TDLs were more relaxed but less precise.

The new RTL3 seems like good value, and when it comes to compete with its peers behind the curtain in our next blind test, I suspect its enthusiasm will be no hindrance. **IK**

TDL Electronics Ltd ☎ 01628 850111

Sony MDS-JE500

The latest MiniDisc offering is this neat machine, which offers features and decent sound in generous measure.

£299

Everyone assumes that the MiniDisc (MD) bandwagon stopped rolling when Philips' DCC ran out of steam, but in fact, MD never went away. Now, with sales trends outperforming those of CD in its launch period, this is the second new MD recorder we've reviewed in as many months. Both Sharp and Sony are once more attempting to capture European and US markets with this neat medium.

The MDS-JE500 is a full-width recording machine with a plethora of features and one of the largest remote handsets I've seen in a while. The latter has 25 track-entry buttons which

double as alphabetical keys for naming discs and tracks, making this process quicker than usual. Other novelties include Smart Space, which reduces blocks of silence over four seconds long to three seconds' playback, and Time Machine Recording, which retains the last two seconds of incoming signal in a RAM reservoir. If you're recording off-air and press 'record' too late, the preceding two seconds will still be in the can.

Sony sent along a 20-bit WBS (Wide Bit Stream) demo disc with this machine, which I duly played. The result was not what I expected, being quite relaxed and clean sounding, but distinctly rolled-off, and almost devoid of treble. This turned out to be a property of the disc rather than the player; older commercial software had adequate bandwidth and pretty good sound quality.

Recording through the optical digital input was straightforward and sonically rewarding. The only drawbacks were limited ambience and a decrease in the sense of naturalness. The Sony quite readily revealed differences in recordings made on the Sharp MD-MS100 I tried last month.

As the JE500's extensive manual spells out, this unit has editing and recording facilities worthy of a professional home-recording suite. If you own an MD personal or in-car unit, the MDS-JE-500 is a must-buy. If not, this could be the product that makes MiniDisc start to happen for you. **IK**
Sony National Ops Centre ☎ (0181) 784 1144



Trichord Revelation

We've heard the Clock 2 tweak and the Genesis CD. Now Trichord brings all its experience to bear in this new player.

£799

Trichord is one of the more innovative small companies in this industry. It brought you the *Clock 2* CD player modification a couple of years back, and this year it came up with its version of a Pioneer *PD-SS05*, the *Genesis*. At £549 this is becoming the key player in the price range. But Trichord has more — like the new *Revelation* player/transport at £799. This incorporates the company's *Clock 2*, power supply and analogue output stage found in the *Genesis*, alongside a new digital output board and power supply, plus isolation of the display circuitry (see also *The Jimmy Hughes Experience*, page 25).

Functionally, *Genesis* is still a relatively inexpensive Pioneer, thus offers a wide range of features to play with, and a volume-controlled headphone output to boot — more than you'll find on some high-end players! A matt-grey re-spray ensures it looks subtly 'different'.

When it comes to sound, *Revelation* is a wolf in sheep's clothing. I expected it to be good — I've been using a *Genesis* for six months — but I didn't expect it to make that fine player sound almost crude. Swap from *Genesis* to *Revelation* and the increase in resolution of detail, ambience, decay, spatial information and atmosphere is staggering. This thing stops and starts precisely and effortlessly, reproduces dynamics with remarkable subtlety, and gives full-scale three-D imaging with razor focus but no glare or brightness.

It is equally effective as a transport, where its speed and power make for chalk-and-cheese differences between software. Phase effects become as clear as day, and instruments appear out of sounds. If you only want a transport I'd suggest you hang on for the Trichord *Digital Turntable*, but if you want a great

player that can cut it with some of the best transports on the market, this machine's for you.

I'm sure there must be better players on the market but I'm also sure you'd have to pay a lot more than £800 for them. ❧

Trichord Research Ltd ☎ (01684) 573524

Neat Petite II

The cult favourite has been re-styled, and its new tweeter yields great advances in the portrayal of rhythms.

£745 black, £795 cherry

The original Neat *Petite* carved out a nice little niche as a bookshelf speaker for the rhythm'n'timing brigade. In many ways it was a spiritual heir to the smaller *Linn Kan*. However the Neat never looked like a £500-plus loudspeaker; you had to listen to understand its cult status. Things have changed in the *Petite II*. Now there's a Tonagen EMIT tweeter in place of the original Audax, which has shifted the cross-over point up to seven kHz, well out of harm's way.

A ribbon tweeter like the EMIT has the

advantage of being a line source, which is usually cleaner-sounding than a dome, but carries the penalty of lower efficiency. The

Petite, now rated at 86dB/W, has never been very efficient, but has offered bass extension in lieu of sensitivity.

This means you need decent amplification to begin to appreciate what the *Petite II* can do, and I wouldn't recommend you stick these on the end of any old £200 amp.

For amplification I used a bridged Myryad *M1120/MA120* combo, and the Pioneer *A-300R Precision* — the *Petite II* did well with both. With the powerful Myryads they showed muscle and credible bass extension, but got rather fierce when driven hard. In this situation some pundits censure amplification; others applaud raw energy and praise liveliness. Personally, I preferred the superb timing and subtle phrasing they reproduced with the Pioneer, which didn't have the grunt to drive them loud, but removed the need to do so by putting on a dynamic full scale performance at lower levels.

These results were achieved with the rather tasty Slate Audio stands supplied for the review, but bearing in mind their high price I substituted some Targets. These took the edge off the rhythms, but made for more comfortable high-level listening.

The *Petite II* is a worthy improvement — now we must hear how it performs with Neat's new *Gravitas* sub-woofers-cum-stands! ❧

Neat Acoustics ☎
(01833) 031021

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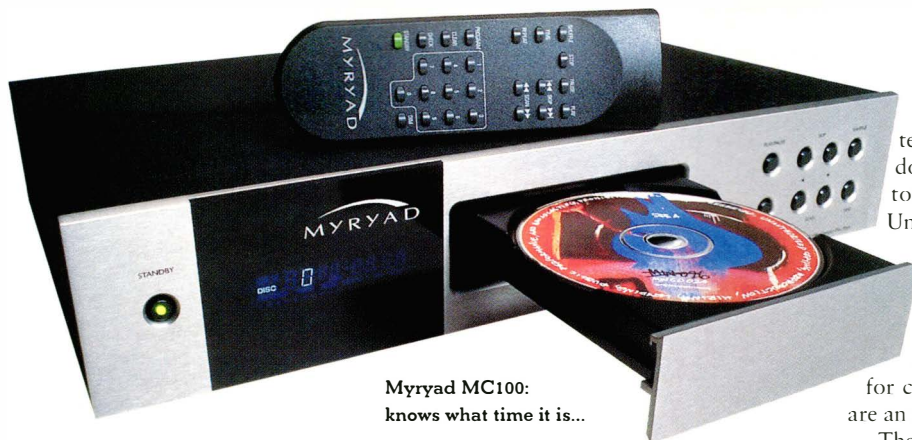
The Faraday ring may look insignificant. But it's this tiny component that gives the A Series its huge dynamic range.

By counteracting rising impedance in the voice coil, it allows more power into the tweeter. And with more power going in, you get more power out.

Even the highest frequencies sing out loud and clear, making the A Series the ideal speakers for the faithful reproduction of today's digital music and film recordings.

The Faraday ring is just one of many small, but vitally important components that make the new A Series so special. And there's only one place good enough for it. The beautiful box we put it in.





Myriad MC100:
knows what time it is...

Myriad MC100

Myriad's latest addition is an attractive CD player with a fine sense of timing. This one's ideal for rock fans!

£699.95

Débutant Myriad has quickly established itself as a purveyor of flexible, good-looking products. It comes as no surprise to find that in the wake of the *M1120* integrated and *MA120* power amps, the latest Myriad is a £700 CD player, the *MC100*. Styled to match the rest of the range and equipped with My-Link sockets for remote control, the *MC100* is a chunky affair with metal cones instead of rubber feet.

There's little else to say other than that build quality is exemplary, and the usual coaxial phono sockets exist for analogue and digital outputs. One niggle is the transport logic's assumption that you don't want to play a selected track until you press play — I thought that went out with the ark.

I was encouraged to use the company's amps while listening to the *MC100*, in which guise I detect a Naim-like philosophy emphasising bass power and timing. However I preferred the results achieved with the Pioneer *A-300R Precision*, whose more relaxed balance complemented the Myriad's get up and go.

The more I used this player the more I liked it. It is very much in the style of players from Naim and Orelle with a fine sense of timing suiting rock material, and it stays in control under fire — it's not fazed by high levels or complex material. Next to Trichord's *Genesis* (£549) it's a touch uncivilised, and outclassed for imaging, but alongside the less expensive but credible Cambridge *CD6*, it's much more substantial.

The Myriad *MC100* is distinctive in both appearance and sound quality. I enjoyed its ability to play discs with gusto, yet without harshness. In my books this is the finest Myriad so far. *JK*

Myriad Systems Ltd ☎ (01705) 265508

Stands Unique Sound Tower

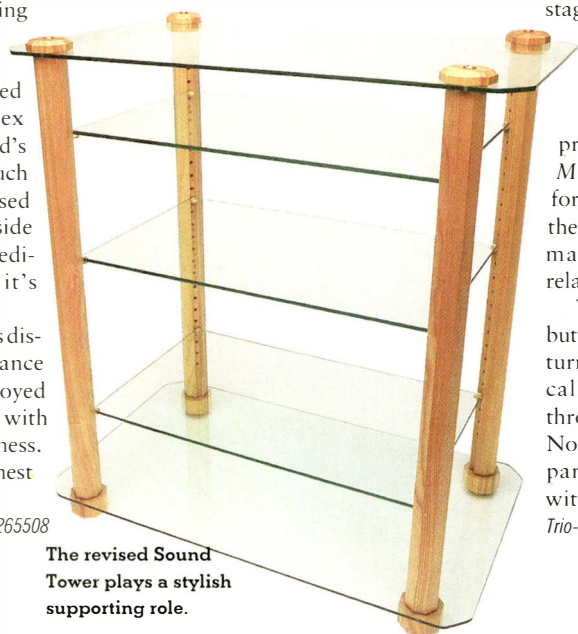
This new version of the Sound Tower is more solid than before. Carbon-fibre isolators add a touch of high-tech!

£269

When we printed our review of equipment tables in issue 151, we were forced to draw unfavourable conclusions about the the £269 Stands Unique *Sound Tower*. After publication we discovered that our review sample was not in the first flush of youth, so on learning that it had been revised, we detected an ideal opportunity to look afresh at this product.

The latest versions have stronger bracing for the wooden uprights and separate floor-spikes. An ingenious feature minimises ringing in the glass shelves: each one rests on three plastic lugs and one carbon-fibre lug (all adjustable), which results in better sound than when all lugs are made of the same material. What's more, *Sound Tower* is easier to put back in its box (for transport) than before.

This is still not the most rigid structure (a ten-mm glass variant will be more rigid than the six-mm glass used here) but the sound is fresh, forward and bright, yet far less natural, say, than a five-tier Mana table. Also, *Sound Tower* tends to make the bass drag behind. However, the dynamic range and detailing I heard were bet-



The revised Sound Tower plays a stylish supporting role.

ter than expected. Also while doing this review, I had a chance to experiment with Stands Unique's carbon-fibre isolators and ten-mm glass on top of the support. With each successive set of isolators and glass, the sound changed noticeably. As a replacement for conventional feet the isolators are an inexpensive improvement.

The *Sound Tower* is an attractive option for those who want to wrap their hi-fi in real wood! *AS*

Stands Unique ☎ (01933) 461058



Kenwood KA-7090R

This chunky Japanese amp has high tech transistors and remote control, but will it work well in your system?

£399

Kenwood KA-7090R: a lively remote-controlled performer.

At first glance this appears to be just another chunky Japanese amp. However the Kenwood *KA-7090R* has an acronymical claim to novelty (if not fame) in the form of TRAIT-R, which stands for Thermal Reactive Advance Instantaneous Transistor. In practice, claims Kenwood, this means four-leg output transistors with built-in thermal sensors, all in the name of maintaining an optimum operating temperature. Most transistors are regulated by a sensor separate from the output device, which is thus slower to react.

That's the technological angle; in practice the *KA-7090R* is a 100-Watt, remote-control integrated amp with six line inputs and MM/MC phono stages. A fold-down flap reveals tone and balance controls, plus a 'source direct' tone-defeat button which I used in this review.

Finding sympathetic ancillaries proved a little tricky. The Myriad *MC100* CD player was too gung-ho for the Kenwood's energetic balance, the Cambridge *CD6* was a good match, but something still more relaxed would probably be better.

The *KA-7090R* is long on grunt but short on finesse. Lively recordings turned out less spatially and musically coherent than when played through a Pioneer *A-300R Precision*. Nonetheless, the Kenwood sounded particularly clean when partnered with Kenwood's own ancillaries. *JK*

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Farad's NXT Step

Imagine being able to hear the same hi-fi sound quality anywhere in a room. **Alvin Gold** reveals revolutionary new technology from the people who brought you Mission loudspeakers.

There is nothing new in loudspeakers. Every kind of speaker you're familiar with — including exotic electrostatic panels, ribbons, piezo-electric devices, even plasma drivers — has been exploited for decades. There have been vast improvements in our ability to model speaker behaviour and use new materials, fabrication techniques and adhesives, but the physics of sound reproduction has stagnated.

Until now. Verity plc (the holding company of Mission, Quad, Wharfedale et al) has just announced the launch of a new loudspeaker technology: *nxt*.

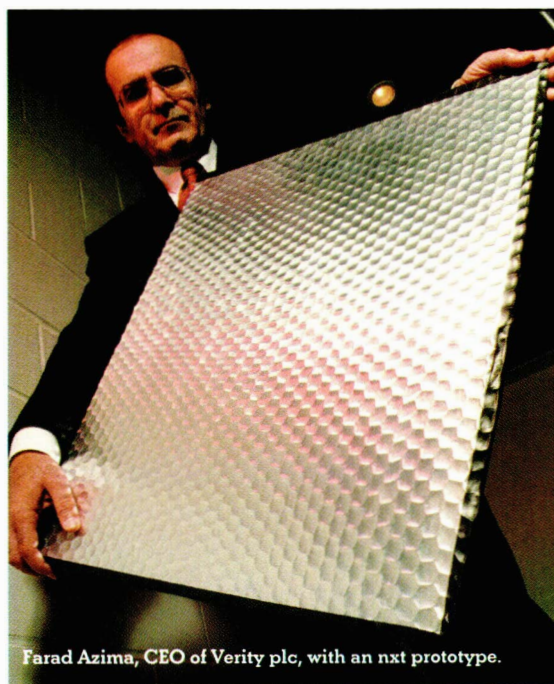
How *nxt* works

Most practical speakers use a variation of the piston driver, in which an electrical motor drives a cone or dome, pushing and pulling air. In a panel speaker, the motor spreads out over the surface, but the effect is the same, and control over the panel, cone or dome is absolutely central to all drive units.

nxt is a flat-panel technology in which the panel is activated from a single point, using a moving-coil, piezo-electric or other type of motor. In principle it doesn't matter which one is deployed: rather than driving the panel pistonically, *nxt* drive maximises the resonant behaviour of the panel, for example by choosing a suitable panel material, and deciding where to place the drive element.

The fundamental idea is that adjacent points on the panel surface move randomly with respect to each other. At first sight, this seems counter-intuitive: doesn't all this random movement sum to zero? It turns out — and this is the great intellectual leap in *nxt* — that this is not the case. A laser, like a standard drive unit, produces output waves that are coherent; a tungsten light-bulb, like *nxt*, radiates randomly and incoherently in all directions; yet both tungsten and laser produce light you can read by.

The consequences are profound. Because the driver doesn't move fore and aft like a piston, the back of the panel is in step with the front, which means *nxt* is bipolar rather than dipolar in operation. The dipolar nature of traditional drivers requires an enclosure to pre-



Farad Azima, CEO of Verity plc, with an *nxt* prototype.

vent air rushing around the sides to equalise the pressure, reducing bass output to almost zero. This problem is solved in open panel speakers by making the panel larger, but there is an inevitable consequence of a sharp waveform cancellation and addition pattern, resulting when the back radiation bounces off walls and interacts with the direct radiation. This causes an uneven comb-filter response that varies sharply if the listening position changes. Typically, *nxt* produces a frequency response that is almost constant as the listener moves around the room, and a sound level that diminishes linearly with distance, not according to the inverse-square law. This means that the speaker sounds almost as loud at the far end of the room as it does close up.



nxt technology makes light work of "in-wall" speakers.

What's in an *nxt* speaker?

An *nxt* speaker can be a lightweight panel weighing no more than a ceiling tile. Indeed, at the press launch for *nxt*, Mission demonstrated a prototype tile speaker complete with fire retardant properties. In principle there is no need for any kind of structure around the panel. It should even be possible to make *nxt* car speakers out of parcel shelves or dashboards, as long as they possess suitable physical properties.

Although the anechoic sensitivity of *nxt* panels is a few decibels below conventional levels (about 86dBW), the effective in-room sensitivity at normal distances is comparable to that of standard speakers, and electrical impedance is largely resistive, easing the amplifier's task. The panel surface moves only microns, obviating nearly all distortions related to displacement and magnetic non-linearity. Also, limited excursion almost eliminates back-EMF, making the amp's load even lighter.

In future it should be possible to place *nxt* panels against a wall, at the cost of some sensitivity. It should even be possible to design curved and solid shapes of arbitrary complexity as *nxt* loudspeakers. All this, yet manufacturing costs are intrinsically low.

To prove it works, Mission demonstrated a pair of large audiophile speakers, a centre speaker which doubles up as a TV projection screen, and panels at the back of a large room. In concert with a Mission 75S sub-woofer, these gave good quality in both stereo and Pro-Logic modes, with no beaming but plenty of detail — a tonally neutral, transparent and altogether unboxy sound.

Nxt we take Las Vegas

If *nxt* lives up to its promises, it heralds a cataclysmic revolution in loudspeaker design, likely to send existing brands scuttling to protect their present hegemony, and entice new names into the industry in a big way. The first Mission model is scheduled for launch at the January CES in Las Vegas, but the main thrust of the programme is to license the technology to third parties, principally car, aircraft and computer manufacturers. Remember where you read it first! ▲

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Ear Waxings

It's not all cakes and ale in hi-fi! **Jason Kennedy** explains the delicate balance that reviewers' systems must strike, between personal pleasure and professional independence.

Some people think it's a piece of cake to be a hi-fi reviewer. How wrong they are. Be thankful, those of you who can just go out and buy a system. You have nothing more arduous ahead than setting it up and settling down to enjoy your music. Once in a while you may be tempted to do a little upgrading or tweaking, and gradually the quality of your rig will improve. Your ability to judge hi-fi sound quality will improve as your system improves, just as you will be able to judge other systems in relation to your own.

The perils of reviewing

Unlike enthusiasts, reviewers must grapple constantly with a wide variety of products. Each sample has a unique philosophy and price, so the challenge is always to find a sympathetic context for everything tested. As a reviewer's system rarely stands still for long, the best-case scenario is that only one thing changes at a time, and that new components don't prove so much better than existing ones that they should take their place.

You might see the logic in a reviewer pledging allegiance to one particular philosophy, but in practice this is almost impossible. Get pigeonholed in this way, Mr Hi-Fi Guru, and you'll find your access to certain 'contrasting' products curtailed. Non-aligned brands will assume that you won't give their kit a fair chance.

My idea of professional Utopia would be enough space and equipment to keep at least two systems set up at all times. One could be developed gradually, the other could be assembled for each review to suit the particular component at hand. However, to construct the first system is an impractical and expensive affair. Several times a year there will be something fabulous and 'better-than-all-that's-gone-before'. And even if you could borrow precisely what you wanted for as long as you wanted (which is usually the way us hi-fi-magazine staffers get by), what can you choose that is both satisfying and politically neutral?

Here's an example. Say I chose for myself an all-out tube'n'horn system, like the one featured in *Inspirations* this month (p.54), albeit with commercially-available equipment. That system would excel in certain ways, but would find itself totally at odds with numerous brands of equipment that I wanted to review. Alternatively, at the opposite end of the hi-fi spectrum, there's the philosophy espoused by one of the self-appointed voices of my conscience, Tom Evans, whose "realstereo", phase-linear gear states his case impressively.

There's also a danger of ending up with

risk that by delving too closely into a designer's psyche, you will form too close a relationship with it, and thereby compromise essential impartiality.

And then there's the inevitable barrier between all of us and the holy grail of total fidelity. On the one hand most hi-fi components are remarkably good at their job, and represent tremendous value. On the other hand, no system seems able to fool you into thinking you're hearing 'the real thing'. This is largely due to limitations of the formats we use, LP and CD. However, the results I have achieved with arcane and obscure hi-fi sys-



a hi-fi rig that plays David to all review-sample Goliaths which come to challenge it. In that situation I would come to be considered an unduly harsh critic for saying that everything sucks by comparison.

Context is everything

This brings us back to context. I would hope that most hi-fi components are designed to give the best-possible sound within the constraints of imposed development budgets. A reviewer can fully appreciate products on test by engaging in considerable communication with their creators, but sometimes that takes more time than both designers and reviewers can usually spare. And there is always a

Today, this system; tomorrow, a different one...

tems lead me to fear that there are too few companies striving for higher fidelity at a better price. It is all too easy to trot out product on the basis of pure saleability, but this strategy will never open the public's ears to new modes of musical appreciation. That, more than anything else, is what this industry needs to turn it around.

If hi-fi gear was more like cars, concrete parameters would narrow down opinions. Most people agree what makes a good car, but consensus on the most "accurate" hi-fi equipment is almost unheard of. Still, what would we write about if it was?! ▲

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The Jimmy Hughes Experience

Jimmy Hughes has taken a leaf from New Labour's book. Now it's okay to like early digital recordings!

James Lock, the veteran Decca recording engineer, is a brave soul. Interviewed in the September 1996 edition of *Gramophone* magazine, he concedes the moral high ground to those who criticised the harshness and lack of musicality demonstrated by early digital recordings. The subject is still controversial: most pundits now accept that the best digital can be very good, but back when this technology was still new, to prefer analogue was to be branded an audio Luddite. As time went by, digital got better, and its problems gained wider understanding. Time has thus vindicated the views of the initial dissenters.

Bless me, father

I have a confession of my own. I no longer find all early digital recordings unacceptable. Indeed, some that I once heartily disliked, now sound rather good. This change of stance derives as much from improvements in my hi-fi system over the past 15 years, as it does from advances in digital recording and CD mastering.

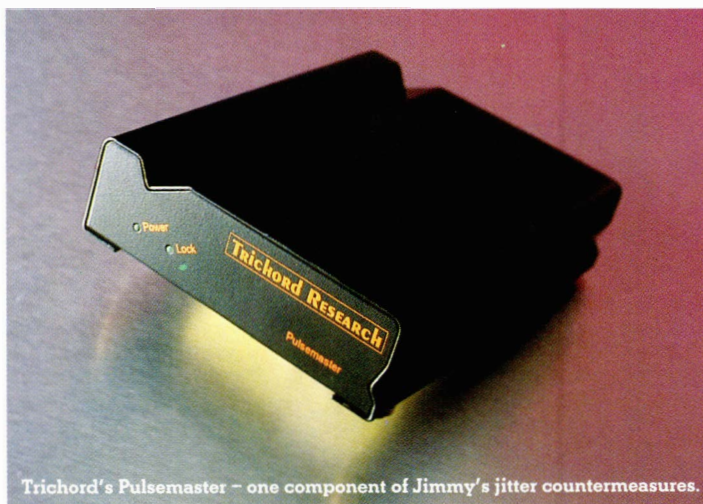
Currently I have a Trichord-modified Pioneer PD-75 with *Clock Two* and the *Digital Output Board*, each one fed by its own dedicated Trichord power supply. In the early '80s, few of us had discovered jitter or realised how seriously its presence could affect sound quality. Jitter adds a false brightness or harshness, making music sound edgy and congested, and destroying any sense of ambient spaciousness preserved from a recording venue. It makes musical timing sound smeared, robbing music of its rhythm.

One box or two, vicar?

Has it ever occurred to you that the vast majority of Japanese hi-fi companies do not make outboard DACs? Most stick to one-box CD players, and I am sure that this is principally because of the increased jitter problems that must be overcome when CD transport and DAC are separated. In my system, I use the PD-75 as a transport, hooked up to an external Cambridge Audio DAC, but I am only too aware how much I rely on

Trichord's £349 *Pulemaster* "de-jittering box", which sanitises dirty digital signals most effectively.

This unit has been modified recently, because Trichord discovered that by using two crystal oscillators, they were creating slight internal jitter. I had the chance to compare old with new, and I was surprised to find I preferred the original at first! The new *Pulemaster* sounded smoother and less 'busy', but not as dramatic as the original, which seemed superficially more exciting



Trichord's Pulemaster - one component of Jimmy's jitter countermeasures.

and lively. However, on extended audition the new *Pulemaster* reveals a wider range of tonal colours, and more subtle portrayal of dynamics. The sound is sweeter, cleaner and more effortless; indeed, it is more like good analogue reproduction.

I find it intriguing to hear any audible improvement at all, given first that the PD-75 puts out an inherently low-jitter signal, and second that I use Meridian's *S18 Digital Audio Processor* between transport and DAC, which in itself is a de-jittering device. This must suggest that even slight amounts of jitter are audible, and that the problem is very pervasive. Despite measurements indicating that one *Pulemaster* might have lower jitter than the other, each box seems to have its own sonic signature, affecting tonal balance, transient attack, and low-level clarity.

A silent display

Last August I took the PD-75 down to Graham Fowler at Trichord, who was able

to carry out a one-off modification to the player's display. It seems that the ceramic resonators used to drive the display can cause beat frequencies with the digital circuitry's master clock. And this, as I'm sure you've guessed, leads to jitter.

For its own modified players based on Pioneer transports, Trichord has developed an active circuit to drive the display without causing any beating. It isn't easy to fit and won't suit all CD players, but Graham made it work with the PD-75, resulting in a sharper, brighter, but cleaner sound, possessing better transient attack and fine detail. I thought the display was merely a visual indicator, but its circuits are integral to a CD player's operation. Even when track info and numbers are dimmed, the problem-causing components are still active.

With Trichord's mod I can play music at lower volume levels and still get room-filling sound. Climaxes have extra power, while quieter passages retain presence and body, bringing more detail to the fore. When I play at high levels, there is less aggression. Early digital recordings, that once seemed harsh and thin, now sound bright and full-bodied. The essential nature of the recording is not disguised, but instead it is presented as balanced and realistic, even if the sound is not as refined and natural as it would be on a more modern recording.

Digital comes full-circle

In one sense, digital techniques freed recording engineers from the background noise and saturation problems of analogue tape; but I feel digital also proved more circumscriptive, because it could sound nasty and aggressive when asked to reproduce vivid contrasts and extremes. Hence today's return to simpler, more conservative microphone techniques, more as a form of self defence for the ear than ideology.

Digital improvements, both in recording equipment and home hi-fi, are bringing the wheel full circle. Some 15 years or so after it was first advertised, cake 'to have and eat' is starting to appear on the menu. ▲

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Paul Miller's Oasis of Sanity

B&W's CDM1 speaker can operate as either a reflex-loaded or sealed-box system.

Does it offer the best of both worlds? Paul Miller investigates.

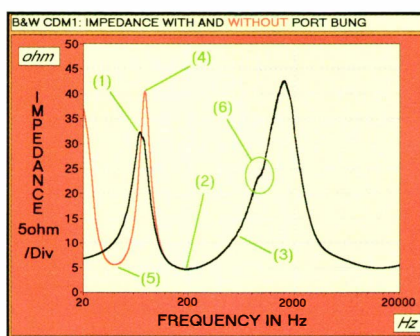
Bearing in mind that this month's issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* carries something of a speaker extravaganza (starting on page 66), I thought I would take the opportunity to look a little more closely at what speaker designers call 'bass loading'.

These days, one of two principal techniques is employed to squeeze as much bass as possible from any given size of cabinet. One is called reflex loading (speakers with a hole disappearing into the baffle or rear face), while the other is known as sealed box or infinite baffle (these, by definition, don't have holes anywhere in the cabinet).

Of course, some speakers attempt to offer the best of both worlds. One of these is the CDM1 from B&W, which, as reviewed in this issue, serves to illustrate the dual bass-loading techniques outlined above. The two techniques are easily distinguished by comparing the speaker's modulus of impedance in its guise as either a sealed box (black trace) or reflex design (red trace) above right.

The speaker itself is conventional enough, employing the same 165mm Kevlar bass/mid unit used in the DM601 (issue 156), together with a free-mounted, 26mm, ferro-fluid-cooled, alloy-dome tweeter. B&W describes its CDM1 as a 'fourth-order vented-box system', a description we'll come to in a moment. There is a foam bung to plug the front-facing port, in situations where nearby rear or side walls, or the vagaries of small rooms, might result in an excessive or boomy bass.

Plugging the port in this fashion imposes a sealed-box bass alignment. In this guise, the trapped air volume within the cabinet provides resistance to the motion of the bass cone at very low frequencies. The stiffness of the cone's suspension, its overall moving mass and the 'springiness' of the captive air, all determine the resonant frequency of the speaker system. This is visible on the impedance plot as a peak at 71Hz (1), below which the speaker's bass response rolls off at a gentle 12dB/octave, known as 'second-order'.



B&W CDM1 as the amplifier sees it.

At this resonant frequency, the impedance of the speaker is almost wholly resistive in nature, falling to a low point of 4.6 Ohms at 200 Hz (2), which corresponds to the DC resistance of the voice-coil. At higher frequencies, the inductance of the voice-coil takes hold, increasing the reactive component of the speaker load and, as a result, the total impedance (3). This trend is entirely typical of a sealed-box speaker design.

Removing the foam bung enables the rear output of the CDM1's bass driver to be launched in phase with the front output of the port. This is known as reflex-loading, and typically leads to two resonances: the driver-in-box resonance (4) and, at a lower frequency, the Helmholtz resonance of the air in the port or tube (5).

In this instance, the Helmholtz or 'tuned'

resonant frequency of the port occurs at 40 Hz. At this point, the tuned action of the port offers such a huge resistance to motion that any output from the driver itself dies away almost completely, leaving the amplifier to 'view' the DC resistance of the speaker's stationary voice-coil (5). Naturally, any bass distortion associated with the driver at this point is markedly reduced when compared to the sealed-box alternative.

Incidentally, you may note that the 5.5 Ohm DC resistance of the voice-coil at the port resonance (5) is slightly higher than the 4.6 Ohm recorded at 200Hz (2) when, in theory, they should be the same. In practice, the difference is due to losses caused by the walls of the speaker cabinet flexing under 'real-life' conditions. The bigger the gap, the weaker the cabinet structure.

Returning to our original theme, reflex-loading may clearly improve the efficiency, and extend the bass cut-off point, of the speaker. Below its tuned frequency, the output from port and driver are in anti-phase, increasing the bass roll-off to a rapid fourth order. All things being equal, this steeper roll-off impairs the speaker's transient performance as ringing increases. The trick here, for the designer at least, is to damp out this ringing while keeping the lower distortion and increased power handling offered by the reflex system.

The broad trend of the impedance curve at resonance (5) reveals that the CDM1 is, indeed, usefully damped through the application of an internal foam lining. This lining minimises any mid-frequency (500Hz-2kHz) standing waves or high-frequency reflections within the port - something that B&W discovered during its development of the *Silver Signature* series.

So there really is more to speakers like the CDM1 than meets the eye. Just remember, it was designed as a reflex-loaded box in the first instance, and sealed-box as an aid to near-wall mounting in closet-sized listening rooms.

Is the CDM1 all things to all systems? Just turn to page 69 for the results of our listening tests and, in the lab test report, a caption for the blip recorded at (6). ▲



CDM1 in the flesh.

Do you have a query for the Oasis? Contact Paul Miller direct via e-mail: 100576.3021@compuserve.com



218 THX stereo power amplifier

worth looking into

The NAD 218 THX stereo power amplifier is one of the most sophisticated hi fi components we have ever produced. Yet for all its brilliant features and astonishing levels of performance, it remains true to the NAD "no nonsense" design philosophy.



The very first feature you'll notice is the weight of the 218 THX, due partly to the heavy construction of the chassis and front panel, designed for rack mounting, (its advanced specification makes the 218 THX ideal for professional studio use). But the increase in weight is largely due to the massive Hölmgren toroidal mains transformer.



WHY SO LARGE AND WHY HÖLMGREN?

Apart from being the ideal design for the huge amounts of power it is likely to handle, the Hölmgren offers other advantages. A conventional transformer can be affected by AC mains to produce hum or even buzzing, whereas a Hölmgren transformer isn't. Plus, a Hölmgren transformer because of its unique design, will not affect other adjacent components.

A feature which doesn't add much to the weight of the 218 THX but certainly adds to the weight of its performance is the bank of eight capacitors, rather than a single pair. This is a comparatively low cost benefit which makes a better power



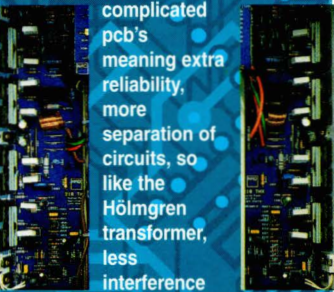
supply because several smaller capacitors have a faster recovery time and have less equivalent series inductance and resistance than a single pair.

The 218 THX incorporates fully balanced XLR inputs, allowing the use of long runs of cable between pre and power stages, without the risk of interference.



This thoughtful yet simple feature offers the opportunity to set your system up more flexibly and of course it's a benefit if you are bridging two 218 THX's for mono and locating them nearer your speakers.

The circuitry includes left and right channel pcb's, offering lots of benefits. They include less complicated pcb's meaning extra reliability, more separation of circuits, so like the Hölmgren transformer, less interference

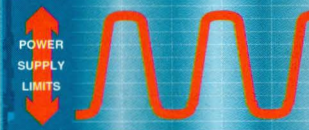


going out or coming in. All this, plus lower build cost too, means more savings again towards the specification of better components.

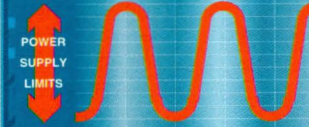
Any amp which is overdriven, (unlikely on the 218 THX because it is so powerful) can produce distortion or 'clipping'. The NAD Soft Clipping circuit gently transforms the

waveform, rounding off the peaks, preventing "dynamic overload" and heading off damage to your ears and your speakers, without losing the sense of musical drama.

Hard Clipping



Soft Clipping



There are other more hidden features too which provide specific benefits. Typically, the 218 THX incorporates extensive non intrusive protection circuitry. This prevents damage from accidental overload or misuse which can lead to overheating or circuit failure.

Finally for those for whom the letters THX are somewhat of a mystery, let us briefly explain.

George Lucas, creator of the 'Star Wars' epics, went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that the sound quality of his films exceeded anything Hollywood had previously produced and he laid down exacting

specifications covering distortion, noise, power etc. to encourage manufacturers to develop products which will reproduce his sound tracks to the standard they deserve.



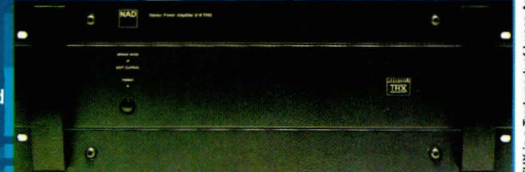
NAD was first with a power amplifier which met these challenging standards and won the right to carry the THX badge. The 218 THX continues this principle of quality first.

So what do you get for your not insubstantial investment at the end of the day?

A thoughtfully designed, utterly reliable, acoustically stunning 2 X 200 watts, bridgeable to a more than you'll ever need 700 watts mono, with more headroom than your window frames will thank you for, which could even change the way you perceive music.

But with all this capability none of it is a fashion statement. The 218 THX is designed, not designer. Every feature of the 218 THX enhances performance and reliability.

That's why our slogan "pure and simple" is as relevant today for equipment as advanced as the 218 THX as it was when NAD was created more than 20 years ago.



THX is a Trademark of Lucas Arts Entertainment Company.

Personal Messages

Paul Messenger seeks speaker solace by contemplating pot plants and horizontal floorstanders . . .

To sit staring at a black curtain, while the same music plays again and again, sounds like torture dreamt up by a Cold War interrogator. In fact, it's the harrowing experience suffered regularly by the panellists who help us 'blind-test' loudspeakers. It only provides some answers about the sound of different speakers, but does focus attention in a controlled and repeatable way.

From the latest tests (p.66 onwards), one observation sticks firmly in mind. The two 'semi-omni' designs tested (Canon S-75 with its 'acoustic mirror', and Castle *Harlech* with its second upward-facing main driver) seemed to fill the far end of the room much more effectively than the dozen or so conventional designs, with all drivers on the front panel.

Don't worry. I'm not going to spend the rest of this column reiterating the well-worn omni-vs-direct arguments. The crux is that when you reduce directionality, or increase omnidirectionality by adding drivers or lenses to distribute sound away from the listener, it reduces the ratio of direct to reflected sound. With an omnidirectional speaker, the room reflections make up a greater part of the total sound you hear, than they do with more conventional speakers.

Even though they've been very successful elsewhere, high-reflectivity, very omnidirectional speakers like the Bose 901, have found the British market tough going. Partly, I suspect, this is because our rooms tend to be smaller than those in the USA. However, Dick Shahinian's recent offerings (*Compass* reviewed in *HFC* 158) have been building him a cult following, filling something of the gap left when the semi-omni Linn *Isobarik* went out of production.

I'm sure the Castle *Harlech* (see page 73) will increase the popularity of the semi-omni approach. It suited my room well, adding spaciousness to a beautifully balanced sound. Critics point to the loss of stereo focus, which is a fair comment. The *Harlech* didn't focus images quite as precisely as the others when

listening close up, but it didn't seem a problem for the panel sitting further away, and the extra room-filling effect was a real bonus.

I casually mentioned this to Joe Akroyd (of Royd), and enquired whether he'd considered top-mounting one of the two main drivers in the excellent little *Doublet*. He had not, mentioning the Pot Plant Factor (PPF) as one objection. It would have to be a pretty tiny pot plant to perch on top of a *Doublet*, I suggested, but took his point.

I hope the PPF doesn't work against the *Harlech* (Castle, of course, has plenty of

ing is overwhelmingly towards a narrow front panel (baffle), which gives wide lateral dispersion. The majority view, which I don't entirely share, is that there are sound acoustic reasons for making the baffle as small as possible, and mounting it clear of walls and floor. The rest of the enclosure is there to hold the baffle in place, and absorb the sound radiation that comes from the back of the main driver cone; in the ported enclosure converting some of it into extra low-frequency output of dubious phase integrity.

The trouble is that the typical enclosure doesn't do a particularly good job. Its internal dimensions form standing waves, which focus the energy and create coloration that comes out through cone and port. Most serious of all is the back panel, which is usually only a few inches behind the main driver and acts as an internal acoustic mirror, reflecting the rearward-cone output straight back through the cone as a delayed (and phase-inverted) distortion. Internal damping helps, but causes its own problems, too.

The simple sealed or reflex-ported box is usually the worst offender. Transmission lines (uncommon) and labyrinths (historic) make serious attempts to 'lose' and absorb the rear radiation, but can be expensive to construct.

The obvious low-cost solution is to make the speaker much deeper than its height or width. This is a bit like turning round a floorstander so that the height becomes the depth, the drivers are mounted where the top used to be, and the whole thing is installed a couple of feet off the floor, with what used to be the base close to the wall. This arrangement would make sense acoustically, by minimising first internal reflections, and keeping the baffle area small, and clear of wall and floor.

No-one, to my knowledge, has tried such a radical shape, presumably because it would look too weird and doesn't fit the stereotype. Ironically, the nearest commercial equivalent is probably B&W's hyper-radical *Nautilus*, yours for £30,000 a pair! ▲



Paul's proposal will turn speakers on their sides!

alternatives for the horticulturally inclined), but this did, in turn, make me wonder whether speaker design is partly determined by the dictates of domestic acceptability.

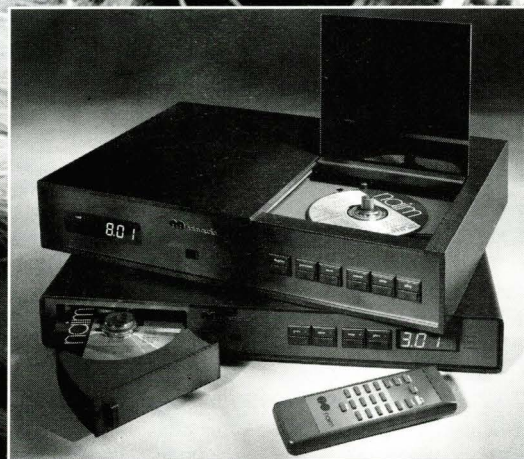
The trend towards compact floorstanders is a prime example. In many cases, these are merely bookshelf-size speakers, with cabinets extended down to the floor so that pretty woodwork replaces stand ironmongery (even though the latter is likely to do a better job).

Then the penny dropped. If form followed function, rather than the dictates of fashion and the so-called 'wife acceptance factor', speakers ought to be a different shape.

There will never be total agreement on the 'right' shape for a speaker, but current think-

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OUR LETTERS PAGE ONCE AGAIN RESOUNDS TO THE CLAMOUR OF INBOUND LEXICOGRAPHICAL DYNAMITE

LETTER OF THE MONTH

The unbearable rightness of testing

What is it with your blind panel reviews? Time after time you present us with supposedly impartial conclusions, delivered from behind the anonymity of a black-out curtain, but I'm not so sure. Having thought long and hard about the implications of your testing techniques, I have the following comments.

First of all, if you conduct a test of, say, 14 CD players in a day, how long does each one get to prove its mettle? Not more than a few minutes, I'll be bound. And surely if you test players one after the other, the panel's opinions on one model are bound to be coloured by its predecessor? The only way to circumvent this would be to introduce a 'control' product between each unit tested. Does this occur? I think we deserve to know.

Another puzzler is the way less expensive models often come out better than their more expensive siblings. A classic example of this occurs in the December 1996 edition, in which the £160 Sony CDP-XE500 CD player [below] rates more highly than the company's £300 CDP-XE900 model. If I was Sony I would be pulling out my hair in frustration!

Roger M. Ellie, Barking, Essex.

Our esteemed reviewers use all their powers of skill and judgment to give each product a fair crack of the whip... - Ed



Pomme de couch

All hi-fi mags are to blame. You may get one in a review of six or eight, but never all of them. What am I talking about? Remote-controlled amps, of course! Please, please let's have regular reviews on just these.

I've used separates for 30 years, but bought my first remote amp in 1980, and found it more relaxing to control volume from the armchair, especially with classical music which has such wide dynamic range.

David C Angove, Camborne, Cornwall.

PS: I know

ordinary amps sound slightly better than remote ones pound for pound, but I'm quite happy with my Yamaha AX-570.

You'll find a couple in Sessions this month and if things keep going the way they are, only the truly esoteric will be sans remote in a few years time. Vive le couch. -JK

Critical combinations

On more than one occasion I have read that when purchasing separate pre and power

amplifiers, it is best to stick to the same manufacturer. It is here that I would suggest otherwise, as different combinations can prove interesting and satisfying alternatives. It came as no surprise when I read your review of the Rotel RC/RB-980BX pre/power combination (HFC 155). To my ears it gave a penetrating and ultimately fatiguing sound — my own experience has revealed that the pre-amp is the culprit. If you discard this and connect a CD player directly into the Rotel power amp, the sound is immediately less aggressive.

Better still by far is to marry the RB980BX power amp with an Audiolab 8000C pre-amp. This combination is a real winner — equally detailed yet warmer and far more engaging than the Rotel pairing, with no hint of fatigue.

I would suggest that when possible you should assess the performance of pre and power amplifiers separately, making use of other partnering equipment as well.

Kevin White, Durban, South Africa.

The cloth-eared brigade

I have just read the review of six cartridges by Malcolm Steward (HFC 158). His references to various ludicrously-named pop groups and bass lines etc convey nothing to me at all.

I would have been very interested to learn how these cartridges coped with the classical repertoire, e.g. the strings of a large orchestra or the choral movement of Beethoven's *Ninth*, etc.

Why is it your magazine only seems to cater for the cloth-eared brigade? If you would cast your net a bit wider you might even improve your

circulation figures.

Incidentally, from Mr Steward's description of his own equipment, I'm thankful I don't live next door to him, or even in the same street!

KG Leigh, Newcastle, Staffs.

Bus business

Discussing the relative merits of interconnects is analogous to discussing the wind resistance of different wing mirrors on a bus. Frankly it would be better to discuss how to improve the aerodynamics of the bus itself.

The same argument can equally be extended to speaker cable. As long as the cable is easily able to carry the current, it would be better to spend the money saved on esoteric cable to acquire better speakers or sources, where there is likely to be real and measurable benefit.

Anna Courtney, Southampton, Hampshire.

Lumme!



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

A Concerted Effort

Alan Sircom judges Jamo's first foray into the world of affordable high-end speakers.

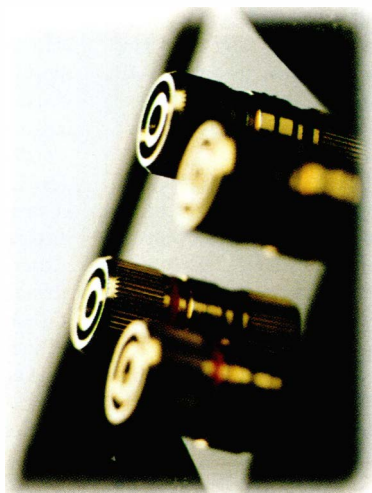
Jamo has not become Europe's largest loudspeaker manufacturer by chance. Only a great deal of intelligent planning and marketing can achieve such continental pre-eminence. Inevitably, sales figures of this magnitude come not from concentrating on niches but by seeing the big picture and serving the whole market. But only the short-sighted or foolish would write off Jamo as purveyors of mere audio trinkets.

In 1992 the company made a statement to set the record straight about hi-fi credibility. That statement was 1.78 metres high, weighed 72 kilos and carried a £7,000 price-tag. *Oriel* was its name. This giant floor-standing speaker proved that Jamo could make a loudspeaker that hi-fi buffs would talk about. Trouble was, *Oriel* remained mostly a talking point, as its cost and size prohibited all but the most privileged ownership. Nonetheless, *Oriel* set the scene for the *Concert* range unveiled this year.

Concert 8 is the first member of the range to become available, but by the time you read this there will be also a £2,000 floorstander, *Concert 11*, and a £500 shielded home-cinema dialogue unit, *Concert Centre*.

For £1,300, the stand-mounted *Concert 8* is lot of speaker in a small box. The two-way, rear-ported, 25-mm-thick MDF cabinet is wrapped in gorgeous cherry (as shown) or swietenia mahogany veneer, and features Jamo's unique Non Coloration Compound front baffle, which comprises two black plastic shells filled with a composite of quartz sand and resonance-deadening binding agent. The two shells are heat-sealed together to make the whole front baffle very heavy, and as acoustically dead as you can get, even though the surface is quite reflective.

The drive units are equally dis-



Above: the twin inputs for that all important bi-wiring. Below and right: the *Concert 8* stands tall on its stylish cast-iron and extruded-aluminium support column.



tinctive. Both treble and mid/bass units are made specifically for the *Concerts 8* and *11* by SEAS. The treble unit sports a 25-mm, partially horn-loaded cloth dome, coated four times in Sonotex for optimum rigidity and internal damping. This unit is rear-vented, ferrofluid cooled and uses silver wire throughout.

The 165mm mid/bass unit is equally unique. It has a die-cast magnesium chassis and employs a die-cast magnesium cone, chosen for its combination of low mass and high rigidity. A copper phasing plug is included to avoid dust-cap-induced cone break-up. The plug also serves to conduct heat away from the main drive-unit's motor assembly.

The mid-bass drive-unit operates up to 2.5 kHz, at which frequency it integrates with the tweeter through a simple yet effective crossover network. Internal connections are made with flat, low-resistance, oxygen-free-copper cables, whose characteristics are optimised for both mid-bass and treble drivers. Impedance is claimed to remain steady at four Ohms, and sensitivity at a healthy 90dB, rendering the *Concert 8* tailor-made for valve amplifiers with appropriate output tappings. Jamo even supplies an

optional stand: this is an elegant, self-assembly, triangular affair, with a single central pillar that can be sand filled if desired. There is a cable-housing compartment at the rear in which the speaker cables may be hidden neatly.

Many metal-coned speakers have an optimum working temperature, which more or less equates to a warm living room. True to its Scandinavian heritage, the *Concert 8* is relatively insensitive to climatic variation. It is position sensitive, though: to avoid a flood of mid-bass you need to ensure the rear-firing port has plenty of clear air to buffer it from the nearest wall.

Within minutes of playing I discovered two fundamental factors governing the *Concert 8*'s performance. The first, which applies irrespective of valve or solid-state amplification, concerns cabling. These speakers must be bi-wired (or better still, bi-amplified) to give of their best. It is even worth experimenting with a hybrid cable, in which different types of wire are used to hook up the treble and mid-bass terminals.

The second proviso relates to the use of a turntable. Unless your record-spinner is well-damped like a Townshend *Rock III*, prepare to observe the mid/bass cone flapping when the needle hits the groove!

These caveats aside, Jamo *Concert 8* is a perfect house guest. It is charming, cultured, refined, and never makes a mess. In particular, the mid-band is detailed, open and free from the boxiness endemic in loudspeakers with wooden cabinets.

This transparency makes the speaker sound more like a Quad electrostatic than many a box, and equips it superbly to portray every nuance of complex musical mixes. To the unaccustomed listener this can be disconcerting, as both harmonious and deleterious recorded minutiae will be revealed for what they are.



Consequently, your discs may shimmer with new-found subtleties.

This loudspeaker is very dynamic, and thus adept at handling the crescendos of classical music or the Stygian depths of dub-reggae cuts. Turn up the volume and *Concert 8* becomes the ultimate drum-kit speaker. It matches its dynamism with transparency, delineating each stick-hit on every drum and cymbal, thus

preserving attack, decay, sustain and release portions of note envelopes.

In fact, the *Concert 8*'s only limitation is bass, and 'twas ever thus for speakers of this size. Low notes are well controlled and the response plumbs the bottom two octaves, but not sufficiently to embody a physical presence. To be fair, this omission will only dismay those who live for timpani and organ pedals: the *Concert*

8 is no more compromised than, say, a ProAc *Response One 'S'* or Acoustic Energy *AE-1*. It's definitely not designed to play very loud, and bites back when cranked too hard. But its clean, uncompressed sound accommodates continuous programme at much higher levels than most speakers can sustain comfortably, and for that, I commend it highly. ▲

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Highway to Krell

Jason Kennedy thrills to the superlative performance of Krell's most affordable amplifier.

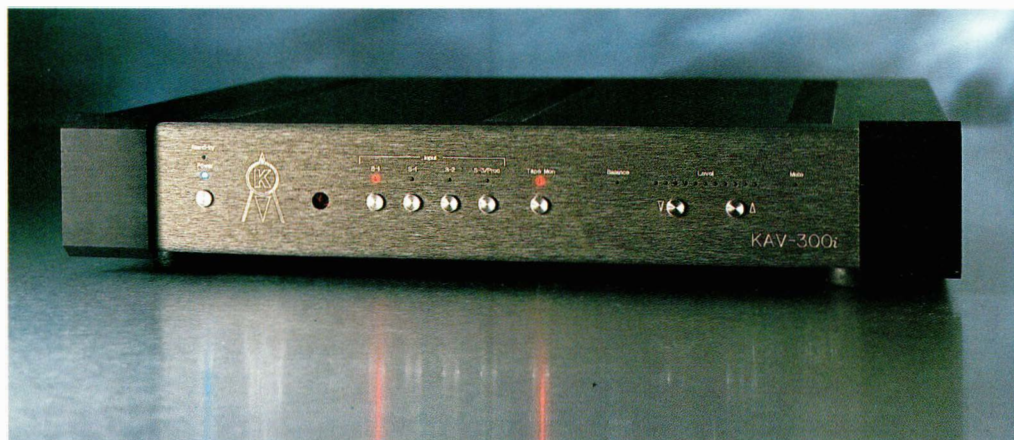
Krell is firmly established in the elite of US high-end companies. Krell proprietor Dan D'Agostino virtually introduced the concept of 'muscle amps' to Europe in the mid 1980s, with the *KA-50* and *KA-100* power amps. Since those heady days of transistor-amp purism, the company has diversified into hi-fi number-crunching with Krell Digital, and more recently, into the home theatre market with Krell Audio Video.

The *KAV-300i* hails from the AV division, yet apparently it is not an AV amplifier. It has no surround-processing circuits and incorporates only two channels of amplification. Rather it is intended for use with a separate processor and as many extra channels of amplification as necessary. Buried on the back panel is the only clue suggesting applications outside pure audio: processor loop sockets.

At one time the idea of an integrated Krell was totally anathema. How could the kings of transistor amplification make something so pedestrian? Times have changed, however, and the *KAV-300i* has won a number of awards, including EISA's European High End Audio Product of the Year (reported in *HFC* 158).

This is no ordinary integrated amp. It costs a cool £2,500, has remote control, balanced inputs and two-channel electronic volume control; and of course, it comes complete with glorious Krell metalwork.

It's not exactly bursting with features, but it does have three regular line inputs, one balanced input, one tape loop, the aforementioned processor facility, and pre-out sockets. The latter make possible a number of



options, including bridging (for extra power) and AV applications. This seems like a rather limited selection of inputs for home cinema pursuits, but I'm sure there's a workaround hiding in the catalogue somewhere.

To audition this fine product I hooked it up to a Voyd turntable with Wilson-benesch *ACT 2* arm and *Carbon* cartridge, equalised and amplified by Michell *Iso HR* and Rega *EOS* phono stages. In the digital domain, Trichord Research *Genesis* and *Pulsar Series One* CD player/DAC did the honours. All interconnects were Audio Note silver. At the business end I connected Wilson-benesch *ACT One* loudspeakers with Electrofluidics speaker cable. A Living Voice mains cable purveyed PowerGen's finest.

This outfit made for some seriously good listening. First I was struck by the *KAV-300i*'s remarkable channel separation and stereo imaging. Even this base model embodies phase linearity! While listening I played a record by an outfit called Photek, which is predominantly synthesised and contains some extreme out-of-phase stuff flying around the room. This exaggerated the effect of the Krell's powerful imagery, but further listening did nothing to diminish the impression, and I ended up wondering how the *KAV-300i* would get on with a pair of Electrofluidics *Sonoliths* — as far as I'm concerned, the ultimate speakers for imagery.

Three-D stereo wasn't the only virtue on display; the Krell's timing, too, was exceptional for an integrated design. It had no trouble unravelling the complex rhythms of a Salif Keita track, and in fact I couldn't find a piece of music that ruffled its assured presentation.

The superlatives kept on coming. The *KAV-300i* handles dynamics with aplomb, tracing subtle variations in level almost like a good single-ended triode valve amp (but that wouldn't kick out 150 Watts). It's sensitive to input level, and responded more enthusiastically to the relatively high output of the Michell *Iso HR* than the *EOS*, while revealing the latter's ability to resolve tonal subtlety.

This brings me to the most crucial test of any hi-fi product: its ability to respond to fine variations in input signals and portray as much of the character of the recording as possible. The Krell passed with aplomb, making it very hard for me to get a handle on any obvious artefacts of its presentation. I'd say overall it's a little dry, and my usual ECA/Roksan pre/power sounds free and open by comparison. Also, this amp favours the recording studio's idea of progress: modern recordings tend to sound better than older ones, even though some of the most soulful cuts are vintage ones.

Having heard this amp, I'm glad EISA's judges gave it a round of pan-European applause. Krell deserves it. *Absolute Sounds* ☎ (0181) 947 5047 ▲

Krell's £2,500 KAV-300i is prepared for the Day of AV Judgment! Until such a time, it remains a damn fine hi-fi amplifier...

Help!

AS MALCOLM STEWARD'S COVERED WAGON PULLS INTO TOWN, CROWDS GATHER FOR THE NEXT HI-FI MEDICINE SHOW.

Send your hi-fi queries to 'Help!' at the usual address (page 145) or 100433.1130@compuserve.com. We regret that we cannot answer individual queries on a personal basis.

Query of the month

As part of my hi-fi system, I have a Philips D8734, an inexpensive combined amplifier-and-twin-cassette-deck system, purchased in the early '80s. I treasure this machine for its ability to fade out from deck A when transferring to deck B. I've been told there is nothing available today that can do this unless I set up a veritable recording studio. Is that so?

Don Lewis, Derbyshire

Calls to the major cassette deck manufacturers didn't unearth any machines with an automatic fade facility of the type I suspect you're seeking. The closest I came was a Technics machine that fades when recording from CD to prevent abrupt silences when the tape runs out. However, you can perform manual fades on modern cassette recorders without resorting to a mixing desk — you simply turn down the record-level control on the deck that's recording.

Out of depth

My system includes an Arcam Alpha 5+ CD player, Naim 42-5/Hi-Cap/110 amps and Naim IBL speakers. I bought the speakers second-hand quite cheaply, and although the sound is very detailed it can be a bit thin and harsh. I believe that the CD player, good as it is, swims out of its depth in this system. I have £1,000 to spend at the moment, but could double that in a year if you don't think £1,000 will buy a CD player that would do justice to my amps and speakers. What is your opinion of the IBLs? I have never seen any reviews of them, but I have been told that they need better amplification than that I am using.

J. Collins, Manchester

Although I'm a card-carrying member of the Naim fan-club, I confess that I never much liked the IBLs. I have heard a couple of systems in which they've sounded well balanced, but generally I've found them lacking bottom-end weight. The quick fix would be to sell them and look at the new Naim

Intro, which is the IBL's £596 replacement. Keep the Arcam CD player for now and put the left-over £404 towards a CD3.

Thrashing baroque

I have a Naim CD3 and NAIT 3R, KEF Coda 7 speakers, Atacama stands, Naim interconnect and Gale XL 160-2 speaker cables.

I listen to the complete spectrum of classical music, nothing else. My system plays most discs well, but its weakness is baroque music, which sounds thrashy with a metallic harshness. The Naim gear is not at all tolerant of sub-standard discs, and some of my remastered opera recordings from the '60s and '70s sound too vivid and edgy.

My speakers are probably not up to the Naims, and I was thinking of an upgrade. What would you suggest for up to £600? I would consider stand-mount or free-standing enclosures. I like the presentation of the KEF Coda 7s, but I would prefer slightly more warmth and refinement.

R.E. Adams, Gwent

Firstly, sand-fill your stands if you haven't done so already. The SE24s can ring when undamped, and that can exacerbate high frequency edginess. Then try swapping speaker cables — see if you can borrow some well-run-in Naim NAC A5.

If that doesn't do the trick, start auditioning speakers. I would listen to the Rega ELA, Mission 752, and Naim Intro, all of which are convenient floorstanders.

A change of direction

I have a question regarding speaker cables. I have read about directional cables, but I'm very sceptical, owing to my technical education.

One magazine says it's a subject of great debate but they wouldn't argue with manufacturers — why not? What are your opinions and, if a cable can be directional (if indeed), why is it so?

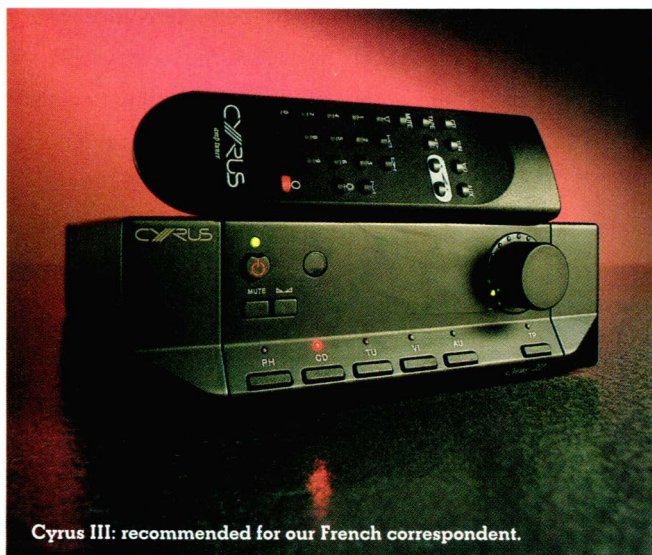
Mike Pountain, Ladybarn

Don't miss out on a cheap and effective way to improve your sound merely because cable directionality seems illogical. Quite why some cables are directional is a mystery that one day science will solve. I don't understand it and I spent years studying transmission theory.

Just accept that this quirk can often give rise to audibly discernible differences, marginal or significant. Try it with your cables — you have nothing to lose.



Rega ELA: could add warmth



Cyrus III: recommended for our French correspondent.

Sounding British

My system consists of a Yamaha AX450 amp, Marantz CD52SE and a pair of Focal JM Lab DB19 speakers on 60 cm stands. I use QED Qudos speaker cable and Link Monitor analogue interconnect. My listening room is five by four metres, and my music tastes are heterogeneous but principally jazz and classical.

I like the sound of the Marantz CD52SE but I want to replace my speakers and amp. I have £750-£800 to spend and I'd like to buy British.

What would give better results in terms of neutrality and transparency, with wide and deep stereo imaging? What do you think about the following equipment combinations: Audio Innovations Alto and ProAc Tablette 50, or Cyrus III with Castle Durham 900?

M. Tavernier, La Gorgue, France

The Alto and ProAc combination isn't ideal for a room of this size: the amplifier is underpowered and prefers more efficient speakers. The Cyrus and Castle would be better but deserve a more sophisticated CD player. The CD52SE is a

worthy machine but it's only a budget player, and its limitations will soon become apparent in a revealing system.

With that in mind, listen to amps such as the Cyrus III, Arcam Delta 290 and Orelle SA-100, with speakers such as the B&W DM602, Mordaunt Short MS25i, Tannoy 633/III and TDL RTL2.

Dusting off

I used to be a keen hi-fi enthusiast but, with the arrival of my children, I have sold or moth-balled most of my equipment.

The time has come to start up again — some of the old system is in need of a service but otherwise it's okay. Should I start again, or keep certain elements and add improvements?

I currently have: one Quad 303 power amp, a Quad 33 pre amp and a Quad FM3 tuner (circa 1983), plus one of the old curved electrostatic speakers which I hope to sell anyway; one Garrard 402 transcription turntable with an SME 3009 Series II Improved pick-up arm and Shure V15 Mk III cartridge; a pair of Bose 301 speakers, a pair of Wharfedale Lintons, and a Pioneer CT4141 cassette deck in need of repair.

I am considering using the Quad system and buying a CD player to go with it. I'd use the record deck, as we have a good selection of vinyl, and maybe the cassette deck if it won't cost too much to repair. I would use the existing speakers or maybe replace them with Quads to match the electronics.

The alternative is to scrap the lot and start again. Would anybody be interested in buying equipment as old as this?

I would be prepared to spend up to £1,000 on something like the Denon D-F10 you mention in the magazine.

Geoff Mead, Wiltshire

There are plenty of people still using Quad 331303s and Garrard turntables; they're cult items in some quarters. The cost effective solution is to have these renovated and buy a new CD player. I'd also look for another old Quad electrostatic to make up a pair. However, have the ESLs serviced by the manufacturer because they run at high voltages and you must be sure they're working properly before using them. You would then have a genuine high quality system — old, but good nonetheless, and superior to any modern mini system including the estimable D-F10.

Headphone adaptations

I have the following equipment connected to an Arcam Alpha 3 amplifier: Panasonic TX-29AD30F TV, Sony SLV-E810 VCR; Nokia 2202 CS satellite receiver; Sony DAR 1000 ES receiver; AKG K1000/Sennheiser 565 Ovation headphones; and Heco Professional 5000 speakers.

I am more or less satisfied with the amplifier but, as it has no remote control, I want to buy another, better, integrated amplifier. I think perhaps one of the following: Arcam Delta 290; Audiolab 8000S; Harman

Kardon HK 680 or Luxman A 384 (pre amp with triode tube).

I was also thinking of the Cyrus III but, it has no outlets for headphones or a second pair of speakers.

Karl Allenbach, Kollbrunn, Switzerland.

You will probably find the Arcam Delta 290 or Audiolab 8000S best suit your requirements, but your letter raises an interesting point regarding minimalist designs. Just because an amplifier doesn't have a headphone socket doesn't mean you can't use headphones with it. There are adapter boxes that allow you to connect most dynamic headphones to the amplifier's loud-speaker terminals. Or you can simply replace the headphones' jack plug with other terminations suited to making a direct connection to the speaker terminals. Ask your dealer to help you with this, because not every amplifier is happy with such an arrangement.

Add a bit of life

I am looking to upgrade my amplifier to a pre/power or valve set-up, and I can budget up to £2,000. My current system is a Meridian 206 CD player, Exposure XV integrated amp, B&W 805 Matrix speakers, Audiolab 8000T tuner and Nakamichi DR3 cassette deck.

The Exposure amp sounds very smooth, but I am looking for a more lively sound with a more 'punchy' bass. My listening preferences are rock, electronic and jazz.

P. Sharp, Berkshire

Your CD player is a respectable but not urgent-sounding device, which probably explains the system's lack of liveliness. Also, your amplifier, though good, isn't the ideal candidate to drive your speakers. Given your tastes in music, I'd be inclined to select

Audiolab 8000S: fine amp with the added bonus of a headphone jack.



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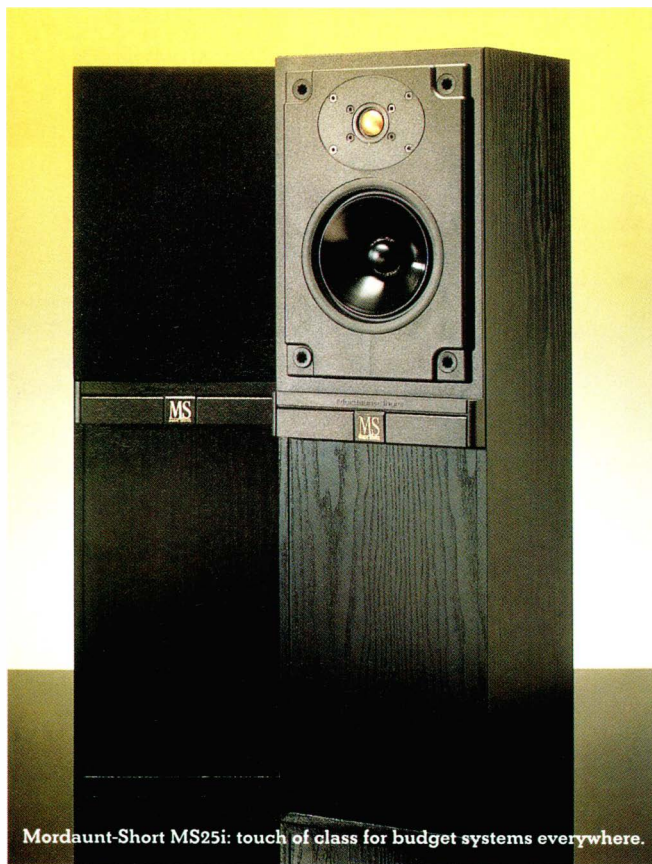
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Mordaunt-Short MS25i: touch of class for budget systems everywhere.

◀ a CD player, amplifier and speakers that better serve the rhythmical needs of contemporary music. Check out CD players like the Naim CD3 and Micromega's Stage range. Listen to speakers like the Neat Petite and TDL Studio 1. Then audition amplifiers — maybe one of Exposure's prepower combinations — and look for one that retains the verve these components can deliver.

Supporting a system

I currently have a Denon DCD615 CD player and a Denon PMA-480R amplifier connected to a pair of old Sharp loudspeakers. I want to replace the speakers and would welcome suggestions of models to audition costing up to £300. I listen mostly to rock but there are classical CDs in my collection.

Would the £200 Cambridge DACMagic 2 make a worthwhile improvement to my system, or should I spend the money on something else, such as an equipment table?

Itzhak Nuri, Madrid, Spain

I'd start your search for speakers with the Mordaunt-Short MS25i, a floorstander whose accommodating but revealing nature allows it to work well in a

budget system, yet still prove rewarding when you upgrade your electronics.

I wouldn't recommend adding a DAC to your inherently respectable CD player if you don't yet have a proper support under your electronics. Your money will be better spent on an equipment rack and some decent-quality bi-wire loud-speaker cables. They'll allow you to appreciate any subsequent upgrades by extracting more performance from your CD player and amplifier.

Amplifier or turntable?

I assembled my system 20 years ago to play a large collection of vinyl albums. While my collection of vinyl continues to grow, my system has remained unchanged until this month, when I bought a Denon DRS 640 cassette deck.

The system includes an Armstrong 600 receiver, IMF Super Compact speakers, Ariston RD11S turntable with SME 3009 arm and Ortofon VMS20E cartridge, and an Akai 4000DS reel-to-reel tape recorder.

The Ariston's pilot light has failed and the Armstrong's collection of two and five-pin DIN outlets has

frustrated attempts to upgrade interconnects and speaker cables. On the basis that I can only replace one unit at a time, what would you replace, and in what order?

Ideally, the replacements should be British. I've identified the Systemdek 2x2 turntable as the most desirable replacement for the Ariston, but my price range says Rega Planar 3.

Stephen Glancey, Middlesex

Read last month's issue for our warm appraisal of the Systemdek. Compare it to a Planar 3, which is a reliable if not top-league performer. Consider buying a second-hand Linn Sondek LP12 if your LP collection is seriously large. However, you need a new amplifier fast, so search out a good dealer and see if he can restore your Ariston to tide you over for a while.

You don't say how much you want to spend on an amplifier but I'd recommend an integrated model with a better-than-average-phonostage — an Exposure or a Naim, preferably.

Warming up

My system consists of a Denon DRM 700 tape deck, a Denon DCD 960 CD player, and a pair of single-wired Tannoy 603s driven by an Audiolab 8000A.

Having converted to CDs entirely, I miss the depth, realism and warmth of music from LPs. Fortunately, the DCD 960 has optical and coaxial digital outputs. With a budget of \$600 (£385), would you recommend adding an external DAC like Arcam's Black Box 50, or would I be better off changing the player?

Finally, do you also recommend bi-wiring the Tannoys? With what cables?

Q. Araneta, New Jersey, USA

Your amplifier and speakers are not the warmest around, so there's no cheap or easy way out of this situation. You might try listening to a Rotel RCD970 CD player, which tends towards a more vinyl-like presentation, or maybe check out speakers with a less attacking nature.

To achieve an ideally balanced system, you audition a new set-up that suits you, and work towards it — even if it's out of your present price range.

Bi-wiring the 603s with heavy gauge cable, such as Cable Talk Talk 3.1, might alleviate some of your problems in the short term.

At a higher end

I am very happy with my present system, comprising Mission 753 speakers, Musical Fidelity The Preamp and bi-amped Typhoons, Theta Data Universal Transport 11 PAL and Pro Basic 11 B DAC, and a Rega Planar 3. However I intend to change these components and venture into the higher end, in search of a roughly similar sound but more advanced aesthetics than the usual 'black box'.

I am considering: Spendor SP 9/1 speakers, amplified by the new Copland CTA 301 mk11/CTA 505 (maybe adding a second 505 for bi-amping); a Voyd turntable (standard or 0.5) and SME arm. As far as CD is concerned, I'm not quite sure yet: maybe Mission Disc/Dacmaster, Pink Triangle Cardinal/Ordinal, a Counterpoint combo or even the new CD player from Copland and a suitable DAC.

I listen to a wide spectrum of music, from classical to rock and grunge, but no techno.

Patrick Wheeler, Zürich, Switzerland

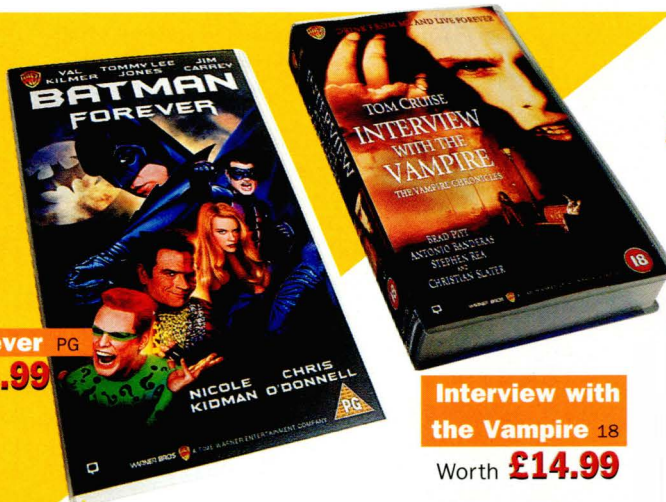


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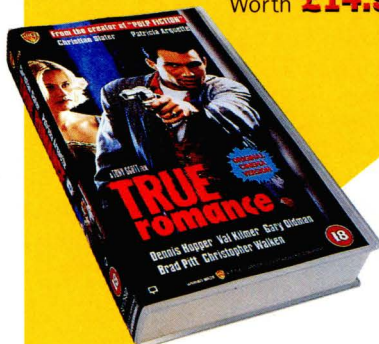


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◀ If you're spending high-end cash it's understandable that you want a system to look good. However, hi-fi's primary purpose is to sound good and the best aesthetic match might not fit this criterion. Recognising that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, can I point you towards some alternatives? You might consider a system from Pear Audio, such as the one I reviewed in issue 144, which comprised a Well Tempered record player, Dynavector amplification (discreet black boxes) and stunning Shahinian loudspeakers. Also look at Meridian equipment, which was definitely developed to please the eye.

Get a support

I own a Marantz CD-63SE CD player, which I use with Sennheiser HD 565 Ovation headphones, as domestic circumstances currently rule out loudspeakers. Listening exclusively to classical music, I enjoy the Marantz's open, spacious presentation with no loss of detail. The only problem is that it doesn't have a detachable mains cable. Now I would like to optimise the configuration and wonder whether connecting the headphones to an amplifier, rather than to the headphone jack of the '63SE, would improve the sound. With a budget of £350-£550, could you recommend a suitable amp and interconnects? Any other advice on how I might overcome limitations of a CD player/headphone set-up? *Andreas Bendlin, Oxford*

In such a basic system you'll gain the greatest improvements by improving what you already have, rather than by adding an amplifier, which will be just another device that can degrade the signal. Improve the CD player then buy some better headphones if

you want significant gains. And think about buying a decent support for the CD player — Mana Soundframe, for instance. Budget players are usually susceptible to external disturbances, which will be readily audible via headphones.

A bit of a boo-boo?

My system comprises a Philips CD960 CD player, Arcam Black Box, QED passive pre amp, Musical Fidelity P170 power amp and B&W P5 speakers.

I recently bought the ex-demo P5s for £700 having previously used Arcam Alpha 2s. I think I've made a big boo-boo!

My reason for buying them was to get more bass (I want lots of extension, but I don't want boom!) and I also wanted a little less muddle when playing complex classical music. *Colin Jones, Southall*

System matching is the main problem here. The CD960 isn't exactly the best-sorted CD player on the planet, the Black Box has been comfortably surpassed by later generations, the amplification isn't optimal — passive pre-amps were all the rage until people discovered that few power amplifiers responded well to them — and the speakers are intended for a more sophisticated set-up.

In short, your best bet is to sell-up and start again. To make this process cost effective, buy the best CD player you can afford, then find an amplifier that will work well with your less demanding Arcam speakers. I would suggest something along the lines of the Orelle CD-100SE or Arcam Delta 290, as suitable starting points for your auditioning trail.



HI-FI CHOICE

HINTS & TIPS CD SHAMANISM

Jimmy Hughes invites CD connoisseurs to use their pause buttons sparingly!

One of the great things about CD is its consistency. Used to evaluate a system, or employed as the source in comparative tests, you can rely on it to deliver an identical signal at all times. Or can you?

Recently John Rogers, the man behind the QR Developments *Ringmat*, demonstrated how the perceived sound of a CD player alters, according to how you select tracks that are being played. Quite simply, the best sound results when a track is cued from stop and the disc is left to play. If you press pause, select the next or previous track, or use the fast-search keys, the sound loses some of its freshness and immediacy. You don't believe me? Well, just try the following test.

Select a piece of music with a good, strong bass line and lots of high-frequency energy — something that sounds lively and articulate. Select the desired track, press play and listen for half a minute or so until you've assimilated the sound. Now press pause, wait a second, release pause and carry on listening. Does it sound exactly as before? Or is there now a slight lack of bite and crispness, and less presence and immediacy? It's easy to check — just press stop, re-select the track and begin listening. Incidentally, it doesn't seem to matter whether you do this via the player's function buttons or remote handset.

The best sound seems to occur when you go direct from stop to the track required; as soon as you interrupt this sequence, the sound is slightly impaired. It's like this with every CD player I've had the opportunity to try thus far, regardless of make.

The difference isn't huge, but it is audible. The sound seems to lose a little freshness and sparkle, as if a thin veil had been placed between listener and music. Because there's a slight loss of immediacy, it's as if the volume had been reduced very marginally. A bright, crisp recording of a piano displays the difference beautifully.

Quite why this should happen is very difficult to explain. I'm intrigued that the effect seems to be universal, certainly on the evidence of the Sony, Marantz, Pioneer, TEAC, Wadia and Arcam players I've tried, to mention just six. Some pundits reckon it's to do with the laser failing to track correctly, but I'm not sure myself. After all, when I choose a track number once playback has begun, why should it sound different to the same track selected from rest? And why should selecting pause or fast search have an effect on things? It's very strange! What's most curious is how this effect is evident with so many players, all possessing different types of transport mechanism.

I have demonstrated this effect in a variety of different locations, to many sceptical individuals, and with any number of different CD players. Every time, on announcing my theme, I confront disbelief in every corner; but once I make my demonstration, everyone hears the change. This gives me the confidence that I am not just hearing the results of an over-vivid imagination. Try it for yourself and see what you think. I'd be interested to know if it works for you, too!



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- STOKE**
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- STOURBRIDGE**
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- TRURO**
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- TUNBRIDGE WELLS**
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- TUXFORD**
Hi Newark
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- UXBRIDGE**
LUXridge Audio
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Astley Audio
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- WARRINGTON**
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01925 628009
Practical Hi-Fi
01925 32179
- WATFORD**
Hi-Fi City
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Richer Sounds
01923 218888
Sevenoaks Hi-Fi
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- WYBRIDGE**
Cosmic
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- WEYMOUTH**
Weymouth Hi-Fi
01305 785729
- WILMSLOW**
Swift Hi-Fi of Wilmslow
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- WOKING**
Bartletts Hi-Fi
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Superfi
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01480 427021
Worcester
Sevenoaks Hi-Fi
01905 612929
- WORTHING**
Bowers & Wilkins
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- YEOWIL**
Mike Manning Audio
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- YORK**
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1994



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1995

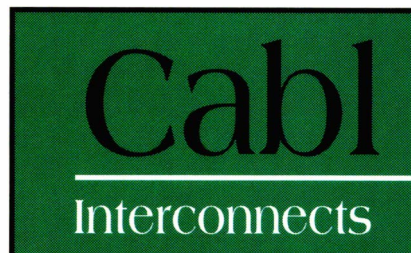


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Swing Out Systems

Lip-smackin', CD-guzzlin', tape-playin', airwave-bustin', lounge-charmin', Watt-poppin', fresh-stylin', motor-vatin'... systems! **Alan Sircom** turns blue as he samples the taste of a new generation.

In case you hadn't noticed, you're reading a hi-fi magazine. Hi-fi magazines have a reputation for being less than open-minded about packaged integrated systems, no matter how expensive they are. So you'd be forgiven for thinking that if *Hi-Fi Choice* tests six examples, they'll all get a right drubbing — but you'd be wrong.

Like hi-fi separates, integrated systems have come a long way in the past few years. In a handful of models, sound quality has become a major design factor, just as it has for separates. This test showcases some of the best integrated systems around. In their own way, each one transcends price and space constraints, to make a sound that stands head and shoulders above the competition. Maybe other integrated systems might match the performance of this sextet, but none will better them at each price tag.

We've deliberately included two seriously expensive examples alongside four more affordable variants, to discover what benefits accrue from spending an order of magnitude more than the ballpark figure.

What is the difference between an integrated and a separates system? Some of these systems need impressive numbers of phono leads to wire them up, and surely that defines these systems as separates? Defining lines are becoming increasingly blurred, but in this test, every system has a single mains input, regardless of how many boxes are on display. For example, the Denon *D-F07* system has a single mains plug connecting the tuner to the wall, with all other components taking their mains feed from the tuner. By contrast the Teac

H500 can use a mains socket for each device in the system, although it has two mains sockets in the rear of the amplifier. This is the only exception to the 'one-plug' rule, except for the systems with active speakers (Bose, B&O) that need separate mains inputs to drive active circuitry.

This may seem like a small point, but to get good sound out of any hi-fi system it is vital to use separate power supplies. Inside any decent power amplifier there'll be a hefty power-supply section, which is not there just to look good!

Each component in the chain drains a certain amount of juice from the power supply, and if that supply has to feed a CD player, an amplifier and tape machine at the same time, it might find itself under strain. The optimum situation is when each component has its own supply.

So why buy a integrated micro, mini or midi system, or some other pigeonhole-busting outfit? Simply because this genus of product offers convenience unavailable with most hi-fi separates, while still purveying good sound at an affordable price.

The clincher is this: there are numerous hard-core audiophiles with top-dollar main systems, whose studies or bedrooms thrum to the sound of a packaged system.

I'm one of them.



THE CAST LIST

Bang & Olufsen Beosystem 9000	...£4,600
Bose Lifestyle 20£3,000
Denon D-F07£650
JVC UX-1000£270
Teac H500£800
Technics SC-CA01£650



BANG & OLUFSEN BEOSOUND 9000

Bang & Olufsen's £4,600 *Beosound 9000* comprises a six-disc CD player, a 60-preset AM/FM tuner, a timer and a pair of floorstanding active loudspeakers. Simply to look at the *Beosound 9000* in terms of specification, however, is to miss the point completely. B&O is a master of ergonomics and design, and the *9000*'s spec belies its elegance and sophistication.

Your six CDs sit displayed beneath a powered glass door. Unusually, the discs stay still and the laser pick-up shuttles between them. After playback, the mecha-

nism returns the disc to the position in which it was inserted — very elegant. B&O's remote control, meanwhile, is a metal casting tough enough to hammer in nails.

To ensure it blends with interior décor, the *Beosound 9000* controller can hang vertically or horizontally on a wall, mount on an optional stand, or recline on a table. In each configuration it looks superbly assured.

It takes a fair time to set up this system when you take it out of its box, but once programmed the *9000* is as refined and usable as it is stylish. While its sound would not stand comparison with a similarly-priced, well-chosen separates system, it is refined

enough never to attract adverse publicity. The tonal balance is natural, and the active speakers sound weighty, full of bass and quite powerful, without being overblown or ill-defined. In fact, the biggest stumbling block is imagery. The *9000* gives decent stereo information, but lacks the soundstaging and image depth that true hi-fi aficionados crave.

Still, the *Beosound 9000* deserve to sell in vast numbers to a different kind of enthusiast — those for whom advanced styling and ergonomics are of equal importance to good-quality musical reproduction.

Bang & Olufsen ☎ (01734) 692288

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Micro System**



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Hi-Fi Mini System
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NSX-AV90
Hi-Fi Mini System

So you're buying one of our new home entertainment systems. Thanks. But we don't want you choosing us just because we're the overall UK market leader in sound systems. We'd like you to understand why. Take the mini-system. The model below delivers over 120W per channel - more than enough to put punch into every punch-line. Combine it with the NICAM stereo VCR and you have a versatile package that will match the mood of every audience. And movies? The Dolby Pro-Logic* 5-speaker package creates outstanding big-screen atmosphere wherever you want it. As for repertoire, we integrate CD, cassette, radio, TV and video. All to the same standards of quality. And the guy on the screen? He's a comedian. Oh, that's why you're laughing, is it?

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BOSE LIFESTYLE 20

Bose didn't get to be the world's largest loudspeaker manufacturer without having a trick or two up its sleeve. And you don't need a microscope to spot what's smart about the £3,000 *Lifestyle 20* system. Whichever way you look at it, this is one system filled to the brim with sophisticated features.

First there's the 'Virtually Invisible' loudspeaker system, which includes two satellite mid-high enclosures small enough and light enough to make a paperback novel look hefty. An accompanying subwoofer houses the *Lifestyle 20*'s power amplifiers.

The system controller, which combines an AM/FM tuner with a six-disc cartridge CD multiplayer unit, makes provision for separate line inputs, plus tape and video loops. It can also drive two loudspeaker zones for easy but basic multi-room operation. The discreet white remote handset operates with radio frequency signals instead of infra-red light, which means you can use it all around the house, instead of just within line-of-sight of the system.

Once the subwoofer is concealed near to a wall, all you'll see is a tiny silver control unit and a pair of miniature speakers — yet the sound is anything but tiny. Orchestral swells are huge and the sense of scale is

excellent, indeed lifelike. Up to a point.

The biggest let-down is the lack of upper bass. There is a mighty depth to the sound, but this is not reinforced by the upper bass registers. So a bass guitar is fine when fretted at the bottom of its neck, but sounds a bit spongy and lax an octave up. This is especially true at low listening levels, where the bass tends to boom, I suspect as a consequence of an automatic loudness contour.

Putting these niggles to one side, however, I can't help but conclude that Bose's *Lifestyle 20* system will prove popular because of its discreet proportions and huge sound. Devil take the competitors.

Bose ☎ (01795) 475341

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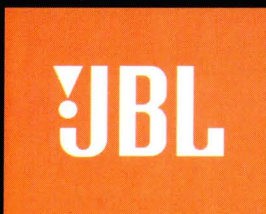
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DENON D-F07

Denon has controlled and defined the high ground of packaged audio systems for many years. So strong is its command, would-be sophisticates from competing manufacturers often try to follow Denon's styling cues. However, the company stays ahead of the pack by releasing a continual stream of new models, and the latest range includes the new £650 *D-F07* system tested here. A 45-Watt amplifier, CD player, RDS-equipped tuner, tape machine and timer are squeezed into four purposeful, mid-sized, champagne-fronted units. For completists, the *D-F07* is available with Denon-branded speakers for £800.

The *D-F07* resembles the more expensive *D-F10* system, but the similarity is only skin-deep. Although a profusion of signal and system communications are routed through phono- and jack-plugged cables, only one true mains lead hangs out of the system. The rest of the boxes all take 230V succour from the tuner. By contrast, the individual units in the more expensive system all have separate mains supplies. Although this means that you need four mains sockets instead of just one, separate power supplies are what differentiate true hi-fi equipment from mere audio, no matter how glossy and separate the boxes.

That said, the Denon *D-F07* puts in a very fair showing, making an agreeable part-

nership with speakers priced £100-£130, such as the Mordaunt-Short *MS10i*.

Regrettably the lack of separate power supplies takes its usual toll on dynamic shading, so the system balks at Mahlerian or Wagnerian extravaganzas, and the complex shading of a string quartet defeats it. With music that is less dynamically challenging, however, the system is crisp, clean and fast, but not the least bit aggressive.

If you're prepared to sacrifice the last word in dynamic scale for the convenience of system control, the Denon *D-F07* is a perfect plug-and-play option. You might also care to hear the *D-F10* before you buy — the difference is worth the extra dosh.

Hayden Laboratories ☎ (01753) 888447



TEAC H500

Teac is best known for its up-market Vibration-free, Rigid Disc Transport (VRDS) CD players, plus semi-pro tape and DAT machines. However, it seems eminently logical that so specialised and sophisticated a company as Teac, should make a system as neat as the £800 H500, especially since lately Teac has been carving out a name for itself as a player in the budget separates market.

The system tested here comprises a 50-Watt amplifier, an RDS-equipped tuner, a cassette deck and a single-bit-DAC (but not

VRDS) CD player. It seemed odd that while the three source components are capable of taking a mains feed from the A-H500 amplifier, there are only two mains outlets on the latter's rear panel. According to Teac, as each component can accept 230V mains, the best idea is to run the cassette deck from a separate mains socket, but power the CD player and tuner via the amplifier.

There is something very American and slightly old-fashioned about the Teac system — and that's a compliment. It's not just the US-style graphics and Chevrolet-sized control knobs, but also a big, warm, dark, expansive sound. It's on the blowsy side of

neutral, but might be an excellent complement to most classical music, and thus of special merit to those whose budgets or lounges don't run to a true separates system. The H500 even makes a passable attempt at dynamic shading, something that few other one-make systems even begin to try.

It would be disingenuous to suggest that the Teac H500 system could distract a true hi-fi buff from his or her quest. However, it's a worthy first stab at the packaged audio market, and this excellent standard-bearer must rank as one of the first serious Denon challengers not to cost a King's Ransom.

Teac ☎ (01923) 819630



JVC UX-1000 (above)

There are micro systems — and there are micro systems. The £270 JVC UX-1000 belongs to the really-decent, really-small camp. Standing no taller and weighing no more than a dozen softback Agatha Christies, this top-loading EISA-award-winning system shoots straight to the top of Christmas wish lists as soon as would-be owners clap eyes upon it.

Unlike the majority of feature-festooned micro systems, bedecked with superfluous sonic tricks and treats, JVC limits the UX-1000's widgets to a much-needed 'Hyper-Bass Super Pro' upper-bass-boost circuit. There is no tape deck (where would you put it in such a small device?), and the only fancy light-show is a blue backlight for the LCD panel. All controls except for the big central volume knob and 3.5mm headphone socket, are stacked on the top of the unit, beside the powered CD-door. Even my black-hearted Audio Puritan upbringing has nothing to mope about here.

Given its tiny size, small lengths of speaker wire and ultra-minimal single-drive-unit speakers, the little UX-1000 sings its heart out. There's no bass to speak of, and even upper bass is largely AWOL without the bass boost plumbed in, but the system is suffused with an infectious funkiness. Any teenager waking up to the UX-1000 on Christmas morning is sure to offer an immediate prayer of thanks to Saint Boogie-Shoes. With speakers placed appropriately there is even the start of a stereo image — rare from systems like this.

Like the Technics system, the JVC suffers limited ultimate volume and dynamic headroom. By the same token, neither system is loud enough to cause neighbourly offence, except at unacceptable distortion levels.

In summation, the JVC UX-1000 is a

stylish performer that sounds as understated as it looks. In today's overcrowded living spaces, that must be a good thing.

JVC ☎ 0181-450 3282

TECHNICS SC-CA01 (below)

Although packaged and sold as a complete mini system, the £650 Technics SC-CA01 could be considered a group of separate components — albeit very tiny ones! The system comprises a twin-MASH-converter CD player, a tuner,

a 45-Watt PDM amplifier (see last month's *Sessions* review for more details), a cassette deck, and speakers. Of course, the units share a single power supply and the interconnecting/power leads are multiway data cables, but it's the thought that counts.

The units are designed to be stacked in a two by two arrangement, with CD and tape deck sitting to the left of the tuner and amplifier. If you add the simple two-way loudspeakers this all looks very hi-fi, with only the short lengths of cable letting the side down. It's a nice touch that Technics has included little ferrite rings to help ameliorate any radio-frequency interference caused by the system's digital circuits.

This is one tidy-sounding system, when played within its performance envelope. Its dynamic and volume limitations, common to all systems at the price, do not stint its ability to play pop and rock in smallish rooms. And this, after all, is the most likely application for Technics' high-tech baby.

This system certainly doesn't offend listeners with a relentlessly punchy, up-beat interpretation of music. All too often, cheaper mini systems blast out a bright, pinched balance that you'll only tame slightly with judicious applications of tone control. By eschewing fancy gadgets for a back-to-basics design, the SC-CA01 scores highly with the purist, sound-first brigade.

For hi-fi types this is a perfect second system. It is separate and minimal enough to massage the most delicate audiophile sensibilities, and as long as you don't play too loud, the SC-CA01 sounds damn fine.

Technics ☎ (0990) 357357



Five Stars

Does the best price always mean the best deal?

"I thought I had this buying hi-fi business sorted out. I bought all the hi-fi magazines and read them thoroughly, because I reckoned their experts knew exactly what they were talking about - at least a lot more than I did! It was reassuring to see the same product names cropping up regularly and I figured the writers' experience and guidance would steer me straight to the system of my dreams. The trouble is I've ended up more confused than when I started.



One reviewer said a product I fancied was absolutely brilliant but another said it was nothing special at all. How can that be? Surely one CD player is pretty much the same as another? And how can a loudspeaker that's one magazine's top recommendation not get so much as a mention in any of the others? And then there was the amplifier that was the best in the test six months ago, yet now I never see it mentioned. I don't mind admitting it, I'm completely lost."

Plan B — I'm going for a deal

"So, I've decided to adopt plan B. I'm sure there can't be any really dramatic differences between all this gear and it's all bound to work together properly, so I'm going to check the price lists and the adverts and shop around for the best deal. I know getting the right hi-fi is important — hey, I'm as mad about music as anyone — but if I can get close to the mark and save a few quid, I'm sure I'll end up with a good system and be happy. I know there are specialist shops out there that do demonstrations and reckon they've got all the solutions but, to be honest, I'm a bit scared of going to one. I'd really welcome some advice and guidance but I don't know all the technical jargon and I'd feel daft sitting there trying to "hear the differences" if I couldn't. Anyway, a friend told me that these shops only sell the really expensive gear and that they're not interested if you don't have loads of money to spend."

And so another hi-fi buyer starts his journey down the road to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a permanent overdraft.

There is only one way to buy a hi-fi system that will prove satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money, and that's through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Let's face it, you wouldn't think about buying a car if you couldn't take it for a test drive. You wouldn't buy a house solely on the strength of seeing the estate agent's details and a photograph. Even if you're spending far less, say buying a jacket or a pair of shoes, you want to try them on to make sure they fit you.

Buying a hi-fi system is no different. It doesn't matter what the specifications say or what the "experts" think: if it doesn't measure up to what you want from a system, then it's not the right choice. Knowing that you've bought a room full of five-star favourites or best-buys is no consolation when you can't bear to listen to them for more than five minutes. Even that ten per cent discount on the price won't make them sound any better.

Buying or being sold to?

Mind you, most of us are easily suckered when it comes to buying hi-fi. Given the choice of venturing into the unknown territory of a specialist dealer's shop and exerting some influence over what we buy, or taking what looks like the easy route — having adverts and magazine reviews push us along a path sweetened with discounts and special offers — we opt for the latter. We don't buy a system, we allow ourselves to be sold one. We side-line our own ideas about quality and personal satisfaction and buy someone else's opinion of what's good for us and good value for our money.

Take control!

Now there's a group of long-established, independent specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer back in the driving seat. They're encouraging the buyer to take control ... with a little help and guidance provided where required. They know how difficult it can be to establish the true quality and worth of hi-fi and home cinema systems.

For Value

Ask the UK's top twenty specialist hi-fi dealers.



They know that without experiencing the performance of the systems they offer, you can't possibly assess the value of them. That's why their idea of "selling" is to play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.

Listening to your choice of music in a peaceful, well organised demonstration room, you may be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to hear the differences between components and between systems. With the dealer's help and advice you will be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy. It comes down to trusting your own judgement rather than the opinion of a reviewer you've never met ... and who won't refund your money if you're not satisfied or be at the end of a phone to sort out any problems you might encounter.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put

your hand into your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure that you're entirely happy with the way it works.

Why bother?

There is, of course, one question that hasn't been answered: why should you and these dealers go to all this trouble? Well, from your point of view maybe it's because a good deal is about a great deal more than just price. Unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years — years during which most of those five star products will probably stop shining quite so brightly.

As far as the dealers are concerned, maybe they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

Listed on the right of this page are the best hi-fi shops in the country. They all have lots of stars. You'll find them on the shop floor: they're the people waiting to guide customers towards hi-fi for which the appeal won't fizzle out the next time you buy a hi-fi magazine.



THE 20 BEST HI-FI DEALERS IN THE UK

LONDON N1

Grahams Hi-Fi
190a New North
Road
0171 226 5500

SW11

Oranges & Lemons
61/63 Webbs Road
Battersea
0171 924 2040

W4

Martin-Kleiser Ltd
108 Chiswick High
Road
0181 400 5555

SOUTH

Ashford, Kent
Soundcraft Hi-Fi
40 High Street
01233 624441

Chelmsford

Rayleigh Hi-Fi
216 Moulsham
Street
01245 265245

East Grinstead

Audio Designs
26 High Street
01342 314569

Kingston-upon-Thames

Infidelity
9 High Street
Hampton Wick
0181 943 3530

Rayleigh, Essex

Rayleigh Hi-Fi
44a High Street
01268 779762

Southend-on-Sea

Rayleigh Hi-Fi
132/4 London Road
01702 435255

Uxbridge

Uxbridge Audio
278 High Street
01895 465444

MIDLANDS

Banbury

Overture
3 Church Lane
01295 272158

Birmingham

Sound Academy
152a High Street
Bloxwich
01922 493499

Leicester

Listen Inn
6 Hotel Street
0116 262 3754

Northampton

Listen Inn
32 Gold Street
01604 37871

Shrewsbury

Creative Audio
9 Dogpole
01743 241924

NORTH

Cheadle (Stockport)

Audio Counsel
14 Stockport Road
0161 428 7887

Oldham

Audio Counsel
12/14 Shaw Road
0161 633 2602

Sheffield

Moorgate Acoustics
184 Fitzwilliam St
0114 275 6048

SCOTLAND

Edinburgh

Russ Andrews Hi-Fi
34 Northumberland
Street
0131 557 1672

Glasgow

Stereo Stereo
260 St. Vincent
Street
0141 248 4079

VERDICT

VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
SERVICE	★★★★★
FACILITIES	★★★★★

Homebrewer of the month

Jason Kennedy heads for Brighton, and the home of lifetime hi-fi enthusiast Rob Dowse, whose home-built, valve-intensive audiophile system has taken three years to perfect.

It stole the title for this month's *Inspirations* from *Sound Practices*, an American 'Journal of Audio Technology'. The technology in question is usually valve amplifiers and horn loudspeakers, and in the latest issue there's an interview with one Al Bryant, who in retirement is building, testing and listening to valve amps that he has built with his wife. I don't anticipate the same future for Rob Dowse, the creator of the magnificent system you see on this page. Having spent several years refining his largely home-brewed system, he has now managed to cure himself of the hi-fi bug. For the time being...

A hi-fi history

Rob's been messing around with hi-fi gear for a long time. He started at the age of ten, fashioning a new tonearm for an autochanger turntable with a coat hanger and some Meccano. This creation, which came complete with a ceramic cartridge and needle bearings made out of drawing pins, he partnered with a valve amp and speakers from a radiogram, and it made fine work of his record collection (Bowie's *Hunky Dory* and something by Mott The Hoople).

By the time of his 16th birthday, Rob had been through a DJ-style, two-deck outfit, and on to a venerable Thorens TD124 with Ortofon arm, Armstrong amp and big Wharfedale speakers. The increased sophistication of his playback equipment broadened Rob's already catholic tastes in music, to include Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart and Return to Forever.

It was not until his mid '20s that Rob

splashed out on a brand-new system. At the time, any hi-fi magazine you cared to mention — and there were quite a few — proclaimed that the only path to righteousness was the Linn *Sondek LP12*. Rob duly purchased the sacred transcriber, and equipped it with a Linn *Basik* arm and A&R P78 cartridge (the boron-cantilevered version of the popular P77). In accordance with the philosophy of the era, Rob finished off his rig with a NAD 3020 amp and Heybrook HB2 speakers — a classic early-'80s system that worked well, but frustrated its owner's every attempt to tweak. The mysticism surrounding the *LP12* was a particular bone of contention.

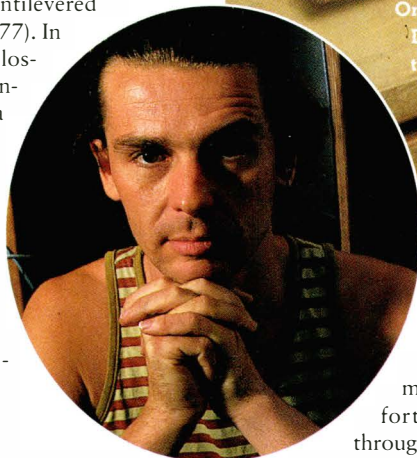
Road to Damascus

It wasn't until 1987, when he met Gary Waugh in a Brighton shop called Melos, that Rob set the course which has carried him to his current set up. Gary played him a Townshend *Rock* turntable, equipped with Helius *Scorpio* arm and Goldring 1040 cartridge, through an Audio Innovations *Series 300* amp and Snell (now Audio Note) *Type K* speakers. It wasn't long before Rob traded in the Linn, NAD and Heybrooks.

He had built some elegant triangular stands for his old speakers, but realised they were not fulfilling the potential of his new



One man and his stereo. Rob Dowse (left) and the full-on tube 'n' horn hi-fi system he has built over the last three years. Note free-range tweeters and vertically-mounted midrange horns.



*Type K*s. His response was to sit down and design his own high-mass stands, optimised for the *K*s, which developed, through a catalytic relationship with Snell importer Audio

Innovations, into a suite of speaker supports for the whole Snell range — even the big floorstanding *Type Cs*.

These 'Pirate' stands were Rob's first foray into the hi-fi business — not long after their launch he took a short-lived plunge into retailing, setting up Definitive Audio (Brighton) to sell the range that Melos's demise had left unrepresented. Selling, however, turned out not to be his forte, and the shop transferred to its current proprietor, Gary Dews, in 1989.



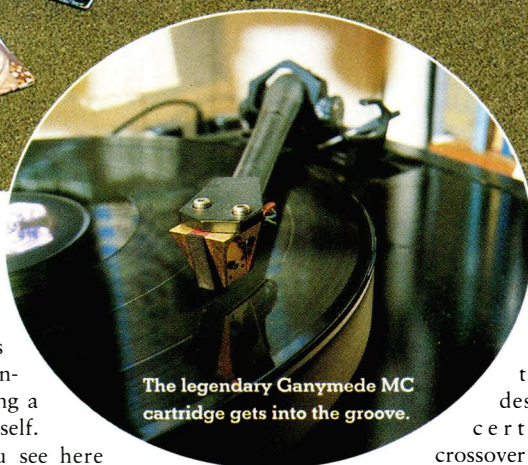
Back to hi-fi

What of Rob's system? In the meantime it had expanded to include a Voyd turntable, with Heliuss *Cyalene* arm and an Audio Note *Io*, plus Audio Innovations *Series 1000* pre-amp and *Second Audio* power amps driving Snell *Type Es*. This was one of the ultimate tube-based systems in the days before the single-ended valve revival of the '90s.

At this time Rob was still involved professionally with Audio Innovations, and as a consequence he was able to visit Audio Note's Japanese proprietor Kondo-san, to learn the building of AN's hand-crafted *Io* cartridge. Veteran readers may recall the Craftsman feature which showed Rob building these intricate creations in his workshop. Photographer Chris Richardson still remembers the incredibly confined space that Rob

used to work in. Since then Rob has gradually extracted himself from the business side of hi-fi, and concentrated on creating a wild system for himself.

The system you see here started out as a 'shunt-regulated-PSU phono preamp', which is a bit like an Audio Innovations *P2* on steroids. The speakers, derived from a Vitavox *Thunderbolt* public-address system, use Vitavox bass units, and midrange pressure drivers on cast aluminium, multi-cellular horns. The tweeter is a Fane bullet/horn type, positioned on movable legs for easy adjustment of tonal balance. The vertical arrangement of the



The legendary Ganymede MC cartridge gets into the groove.

midrange horn is unusual, but Rob feels that it helps domesticate a system designed for concert halls. The crossover is in a box, hanging from the outside of the speaker, to isolate it and to aid tweaking.

The speakers are extremely efficient, well over 100dB/W, and perfectly suited to the three-and-a-half Watt, single-ended, 2A3-tubed 'integrated' amplifier—the one with the doorknob volume control. This amp is the culmination of several years' work on a variety of power supplies. At one time there were something like nine PSUs driving the amp, but



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 Akai
 Alchemist
 Alphason
 Apollo
 Arcam
 Atacama
 ATC
 Audio Alchemy
 Audioquest
 Aura
 AVI
 B & W
 Barco Projectors
 Beyer Dynamic
 Bose
 Boston
 Cabletalk
 Canon
 Carver
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 Celestion
 Cerwin Vega
 Chord
 Citation
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Rob's single-ended, three-and-a-half Watt 'integrated' amp. Discreet, innit?

◀ Rob has refined that arrangement down to three chassis, which are shunt regulated with 100 per cent negative feedback.

The amp is considered integrated because it contains both phono and line stages, and the audio signal doesn't stray into the other chassis. There is no source select switch as such, so when Rob wants to hear CDs on a Trichord-Clock-Two-modified Aston player, with custom PSU, he has to do a bit of cable changing. That's because he has over 2,000 LPs, and most of the time he listens to a modified Voyd 0.5 with silver-wired SME V and the home-brewed Ganymede cartridge.

Rob's system has been developed with the aim of realism: he wants 'live' reproduction that cannot be distinguished easily from the real thing. In my opinion, with the right recording, his system achieves that aim. In hi-fi terms it is effortless, powerful and organic, and can be extremely dynamic without blasting you out of your seat.

In musical terms, it allows neo-Philistines like myself to appreciate the finer qualities of Rob's favourite music. 'Avant garde' barely begins to describe his preference, but the most obscure compositions are safe in the knowledge that his hi-fi will not mangle even their most fragile atonalities. ▶

When the tweaking gets too tame, triathlon's the game. Rob's bicycle maintains a constant state of readiness.



Wire not?

Don't strangle your sound with unworthy wires! **Alan Sircom** and **Paul Miller** (lab test) try out ten of the latest interconnects.

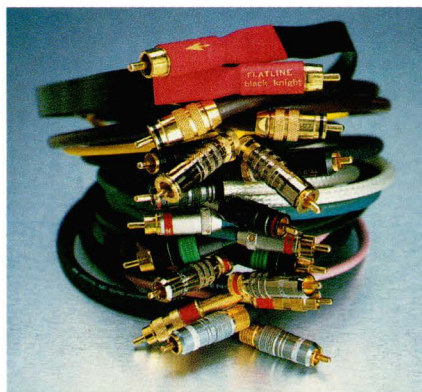
Cable is one of the most misunderstood parts of hi-fi. Some people believe that using an ultra-expensive cable will sort out problems in a midprice hi-fi system, while others think that the whole cable market is a sham, and stick with the cheap give-always that come packed with the hi-fi in the first place. Sadly, both parties are mistaken.

Interconnect cables do make a drastic difference to the sound of a hi-fi system, and in most instances, these differences have strong objective back-up from the measurement brigade. However, although not all interconnect cables are created equal, it is unwise to use outrageously pricey cables in an inexpensive system. At worst, you may find that the cable lets through more information than the electronics require, and highlights the bad points just as much as the good.

For this test, we gathered together ten interconnect cables, all priced (loosely) around the £50 mark. This is one of the most popular cable price-tags, ideal for those using hi-fi systems around the £1,000 mark. While the majority of candidates came from well-established cable suppliers, the cable market is both buoyant and there are many new kids on the block.

THE CAST LIST

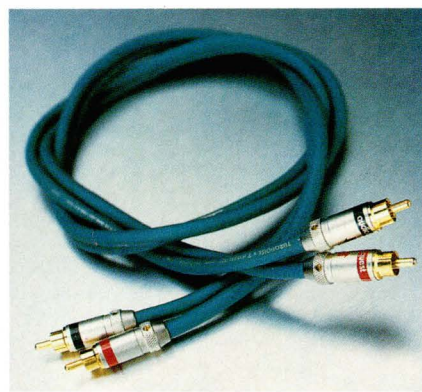
AudioQuest <i>Turquoise</i>	£40
Bandridge <i>ProfiGold PGA 301</i>	£65
Cable Talk <i>Studio 2</i>	£65
Cambridge Audio <i>Studio Reference</i>	£40
Connections <i>Midas HD</i>	£39
Ixos <i>102</i>	£60
Nordost <i>Black Knight</i>	£50
Silvertone <i>Ex-Static</i>	£35
Sonic Link <i>Silver Pink</i>	£35
van den Hul <i>Source HB</i>	£50



THE LISTENING TEST

All ten cables were subjected to *Hi-Fi Choice's* rigorous blind-listening test procedures, in the new dedicated listening room at our Central London offices. Each cable was slotted between a AVI S2000MC CD player and ECA *Vista* preamplifier. Between the pre-amp and the ECA *Lectern* power amplifier we installed five-metre runs of up-market blue Shark Wire interconnect, while on the business end of the amp Townshend *Isolda* speaker cables snaked out to Audio Note *AN-E* speakers on sand-filled stands. Throughout the test, volume levels remained constant and listeners were kept apart from the electronics.

A number of the interconnect cables were retested throughout the day for consistency, but there were few drastic differences of opinion on repeats. This month's golden eared trio comprised **Jason Kennedy** and **Del Gentleman** from *Hi-Fi Choice* magazine, plus **Clive Caines**, a freelance contributor to *Home Entertainment* magazine.



AUDIOQUEST TURQUOISE - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £40

- ▲ Easy on the ear; perfect for 'haven't changed the system in 50 years' people.
- ▼ All-round yawn-fest for the rest of us.
- ✉ A&R Cambridge Ltd, Pembroke Avenue, Denny Industrial Centre, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB5 9PB.
- ☎ (01223) 440964.

The American AudioQuest cables are surrounded by hype and hyperbole at the high end, but the company makes a number of more down-to-earth performers, including the recently revised *Turquoise* reviewed here.

It has all the typical qualities of AudioQuest cables. It is a 'quite' cable: quite open, quite detailed, quite good low-level resolution, quite good imagery. Consequently it is a fine cable for fit-and-forget types who don't want to spend weeks and weeks chopping and changing.

Unfortunately, this 'quite' character makes *Turquoise* a bit too bland and colourless. Its sound is distinctly lazy, making for insipid performance. It might temper a system that keeps you on the edge of your seat, but will never suit those who seek solace in thrash-metal. Perhaps AudioQuest should consider changing the colour (and the name) of the cable to grey?

LAB TEST

On paper, *Turquoise* is one of the simplest and most elegant of the Audioquest range. It adopts a symmetrical geometry that Audioquest terms 'Double Balanced', though the cable is not 'balanced' in the traditional sense. Instead, its symmetry is obtained by using two identical conductors, each an insulated solid-core of 22-gauge oxygen-free 'high conductivity' copper, surrounded by a foil screen and drain wire (presumably this is grounded at the source-end of the cable). Oddly enough, these symmetrical signal and return cores do not appear to be twisted because the cable's inductance registers a high 0.95µH without appreciably reducing its capacitance, suggesting its dielectric is in need of improvement. *PMI*

Inductance	0.95µH
Capacitance	125pF
Resistance	120mOhm
Leakage	29MOhm
Q-Factor	23
Resonant Frequency.....	15MHz
Series Bandpass.....	20kHz



BANDRIDGE PROFIGOLD PG501- OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £65

▲ A great cable for systems in need of enlivening.
 ▼ Too rigidly controlled and wearing at times.

✉ Bandridge Ltd, Premier House, 18 Deer Park Rd, Wimbledon, London SW19 3TU.
 ☎ 0181-543 3633.



CABLE TALK STUDIO 2- OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £65

▲ Tonally, dynamically and rhythmically a truly first-class cable.
 ▼ Very little to criticise.

✉ Cable Talk, Unit 12, Farnborough Business Centre, Eelmoor Road, Farnborough, Hants. GU14 7XA.
 ☎ (01252) 373434.



CAMERIDGE AUDIO - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £40

▲ An excellent-sounding cable, which is dynamic and has a tangible soundstage.
 ▼ The merest hint of veiling and loss of detail.

✉ The Audio Partnership, Richer Sounds, 202 Long Lane, London SE1 4QB.
 ☎ (0171) 586 5977.

Best known for its low-cost cables, Bandridge has branched out into the realm of specialist cable connectors with its £65 *ProfiGold PG301* cable. This solid-looking cable's sound is every bit as rugged as its appearance.

Bandridge's flagship is one confident cable. It creates a big, powerful image, with loads of ambient detail and good separation between voices. *ProfiGold* was also unanimously praised for its 'considered' timing. 'Mannered' was another oft-used adjective.

On classical pieces, *ProfiGold* was fulsome and controlled, and its treble hike not too drastic. However, on rock and jazz programme, it became too much the harsh disciplinarian, overexaggerating treble while placing the rest of the music under strict control. This is perfect for wayward systems that need a bit more treble, but may prove taxing for the rest of us.

UK cablemeister Cable Talk has a winner on its hands with the £65 *Studio 2* interconnect. It finds very few musical circumstances challenging, and was initially mistaken for the Best Buy Sonic Link *Silver Pink*, until the two were tested side-by-side at a later sitting.

Cable Talk's typical strength, excellent rhythm, is woven into the fabric of this wire, but so is dynamic shading — it puts almost all others in the, erm, shade. *Studio 2* is blessed with an uncanny ability to track crescendos and diminuendos, and digs deep into music to retrieve small details and ambience. Its soundstaging, as our German colleagues would say, is *spitzenklasse!*

If your local dealer stocks Cable Talk in favour of Sonic Link, don't change dealers. *Studio 2* is excellent value for money and comes very highly Recommended.

While I have a built-in prejudice against products that use the terms 'Studio' and 'Reference' in their names without any qualification, I have to say that this is one mighty fine £40 cable.

The *Studio Reference* was one of the very few cables to find the right path between overexuberance and anal retention. When strings needed to sound warm, they glowed like the Ready Brek kid on a winter morning; when they sounded cool, Miles Davis drinking a dry Martini in a freezer could not have shrunk the mercury further.

This was one of the few cables to project a soundstage, and offer dynamic range to match the electronics. Only the slightest loss of detail and a minute amount of veiling held back a Best Buy gong. In fact, if more studios used this cable as a reference, recording quality would just keep getting better and better!

LAB TEST

This chunky interconnect is a coax with a difference. For starters it's equipped with lockable WBT-lookalike phono plugs that actually seem more robust than the 'real thing'. Under the dark blue jacket, however, the large girth of *PG501* is revealed in its two overlapping, braided screens whose innermost component is terminated at both ends of the cable. The outer screen is soldered only to the return path of the 'source-end' phono plug. The upshot is a compatible mix of low-inductance, capacitance and resistance, while the thick polyethylene dielectric, which separates its screens from the multi-stranded core, ensures any leakage is held beyond 350MΩ. *PMI*

Inductance	0.39µH
Capacitance	74pF
Resistance	83mΩ
Leakage	> 350MΩ
Q-Factor	> 100
Resonant Frequency	30MHz
Series Bandpass	34kHz

LAB TEST

The directionality of this unusual cable is maintained during manufacture by reversing the original direction of the conductor used for the return path. After that, it's packed into a green, high-temperature PVC jacket along with *two* matching signal conductors, each comprising 19 twisted strands of 6N-purity copper. This is the ploy behind Cable Talk's SRFS or Signal Return Flow System. The cable is completed with an aluminium-foil screen and drain wire connected at source end; however the close proximity of the signal/return conductors and 'leaky' dielectric (5.6MΩ) is reflected in a massive 452pF capacitance. This is the highest I've measured in over 200 different cable samples and will ensure *Studio 2* is very system-dependent. *PMI*

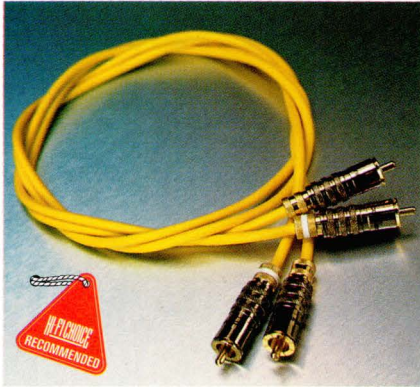
Inductance	0.55µH
Capacitance	452pF
Resistance	83mΩ
Leakage	5.6MΩ
Q-Factor	16
Resonant Frequency	10MHz
Series Bandpass	24kHz

LAB TEST

In keeping with some of the better interconnects destined for audio use (rather than digital or UHF work), *Studio Reference* adopts a fully-symmetrical construction with a pair of multi-stranded conductors for signal and return. These are bound in an extrusion of cellular polyethylene, and surrounded by both a coaxial braid and foil screen. The latter is terminated at the source end of this directional interconnect, which comes fitted, I might add, with a pair of luxurious WBT-lookalike phono plugs. The end result is a broadly compatible cable, well-screened from outside interference and offering a good mix of low-ish capacitance and a low series resistance. *PMI*

Inductance	0.72µH
Capacitance	97pF
Resistance	58mΩ
Leakage	> 350MΩ
Q-Factor	> 100
Resonant Frequency	19MHz
Series Bandpass	13kHz

INTERCONNECTS



CONNECTIONS MIDAS HD - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £39

- ▲ Lively yet open and dynamic performer; great plugs. Can be over-exuberant, and lacks coherence.
- ✉ Connections UK, 1 Manor Drive, Sawtry, Cambridgeshire PE17 5UU.
(01487) 832424.



IXOS 102- OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £60

- ▲ Hunky cable design; materially good value for money — you could tow cars with this cable.
- ▼ The sound quality; physically unwieldy.
- ✉ Path Group plc, Desborough Park Ind. Est, Desborough Park Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3BG.
(01276) 451166.



NORDOST BLACK KNIGHT - OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE £55

- ▲ Can help the sound of a needy system.
- ▼ Use with discretion — it may change the sound of your system more than you expect.
- ✉ QLN (UK) Ltd, Unit 7, Aber Park Industrial Estate, Aber Road, Flint, Clwyd CH6 5EX.
(01352) 730251.

One of many newcomers on the cable scene, the vivid yellow *Midas HD* comes complete with an excellent variation on the locking WBT plug. This makes the cable good value, almost regardless of its sound. Fortunately, it acquits itself sonically rather well, too.

A bright, breezy and open-sounding cable, *Midas HD* was at once praised and criticised by conflicting panellists for being subjectively louder than the others. This 'in yer face' quality made *Midas HD* seem like a bit of a bruiser, but on closer inspection, it turns out to be more dry and dynamic than most. It enlivens music with extra but not excess energy.

In fact, only a rather minor lack of musical coherence, caused in part by a touch of glare, held this cable back from the very best of the bunch. While it doesn't turn all music into gold, *Midas HD* is well worth seeking out.

It reached within a hair's breadth of a Recommended tag, and *Ixos 102* is blessed with a superbly even, natural and well-balanced air. In fact, it only lost against the flag-takers in its treble performance. Here, *Ixos 102* is just a little bit too bright. In particular, trumpet tones tended toward harshness too readily, and vocals from the Lemonheads' Evan Dando were more pronounced than usual.

Regrettably it restricted the dynamic range of the orchestra in heads-down Rachmaninov mode, although this foreshortening is unlikely to be a problem with most likely partnering CD and amplifier combinations.

However, these shortcomings only come to light in side-by-side comparisons. On its own, the cable is a gutsy-sounding performer, and has much to offer systems that need a little bit of pep in the treble.

Nordost *Flatline* is back in the country with a new distributor and new cables, including £55 *Black Knight*. These flat black cables were some of the most sonically manipulative in the group, but not in an unattractive sense.

In absolute terms, the *Black Knight* sounds a little thin compared to the best of the bunch. However, it also casts a very subtle coloration across music, adding a zing to cymbals and a sheen to strings. This gives orchestras and acoustic instrumentals a boost, which is no bad thing for many a system. Only vocals give the game away, as sometimes it seemed the song was being sung by an impressionist.

In many respects, this cable is sonically reminiscent of DNM's Best Buy solid core cable. That bestows more character on the music, but if you want a distinctive sound, *Black Knight* could be your champion.

LAB TEST

To all intents and purposes, this is a fairly standard coaxial interconnect, though with its similarity to older Chord cables and Linn's 'Analogue Interconnect' (Recommended, issue 131), *Midas HD*'s fine showing in the listening tests comes as no surprise. The central signal conductor comprises 20 strands of Oxygen-Free Copper, surrounded by an extrusion of cellular polyethylene, and screened by a return braid of some 70 strands. The braid is not tightly wound, so the final capacitance is held down to 68pF and the resonant frequency up to 27MHz, though the fine stranding does push the overall resistance up to 126mOhm/m. A rubberised PVC jacket finishes off the job very nicely indeed. *PMI*

Inductance0.53μH
 Capacitance68pF
 Resistance126mOhm
 Leakage.....>350MOhm
 Q-Factor.....>100
 Resonant Frequency.....26.5MHz
 Series Bandpass.....38kHz

LAB TEST

At first sight, this Ixos-branded cable looks all but identical to Bandridge's *PG501*. The Ixos is equipped with genuine WBT lockable phono plugs, but both cables share the same dark-blue jacket with the same message, 'PC-OFC 0.95 Conductor Double OFC Screened' printed down the spine. Yet the *Ixos 102* has a higher series inductance, a slightly lower capacitance and a fundamentally lower 53 mOhm resistance. Detailed inspection reveals that the *102*'s central dielectric is extruded from a lower-density polyethylene, and crucially both of its braided screens are terminated at both ends of the cable. Hence the higher inductance and lower resistance, and the difference in sound quality that we discovered... *PMI*

Inductance0.52μH
 Capacitance67pF
 Resistance53mOhm
 Leakage.....>350MOhm
 Q-Factor.....>100
 Resonant Frequency.....27MHz
 Series Bandpass.....16kHz

LAB TEST

This exceedingly flat and advanced cable looks rather like an interconnect version of the *Flatline Gold* speaker cable, reviewed in issue 133. Both are sourced from the Nordost Corporation and both comprise eight very thin (0.01x0.5mm) strips of very high purity copper (5N in the case of *Flatline Gold*, and 6N, apparently, in *Black Knight*). With four strips for signal and return, resistance is reduced to just 33mOhm. This, along with the excellent dielectric stability of its Teflon insulator, isolation from strand-to-strand conduction and reduced 'skin effect' makes for a high-tech package without the high inductance typically incurred by flat, spaced-conductor designs. *PMI*

Inductance0.4μH
 Capacitance61pF
 Resistance33mOhm
 Leakage.....>350MOhm
 Q-Factor.....>100
 Resonant Frequency.....32MHz
 Series Bandpass.....13kHz



SILVERTONE EX-STATIC- OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £35

▲ Pleasantly unfatiguing sound; competitively priced.
 ▼ Not the last word in insight and detail.

✉ Silvertone, 58 Prince Andrew Way, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 8NJ.
 ☎ (0973) 743054.

Silvertone's £35 *Ex-Static* cable, a new name on the market, is a fine example of the latest cable wizardry. The sound of *Ex-Static* is one of subtlety and unforced tonal balance, which does not push the listener toward a particular genre of music. However, its sound is infused with a tidy sense of rhythm, making the most out of pacy rock and jazz cuts.

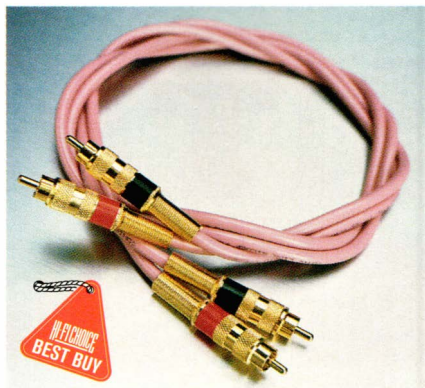
Trouble is, *Ex-Static* is a little too stilted for its own good. High-treble sounds, like the sizzle of a hi-hat, lack the energy to project past the other instruments of a jazz band. Nonetheless, both high and low frequencies lack grain, and the bass is nicely extended.

Ex-Static is a good, if flawed, first attempt at a low-cost interconnect cable. All the panelists were impressed by the ease of music played through the cable, but equally disappointed by its flat sound and inability to shine.

LAB TEST

Silvertone's *Ex-Static* interconnect appears to have been sourced through the Shark Wire brand and looks, to all intents and purposes, like a UHF video cable. The solid, central signal conductor is heavily silver-plated and insulated with a decent extrusion of cellular polyethylene, around which is wound a dense braid and alloy-foil screen. The latter also serves as the return path. The bold dimensions and high dielectric quality of this co-ax ensure that its capacitance is squigged down to just 54pF/m, while resonant frequency stays at 29MHz. In many respects, *Ex-Static* might better serve the audiophile as a *digital* interconnect between CD transport and DAC. *PMi*

Inductance	0.55µH
Capacitance	54pF
Resistance.....	84mOhm
Leakage.....	> 350MOhm
Q-Factor.....	> 100
Resonant Frequency.....	29MHz
Series Bandpass.....	24kHz



SONIC LINK SILVER PINK- OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £35

▲ Nicely analytical and detailed; dynamically sensitive with a superb sense of timing.
 ▼ Action-man pink won't suit everyone's colour scheme!

✉ Sonic Link, The Derwent Business Centre, Clarke Street, Derby DE1 2BU.
 ☎ (01332) 361390/674929.

Despite an average showing in its first presentation, the Sonic Link *Silver Pink* turned out to be the best in the test.

At first, it was considered too bright, forward and lacking in weight, but nicely analytical and detailed. However, on subsequent presentations, *Silver Pink's* forward brightness became less apparent, leaving a sound that was dynamically sensitive and enriched by a superb sense of timing. It was praised for admirably low 'muddle factor'; even in the thick of Rachmaninov's *Third* symphony, instruments were not blurred together.

Being the best-sounding cable in the test would be enough to warrant a Best Buy, but when you consider this is one of the cheaper cables, Sonic Link's latest is a true star.

By the way, apt name — but how many Action Men were melted down in the process?

LAB TEST

In contrast with Sonic Link's more bizarre interconnects employing various ferromagnetic conductors (nickel is a past favourite), *Silver Pink* is blessed with thoroughly predictable strands of silver-plated, oxygen-free copper. Seven 0.15mm strands form the signal core of this coaxial design, which is surrounded by a silver-plated copper braid and separated by a high-quality PTFE dielectric. The cable's inductance is much lower than would otherwise have been incurred with nickel strands, but its tight packing and reduced stranding account for the higher 168pF capacitance and 118mOhm resistance respectively. Oh yes, and the pink jacket is fashioned from PVC, not melted-down Action Men! *PMi*

Inductance	0.33µH
Capacitance	168pF
Resistance.....	118mOhm
Leakage.....	> 350MOhm
Q-Factor.....	> 100
Resonant Frequency.....	21MHz
Series Bandpass.....	57kHz



VdH SOURCE HB- OUR VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £49.95 (0.8m pair)

▲ Superb all-round cable that defines standards of natural sound at this price-point.
 ▼ Nothing at the price.

✉ van den Hul, Unit 12, I-MEX House, 6 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx UB6 7JJ.
 ☎ (0181) 810 9388.

vdH *Source HB* was praised for being a good all-round cable. Like a scaled-down version of carbon-fibre-fabricated *The First*, *Source HB* has a smooth, natural presentation. It's laid-back, but not to the point of sounding rolled-off. Instead, the sound is airy, yet well controlled.

Cables shouldn't be considered filters, but *Source HB* has such a pleasing tonal balance that it could easily be used to tame brash equipment. Big orchestral swells sound small, but within that reduction in image size, the sound is dynamic, ballsy and taut.

In short, vdH's *Source HB* is not so much hybrid as carbon-coated, yet embodies the high-end sophistication of more up-market carbon-fibre cables at a fraction of the cost. It will not out-perform cables like *The First*, of course, but has a damn good try and comes highly Recommended.

LAB TEST

Already famous for its 'Linear Structured Carbon' cables, van den Hul has transferred the germ of its idea into a budget interconnect. *Source HB* is a silver-plated, multi-strand co-ax with a principal dielectric of foamed polyethylene. Its 50 mOhm resistance is a little lower than expected, thanks in part to the conductive polymer (impregnated with chopped carbon-fibre strands) that's extruded over the central signal core, and the similarly conductive tape that's wrapped over the silver-plated braid. The bulk of the conducting area is still 'metal', but this intermediate layer of carbon-fibre could alleviate certain esoteric forms of distortion caused by non-linear conduction across the outer *surface* of the strands. *PMi*

Inductance	0.4µH
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- b) European Imaging & Sound Association
- c) Egalité, Intégrité, Solidité et Absurdité
- d) English Interactive Sound Association

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All entries must arrive by first post, Friday 20th December, 1996.

COMPETITION RULES

- The Closing Date for this competition is Friday 20th December, 1996.
- Winners of the System Competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, and drawn at random after the Closing Date.
- Prizes will be awarded in alphabetical order of brand-names, to the first four correct entries drawn from the hat after the Closing Date.
- All winners will be notified by post.
- The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- The System competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, JVC UK Ltd, Panasonic Consumer Electronics UK Ltd, Hayden Laboratories Ltd, Teac UK Ltd, May Audio Marketing, nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- No cash alternative will be offered.
- By entering the competition all entrants agree to be bound by the rules.
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- For a list of winners of the System competition, write, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope to: Hi-Fi Choice Winners, Dept 160/1, 19 Bolsover St, LONDON W1P 7HJ.

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scoops a Denon *D-F07* system (£650, excluding speakers). The next correct post-card wins an EISA (European Imaging & Sound Association) Award-winning JVC *UX-1000* sub-micro system, worth £270. The third lucky winner bags the brand-new Teac *H500* system (£800, excluding speakers), and last but not least, the fourth correct answer secures the £650 Technics *SC-CA01* micro-component system. Read all about these superb packages in our 'Swing Out Systems' feature, starting on p. 44 of this issue.

Does our generosity know no bounds? It does, but not before we've given away bonus prizes. The winners of the Technics and Teac systems will each receive an audiophile-quality Reference Recordings classical CD, while the winners of the JVC and the Denon systems will find their listening enhanced by a CD from famous Scandinavian audiophile jazz-label, Opus 3. Each disc, worth £13.99, is a perfect introduction to the top-quality recordings available from May Audio Marketing.

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COMPETITION

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Speaking In Tons

Do bigger boxes offer better value? To find out, **Paul Messenger** and **Paul Miller** (lab tests) compare 14 speakers priced between £400 and £1,000.

The most interesting and exciting market sector of the moment is the one where price-tags and perceived value dominate. Our £400 minimum price takes us clear of the beer-budget sector, while the £1,000 ceiling retains some affordability yet gives the designer real freedom.

In the budget sector, the bookshelf speaker (mounted on a proper stand) is still a better bet than a cheap floorstander. Move up into the £400-plus zone, though, and things start to change.

The bookshelf model still allows you the option of matching speaker to stand, but the floorstander's performance becomes increasingly viable, its looks improve, and it takes up no extra space. Models like the Mission 753, Linn *Keilidh*, Rega *ELA* and Castle *Chester* have shown what can be achieved, and plenty of other brands are queuing up to grab a slice of the action.

Our 14-strong test group comprises ten

THE CAST LIST	PRICE	PAGE
B&W <i>CDM1</i>	£600	69
Canon <i>S-75</i>	£1,000	71
Castle <i>Harlech</i>	£850	73
Epos <i>ES12</i>	£500	75
GLL <i>Imagio IC130</i>	£540	77
Monitor Audio <i>703PMC</i> ..from	£800	79
Neat <i>Mystique</i>	from £575	81
PMC <i>TB1</i>	£476	83
Polk <i>RT16</i>	£800	85
QLN <i>Qubic 222</i>	£400	87
Roksan <i>ROKone</i>	£600	89
Royd <i>Doublet</i>	£450	91
Spendor <i>2030</i>	£600	93
Tannoy <i>635</i>	£450	95

floorstanders alongside four more traditional bookshelf-size stand-mounts. Comparing the two types is complicated by the need to allow for the cost (and effect) of appropriate stands. Although our bookshelf models all sit towards the lower end of the price range, between £500 and £600, stands bump up their real-world cost.

Because of the diversity inherent in our test group, we have divided our 14 contenders into three sub-groups: stand-mount, compact floorstanders and large floorstanders. All lab-test bar-graphs are colour-coded to indicate every speaker's classification. This is explained in more detail on pages 96 and 97.

When it comes to cosmetics, many customers will happily pay extra for real wood rather than vinyl, but how much extra is harder to pin down. Some wood finishes are more costly than others, as are the larger cabinets, but the biggest speakers here are vinyl-clad, so comparing like-for-like becomes impossible.

There are several interesting variations in design (Castle and Canon, for example), but the basic driver and enclosure technologies don't differ too much between models. There is variation in the sizes of drivers and boxes, however, which begs questions of whether there is a 'right' size box and driver,



Polk RT16



GLL Imagio IC130



QLN Qubic 222



Castle Harlech

HI-FI CHOICE



B&W CDM1



Epos ES12



PMC TB1



Roksan ROKOne

HOW WE DID THE LISTENING TESTS

With 14 speakers waiting in line, the 'blind' listening tests were spread over two separate days, allowing a number of repeats.

The main reference system used for the blind 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, NAT01 tuner, NAC52 pre-amp and NAP135 power amps. Speaker cables were NACA5 and Nordost SPM. For the book-shelf models, we used speaker stands from Slate Audio and Kudos.

Thanks are due to panellists David Inman (Castle), Robin Marshall (Mission), Richard Dunn (NVA), Gary Mardell (Mordaunt-Short), Ken Weller and Laurence Dickie (B&W), Russell

Kauffman (Morel, Densen), Danny Haikin (Grahams Hi-Fi), alongside *Choice* staffers and operators Jason Kennedy and Alan Sircom.

WHAT MUSIC DID WE USE?

During the testing our play-list included excerpts from the following albums. BBC Radios Three and Four were also used extensively during the hands-on work
Protection Massive Attack
Live At The Point Christy Moore
Strange Angels Laurie Anderson
Rain Dogs Tom Waits
Symphony No.6 Sibelius/Maazel/VPO
There Is Sweet Music Rutter/Cambridge Singers
An American In Paris Gershwin/Mehta/LAPO



Tannoy 635



Canon S-75

and how size variations affect performance. Obvious, perhaps, but rarely discussed.

Our 65-square-metre test room is a little larger than average, and only two candidates (Monitor Audio, Epos) seemed acoustically small. Most suited the room well, although actual bass alignments left room for improve-

ment. The Polk and QLN would probably have preferred even bigger rooms.

When we tested budget speakers in issue 155, we had three Missions and three KEFs. By coincidence neither brand crops up this time, but the presence of some smaller players reminds us hi-fi is still a broad church.



Monitor Audio 703PMC



Neat Mystique



Royd Doublet



Spendor 2030

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B&W CDM1

Compact, bookshelf-size speakers do tend to have a certain sameness about them. The formula itself is timeless, so coming up with an interesting variation on the theme is quite an achievement. When B&W brings in a heavyweight industrial designer such as Kenneth Grange's Pentagram operation, the resultant *CDM1* is a genuine breath of fresh air.

B&W has used Pentagram for many years, and the partnership has spawned a number of classics over the duration of its relationship. However, few speakers have ever looked so drop-dead gorgeous straight from the box, while merely rep-

resenting a subtle re-working of a familiar theme. It's easy to understand why this £600 *CDM1* was voted Speaker of the Year '95/'96 (see *HFC* 148) by a pan-European jury: it makes the slightly larger and extremely successful *Matrix 801* look positively dowdy by comparison.

There's logic behind the shaping and detailing, too – function following form, on this occasion. Angling a section of the baffle helps spread internal standing waves and will help diffuse some of the tweeter reflections (the tweeter itself points forward). And the heavily post-formed cabinet edges avoid abrupt baffle-edge discontinuities.

This high-class presentation and real-wood veneer doesn't come cheap, even with a little paint work around the tricky bits, so the £600 price-tag is reasonable enough in context of the other stand-mounts assembled here.

The internal stiffening is less elaborate than the *Matrix* models, but you still get a cast-frame main driver with 115mm Kevlar cone. There's a large port, too, plus foam bungs to block it up if preferred.

Room measurements show that the bungs reduce output roughly 4–5dB 40–70Hz, and the alignment is well judged for siting a couple of feet out from the wall, or close to the wall with the bungs in place. Sensitivity and bass



VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£600
▲	Fresh styling, luxury finish and a decent, all-round sound with good bass.
▼	Styling a bit fussy for post-modernists; sound is a bit polite and restrained.
✉	B&W Loudspeakers (UK Sales) Ltd, Marlborough Rd, Churchill Industrial Estate, Lancing, W. Sussex BN15 8TR
☎	(01903) 750750

extension are very good for the box size, and tonal balance looks well ordered, apart from a dip through the presence region.

Sound Quality

Fairly unpromising listening test results are probably due to the fact that the *CDM1* was initially auditioned with the bungs in place. Hands-on comparisons established that with the port active, bass sounds less boxy and has greater dynamic freedom.

Indeed, the bass performance is one of the highlights, showing good timing and tonal discrimination. The treble, too, is sweet and pretty well judged, if a bit bright, while the midband is well ordered and quite smooth, if a little constrained and congested at the same time. The result is notably well-mannered and even-handed, if a little too inclined to curtail natural exuberance.

Conclusion

Superb styling grabs the attention, but the *CDM1*'s beauty extends beneath the skin to a fine, all-round sonic performance. The bass performance is particularly impressive, considering the modest size and decent sensitivity, although some might find the sound a little too cautious and restrained. **PMc** ▶▶

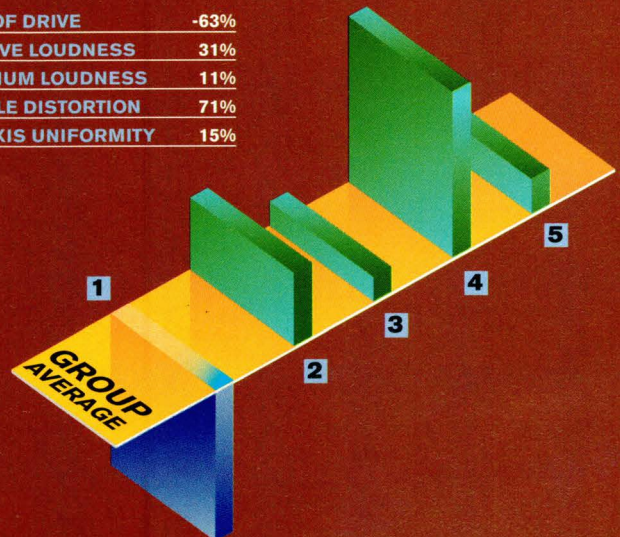
THE LAB REPORT

In my *Oasis Of Sanity* column this month (p.27), I discuss the compromises of sealed-box and reflex-loading (both of which are available with the *CDM1*). With its reflex port left unobstructed, the *CDM1* receives a welcome reinforcement at some 40 Hz, which shifts to 71 Hz with the bung fitted snugly in place. Both options lead to a minimum impedance of 4.6 Ohms at 200 Hz, as B&W accurately predicts. It's also refreshing to concur with B&W's accurate 88dB sensitivity – so many manufacturers tend to, well, err on the side of optimistic fantasy in this regard.

Beyond 120 Hz or so, it's clear neither the sealed-box or reflex-loaded bass alignments exert extra influence on the speaker's smooth-looking response or its modulus of impedance. Do note a 'blip' at 940 Hz (see also graph-point [6] on page 27), which is caused by a misterrmination between the stiff cone material and its relatively compliant surround – a problem now apparently solved by B&W's engineers. Low distortion is also a feature of the *CDM1*, whose advanced drivers suffer just 0.4 per cent (bass) to 0.25 per cent (treble) distortion at dynamic SPLs of 96dBA. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

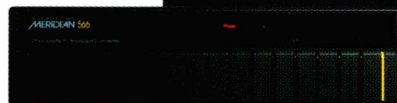
1	EASE OF DRIVE	-63%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	31%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	11%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	71%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	15%



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Canon S-75

Though it is one of the most striking-looking speakers on the market, the S-75's curious shape is unlikely to provoke a neutral reaction. My plumber was very complimentary, but spoilt it by saying how nice it would look in the corner of the lounge, which is not a sensible option. A more cynical panellist, however, described it as an over-sized under-arm deodorant.

Whatever



your personal reaction, Canon has good reasons for adopting a domed cylinder, even if breaking the rules does carry a cost penalty, resulting in a retail price of £1,000.

The buzz-phrase is 'wide-imaging stereo' (WIS). This is a technique that uses a curved 'acoustic mirror' to reflect the midrange and treble output in such a way as to broaden the listening zone in which listeners receive roughly equal sound intensity from both speakers and, therefore, hear a convincing stereo image. (Conventional speakers only really achieve this when the listener is equidistant from both speakers, say, along the central line.) Canon's WIS allows the whole family to join in – an obvious bonus with AV as well as audio-only material.

The S-75 has much in common with Canon's original S-50, reviewed and Recommended some five years ago. Although the main driver has changed considerably since then, and a separate tweeter is now used, this S-75 is, in essence, an S-50 built on top of a cylindrical subwoofer.

You won't easily find the bass driver, since it's hidden inside the cylinder. It operates in a 'coupled cavity' configuration, loaded on one side by a sealed box, on the other by a chamber ported in the base. The port is lifted clear of the floor by a circular cast-metal frame, which looks good and provides a secure spike footprint. Above the cylinder sits the 'acoustic mirror', and above that, firing downwards from beneath the dome, the small midrange driver and tweeter. The latter is built onto a 'spider's web' across the front of the mid cone, slightly offset from the centre line. It says something

VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£1,000
▲	Unique styling and 'wide stereo' to suit the whole family. Good fun.
▼	On the pricey side; sound is a bit lumpy and coloured.
✉	Canon Audio Ltd, Gastons Wood, Reading Road, Basingstoke RG24 8TW
☎	(01256) 841300

for the way speaker design has evolved that this is the only true three-way design in the test group.

Room responses imply this semi omnidirectional design is best kept clear of walls, and also revealed an uneven balance, with a rather strong midbass (50–100Hz) and a distinct notch between midband and treble (around 4.5kHz).

Sound Quality

As might have been expected, the 'differentness' of the Canon caused varying reactions from the panel, with two placing it at the top of their lists while one put it at the bottom. 'Flawed but interesting' sums things up well.

A fine sense of timing was praised by all, and the weight, scale and spaciousness were also applauded. However, there was some criticism of midband coloration, a rather heavy bottom end, and more widespread disquiet at the bright and exposed treble.

Conclusion

This Canon is not without its weaknesses, and it's also quite a pricey proposition. But it is unique, in both physical and sonic character and capabilities, and quite a lot of fun besides. Well worth checking out. *PMc*



THE LAB REPORT

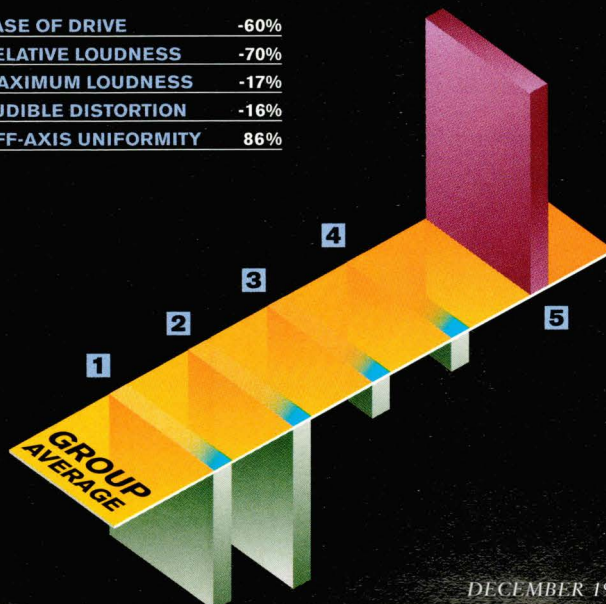
As you might expect, the technical performance of Canon's S-75 is as unusual as its space-age appearance. For starters, the 'axial' 84.4 dB sensitivity must be corrected, to account for the speaker's hemispherical radiation pattern, bringing it closer to 88 dB, but still some two dB short of Canon's spec.

Otherwise, I have to say the response obtained here was identical to that supplied by Canon, including the seven dB loss in output at 4.5 kHz and cancellation notches visible, although not necessarily audible, at 10.5 kHz and 13.4 kHz respectively. So the S-75's response is far from 'flat' but at least it's very consistent, regardless of your horizontal listening axis. Thanks to WIS, no conventional speaker in this group could come close to matching the off-axis uniformity of the S-75.

Which leaves us with distortion (quite high at one to two per cent through mid and lower treble) and a rather awkward impedance trend, which captures the S-75's high-Q port resonance at 72 Hz before falling around or below six Ohms from 160 Hz to 1.45 kHz. With a minimum of 3.8 Ohms at 860 Hz and an average impedance of 7.04 Ohms, only the modest phase angles prevent it from giving your amp a really hard time! *PMc*

HOW IT COMPARES

EASE OF DRIVE	-60%
RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-70%
MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-17%
AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-16%
OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	86%





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Castle Harlech

Castle has spent several years developing a range of floorstanding loudspeakers that use a different method of bass loading than any other brand, and offer a unique driver distribution, too. The very big *Winchester* and half-size *Chester* paved the way, but are now superseded.

First came the £1,000 *Howard* (issue 132), which was the first attempt to create a cross between the two – good enough for Recommendation, but it could have been smoother overall. Enter the new £850 *Harlech*, which is similar in layout to the *Howard*, but about £150 cheaper, roughly 25 per cent smaller, and out to prove that Welsh Castles sing sweetest of all.

For many of today's floorstanders, the box volume can be a bit of an embarrassment in a typical reflex arrangement, often leading to some of the enclosure being blocked off. Castle opts for something called 'quarter wave' loading, which takes up much more space and has some similarities to horn loading. The (two) waves are terminated in a narrow but precise slot, between plinth and enclosure – the intention being partly to augment the bass but also to provide superior diaphragm control.

Perceived value is very good. That £850

buys a pair of hefty (21kg) speakers, which are nearly a metre tall. Each of the speakers has two cast-frame main drivers, a separate plinth with extended footprint, and some of the classiest real-wood finishes in the business. The in-room balance is mostly very positive, too. Like *Howard*, *Harlech's* bottom end is a bit detached and lumpy, and the speaker needs to be sited clear of walls. However, its midband is altogether flatter and smoother than its more expensive brother's, and the treble is better integrated and maintained.

The upward-facing extra main driver radiates sound into the room with a rather different pattern, increasing the reflected/direct sound ratio compared to forward-facing drivers, adding to the scale and spaciousness.

Sound Quality

The *Harlech* came out as the overall favourite in the listening sessions. The sound is generous in the way it fills the room, yet it's also delicate and light on its feet. It has fine dynamic range and tension, bringing through a convincing acoustic with appropriate recordings.

Superior bottom-end control makes the bass tuneful with good timing, even if it is a bit uneven and lacking in authority. The balance might be a bit forward for some tastes, and the treble rather exposed for some CD players, but the whole is much greater than the parts. As one panellist remarked: "It's harder to listen to the speaker than the music!"

Conclusion

I just hope Castle hasn't stockpiled too many *Howards*, because, in my opinion,

this new *Harlech* is not only smaller and cheaper, it's also rather better. It favours a largish room and probably suits acoustic music better than synthesised. But above all, the *Harlech* offers an exceptionally entertaining and enjoyable musical experience at a very realistic price – an obvious Best Buy. *PM*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
 VALUE ★★★★★
 PRICE £850

▲ Fine midband dynamics and transparency; fills the room with music.

▼ Bass is a bit lumpy and detached; better with acoustic instruments than techno.

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

THE LAB REPORT

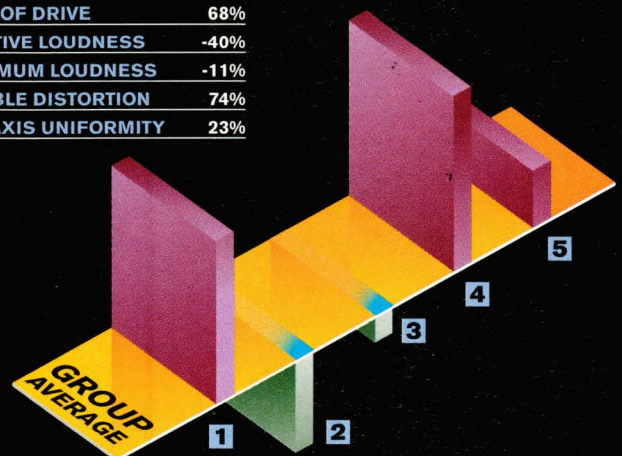
This unusual speaker employs two small, polypropylene bass/mid units, each working into its own cavity. These are a pair of quarter-wave pipes tuned to 54 Hz and 78 Hz respectively, that exit in unison at the base. For this joined port not to be shorted or resistively loaded by a thick carpet, it's important for the *Harlech* to be raised on all four corners using the supplied spikes.

Measured in such a fashion, this 'distributed port' is clearly tuned to a practical 55 Hz, but the ensuing driver/box resonance looks very abrupt indeed, reaching a maximum of 30 Ohms at 89 Hz before falling sharply to below eight Ohms, where it settles between 150–500 Hz. The impedance trend also highlights an appreciable 'glitch' at 745 Hz, sitting midway along a broad depression in the speaker's output, which is probably caused by destructive interference between the two bass/mid drivers.

Incidentally, this pairing also complicates the speaker's sensitivity, which, measured on-axis, measures 86.4 dB, although, with the second driver's contribution taken into account, a figure of 88 dB seems closer to the mark. Also strongly in the *Harlech's* favour is the very low 0.2–0.45 per cent distortion – a performance maintained across the entire audioband. *PM*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	68%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-40%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-11%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	74%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	23%



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Epos ES12

Awarded Best Buy back in 1991 (issue 94), the Epos *ES11* has both defined and dominated the market for high-quality, luxury-finish, bookshelf-size loudspeakers even since. Loudspeaker technology may not change radically or rapidly, but it does evolve slowly but surely, so several years down the road, a number of new development opportunities are available to update, refine and improve an old friend.

The new £500 *ES12* looks virtually identical to its famous predecessor – after all, why change a successful formula? – and the appearance doesn't look in any way dated, either. The classic shape is finished in a tasteful, real-wood

veneer (choose from light or dark cherry, or walnut), and the front panel is all the cleaner for elegantly 'radiussed' baffle edge.

The front panel is just one of many detail changes, though. There's a new tweeter (a 25mm aluminium-dome device) which is now made in-house. The bass driver has a new injection-moulded cone, and the solitary crossover component – a single capacitor protecting the tweeter from low frequencies – has also been upgraded. The bi-wire terminals fitted offer increased current capacity, and 'gas-flow' shaping has reduced turbulence in the rear-panel port.

The whole thing feels very hefty, implying a very solid, wood-veneered wrap, since both back and front panels are precision structural plastic mouldings, the latter incorporating the frame of the main driver. A new matching stand is planned, but was not available for review.

I dug out the *ES11* data from issue 94, to investigate any obvious changes from the '11 to the '12. The impedances are very similar, even down to the main cone termination 'glitch' at 750Hz, while the bottom end has been slightly realigned.

The *ES12*'s overall balance is very similar to the *ES11*'s, but slightly tighter in the midbass (there's no low bass here) and still rather lean in the upper bass. Both the broad midband and the treble are significantly smoother than the *ES11*, but extending the upper roll-off point of the main

VERDICT

SOUND VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE ★★★★★

PRICE £500

▲ Fine midband gives exceptional stereo imaging, with great depth and focus.

▼ Limited bass weight, and a touch of nasality on voice reproduction.

✉ Epos Acoustics, 3 Ridgway, Havant, Hants PO9 1JS
☎ (01705) 407722

driver has made the transition between them rather more abrupt.

Sound Quality

A mixed and widely varied response in the blind listening tests makes the reviewer's life difficult, and if the *ES12* came out about average overall – the most popular comment was "a good effort" – some listeners were much more impressed than others.

Fine stereo imaging and a freedom from boxiness are major plus points, and the broad midband is unquestionably open, well ordered and coherent. However, a touch of brightness and 'nasal' voice coloration does intrude towards the top end of the band. And while the bass end has good punch, it lacks some weight and dynamic contrast – the intended matching stand might help here.

Conclusion

The *ES12*, unquestionably, has a great midrange, capable of delivering a precise stereo sound-stage with convincing depth. Certainly improving on its illustrious predecessor in several respects, it also seems a little less artful at disguising its limitations. It's better suited to the smaller room, and a compatible system will be vital to get the most from this entertaining speaker. *PM*



THE LAB REPORT

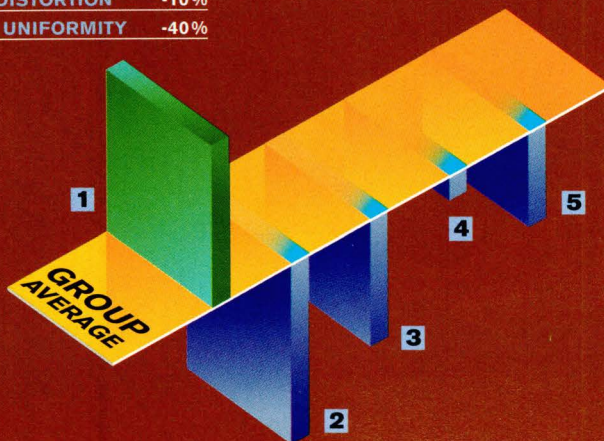
This model evolved from the Epos *ES11*, and trades a reduction in sensitivity for a very easy-going impedance curve. The 85.3 dB sensitivity recorded here is certainly lower than Epos' figure of 88 dB, but at least the speaker load remains resolutely above eight Ohms (average equals 10.8 Ohms), only falling below eight Ohms above 10.5 kHz, where the phase angle also swings to a rather surprising 55 degrees. Surprising, that is, because the *ES12* is equipped with a simple, first-order RC network for the treble arm.

A blip in the impedance trend suggests a cone surround mistermiation at 625 Hz, but it is the erratic response that lends the *ES12* much of its 'character' and throws out the broadband sensitivity en route. Interestingly, there's an obvious peak at 1.3 kHz, which is where most manufacturers will specify their sensitivity.

Further peaks occur at 2.2 kHz and 3.5 kHz with an axial dip – suggesting that integration between the drivers could be improved – appearing mid-way at 2.8 kHz. The treble range is very smooth by comparison, but it's the mid-band, yet again, that suffers an increase in third-harmonic distortion to 1.4 per cent. Is this a deliberate ruse? *PM*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	69%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-77%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-53%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-10%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-40%



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GLL Imagio IC130

GLL's Inductive Coupling Technology (ICT) is a patented method of energising a metal-skirted, dome-shaped treble diaphragm, sited within the magnetic gap of a bass/mid drive unit. The treble diaphragm has no voice-coil of its own, and is not connected electrically to the amplifier. Instead, it collects treble energy through electrical induction from the bass/mid voice-coil, just like a transformer's secondary winding picks up current from the primary. The lack of a tweeter voice-coil means there is no risk of burn-out due to amplifier overdrive, which is a major advantage over conventional tweeters.

A major part of GLL's business is driver manufacture for other industries, notably cars and TV sets, and here ICT has been used successfully for a number of years. And the emerging AV market welcomed the ICT-equipped, general-purpose *Arena* with open arms (e.g. *Sessions*, HFC 129).

A hi-fi application has been a long time coming, but now we have the *Imagio* range: four models all told, comprising a bookshelf-size *IC100*, plus three floorstanders with one, two and three drivers respectively. The *IC130*, which is the subject of this report, is the largest of these, standing over a metre

tall and costing £540 – which is reasonable for one of the largest speakers in this test.

The upper of the three drivers here is the ICT bass/mid/tweeter, which operates full range in its own sealed-box section. It has a polymer cone, and a 'time-aligned' aluminium treble diaphragm. The lower two units are bass-only drivers, reflex loaded by a front port. The cosmetics are executed neatly enough, although the 'rosewood' vinyl woodprint is unconvincing. Modest spikes are fitted poorly into the base.

A speaker with this amount of bass-radiating area will obviously work best when sited clear of walls, and has an impressively even and flat response through the bass region. Trouble is, there's not enough treble to match up. The balance is pretty flat up to 1.5kHz, but starts to drop away until -8dB is registered at 7kHz, prior to a recovery peak at 12kHz. Adverse subjective implications are, alas, unavoidable.

Sound Quality

The ear can adjust to a wide range of tonal balances, but the dull, dark and irredeemably heavy sound of the *IC130* was too much for our panel. It came bottom of the class by quite a large margin, and only one listener gave it even an average mark. Nonetheless, its low-frequency response is both extended and even, and the plentiful sound output will be welcome for AV. One off-axis listener commented on surprisingly good stereo imagery.

Conclusion

ICT is undoubtedly an innovation with broad applications across the whole field of audio. It is hard to judge the worth of ICT in this design, however, because the quantity and/or

quality of the bass overshadows the performance of the novel treble diaphragm. Nonetheless, the *IC130* remains is a lot of speaker for the money. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £540

▲ Delivers even, deep and loud bass at a very reasonable price.

▼ Not enough treble to match the bass; gives a very dull and shut-in sound.

✉ GLL, 3 Ridgway, Havant, Hampshire PO9 1JS

☎ (01705) 492777

THE LAB REPORT

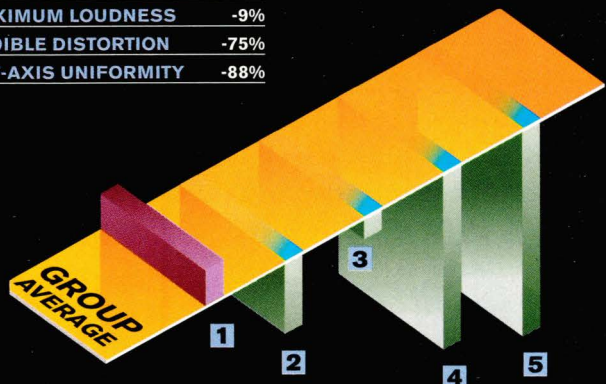
This tall floorstander is equipped with two reflex-loaded mid/bass units and topped-off with a (sealed) ICT unit, which features the distinctive bullet-shaped termination which acts as a horn load for the ICT treble dome. This technology is behind an unusual HF impedance trend, which climbs away beyond 60 Ohms (yes, 60!), where dynamic phase angles approaching +35 degrees should not prove troublesome.

The construction of the ICT tweeter, and its phase plug in particular, is responsible for a sharp seven-kHz axial dip, which recovers between ten to 15 kHz, only to fall off again thereafter. The off-axis response is somewhat smoother, but it's this change in response that prompts such a poor showing in the 'off-axis uniformity' category (5).

There are bigger bugs in the bass department, where GLL's damping of the 81 Hz port resonance encourages the extended output of a traditional sealed-box system, trading some low-frequency reinforcement for a gentler second-order roll-off by way of compensation. Sadly, this extended LF is not particularly clean, suffering two to three percent THD where 0.5–0.7 per cent would be more appropriate. If GLL could reduce this figure, I believe it would go a long way to address our criticisms of the *IC130*'s overpowering bass. *PMI*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	14%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-31%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-9%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-75%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-88%



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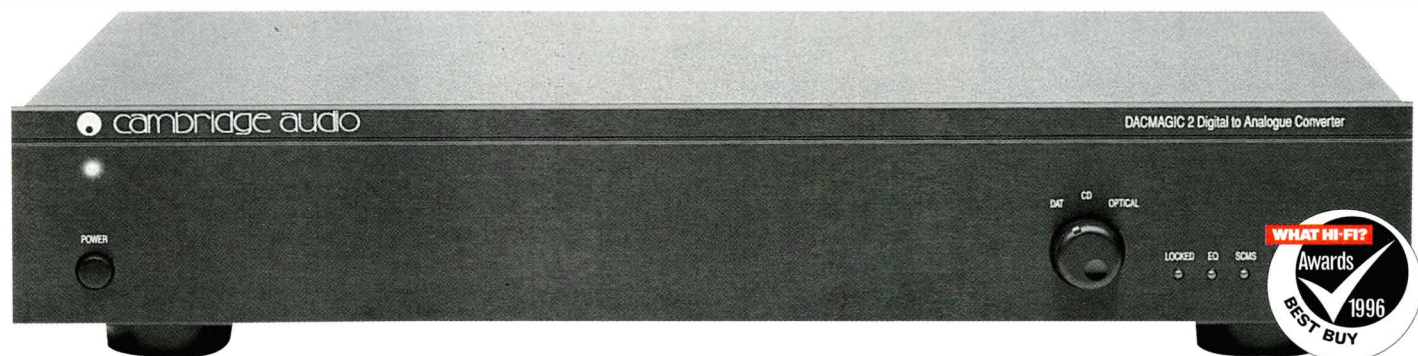
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Monitor Audio 703PMC

Monitor Audio has long been known for turning out some of the prettiest woodwork imaginable, and this Rosemah-veneered compact floor-stander is no exception. Exactly what a Rosemah tree is, I'm not sure – it probably comes from the land where fish have fingers and corn grows in flakes. Whatever, it's got to be about the finest surface finish around, and that's reflected in a price premium of £100 over the black version.

This £800/£900 703 PMC is the third model up a four-strong range, the smallest of which was covered earlier this year (issue 152). Although the two differ considerably in size and shape, they actually have a great deal in common, notably the cast-frame metal diaphragm drivers. These are very classy affairs indeed, although the gilt anodising might be a bit OTT for some tastes (and the grille is better avoided).

Like a number of other compact floor-standers, the whole of the internal box volume is too large for ideal working with the main driver, and the lower section is blanked off. A small inspection hatch allows ballast to be added here. Spikes are fitted directly into the bottom panel, so the fore-and-aft footprint is limited.

Bass extension is similarly constrained,

rolling off rapidly below 50Hz on our in-room measurements. These show that the happiest position for the 703 is well clear of room boundaries, whereupon it delivers a remarkably flat and smooth balance, right up through the treble, albeit with a more rapid roll-off than usual in the treble as well as the bass. Unusually – perhaps controversially – the crossover network involves a measure of equalisation to 'peak up' the main driver output just prior to the (highish) 4kHz electrical crossover point.

Sound Quality

The listening panel was pretty impressed by the 703, with every listener rating it average or better, although the level of enthusiasm did vary. The even-handedness and neutrality was widely appreciated, and the midband is very well handled, bringing plenty of well-focused fine detail to voices in particular.

However, the sound is also a bit small and mid-dominant – as one panellist put it: "A safe loudspeaker... easy on the ear, but I want it to let go and try harder." The hands-on work raised some additional question marks. The balance is very well suited to playing at modest levels, with the slight forwardness helping detail intelligibility. Start turning up the volume, though, and the experience becomes less comfortable. An initially attractive top-end 'sheen' starts to become a bit of a glare, and dynamics begin to sound a little congested.

Conclusion

The 703 is well suited to smaller rooms, and is particularly effective when operating at modest levels, with splendid midband coherence and clear, clean, well-projected detail – a rare strength, which demands

recognition by Recommendation. Though the price may be high for the engineering content involved, the finish and presentation are well ahead of the pack, too. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE From £800

▲ Fine midband projection, with loads of detail and good focus; excellent cabinetwork.

▼ A bit pricey for the ingredients; up-front sound can become fatiguing.

✉ Monitor Audio Ltd, Unit 34, Clifton Rd, Cambridge CB1 4ZW
 ☎ (01223) 242898

THE LAB REPORT

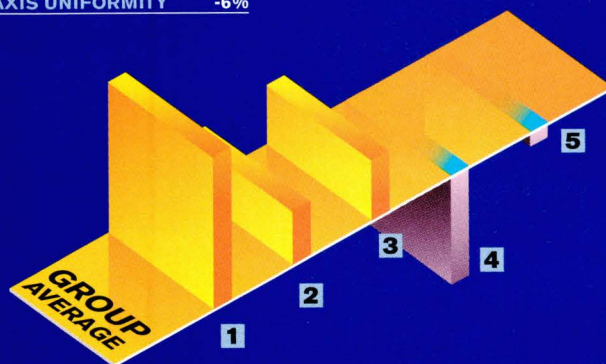
This charismatic loudspeaker is both reasonably sensitive and efficient, for although our measured figure of 87.9 dB/one-metre is somewhat lower than MA's optimistic 90 dB, at least this has been achieved without recourse to a current-hungry impedance trend. In reality, the 703 PMC is fairly easy to drive, with LF phase angles well controlled and a load limited to a mere 6.9 Ohms minimum at 210 Hz and an average figure of 10.5 Ohms.

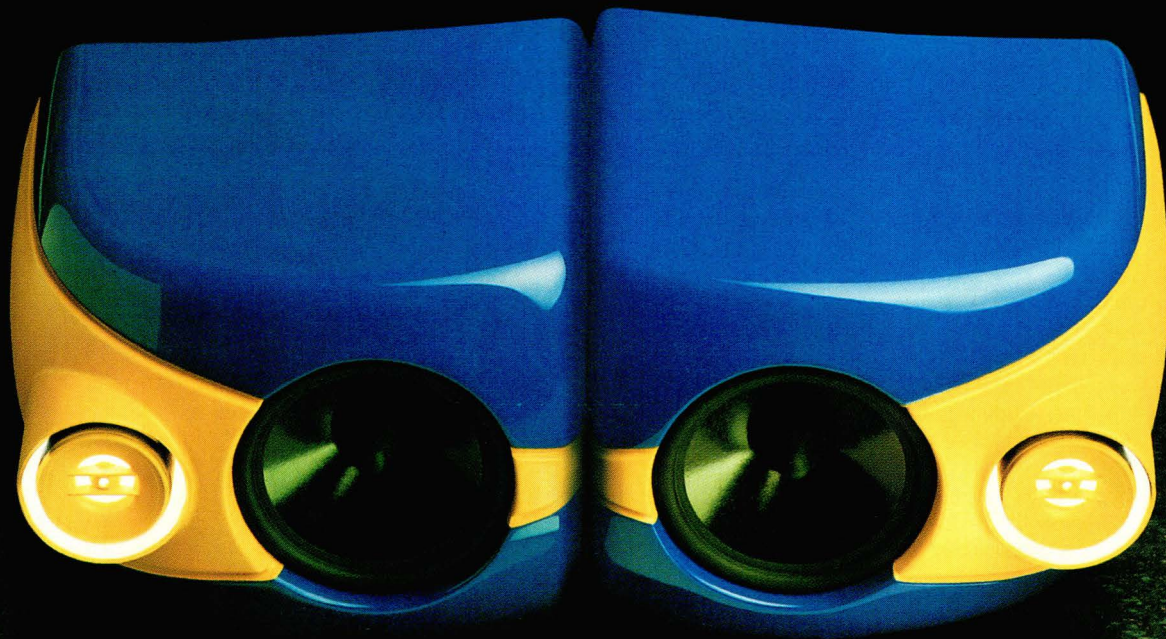
However, the 703 does show an additional and unexpected dip near the crossover point at 2.6 kHz, where the phase angle also switches abruptly from -22 to +10 degrees. The impedance is still above eight Ohms here, but this switch does match-up with a series of irregular-looking peaks through the speaker's upper-midband, where distortion, and particularly third, fourth and fifth harmonics, increase to around two per cent. This will undoubtedly add a little 'hardness' to its sound.

Otherwise, the 703PMC's extreme treble seems to die-away beyond 15 kHz or so. In reality, this is merely the lull before the storm (inaudible though it is) of the metal tweeter's dome resonance, which peaks abruptly at 25-27 kHz. Bass, meanwhile, is augmented via a fairly sharp, high-Q 52 Hz port resonance. *PMI*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	64%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	21%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	26%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-45%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-6%





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Neat Mystique

Neat Acoustics is a small County Durham operation that keeps a pretty low profile, but has nevertheless created something of a cult reputation with the small but pricey *Petite*. Those two adjectives don't apply to this *Mystique*, which is a handsome, real-wood-veneered floorstander. It's unquestionably one of the best lookers in our group, but sells for a competitive £575 in black. The cherry wood variation costs £650.

Neat by name and nature: clean lines are the reason the *Mystique* looks so good. No attempt has been made to cover up the drive units, so they're tidily recessed into the baffle, and there are no unsightly mounting lugs to give a half-finished 'something-is-missing' impression. Veneer covers all five visible faces, and each edge has been precisely rounded to soften the look and feel. The whole thing is mounted on a chunky little plinth, which is painted to match the woodwork. This provides secure mounting and a decent footprint for the floorspikes.

The enclosure is wider than its depth, which is perhaps not the current fashion, but does allow a decent-sized main driver to be used, and keeps the box volume modest. The fashion for floorstanders can

give too great a box volume for many drivers, and Neat blanks off the lower 190mm of the enclosure, suggesting it can be filled with ballast, leaving an acoustically active volume of 16.5 litres – similar to a medium-sized bookshelf model. The rear panel is fitted with a small port, plus two pairs of 4mm sockets mounted through a recessed wooden panel. No links are provided, in order to encourage bi-wiring.

Neat's leaflet claims that no response measurements were made until the design had been finalised, so it's maybe surprising to find the *Mystique* delivering a fine in-room balance, provided it's kept clear of walls. Good bass extension and alignment are achieved at some cost to sensitivity, and while the overall trend is very good, there's a certain amount of unevenness, too.

Sound Quality

The majority of our listeners warmed to the *Mystique* sound, although there were enough dissenters to haul down the ratings and plant seeds of doubt in the reviewer's mind. This is very much a try-before-you-buy proposition, as those who took against this inoffensive-looking speaker were quite strong in their criticisms, while its supporters enjoyed the easygoing and natural coherence of its music making.

The main strength lies in the voice band, which manages to sound clear, detailed and open, without resorting to unnatural forwardness. Decent bass weight and extension give a good sense of scale and a generous sound stage, although it has to be admitted that dynamics are a little lazy.

Conclusion

Not to every taste perhaps, the *Mystique* is, nonetheless, an easy speaker to like, with fine voice reproduction and a natural and relaxing musicality. Sensitivity is modest, but the real-wood box looks most attractive, and the whole thing represents solid value at £650. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★☆
PRICE From £575

▲ Fine voicing, a handsome cabinet and an easy-going sound with good scale.

▼ Sensitivity is below average and the dynamics are a bit lazy.

✉ Neat Acoustics, Unit 1a, Stainton Grove Ind Est, Barnard Castle, Co Durham DL12 8UJ
 ☎ (01833) 631021

THE LAB REPORT

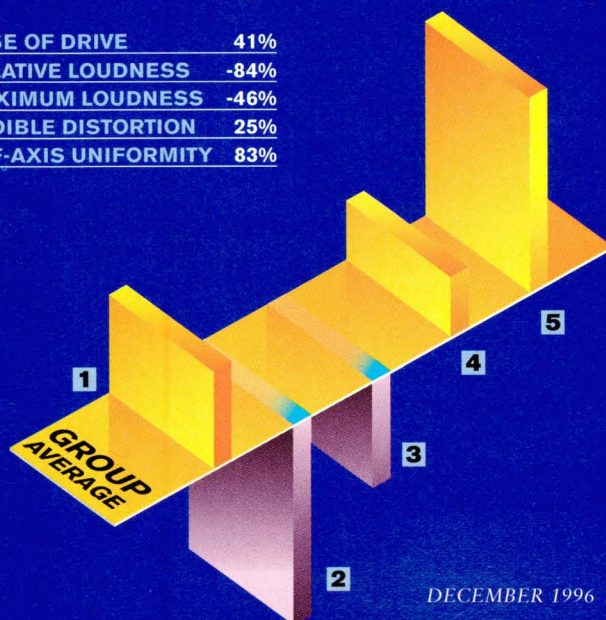
The art of loudspeaker design is often something of a compromise. In this case, Neat Acoustics has traded a decrease in sensitivity (and maximum loudness) for a consistent off-axis response and a nominal eight Ohms impedance, which drops to a thoroughly innocuous 6.5 Ohms at 175 Hz. So the *Mystique*, rather like the Epos *ES12*, will never blow ornaments off the shelf, but neither, I might add, will it cook your amplifier.

Neat's bass/mid unit appears to feature a large voice coil and is reflex-loaded via a small rear-firing port, to yield a broad, low-Q reinforcement centred on a fairly low 35 Hz. The upper bass and midband is somewhat smoother in appearance, but does droop towards what I assume is the crossover point at around three kHz, before a bumpy-looking treble takes over.

Distortion, under dynamic conditions, registers as a moderate 0.4 to one per cent across the audioband, although a 'glitch' in the impedance curve at 290 Hz corresponds to a very obvious cabinet panel resonance – a 'buzz' that's easily excited by applying a swept tone to the loudspeaker. Whether this is a design or QC issue is uncertain, but either way, Neat should address what could be a potential problem area. *PMI*

HOW IT COMPARES

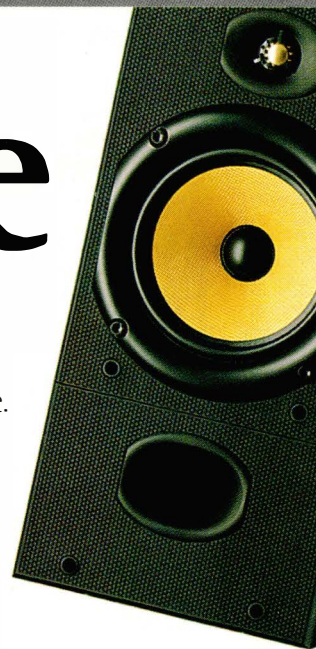
1	EASE OF DRIVE	41%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-84%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-46%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	25%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	83%



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PMC TB1

The epithet 'monitor' must be one of the most misused words in the hi-fi lexicon, so an operation that calls itself 'The Professional Monitor Company' is liable to start alarm bells ringing. However, the last time I spoke to one of its principals, he was jetting off to the film studios in LA, where the company's full-size, active-drive monitors are busy mixing the latest blockbuster soundtracks. Cred assured.

PMC, as it's now called, was founded a few years ago, and *Choice* examined two upmarket pro-oriented models back in '92/'93, with fine results. This £476 TB1, however, is primarily aimed at

the domestic hi-fi market. There are obvious cost savings in most areas, while the shape and presentation also fit our domestic stereotypes better. But at least two key PMC features have been retained: the TB1 is a stand-mount speaker, and the enclosure is a variation on the transmission-line theme.

Presentation is attractive enough, in a rather sober, understated way, with real-wood veneer around the wrap, and a textured charcoal-grey finish to front and back. A large transmission-line-type port is set into the back, along with a pair of terminals for (optional) bi-wire connection. The main driver has a cast-frame and doped-paper cone 125mm in diameter.

The room measurements tend to favour free-space siting, but under these conditions the midband (250Hz-1kHz) is rather prominent. Close-to-wall positioning helps match up the bass and midrange a bit better, but correspondingly leaves the treble looking rather obviously depleted.

Sound Quality

Having recently been very impressed by the TB1 (*Instant Systems*, HFC 157), the rather ambivalent listening test results were a little disappointing, but quite explicable in context.

This speaker has a very 'laid back' balance, which seems to act as a disadvantage under our controlled conditions, depending somewhat on the character of the preceding model. Subsequent hands-on

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £476

▲ Impressively coherent and tidy, with a wide and broad dynamic range.

▼ A bit too laid back for its own good, perhaps; bass could be smoother.

✉ The Professional Monitor Company, Unit 72, Hazelemere Industrial Estate, Welwyn Garden City, Herts. AL7 1BD

☎ (01707) 393002

experiments showed that precise positioning is quite critical, and that the locations used during the blind testing were a little too close to the wall.

Adjusting to the TB1's character and getting it correctly placed may take a little time, but are well worth the effort. The end result remains determinedly laid back and understated, and may not have quite enough impact for some tastes, especially when playing at low levels. However, it has a rare ability to create a well-ordered and precisely layered soundstage, with fine top-to-bottom coherence and a wide, clean and unusually consistent dynamic range. Crank up the volume and it just gets louder, stays tidy and becomes increasingly convincing, without ever becoming hard – reminding one that studio speakers are accustomed to heavy-handed treatment.

Conclusion

The TB1 is maybe a little too inclined to hide its light under a laid-back balance, but the more one perseveres, the greater the reward, and the more one comes to appreciate the speaker's professional heritage and fine dynamic range. An obvious Best Buy – play it loud and enjoy. *PMc*



THE LAB REPORT

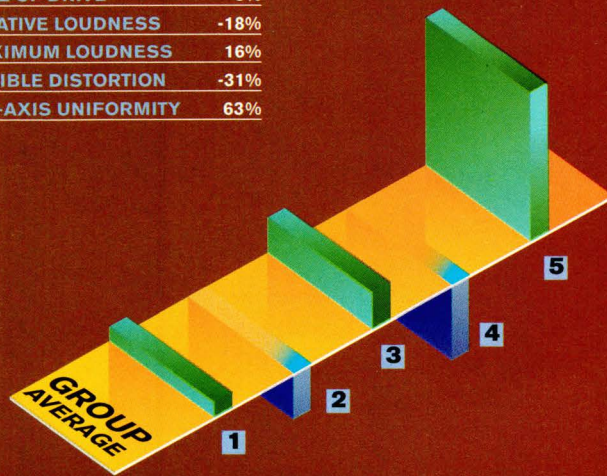
Judging by the bargraph, PMC's TB1 seems fairly representative of the 'average' loudspeaker within this group. Its 0.4-0.9 per cent distortion across the audioband (96 dBA), and healthy 104-105 dBA maximum SPL (dynamic conditions, three per cent THD), are right on the nail, but there's more to define the TB1's 'character'.

Specifically, PMC uses a metal-dome tweeter with protective phase plate, above a doped-paper bass/mid unit, which is reflex-loaded via a short, chubby transmission line (what PMC calls transflex-loading). The large, foam-plugged box-section port at the rear of the enclosure is sufficiently resistive to modify the fourth-order bass alignment, encouraging a broad, low-Q output centred on 51 Hz – thoroughly sensible for a box of this modest size.

An additional resonance on the impedance curve at 185 Hz fails to complicate the reactive component of the TB1's load, which remains within 15 degrees below eight Ohms. The response features a 'warming' influence up to 200 Hz, beyond which there's a steady loss in output through the mid and lower treble before a boost beyond five kHz. Hence our computed sensitivity of 86.8 dB/one metre/2.83 V is a little short of the claimed 89 dB. *PMI*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	6%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-18%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	16%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-31%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	63%



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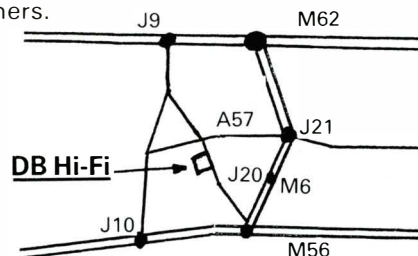
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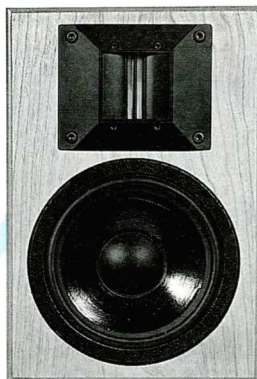
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Polk RT16

American speaker brands have such a big home market to supply, export becomes a relatively low priority. Polk has been one of the biggest players on the US scene for many years, but is a relative newcomer to the UK, and is still in the process of building up its profile.

That the company is a formidable force is clear from the extent of its vast range. That it is also able to offer decent material value is evident from this large floorstanding *RT16*, which costs a substantial £800, but which is also considerably larger and heavier than any of the other models assembled here.

Are speakers born and raised in the US of A really suited to the UK environment? Probably, but for some reason I always seem to get sent the largest – and arguably, least suitable – models in the range. The *RT16* has no fewer than six smaller *RT*-series brothers. It's no coincidence that leading UK brands are often reluctant to have their largest models reviewed here; they expect to sell these models mainly in overseas markets, where lounges tend to be larger.

Big and heavy, it is; pretty, it is not. The vinyl pseudo-wood is particularly unconvincing, as well as difficult to overlook. Two fair-size main drivers operate in tandem,

loaded by the large box and similarly generous port, cunningly built into a plinth, spaced apart from the main box. Said plinth and the cabinet top are shaped to add a touch of styling, but are fighting something of a losing battle against this big box.

The in-room balance is interesting in several respects, showing fine bass extension as well as high sensitivity, and a mostly flat, broad midband 200Hz–5kHz, which is somewhat uneven around the lowish crossover point (1.5kHz electrical). The problems are that the bass (40kHz–150Hz) is too strong, even clear of walls, and the tweeter starts to struggle a bit above 6kHz.

Sound Quality

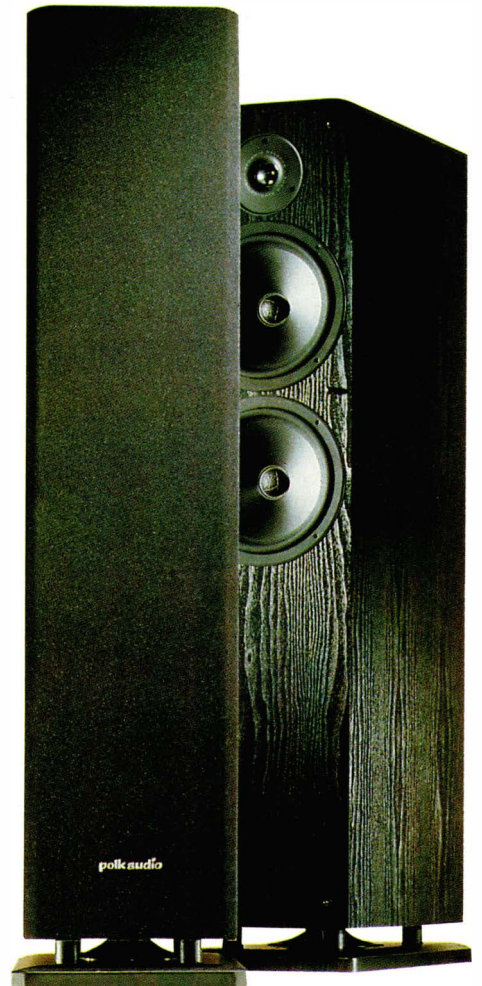
The overweight bass was bound to dominate panellist reactions, and undoubtedly contributed to a below-average overall ranking. There was also criticism of a rather 'up-front' upper midband and 'scratchy' treble, so it might be said the sound is somewhat cosmetically challenged.

However, the news isn't by any means all bad. Half the panel found the *RT16* rather entertaining, despite its peculiarities. There's a dynamic effortlessness and headroom, which sets it apart from the pack, while the dynamic range is wider and cleaner than most, too. It's not really sweet enough to make the most of classical material, but spinning *The Prodigy Experience* was quite a revelation, positively encouraging the liberal application of volume, with the high sensitivity permitting serious sound pressure levels without serious discomfort.

Conclusion

Arguably it's too big for most UK rooms, but if you want to hold your own private rave,

and/or annoy the neighbours with the latest blockbuster video, this is still the speaker to do it. What the *RT16* may lack in subtlety, it makes up for with a healthy dose of gusto and infectious enthusiasm. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £800

▲ High sensitivity and loudness capability, plus plenty of gusto and enthusiasm.

▼ Too much bass and not enough treble gives a rich, heavy sound.

✉ Polk Audio UK, Tyttenhanger House, Coursers Rd, St Albans AL4 0PG
 ☎ (01727) 827311

THE LAB REPORT

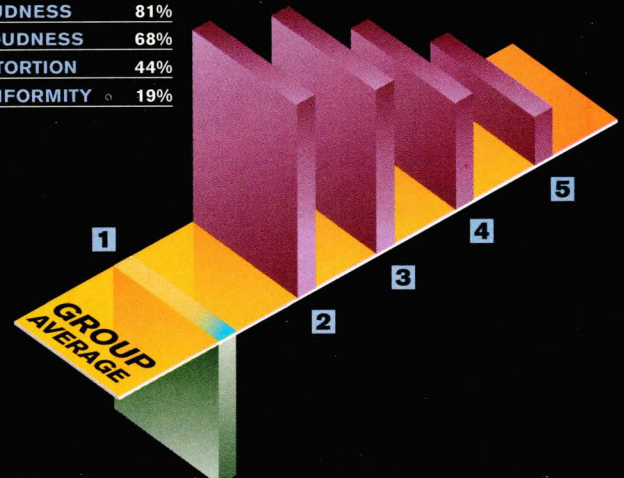
This huge floorstanding loudspeaker conceals a large, downward-firing reflex port, whose broad low-Q output is centred around a sensible 39 Hz, and lends its two bass/mid drivers a fourth-order LF alignment. The combined driver-in-box resonance at 65 Hz is far sharper, but it's not linked to some small discontinuities in the impedance trend at 155 Hz and 204 Hz, or, indeed, to the cone/surround misterrmination at 440 Hz, where there's also a +28 degree phase angle.

The average load represented by the *RT16* amounts to 7.6 Ohms, with minima of 3.8 Ohms in the bass, which amounts to one of the tougher drives in this test. A low-impedance load often goes hand-in-hand with a high sensitivity, and here the *RT16* is no exception, with its thunderous 91.3 dB/one metre/2.83 V measured performance, equivalent to a maximum SPL of some 110 dBA in the average room! Hence the easy-sounding dynamics.

Distortion is also low at typically 0.3–0.45 per cent across the audioband at 96 dBA – a level that obviously causes far greater stress to the less sensitive models in our survey. Oodles of SPL is the *RT16*'s trademark, for its lumpy-looking response – with peaks throughout the mid and treble – suggest a far from neutral sound. *PMi*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-61%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	81%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	68%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	44%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	19%



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QLN Qubic 222

I can recall reviewing some QLN speakers many years ago: little pyramid affairs from Sweden, quite possibly built from depleted uranium given their massive weights and price-tags. (Archivists can check out issues 78 and 82.) QLN disappeared from the UK scene for a while, but now it's back with a new distributor and a very different kind of product.

The £400 *Qubic 222* looks like the stereotypical budget floorstander, which is fair enough since it's been around for several years. It's almost totally devoid of embellishment, and must go down as one of the least attractive-looking speakers on the market. The excuse, of course, is that you're paying for the sound and engineering rather than expensive, frilly bits, which is entirely valid in a Volvo sort of way.

Hair-shirt presentation, however, is backed up by solid and generous engineering. The drivers certainly weren't found in the bargain basement, and the box feels very solid indeed. There's even a separate plinth to reinforce the base and secure the spikes, although one of these started to come away and had to be re-secured with heftier screws.

I would suggest removing the thick-framed grille, even if it does mean putting up

with several square feet of textured black and a couple of surface-mount drivers. The rear panel accommodates a large port and a single-terminal pair. There's no bi-wiring option here, because the 222 is (very) unusual in using a series rather than parallel network.

The large port implies, and the room measurements confirmed, that the 222 is best kept clear of walls. I fully concur with QLN's suggestion that it is best suited to larger rooms, since the bass is always a little strong in our 65-square metre listening room, although elsewhere the balance is impressively smooth and even.

Sound Quality

One day I'm going to find a speaker that scores a straight average five out of ten from every panellist. The 222 came incredibly close, receiving that said score from five out of the six of us. Which, for the least expensive speaker in our group, is quite a result. But do we really want an 'average' loudspeaker? I'm not sure. To quote one panellist's summary: "Nothing desperately wrong, yet I can't find anything to enthuse about. Does that make it boring?"

The sound is big and generous, but the bass excess tends to thicken and cloud the issue somewhat, while the upper midband is also a bit shut in and congested, with a slightly 'cupped hand' coloration. However, the sound is very even throughout, with well-ordered perspectives, and if the absence of undesirable artefacts is something of a negative virtue, it's still an important factor.

Conclusion

No question, the *Qubic 222* offers a lot of very competent loudspeaker for a very

reasonable £400. The bass alignment is better suited to larger rooms, although the mild excess will be welcomed by some users. The sound elsewhere is very well behaved, if not the most exciting or invigorating around. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £400

▲ Fine material value, and an impressively even and well-mannered sound.

▼ Styling by default, and a sound that lacks brio and mid transparency.

✉ QLN (UK) Ltd, Unit 7 Aber Pk Ind Est, Flint, Clwyd CH6 5EX

☎ (01352) 730251

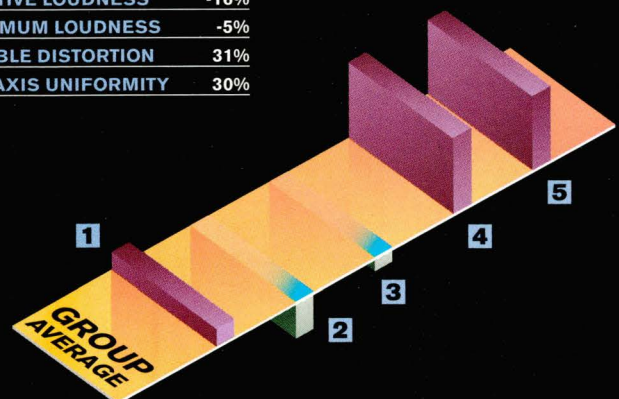
THE LAB REPORT

In perfect accord with the listening tests, the QLN turns-in a fairly 'average' set of measurements. On the one hand, this tall and slim floorstander is endowed with a very generous bass, reinforced by the reflex loading of its 6.5 inch bass/mid unit via a large rear-firing port. This is tuned to a very low 39 Hz, and causes a 'hump' in the bass response that's followed by further 'humps', from 800 Hz to three kHz and three kHz to nine kHz across the mid and treble respectively. Then again, irregular though it is, at least the response remains reasonably consistent over a wide listening axis.

Impedance falls below six Ohms from 110 Hz-350 Hz, but with a minimum of 4.9 Ohms at 210 Hz and an average of 9.8 Ohms, the 222 turns out to be an easier load than QLN's own literature might suggest. The 88.5 dB sensitivity is also a little lower than QLN suggests but is still perfectly generous, while distortion, ranging from 0.6 per cent in the bass to just 0.25 per cent in the treble, is really rather good at dynamic levels approaching 96 dBA. With such inherent low levels of coloration, the 222 could be on the verge of greater things, should its bass be taken firmly in hand. *PMi*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	7%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-16%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-5%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	31%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	30%





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The Naturally Neutral Chain

Roksan ROKone

Roksan has never been a speaker specialist, and even though it has only introduced a handful of speakers over the years, all have been notably innovative. The company is now part of the Centralforce group, alongside Mission, Quad and Wharfedale, but the large-bookshelf-sized £600 ROKone speaker carries many typical Roksan hallmarks. Even if it does embody less ambitious engineering than floorstanding predecessors like the *Darius*.

ROKone might be a stand-mount, but it's no shrinking violet. By the time you get it installed



on top of a stand, and at least some distance out from the wall, the visual impact of the handsome black veneer will be considerable. In bulk terms, it's more than half as big again as the other stand-mount speakers in this test, and the acoustic volume is comparable with some of the floorstanders.

The enclosure is narrow but deep, the more so because the main driver is mounted slightly ahead of the box proper. A chunky ring spacer serves the interests of time-aligning the drivers and aiding main driver off-axis distribution. The driver layout is unusual, too, with the tweeter being almost in the middle of the baffle, above the main driver but below a generous port.

The Morel-sourced main driver has a 115mm plastic cone/dome diaphragm, a large diameter voice coil, and is magnetically shielded, while the tweeter is a soft-fabric dome. Internal damping is supplied by acoustic foam, and a figure-eight brace further stiffens an already very solid enclosure. Bi-wire terminals are fitted, although the crossover is vestigial in the extreme – just a single capacitor to bring in the tweeter, at an unusually high 5kHz (electrical).

The room responses were rather uneven. Clear of walls, the bass was dry, the mid forward and the treble a little uneven. Close to a wall, the midbass became too strong as well as more isolated from the rest.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £600

▲ A fine musical communicator with decent dynamics and dynamic range.

▼ Sound balance is rather uneven, and mid/top is a bit coloured.

✉ Roksan, Stonehill, Huntingdon PE18 6ED
 ☎ (01480) 431577

Sound Quality

Although I rather liked the ROKone in the panel tests, most of the rest of the panel were ambivalent (or worse), and the net result came out rather below average. Reactions were often contradictory, so it was difficult to summarise accurately.

A lack of bottom-end consistency seems to be one problem, and there were also complaints about colorations in the mid and treble. But some liked the mid-forwardness and praised the dynamic expressiveness and subtle voice reproduction.

Some of that same ambivalence carried through into the hands-on work. I found the ROKone very articulate, informative and enjoyable when listening at low levels, which is usually a good sign, but as the volume was increased, the colorations seemed to become more intrusive. However, the entertainment value remained high throughout, bolstered by decent dynamics and dynamic range.

Conclusion

This is a speaker with character. It won't have universal appeal, but might just be the 'one you're looking for'. Musical values come through very well indeed, but the cosmetics of the sound are a little untidy. *PMe*

THE LAB REPORT

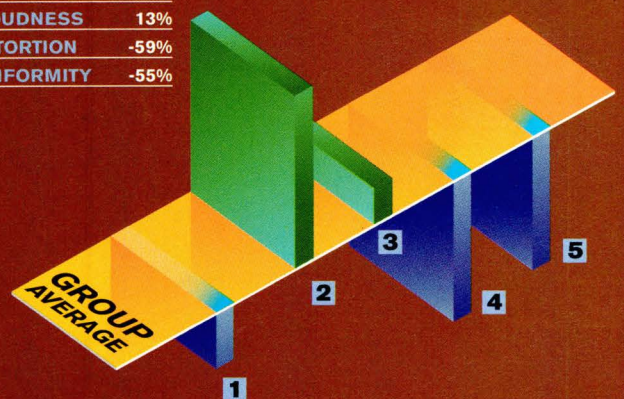
Just for once, it's refreshing to encounter a speaker whose practical sensitivity (89 dB/one metre/2.83 V) is actually *higher* than its manufacturer's specification (88 dB). The reason behind this, however, is arguably less glorious. Specifically, the axial response of the ROKone is very irregular, suffering a broad notch around one kHz where Roksan will measure its sensitivity. By contrast, both the upper bass and midrange are reinforced; the former implying that a free-mounted position will be preferable.

There's another notch through the five to six kHz crossover region, where the two drivers are not completely integrated and yet, beyond this, the high treble is both even and extended. Ironically, the off-axis response is a little smoother, so, even though this is represented as a 'non-uniformity' by our bargraph, the ROKone is best auditioned toed-inwards.

At the other frequency extreme, Roksan's undamped port is tuned to a fairly sharp 40 Hz, while bass distortion is just a little below average, at typically one per cent. Otherwise, the *average* load over the full 20 Hz-20 kHz band works out at a moderately low 7.4 Ohms (with a minimum of just 5.3 Ohms at 280Hz). Therefore, the ROKone still justifies its nominal eight Ohms rating. *PMI*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-23%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	74%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	13%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-59%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-55%



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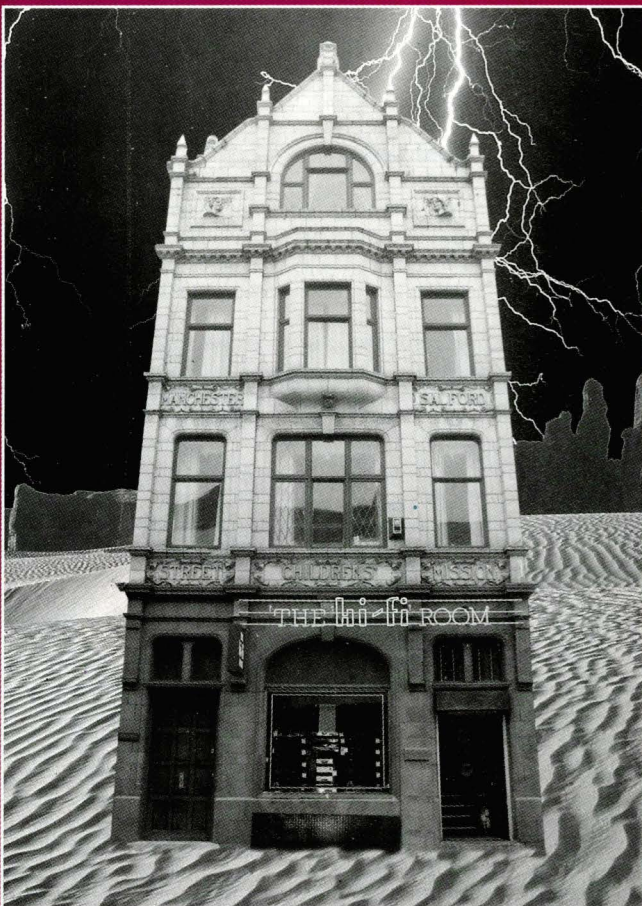
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Royd Doublet

Of the half-a-dozen Royds *Choice* has reviewed over the past half a dozen years, the vast majority have been so-called miniatures, with small bass/mid drivers operating into seven-litre enclosures. Such speakers normally require stands, but not the radical little *Minstrel* (a Best Buy in issue 135), which is probably the smallest floorstander ever to grace my pock-marked floorboards. And where the £250 *Minstrel* led, this £450 *Doublet* follows as a double-dose variation.

It's a slightly curious shape, being narrow, quite tall, yet very shallow, and if it does look a bit odd at first sight, the fact that it's so slim from every direction brings a measure of elegant discretion to the party. The shape has much to do with finding room for the driver array, and getting it off the ground. There are two of Royd's tiny but classy main drivers here, mounted above and below a high-quality soft-dome tweeter. Each main driver uses a cast frame held by eight bolts, and a heavily hand-doped paper cone. The inside of the box is divided by a horizontal steel plate below the tweeter, the back of which is met by a vertical panel up from the base, creating a separate seven-litre chamber for each driver, port loaded from the side.

The whole thing sits on a chunky little laminated MDF plinth, fitted with three even hunkier (M8) spikes. Build is quite exceptional throughout, and real-wood finishes are an optional extra.

The in-room balance suggests that the *Doublet* should be kept clear of walls, whereupon it delivers a decent overall balance, with considerably more bass output than the *Minstrel*. The balance is not particularly smooth, though, peaking up around 1–15kHz and then becoming decidedly uneven over the next couple of octaves. The relative treble level is higher than average.

Sound Quality

My own reaction to the *Doublet* was rather unpromising, but the rest of the panel was there to set me right, voting this a joint 'best of the day'. Like the balance, the sonic performance is a bit uneven, and the mixture will never win universal acclaim, but happily, the plusses easily outweigh the minusses.

The bass end is mostly impressive, with fine timing, differentiation and power, but some unevenness and limited genuine weight. Dynamic range is good, and the sound is commendably free from clogging and congestion, so stereo images are well formed, with good depth and fine resolution of subtle musical textures. Voices are a bit coloured and uncouth, which can be a mite distracting, and the brightness is not always welcome, but the whole thing remains lively, very informative and busy, if a bit untidy, too.

Conclusion

With fine engineering and value for money, this is the best 'bigger' Royd to date, retaining the charm of the familiar babies but with added dynamic zest and bass weight. *PM*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★★
PRICE £450

▲ Lively dynamics and fine timing; very informative and lots of fun.

▼ A bit treble-bright for some; some unevenness adds a bit of coloration.

✉ Royd Loudspeaker Co Ltd., Unit B2, Stafford Park 15, Telford, Shropshire, TT3 3BB
 ☎ (01952) 290700

THE LAB REPORT

Slim it may be, but Royd's *Doublet* still packs a punch, thanks to its 89.9 dB sensitivity. However, as we can see from the bargraph, this high sensitivity is at least partially achieved by recourse to low-impedance loading. Even with its low-frequency system resonances providing peaks in impedance, the average impedance of the *Doublet* between 20 Hz to 20 kHz is still just 6.1 Ohms, including a broad dip from 150–360 Hz, where it falls to 3.95 Ohms. Amplifiers with a stiff power supply (with the emphasis on current delivery rather than just high power output) will suit the *Doublet*.

Two long, narrow gauge ports are mounted in the side of the cabinet, giving the user some flexibility in speaker placement, although I'd recommend you begin your experiments with the ports facing inwards. Of arguably greater distraction, however, is the abrupt increase in distortion (up to three per cent) suffered at bass frequencies under entirely realistic, dynamic conditions (re. 96 dBA). As a whole, the *Doublet*'s response is fairly lumpy. This is especially so through the three to four kHz crossover region, where a broad three to four dB loss in output suggests the units could be better integrated, particularly as the tweeter picks-up quite strongly beyond seven to eight kHz or so. *PMi*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-76%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	82%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	18%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	25%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	12%



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Spendor 2030

Spendor is best known for its professional monitoring loudspeakers, and the BBC tradition out of which they grew. However, the £600 2030 is the middle one of a trio of models, aimed more obviously at the domestic user.

It's pretty much the stereotypical compact floorstander in size and shape, but has a number of constructional features that distinguish it from the herd. The textured grey finish makes a refreshing change, and will blend in well with other audio and video equipment (like the TV set). I must say that I prefer it to the vinyl woodprint 'hoi polloi'. House plant cultivators may be disappointed to find the top panel is not flat but curved.

Another unusual feature is a main driver with an elliptical rather than circular frame and cone. There's plenty of historical precedent for such a shape, but elliptical drivers are rarely found in today's hi-fi loudspeakers. It is, therefore, bound to be more expensive to manufacture, but there are several reasons why it should have some advantages over the familiar circular shape.

For a start, diaphragm standing waves are different across the two axes, and you can create a (slightly) greater radiating area from a narrower cabinet than is available

with a single circular driver. The 2030 shares with the Royd the narrowest baffle in our group, yet gets away with just one driver, with a 100x125mm plastic cone diaphragm.

The box itself feels suitably solid, with thick braced sides, and light-foam damping lining the rear panel. It's properly supported by a plinth, which extends the footprint and accommodates the spikes. Bi-wire terminals are mounted low down on the back, and two ports, with quite a generous total cross-sectional area, are up near the top, behind the main driver.

The in-room balance certainly suggests that the speaker should be mounted clear of walls, but the balance is still not particularly even. The port delivers ample bass output at 30–60Hz, but the upper bass and lower mid are lean, and the broad upper mid is rather forward. Output, then, falls steadily by about 5dB above 1kHz, until the tweeter comes in at a high 5kHz.

Sound Quality

A slightly below average outcome from the listening tests was probably a direct consequence of the balance creating a rather 'dark' and 'shut-in' sound.

My first reaction during hands-on work was equally negative, but after an hour's acclimatisation to the rather 'different' presentation, I found myself enjoying this speaker more and more, especially with CD material. It times well and gets the feet tapping quickly, packs a mostly entertaining thump, and delivers a coherent midband full of understated subtlety. After several hours of entertainment, I was sorry it was time to try something else.

Conclusion

The balance might be a bit uneven, but the transitions are gentle, and the ultimate sound is unquestionably musical and communicative. The 2030 is a bit of a mixed bag, but a very entertaining one in the right system. *PM*



VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£600
▲	Musically very communicative; good with CD and likes being played loud.
▼	Not the most even balance around; bass is a bit detached and thumpy.
✉	Spendor Audio Systems, Station Road Ind Est, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 2ER
☎	(01323) 843474

THE LAB REPORT

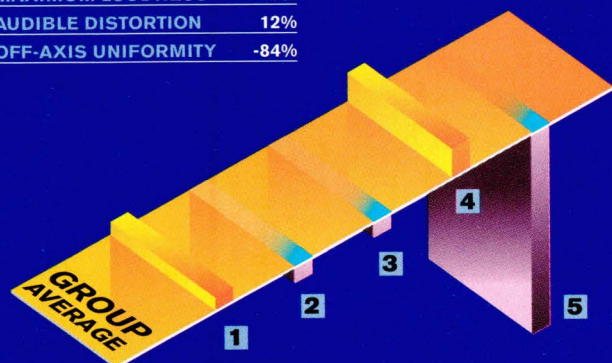
Something of a departure from the neutral-sounding, flat-response Spendors of the past, this latest offering provides a distinctly tailored balance. It has a strong bass but a steadily declining output – from about 500 Hz to five kHz before the high treble kicks-in with something of a vengeance. This explains its mild-sounding midband, but also suggests that placement away from walls and listening ten to 20 degrees off-axis will yield the best results.

The 2030's unusual oval-shaped bass/mid unit has an exposed pole-piece and works into an ostensibly undamped enclosure via two rear-facing ports. Both the Helmholtz and driver-in-box resonances (39 Hz and 71 Hz respectively) are high-Q affairs, prompting both third and fourth harmonics of the latter to be revealed as mild 'blips' in the impedance trend at 213 Hz and 284 Hz respectively.

As an amplifier load, however, the 2030 is plain sailing, with minima of 5.9 Ohms at 260 Hz and 13 kHz, and worse-case phase angles of -44 degrees at 82 Hz (27 Ohms) and -30 degrees at five kHz (16 Ohms). Distortion is usefully low at 0.3 per cent through the treble, but this increases to a higher 1.5 per cent across its depressed midrange, where the 2030 betrays some similarity with both the Epos ES12 and Canon S-75. *PMI*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	6%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-6%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-5%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	12%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-84%



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Tannoy 635

A brand new range of 'Profile Plus' Tannoy loudspeakers was launched last summer, and this is the first one to receive a proper *Hi-Fi Choice* review. The £450 635 is one of the larger floor-standing models in a seven-strong range, which show considerable similarities to their predecessors, but also exhibit numerous detail differences.



The 635's enclosure follows the same 'Profile' shape as its predecessors, avoiding the internal standing waves created by rectangular section boxes. However, the irregular top panel is now fabricated from MDF, which is thicker and more solid than the moulded plastic used before. It's also far less transparent acoustically, and better looking, too. I'm less sure about the use of a pseudo-mahogany vinyl woodprint as an option alongside the rather safer black, though.

The 635 is an all-new model, without an immediate predecessor, filling a rather obvious size/price gap between the £300 633 and £599 638. It uses just the one driver (backed up by a port) – a single 'dual concentric' in the classic Tannoy tradition, building both main driver and tweeter onto the same frame, with the latter firing down a horn located in the centre of the main cone. This driver is larger than most used in the group, with an eight-inch frame and 160mm plastic cone, so the front panel has to be wider to make room for it. Since the speaker only stands 85cm off the deck, it looks quite chunky and purposeful, and has good stability, but generates the sound from a relatively low source.

The whole speaker sits on a moulded plastic base, which incorporates bi-wire terminals right down at the floor, with a neat, sliding link for mono-wire operation. Spikes are securely accommodated, the footprint gives good stability, and there's a small compartment for adding mass-loading/damping material.

The in-room responses make it quite

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £450

▲ Good-value big box, with deep bass and a flat, open, neutral balance.

▼ Tends to sound a bit untidy and congested, especially when driven hard.

✉ Tannoy Ltd, Rosehall Ind Est, Coatbridge ML5 4TF

☎ (01236) 420199

clear this speaker should be kept away from walls – under which circumstances, it delivers a remarkably flat overall balance, from the lowest bass up to the limits of audibility. It's not entirely smooth, and there's a slight peak around 400Hz, but the ripples look pretty well controlled.

Sound Quality

A 'best of the first day' rating provided a very good start, but the second-day results were far more mixed, and the 635 by no means met with universal approval.

The flat, neutral balance is a major bonus, and fine bass extension creates a generous sense of scale. However, some felt the bottom end was inclined to drag its feet a tad, while dynamics and transients seemed a little constrained and congested, leading to some lack of transparency and tension. The treble could be sweeter, especially with complex material.

Conclusion

This Tannoy has a lot going for it, with plenty of welly and a discreet floorstanding enclosure at a sharp price. It delivers a very 'up-front' and immediate sound, but does lack some clarity and sweetness, especially when push comes to shove. *PMc*

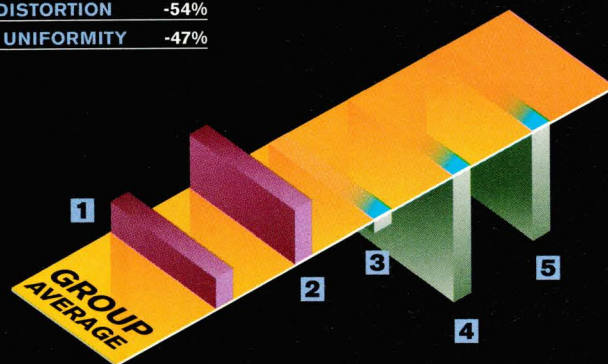
THE LAB REPORT

Tannoy certainly achieves a decently high output from this dual-concentric driver, which manages some 89.5 dB at one metre, despite suffering two axial dips at 5.7 kHz and a particularly abrupt -9 dB cancellation at 17.4 kHz. These are a function of the driver's construction and, provided you listen ten to 20 degrees off axis, are ameliorated. The general boost in output from eight to five kHz remains to give the 635 a little sting in its tail, although at least its moderate 0.45 per cent treble distortion is lower than the one to two per cent that persists below a few hundred Hz.

The reflex port is tuned to a low 29 Hz, but the Q of the resonance ensures a broad reinforcement of low bass, even if the end result does look a little lumpy. The impedance, meanwhile, is smooth and free of any spurious peaks and bumps that might otherwise indicate a mechanical discontinuity within this complex dual-concentric driver. Indeed, it just dips below six Ohms from 100-400 Hz (with phase angles around ten degrees) with a minima of five Ohms at 240 Hz. Higher (typically <45 degree) angles persist across the low bass, but still the 635 should still not prove particularly troublesome for any half-decent amplifier. *PMi*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	12%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	22%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-5%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-54%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-47%



Conclusions

In this test, our 14 speakers came in all shapes, sizes, sounds, and prices between £400 and £1,000. Only one unit proved really disappointing; all the others had plenty going for them. I had little difficulty picking out the three Best Buys, but deciding which to Recommend was inordinately difficult.

Many of the models contain broadly similar ingredients, but each one has been assembled in a particular manner according

to each design team's predilections, and each company's perception of what the marketplace wants.

Even for speakers costing £1,000, each manufacturer must make significant choices, draw various compromises and accept several trade-offs. Ironically, the same would still be true at £10,000 — extra freedom tends to lead speaker designers to ever greater extremes!

However, the £1,000 limit still permits

variations, and the designer has to make several key decisions on how to spend the money. Stand-mount or floorstander? Vinyl or wood veneer? Two drivers or more? All of this comes well before one can get down to the subtleties of bass alignment, midband voicing, cone and dome materials and countless other considerations. Our price and size spread is quite broad, so as mentioned in the introduction, pp.66-67, we have subdivided the famous 14 as follows.

STAND-MOUNTS (GROUP A)

B&W CDM1, £600

Epos ES12, £500

PMC TB1, £476

Roksan ROKone, £600

The four stand-mount speakers form a natural sub-group, separate from the floorstanders, and have plenty in common. All are two-way ported designs finished in real-wood veneer. All have broadly similar internal volumes and main-driver diameters. All weigh in at around eight kilos, and prices differ no more than ten per cent either way.

This foursome differ from one another

substantially in the fine details: in styling, types of drivers, crossovers, damping and so forth. There's even greater diversity in the sound that each one creates. The B&W probably has the best bass, the Epos the best midband and the Roksan is the most up-front communicator; but the PMC has the best all-round sound quality in my book — it also has the least-interesting styling. It's your money at stake, not mine...

In this mid-market price segment I can't say that stand-mounts have an advantage over the floorstanders, as the differences between models tend to mask any generalisations. However,

the stand-mounts do seem to offer superior midband transparency and stereo imaging, possibly because of the extra fresh air underneath, the deeper enclosures (postponing internal reflections), or the smaller surface area. It's probably a combination of all three.

I was a little disappointed that the floorstanders, even those with no greater acoustically active volume, tended to show rather better room alignment through the bass region, but it seems likely that the stand-mount will remain the first choice of the purist.



Roksan ROKone

COMPACT FLOORSTANDERS (GROUP B)

Monitor Audio 703PMC, from £800

Neat Mystique, from £575

Royd Doublet, £450

Spendor 2030, £600

also obvious selections. Next up come the Tannoy, Canon and QLN, although neither of these three looks particularly bulky. However, they are slightly larger (acoustically, at least) than the Monitor Audio, Spendor, Royd and Neat, even if the dividing line is fine.

Wherever you choose to draw this line, we've managed to come up with a Best Buy in each of the three groups, while the Recommended models tend to cluster mainly among the compact floorstanders.

Horses for courses

Nearly all the models in our test group have genuine merit, and their individual characters will suit different listeners, lifestyles, rooms and systems. The

prime task of the review should be, therefore, to try and identify the right conditions that allow each model to perform at its best. The Epos ES12 and Monitor Audio 703PMC both look particularly well suited to smaller rooms, where their limited bass output could be a positive advantage. It's diffi-

cult to get good, deep bass without boom in small rooms, so it's often better not to try.

On the other hand, if you've got a large space to fill, or if you plan to use your speakers extensively for watching movies and don't want to shell out for an extra subwoofer, check out the Polk RT16 or QLN Qubic 222.

If you like to play your music loud, look for a high-sensitivity speaker that isn't too bright at the top end. This could lead again to the Polk perhaps, although in fact, the sensitivity differences between the models are relatively minor when relative impedances are also taken into account.

Again, it might be worth avoiding the brighter-balanced models if you spend most of your time listening to CD. Obvious

examples of treble restraint

include the PMC TB1, Epos ES12, Castle Harlech, GLL IC130 and Spendor 2030. If you like to hear what's going on after the kids have gone to bed, and/or include a generous blend of radio, TV and vinyl disc in your listening mix, you might prefer something brighter and more up-front, in which case, check out the Tannoy 635, MA703PMC, Roksan ROKone and Royd Doublet.

LARGER FLOORSTANDERS (GROUP C)

GLL Imagio IC130, £540

Canon S-75, £1,000

Castle Harlech, £850

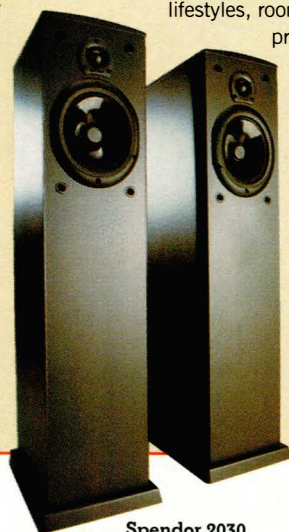
QLN Qubic 222, £400

Polk RT-16, £800

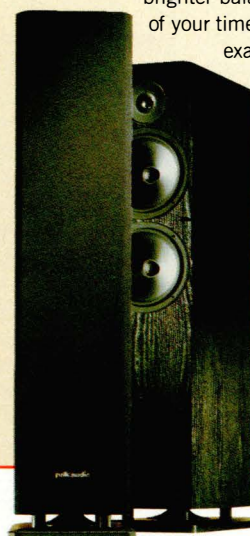
Tannoy 635, £450

Grouping the ten floorstanders meaningfully is difficult. The mid-price point of £700 gives a four/six split, but doesn't say much about relative capabilities. Splitting up the group by box volume, by main driver size, or even by vinyl-versus-real-wood finish, is likely to be more relevant.

Splitting into 'large' and 'small' seems to make the most sense, but even that leads us into the odd paradox. The Polk is way out front, while the Castle and GLL are



Spendor 2030



Polk RT16

BEST BUYS

The **Castle Harlech** is relatively pricey at £850, but still exceptional value, with a fine wood-veneer finish, complex cabinetwork and two classy cast-frame drivers.



Castle Harlech



PMC TB1

The extra driver on top only serves to increase the spaciousness of a sound which has fine transparency and genuine musical tension. The £450 **Royd Doublet** might be an odd shape, but it is very discreet, and packed with serious engineering quality. The sound isn't the

smoothest around, but it is exceptionally communicative, coherent and informative overall.

The £500

PMC TB1 is a little too inclined to hide its virtues beneath a laid-back balance. However, the more one perseveres, the greater the reward, and the more one comes to appreciate both the speaker's professional heritage and its fine, consistent dynamic range across a wide bandwidth.



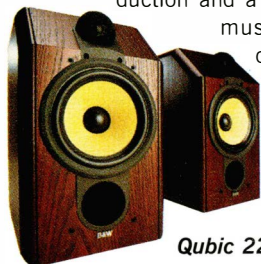
Royd Doublet

RECOMMENDATIONS

The £600 **B&W CDM1** has superb styling and a fine, all-round sonic performance. Bass is impressive and sensitivity decent, considering the modest size, although balance is a little cautious and restrained.

The 'shiny' sound of **Monitor Audio's 703PMC** (from £800) is well suited to smaller rooms. There is fine up-front coherence and clear, well-projected detail. Finish is very classy indeed, but at a price, considering the engineering content involved.

The **Neat Mystique** (from £575) is an easy speaker to like, with fine vocal reproduction and a natural, relaxing musicality. It is no



B&W CDM1

over-achiever and its sensitivity is modest, but the real-wood box is solid value at £650.

QLN's £400 Qubic 222 is a lot of very

competent loudspeaker for the price, but its bass excess is better suited to larger rooms, and the sound elsewhere is very well behaved, if not the most exciting around.

The £600 **Spendor 2030** is a slim, matt-grey floorstander, which has an unusual up/down tonal balance. However, transitions are gentle, and the ultimate sound is unquestionably musical and communicative.

Tannoy's £450 635 has plenty of welly. It's a discreet floorstanding enclosure, at a very sharp price, with a very 'up-front' and immediate sound, albeit one that lacks some clarity and sweetness.

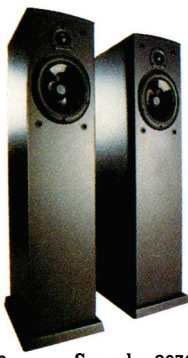
Neat Mystique



Tannoy 635



QLN Qubic 222



Spendor 2030



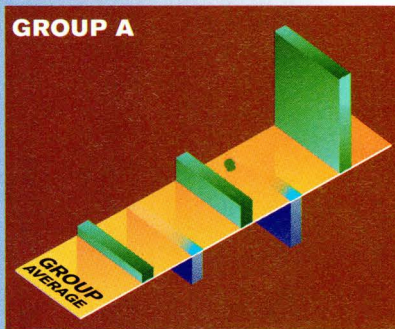
Monitor Audio 703PMC

UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPHS AND GROUP AVERAGES

There are great differences between a speaker that costs £400 and one that costs £1,000. For this reason, we have divided our 14 speakers into three groups to extract meaningful 'group averages' for our bar-graph summaries. The three groups (A, B and C) are explained on page 96, but just so that you can tell which one is which in the reviews, here are the colour codings.

Stand Mounts

GROUP A



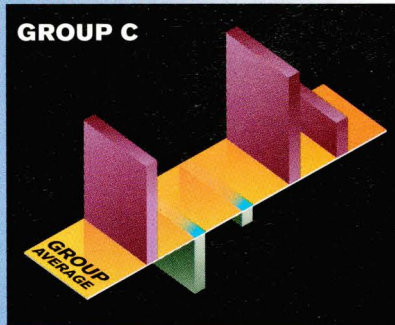
Compact Floorstanders

GROUP B



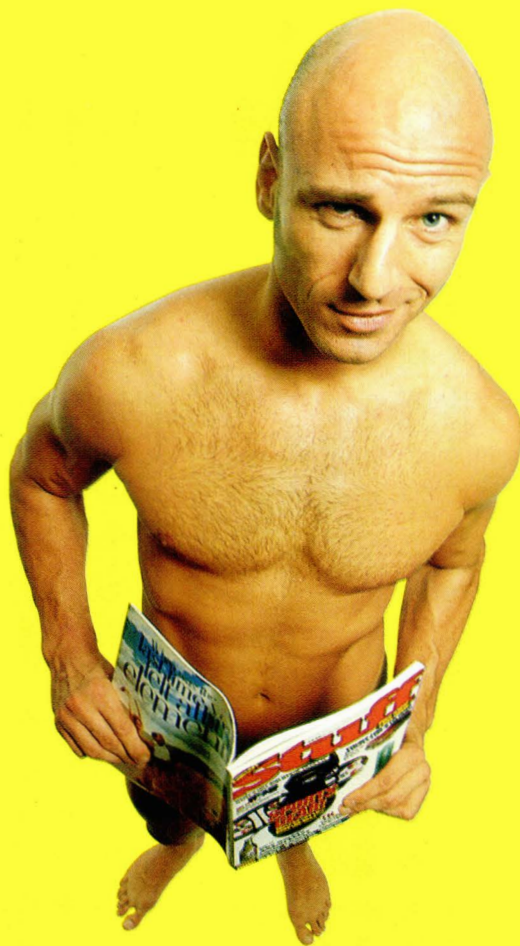
Larger Floorstanders

GROUP C



There are now three 'group averages' to consider, rather than the one deployed hitherto. Since our individual review pages appear in alphabetical order, we have colour-coded each graph so that readers can identify which group each speaker belongs to. Using this information, you can work out with which of its peers' specs we are comparing each speaker's measured performance. Our aim is to give every speaker a fair trial.

For those who are interested to know more about Paul Miller's lab tests, and how he determines the bar-graph values, I would direct you to our July/August 1996 issue (HFC 156), page 23. If you do not have a copy of this issue, why not get one now, using our Back Issues service? Turn to page 105 of this issue for full details. —Ed



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100dB, these 'cans' are equipped for almost every modern-day listening situation. Powered by 50mm rare-earth neodymium magnets, the SR 750s provide sound that we applauded for its sweetness and sense of rhythm. Also, with their solid construction and lightweight voice coils, these headphones always give a great sense of acoustic scale and space, and superior resolution of detail. Extended listening is a dream, thanks to velvet ear cushions and a three-metre lead, while versatility is assured by a 3.5/6.3mm jack plug adaptor.

We have ten pairs of these superb 'cans' to give away, so if you'd like to try your luck, it couldn't be simpler! Just follow the "How To Enter" instructions and you might soon be a lucky winner.

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HOW TO ENTER

To enter, answer the question below on the back of a postcard or sealed-down envelope, and write down your name, address and day-time telephone number. We will assume you are over 18 years of age unless you tell us otherwise.

Address this entry to:

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC612B)
Bradley Pavilions,
Bradley Stoke North,
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All entries must arrive by first post, Friday 20th December, 1996.

THE QUESTION

What type of magnets will you find in the SR 750 headphones?

- a) Friends of the Earth
- b) Rare-Earth Neodymium
- c) Eartha Kitt Diamond
- d) Wallace & Gromit Fridge Magnets

COMPETITION RULES

- The Closing Date for this competition is Friday 20th December, 1996.
- Winners of the Vivanco competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, and drawn at random after the Closing Date.
- All winners will be notified by post.
- The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- The Vivanco competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, Vivanco UK Ltd, nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- No cash alternative will be offered.
- By entering the competition all entrants agree to be bound by the rules.
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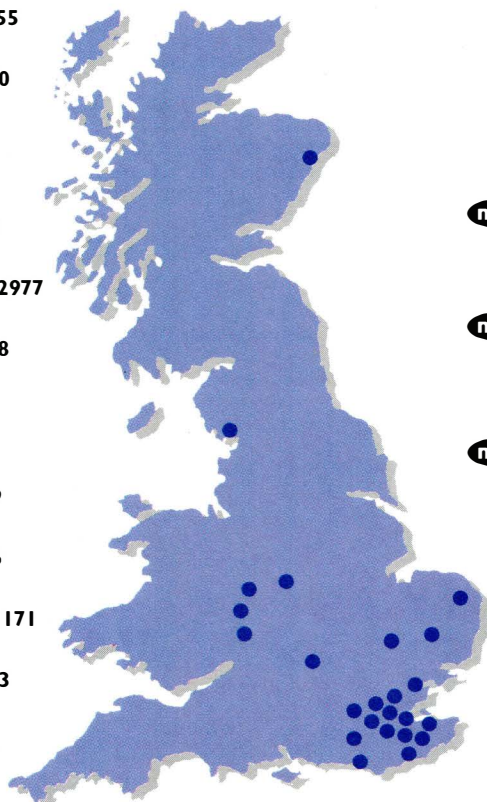
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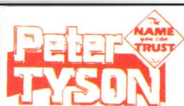
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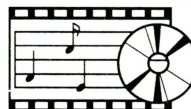
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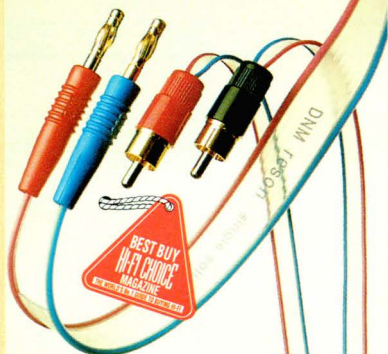
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Thorens TD180 MKV/Stanton 500	£399	£199
Mission/Nagaoka MP20	£240	£149
Systemdek/Mission/Grado	£260	£245
Linn LP12/Syrinx P2. Koetsu Rosewood	£2250	£575

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Spendor S100 Mahogany Mint	£2125	£1300
Spendor S20 Walnut Mint	£770	£500
Yamaha NS1000 Rare in Cherry	£1399	£700
Tannoy 609 Biwire	£300	£180
Rega EL8 Black Mint	£300	£240
IMF TLS80	£1800	£600
Celestion SL6	£390	£220
Monitor Audio MA800	£295	£495
Rogers LS7	£550	£300
Time Window 1A	£900	£499
Polk Audio RTB Mint	£595	£295
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Akai 8 track tape player/recorder plus large tape collection (01637) 830003

Audio Innovations Series 500 and Series 700 valve integrated amplifiers. Both in vgc. £400 and £500, respectively. Hants (01425) 621430.

B&W 802 MKII speakers, boxed, manual (£2,500) accept £1,000. Preston (01772) 626660.

Cambridge CD2 CD player, including Trichord Clock 2 plus PSU; Quad 306 power amp; Technics receiver SA-GX130. Birmingham (Johnathan) (0121) 377 8469.

Dr Bailey transmission line speaker pair, KEF B139, Celestion tweeters £100 Oxfordshire (01869) 350188

Hi-fi equipment comprising: Yamaha speakers, model NS1000 monitor, plus stands; Pioneer Laserdisc, model NO1200. £700 ono. Ipswich (01473) 601391.

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Merseyside (01704) 833601 KEF 104aB speakers, teak, as new, with Mordaunt-Short frame stands, all boxed. £80. Would consider splitting. Portsmouth (01705) 261687 Kenwood KA-3020SE amplifier, in mint condition, boxed £100 ono. Swansea (01792) 418662

Linn Kan 2 speakers. Mint cond. with stands. Can deliver most areas. £250. York (01904) 762686.

Linn Karik III CD player, and Majik amp MM phono, six-months old, boxed, £1,600 ono. Cumbria (016977) 46397.

Linn Keltik system: Kairn preamp, four Klouits, mahogany speakers, Karik/Numerik CD. Pristine cond.

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Micromega Stage 6 CD player, new, £995, now three-months old, boxed, £650 ono. Musical Fidelity P270-2 poweramp; exc cond, £795 ono. Bath (01225) 404431.

Mission 753 (Rosewood) speakers. List price, £800. Will accept £450. London (0181) 220 8527 (eve).

Monitor Audio Studio 50 SE monitor, piano black. Four-months old, immaculate condition, boxed. Open to offers. London (0181) 572 5020/(0973) 561474.

Naim NAC42, Naim NAP 90 £380. Mission 751 and Mission stand, boxed, mint condition £250 (£400). DPA PDM1 III mint £600. Swansea (01792) 280061

Naim NAC82, Hi-cap, Nat01, 2 months old, immaculate. Cost £4,373. Will accept £3,850. Mortgage forces sale. London (0171) 215 3924/(0181) 5584870

Nakamichi 700 ZXL. Awesome deck with Dolby-C unit, auto-calibration, pitch control, mic inputs 'RAMM' memory, remote capability (IR), etc. Mint. £1,000 ono. Reading (0118) 9393836 or (0956) 519912.

Omni Audio SA 12-3 speakers, 200Watts, fluid cooled - superb quality. As new, guaranteed - £1,000 (ono). Exeter (01703) 555089.

Orelle XTC pre-1 remote-controlled preamp, £525. Trichord Genesis CD player, £375. Musical Fidelity X-10 CD enhancer, £75. All brand new. London (0181) 905 6331.

Panasonic NVF Nicam stereo video, £150. Pioneer A400 amp, £150. B&W DM600

speakers, £70. All items are boxed. Hitchin (01462) 450009.

Pioneer A-400; Denon DRM-700A tape; Rogers LS4-A speakers and cables; dual CS505-4 record deck. £550 ono. Gwent (01600) 715808.

Pink Triangle Da Capo DAC with 22-bit filter. Boxed, as new. £895. London (0181) 390 0055.

Pink Triangle Export, Rega RB250 arm, AT-OC3 cartridge, all excellent condition. Upgrading to Anniversary. Aberdeen (01224) 702619 (eves)

REL Acoustics Strata II, boxed, fairly new, exc cond. £300. Essex (01268) 785599.

REL Strata subwoofer. Mint condition. Still boxed. New flat forced sale. £275. Will send if required. Essex (0850) 058308

Royd Minstrel floor standing speakers. Black. Immaculate condition with original box and instructions. £160 ono. Reading (01734) 662620

Ruark Talisman II, dark walnut, exc all-rounders, £470. LFD Tri-Link Interconnect 0.8 metre Poise and Refinement, £70. Focal Pods, £7.00. Cheshire (0161) 437 5819.

Sony 715E Best Buy CD player, £130. Creek T40 Stereo Digital Rotary tuner, £75.

Both immaculate and boxed. Berks (01628) 72041.

Sony X77ES (£1,200), £495. STS770ES (£350), £140. GDP101 (£500), £45. Myst amp (£280), £45. AT-OC9 (£250), £50. Isle of Man (016974) 78537.

Systemdek Iix turntable, Moth arm, £175. Heybrook HB1 with stands. £140 ono. Bucks (01296) 22188.

TEAC ABX10 amplifier with phono Stage included. New, unused, boxed, unwanted present. Retail price: £1,150, will accept serious offer. London 0171 625 1744

Teak DTI DAC, £300. Faraday speakers, Focal units, £190. Rega Planar 3 (no arm), £130. All boxed, as new. Surrey (01883) 330063.

WANTED

Sony remote control RM-D3K for DAT Walkman. Cleveland (01642) 556268

VPI or Nitty Gritty cleaning machines wanted, in mint condition, top models especially required. London (0181) 558 3383



Linn's top Keltik speaker system can be yours — Ivor not included.

The High End Approach

Branko Bozic offers a personal opinion on how to achieve hi-fi satisfaction.

Funny thing being an audiophile, isn't it? Having been a distributor of real high-end components for the last ten years, but a devoted audiophile for more than twice as long, it's quite easy for me to express my personal views without them being clouded by my day-to-day work. However, please be warned that what you're about to read may be very different from what you have been told so far, or have read in other hi-fi magazines doing their best to broadcast fundamentally simple wisdoms.

Quality begins at home

For me at least, to make decisions with no danger of regrets, it is vital to adopt what I call a "high-end approach". This means an uncompromised way of thinking, as well as an equally strict way of defining your own subjective preferences when discussing, judging or thinking about any single audio component, irrespective of price, reputation or (un)deserved status!

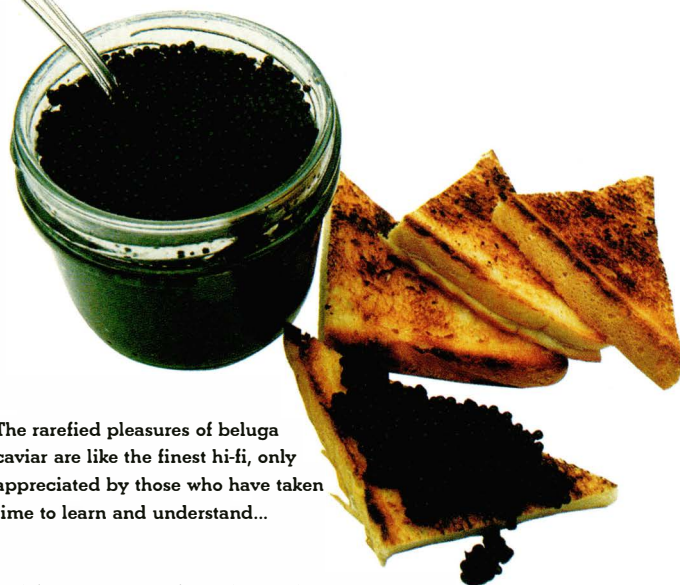
Believe me, there are too many people out there whose vanity does not allow them to admit (to themselves, let alone others) that they have neither clearly defined visions about goals to be achieved, nor practical experience after years and years spent unsuccessfully evaluating all and sundry products. It is not the price of the component, it is not the horrible "value for money" aspect that matters; it is you who must be able to judge. Being argumentatively wrong is still better than trying to be right without a valid argument!

I know very well that it is not possible to evaluate all products in the one and only way I would find appropriate. To begin with, the overall state of specialist audio retail, apart from a few notable exceptions, does not permit practitioners the time or conditions to do the job the way they would (hopefully) want to do it. Furthermore, there is the inevitable "flavour of the month" situation which, thankfully, does not apply to high-end products as much as to others. Finally, without wishing to be more cynical than necessary, it is an undisputed fact that there are too many people out there who only like you until you have signed your cheque.

A plan of action

So, what do we do? First of all, I would suggest that any serious audiophile, depending on budget and overall aspirations, regularly reads as many magazines of UK and foreign (mainly US) origin as possible. In this way the budding aficionado can form his or her own opinion, based on the practically-established idiosyncrasies of each individual reviewer. By getting as many competent reviewers' manners "under your skin" as possible, you can try to imagine how the product in question would sound, based on the personal preferences of each reviewer you have become more familiar with.

Once you've performed this task, the real hard work begins. It will be very difficult to find appropriate places (read: dealers) who will either have available the products you were interested in, or sufficiently decent conditions to present those products effectively. Therefore I urge you to make arrangements for a loan over a week-



The rarefied pleasures of beluga caviar are like the finest hi-fi, only appreciated by those who have taken time to learn and understand...

end (or even longer), and spend some time with any audio component you may wish to acquire, within your system — no matter how good or bad that system may be. Don't be afraid: even a mediocre system can show what a superior product can do. A good product never becomes a bad one and, regretfully, a bad one cannot be made better, no matter for how long you wish to listen to fairy tales about synergy, compatibility, etc. One secret of a good product is its versatility in a wide variety of applications.

Getting priorities right

Finally, please bear in mind that it is of utmost importance to choose correctly the vital components of the system (your main source component and electronics, for instance). Loudspeakers, being most difficult to choose anyway, and any secondary components, can only be properly selected once the mainframe of your system has been put into place. Needless to say, depending on whether you wish simply to upgrade a single component or a system as a whole, different processes of selection may take place, but basic rules should always remain the same. Do not think too much about cables, connectors or any other tweaks at this stage. Little things can make a good system better, but in my opinion are a total waste of time and money if a problematic system is to be improved.

What you have just read may seem more radical than pieces written by previous contributors in these pages, but I am not going to suggest the usual nonsense about how to get on with your hi-fi shopping. Yes, there are still a very few credible consultants around, and if you are lucky enough to enjoy their services, by all means do so. If not, be prepared to go it alone and do your homework. As so many people tend to say nowadays, some kind of truth is still out there, and it is certainly worth searching for. Good luck, and don't forget to write home (*Hi-Fi Choice*) about your journey.

Branko Bozic is the proprietor of Audiofreaks. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Hi-Fi Choice.

THE DIRECTORY

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 1 Discover which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide (starts on page 114). 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 2 Read about the hi-fi equipment that we have reviewed in the Directory (starts on page 122). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy and Recommended awards, which denote products of exceptional quality and value. The Directory is sorted by product type and listed alphabetically, and the beginning of each section provides essential information about each kind of hi-fi component.

STEP 3 Find your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (starts on page 139) to book a demonstration of the products you are interested in.

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 Red signifies the Best Buy swing-tag, which indicates products of the best quality and superb value for money in their price category.

R Blue 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.

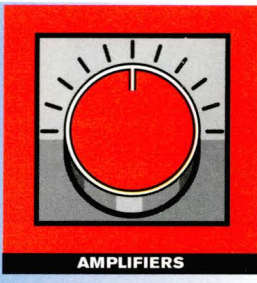
Using Best Buys and Recommendations to buy hi-fi.

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 belief at *Hi-Fi Choice* is that you must consider the hi-fi system as a complete entity, not as 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!



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AMPLIFIERS

**Integrated Amps
Up to £250**

Aiwa XA-003	140
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	240
Arcam Alpha 7	250
Cambridge Audio A1	100
Grundig V11	160
Harman-Kardon HK610	200
JVC AX-R5BK	200
JVC AX-V6BK	230
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200
Luxman A-312	200
Luxman A-331	250
Magnum IA120	249
Marantz PM-34	150
NAD 312	200
Onkyo A-801	200
Pioneer A-103	130
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Pioneer A-303R	200
Pioneer A-300X	230
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Rotel RA970BX	250
Sony TA-FE200	130
Sony TA-F161	140
Sony TA-F300	150
Sony TA-F261E	160
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Sony TA-F448E	250
Sony TA-F406E	250
Teac AR300	200
Teac AR500	250
Technics SU-V300	170
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	200
Technics SU-V500	200
Technics SU-V620	230
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	250
Yamaha AX-390	170
Yamaha AX-490	249

£251 to £500

Alchemist Axiom	289
Alchemist Maxim	319
Analogue Jupiter	330
Arcam Alpha 8	350
Arcam Alpha 6 Plus	350
Arcam Alpha 9	500
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Audio Innovations Alto	300
Audiolab 8000A	500
Audiolink Sterling II	350
Aura VA100 II	400
Cr Developments Kalypso	499
Credo IMP702	499
Creek 4240	279
Creek 4240SE	350
Denon PMA-450SE	280
Emf Audio Sequel	349
Harman-Kardon HK620	280
Harman-Kardon HK1200	300
Harman-Kardon HK1400	400
Harman-Kardon HK640	450
Luxman A-353R	350

Luxman A-373	400
Magnum IA170	299
Marantz PM-65	300
Marantz PM-711AV	450
Mission Cyrus III	500
Moth 30 Integrated	320
Musical Fidelity E10	299
Musical Fidelity E101	499
Musical Fidelity A2	499
NAD 314	260
Onix OA30	300
Onix OA21S	430
Onix OA31	480
Onkyo A-911	350
Onkyo A850	370
Orelle SA-100	449
Pioneer A-400X	300
Pioneer A-503R	300
Pioneer A-602	350
Pioneer VSA-701S	500
Pro-Ject Model 7	300
Rega Elex	398
Sony TA-F3ES	400
Technics SU-A800D	400
Technics SU-A900 Mk2	450
Technics SU-A900	500
Yamaha AX-590	299

£501 to £700

Alchemist Kraken A	549
Alchemist Kraken Anniv	549
Alchemist Nemesis	650
AMC CV13030	529
Arcam Alpha 9+MOD	550
Audiolab 8000S	700
Credo IMP703	538
DPA Renaissance	595
Exposure XX Super	700
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699
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LFD Int. Zero (Ph)	679
Linn Majik-1 (Line)	650
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Magnum Class A	675
Micromega Tempo 1	700
Monrio MJ	695
Musical Fidelity A220	699
Myryad MI120	530
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Shearman Phase 2	649
Stemfort Audio SF60	549
Teac AB-X7R	700
Triangle TE60SE	650

£701 to £1000

Alchemist Forsetti	899
Arcam Xeta One	999
Aura VA150	800
AVI S2000MI	799
Chimera X-80	800
Cr Developments Romulus	998
Electrocompaniet EC1-2	990
Exposure XV Super	800
Harman-Kardon HK680	1,000
LFD Int. Zero LE	799
Linn Majik-1 (Phono)	725
Meridian 551	795
Micromega Tempo 2	900
Minstrel Ultra Linear	900
Monrio MC-200S	895
Naim Audio NAIT 3 R	724
Rega Elicit	730
Sonic Link DM30	725
Stemfort Audio SF100	849
Teac AB-X10	1,000
Thule IA100	949

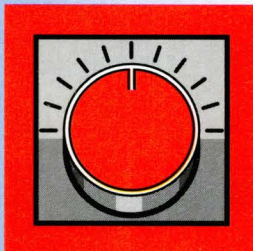
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£1001 to £2000

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Arion Tycho Int Mk II	1,999
Art Audio Integra	1,499
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Audio Innovations S500	1,199
Audio Innovations S700	1,199
Bryston B-60	1,090
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Copland CSA-14	1,100
Copland CTA-401	1,699
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EAR 834	1,599
Electrocompaniet EC1-2SF	1,173
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Meracus INTRARE	1,095
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Rogers E-40a	1,900
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Triangle Nemo Allion 02	1,550
Tube Tech Unisig S-Line	1,399
Tube Tech Unisig	1,399
Union Research Simply Two	1,148
Union Research Simply Four P	1,495
Union Research Simply Four T	1,545
YBA Integre	1,199

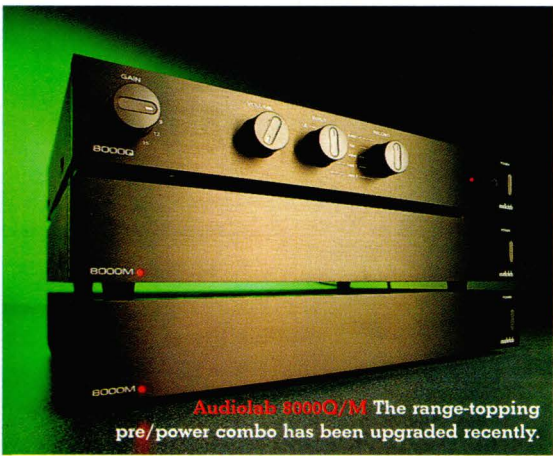
Over £2000

Adyton OPERA	2,595
Electrocompaniet EC1-1	2,233
Electrocompaniet EC1-1 SF	2,415
Gamma Acoustics Rhythm	2,499
Mcintosh MA680	3,735
Meracus ONESTA	2,595
Tube Tech Synergy 1	3,999
Union Research Performance One	4,500



**Preamps
Up to £500**

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AMC AV81 Control	289
AMC 1030	379
AMC S84	479
AMC AV81 H.T. Control	499
Analogue Saturn	75
Analogue Saturn MC	75
Art Audio Minuet	499
Audio Innovations P1	369
Audio Innovations L1	369
Audio Innovations T2	425
Audiolink P400	467
Credo PMP003	385
Credo HMP003	388
Credo MMP002	439
Creek OBM-8	99
Creek OBM-9	110



Audiolab 8000C/M The range-topping pre/power combo has been upgraded recently.

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Crimson CS610C	450
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Moth 30 Active 100VA	349
Musical Fidelity E20	399
Musical Fidelity F2	499
Naim Audio PREFIX	334
Naim Audio NAC92	448
Onix OA24	400
QED Vector	199
Rega EOS	398
Rose RV-23	450
Rotel RC970BX MkII	175
Technics SU-C1000	350
Thorens TTP2000	500
Union Research Simply Phono	495

£501 to £2000

Adyton CHORUS	1,995
Alchemist Forsetti Pre	919
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	750
Art Audio VP1	952
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 8000Q	1,100
Aura CA200	700
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AVI S2000MP+P	1,049
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Bryston BP1	673
Bryston BPS	757
Bryston BP4	802
Bryston BP20	958
Bryston BP-25	1,129
Bryston BP-25P	1,355
Bryston 4B-ST PRO	1,495
Bryston BP-25MC	1,580
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Classe Audio Audio 4L	1,697
Classe Audio Audio 4	1,735
Concordant Exhilarant	900
Concordant Exquisite	1,950
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
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DNM 3 Start	950

DNM 3A Start	1,500
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ECA Prisma	880
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Electrocompaniet ECP-1 SF	675
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Lumley Reference LV1	1,150
Lumley Reference WAP1	1,150
Lumley Reference L/R PV1.5	1,350
Lumley Reference PV1.5	1,500
Lumley Reference PV1	1,500
Lumley Reference PV1	1,700
Marantz AV-500	699
Marantz SC-23	1,000
Mcintosh C712	1,479
Meracus INGREDI	925
Meridian 501	695
Meridian 562	765
Meridian 501V	875
Meridian 562V	995
Meridian 502	1,295
Michell Argo	730
Michell Iso HR	895
Michell Argo HR	1,339
Michi RHC-10	795
Michi RHQ-10	1,150
Michi RHA-10	1,150
Micromega Tempo P	1,250
Monrio ADN	595
Monrio PLURI-L	950
Musical Fidelity F25	1,499
Naim Audio NAC92R	599
Naim Audio NAC72	690
Naim Audio NAC 102	998
PS Audio 6.1	799
PS Audio 6.2	899
PS Audio Phono Link	899
Quad 77PR	850
Rega HAL	998
Rose RV-23S	525
Shearman Phase 6 Pre	895
Shearman 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



Harman/Kardon HK610 This punchy little integrated amp is a great way to start a budget system.

Sumo Athena III	987
Sumo Artemis DP	1,695
Sumo Audiomeda III	1,810
Sumo Model Five	1,830
Technics SU-C2000	700
Tesseract TAADA	1,500
Tesseract TALA	1,500
Tesseract TAHA	1,800
Thorens TTP 2000F	650
Thorens TRP3000	1,500
Thorens TRP3000	1,500
Thorens TRP 3000	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	1,000
Yamaha CX-2	650
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 LV-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
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	2,135
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-52	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 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
Meracur PRETARE	2,195
Meridian 601	2,750
Naim Audio NAC82	2,058
Naim Audio NAC52	3,190
Sonic Frontiers SFL-2	3,795
Sumo Model Ten/M	4,080
Tesseract TAP-A	5,300
YBA 1 Pre	3,750

AMC 2030	449
Arcam ALPHA 9P	400
Arcam Delta 290P	400
Creek A42	279
Crimson CS620C	450
Denon PMA-250SE	160
Denon PMA-350SE	200
Denon PMA-725R	350
Harman-Kardon PA2100	400
LFD Powerstage PA0	499
Marantz MA500	250
Marantz AV600	250
Marantz MA-500	250
Marantz MM-500	450
Moth 30 Series Power	239
Moth 30 Mono/40	459
Myriad MA 120	450
Naim Audio NAP90/3	428
Onix OA401	400
Rotel RB970BX MkII	225
Rotel RB980BX	450
Technics SE-A1000	400
£501 to £2000	
Alchemist Forsetti Pwr	1,309
Arion EOS Export Mk II	1,299
Arion Triton Mk II	1,399
Arion Tycho Pwr Mk II	1,850
Art Audio Quintet	1,393
Art Audio 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	639
Bryston 3B-ST PRO	987
Bryston THX3B	1,074
Bryston 3B-NRB	1,159
Bryston 7B-ST PRO	1,545
Bryston THX7B	1,605
Bryston 5B-ST PRO	1,610
Bryston 4B-NRB	1,756
Bryston 7B-NRB	1,815
Bryston THX4B	1,858
Bryston 8B-ST PRO	1,868
Chimera X-150P	1,200
Classe Audio Audio 70	1,399
Copland CSA 8	950
Copland CTA-501	1,599
Copland CTA-504	1,999
Counterpoint Solid IEM	1,995
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
ECA Lectern S	880
ECA Lectern HD	1,480
Electrocompaniet AW60B	1,185
Electrocompaniet AW60B SF	1,358
Exposure XVII Super	850
Exposure XVIII (pr)	1,599
Grant G50A	1,128
Grant G100AMS	1,528
Harman-Kardon PA2200	700
Harman-Kardon PA2400	1,000
LFD PA1 Powerstage	999
LFD Powerstage PA2	1,599
LFD Powerstage PA2M	1,999
Linn LK100	650
Linn Klout	2,000
Lumley Reference ST40	1,250
Lumley Reference ST70	1,950
Lynwood Ruby	985
Magnum MF330	685
Marantz MA-23	1,800
Mcintosh MC7100	1,259
Meracur CIERE	1,095
Meridian 555	750
Micelli Alecto Stereo	1,150
Micelli Alecto Mono	1,989
Michi RHB-05	1,100
Michi RHB-10	2,000
Micromega Amp	1,250
Monrio MC-25	895
Monrio HP1	1,995
Moth 30 Stereo/60	549
Moth 30 Mono/100	879
Musical Fidelity FX2	799
NAD Monitor 208	999
Naim Audio NAP140	722
Naim Audio NAP180	1,016
Naim Audio NAP135	1,576
Naim Audio NAP250	1,576
Onix OA601	699
Onix OA801	849

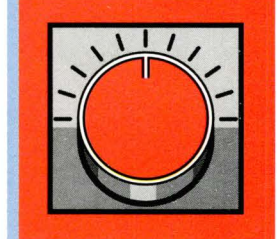
Papworth TVA50	1,425
PS Audio 100 Delta	1,499
Quad 775A	600
Quad 707	800
Rega EXS	598
Rega EXON	598
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	550
Rotel RB990BX	625
Shearne Phase 3	619
Shearne Phase 5 Mono	879
Sonic Frontiers SFS-40	1,695
Technics SE-A2000	1,100
Thorens TTA2000	550
Thorens TRA3000	2,000
Thorens TRA3000	2,000
Thorens TRA 3000	2,000
Thule PA200	1,798
Tube Tech Unisig Pwr Amp	1,099
Woodside ISA 240	949
Woodside MA50 Class A	1,224
Woodside STA35	1,323
XTC POW-1	2,000
Yamaha MX-2	750
YBA 3 Power	1,199
Over £2000	
+ ROK-M1.5	4,500
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 THX8B	2,030
Bryston 8B-NRB	2,195
Classe Audio Audio 10	2,299
Classe Audio Audio 15	3,399
Classe Audio Audio 25	4,639
Classe Audio Audio M-700	7,690
Classe Audio Audio M-1000	9,968
Copland CTA-505	2,099
Counterpoint Solid 2E	2,495
Counterpoint NPS-200E	2,995
Counterpoint SA4	3,575
Counterpoint Nat Progress	4,125
Counterpoint NPS-400E	4,395
Counterpoint NPM-E	8,995
Credo PMP102	2,181
Credo PMP252	2,509
DNM PA2BE	4,250
DNM PA2BS	5,250
DNM PA2BS-1	5,650
Dynavector HX7.5	2,195
Dynavector HX1.2	3,995
EAR 509 Mk II	3,499
EAR 519	4,699
EAR 549	6,999
Electrocompaniet AW100DMB	2,115
Electrocompaniet AW100DMB-SF	2,298
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB	3,983
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB-SF	4,215
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	4,673
Electrocompaniet AW180MB-SF	4,910
Exposure IV	2,199
Exposure XVI	4,000
Gamma Acoustics Aeon 211/VT4C	4,999
Gamma Acoustics Space Ref	5,999

Graaf 5050	2,100
Grant G350A	3,455
Grant G200AMS	3,760
Jadis JA-30	2,880
Jadis JA-80	4,956
Jadis DEFY-7	5,290
Jadis JA-200	7,759
KAL Emperor	4,375
Krell KSA-50s	3,690
Krell KSA-100s	5,843
Krell KSA-200s	7,987
Krell KSA-300s	9,500
Lumley Reference M120	3,200
Marantz MA-24	2,600
Mark Levinson 29	3,450
Mark Levinson 331	4,495
Mark Levinson 27.5	5,399
Mark Levinson 332	6,495
Mark Levinson 23.5	7,399
Mark Levinson 333	8,495
Matisse Ref Monoblocks	7,800
Mcintosh MC7108	2,249
Mcintosh MC7150	2,295
Mcintosh MC7104	2,729
Mcintosh MC150	2,855
Mcintosh MC7300	3,195
Mcintosh MC7106	3,425
Mcintosh MC275	3,995
Mcintosh MC300	3,765
Mcintosh MC2600	5,395
Mcintosh MC500	6,265
Meracur TENTARE	2,245
Meracur CANTARE	8,995
Musical Fidelity F16	2,499
Musical Fidelity F19	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
Shearne Phase 1 Pwr Ref	2,199
Sonic Frontiers SFS-80	2,895
Sonic Frontiers SFS-160	5,495
Tesseract TAMP-60	7,350
Tube Tech Genesis	2,599
Unison Research Smart 845	2,995
YBA 2 Power	2,150
YBA 1 Power	4,250

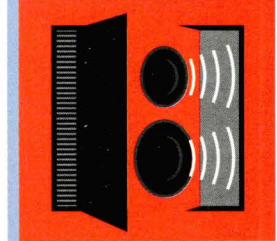


Arcam Xeta One Buy British to get a fine-sounding, feature-packed AV amp.

Sony TA-VE700	350
Sony TA-AV590	399
Sony TA-AV570B	400
Technics SL-EX100	200
Technics SL-EX300	250
Yamaha DSP-A590	349
Yamaha DSP-A780	599
Yamaha DSP-A2070	1,099



AV Receivers	
Denon AVR-900	350
Harman-Kardon AVR-20	499
Harman-Kardon AVR-25	699
Harman-Kardon AVR-30	1,000
JVC RX-416VBK	270
JVC RX-616RBK	350
Marantz SR-82	900
NAD AV713	480
NAD 917	550
NAD AV716	600
Onkyo TX-SV424PRO	450
Onkyo TX-SV525PRO	600
Onkyo TX-SV727PRO	900
Onkyo TX-SV919THX	2,000
Philips FTR731	250
Philips FR751	300
Pioneer VSX-804RDS	399
Sony ST-AD54B	280
Sony STR-D615	300
Sony SMD611B	330
Yamaha RX-V390RDS	299
Yamaha RX-V590RDS	449



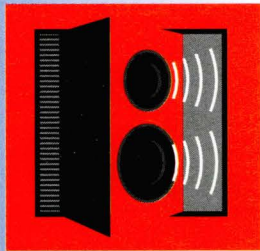
AV Loudspeakers Centre Channel Speakers	
B&W Solid HCM1S	125
B&W CC3	150
B&W CC6	200
Boston Acoustics 404V	100
Boston Acoustics CR1	100
Boston Acoustics Centre 6	130
Boston Acoustics 525V	150
Boston Acoustics Centre 7	200
Boston Acoustics VR12	300
Canon S-C10	129
Canon S-C20	199
Celestion CSC	129
Celestion Centre 2	189
JBL MR Centre	100

Power Amps	
Up to £500	
AMC 2445	299



GLL Arena AV System Deploys GLL's revolutionary ICT technology for ace AV sound.

JBL TLX103	130
JBL SC305	150
JBL Centre	180
JPW Centre 160	170
KEF 200C	699
Kenwood CS-6	150
Keswick Audio Centrali	359
Linn Centrik	298
Meridian DSP5000C	1,750
Meridian DSP6000C	4,900
Mission 75C	248
Monitor Audio CC200	200
Monitor Audio CC900	400
Polk CS200	170
Polk RM2500C	170
Polk CS250	249
Polk CS350	250
Royd AV77	450
Yamaha NS-C60	250
Yamaha NS-C105	60
Yamaha NS-C150	80
Zyp A1TAV	110
	109



Surround Speakers

Aiwa SX-R220	50
B&W SCM8	550
Boston Acoustics VRS	429
Boston Acoustics 575X	450
Canon V-100	210
Musical Technology Merlin	200
Polk M3 II	220
Polk M5	300
Polk LS /fx Surround	449

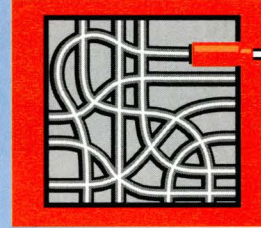
AV Speaker Packages

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
Dali Surround Sound Sys	1,240
GLL Arena AV	89
Harman-Kardon HT-1 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
Pioneer S-V201	250
Pioneer S-V401	700
Polk RM3000 II/M3/CS200	1,088
Polk SRT	9,500
REL/JBL System	1,000
Sony SA-VA1	599
Sony SA-VA3	799
Sony SA-V55	800
Wharfedale Movies 4	349
Wharfedale Movies 7	459
Wharfedale Movies 9	489

Subwoofers

B&W Solid Powerbass	300
B&W PCS8	750
B&W 800ASW	1,500
Boston Acoustics VR500	400

Boston Acoustics SW10	450
Boston Acoustics 595X	455
Canon S-B20	200
JBL PS60	399
JPW Satellites	80
JPW Subwoofer	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
Kenwood CM-5ES	80
Kenwood RS-05	80
Kenwood CM-7ES	100
Kenwood SW500	250
Meridian Sub 1	1,500
Polk PSW100	499
Rel Stadium II	1,000
Rel Stentor 2	1,800
Rel Studio 2	4,000
Wharfedale Modus Sub-Bass	180



CABLES

Analogue Interconnects

Arion SA0.5	75
Arion SA1	125
Arion SA2	199
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	25
Cable Talk Advanced 2	35
Cable Talk Improved 2/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	49
Chord Siren	65
Chord Chameleon	68
Chord Solid	99
DPA Slink	41
DPA White Slink	75
Electrocompaniet EC-K4/S	165
Electrocompaniet EC-K4/X	214
Ixos 104	20
Ixos 103	40
Ixos 102	60
Ixos 101	100
Kimber Cable Illuminati DX50	350
Kimber Cable Orchid	750
Kronos Konnekt 3	49
Kronos Konnekt 2	99
Kronos Konnekt 1	199
Naim Audio SNAIC-5	47
Nordost Magic 1	30
Nordost Black Knight	50
Nordost Blue Angel	80
Nordost Blue Heaven	120
Nordost Red Dawn	250
QED P2 Gold	20
QED Incon P2 Screened	26
QED Incon P1 Screened	23
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

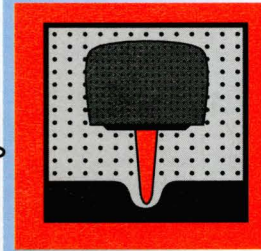
Digital Interconnects

Arion DAC1	99
Arion DAC2	199
Audioquest Video Z	50
Audioquest Digital PRO	90
Cable Talk Digital 2	75
Chord Codac	33
Chord Prodac	50
DPA Digi-link	28
Ixos 105	25
Monster Datalink 100	45
Moth Leyline Datalink	140
Nordost Moonglo Digital	135
QED Digiflex	20
QLN Nordost Moonglo	130
QLN Nordost-XLR	165
Sonic Link Light Brown	30
Sonic Link Green	50
Trichord Pulsewire 75/D	64
Van Den Hul MV Videolink 75	30

Speaker Cables

Bandridge LC7409	4
Cable Talk Overture 2	4
Chord MYTH	6
Chord LEGEND	15

Electrocompaniet EC-K2	119
Gale XL315	2
Gale XL160-2	3
Grado 450CM	25
Ixos 607	2
Ixos 605	5
Ixos 606	8
Ixos 605/5	15
Lumley Reference Silver	35
Naim Audio NACA 5	5
Puresonic 7845	2
Rega	2



CARTRIDGES

Up to £100

Arcam C77	30
Arcam C77MG	40
Arcam E77	60
Arcam E77MG	50
Arcam P77	63
Arcam P77MG	73
Audio Technica AT-91	13
Audio Technica AT-95E	19
Audio Technica AT-110E	24
Denon DL110	70
Denon DL160	90
Denon DL103	100
Goldring Elan P	17
Goldring Elan	19
Goldring Elektra	29
Goldring 1006	59
Goldring 1012GX	65
Goldring 1012 GX Cartridge	79
Goldring 1022GX	99
Grado ZTE + 1	27
Grado ZCE + 1	37
Grado Z3E + 1	47
Grado Prestige Black	49
Grado Prestige Green	59
Grado Prestige Blue	69
Grado ZF1 +	82
Grado Prestige Red	99
Linn K5	65
Nottingham Analogue Tracer I	98
Ortofon VMS2	14
Ortofon OM-5E	20
Ortofon OM-5E	20
Ortofon OM10 Super	30
Ortofon OMPRO-S	38
Ortofon OM Pro S	38
Ortofon 510	38
Ortofon OMDJ'S	50
Ortofon OMPRO-S + 2	60
Ortofon OM Night Club S	65
Ortofon 520	65
Ortofon Concord PProS	70
Ortofon OM20 Super	70
Ortofon OM Night Club E	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	70
Ortofon Concord Pro S	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	70
Ortofon Concord DJ'S	80
Ortofon OMDJ'S + 2	80
Ortofon OM30 Super	90
Ortofon Concord PRO-S + 2	95
Ortofon OMNC+2	100
Ortofon MC10 Super	100
Ortofon 530	100
Pickering TE-15	20
Pickering VE-15	25
Pickering T-E	25
Pickering V15-DJ	28
Pickering TL-E	35
Pickering TL-2E	45
Pickering XV15-625E	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	50
Pickering TL-2-S	55
Pickering XV15-757S	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	70
Pickering TL3S	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	100
Pickering TL-4-S	100
Pro-Ject 78rpm Kit	20
Rega Bias	39
Rega RB78	39
Rega Super Bias	59
Rega Elys	85
Shure SC35C	29

Shure ME95ED	38
Shure M70BX	38
Stanton 500AL II	34
Stanton 500EL	37
Stanton 680AL/X	56
Stanton 680EL/X	70
Sumiko Oyster	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	50
Sumiko Pearl	70
Sumiko Blue Point	100

Over £100

Roksan Corus Black	130
Roksan Shiraz	970
Audio Technica AT-OC9	945
Audio Technica ART-1	244
Audioquest MC5	250
Audioquest 404L	599
Audioquest 404MH	899
Audioquest 7000NSX	1,495
Denon DL304	200
DNM Reson Mica	150
DNM Reson Aciore	199
DNM Reson Reca	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 Eroica LX	110
Goldring Eroica	110
Goldring 1042	120
Goldring Elite	220
Grado Prestige Silver	119
Grado Prestige Gold	149
Grado Signature Junior	149
Grado Signature 8MZ	250
Grado Signature MCZ	375
Grado Signature TLZ	650
Grado Signature XTZ	975
Koetsu Red T	1,550
Koetsu Red K Sig	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	2,297
Koetsu Signature	3,218
Linn K9	150
Linn K18/II	250
Linn Klyde	500
Linn Arkiv	1,060
London Decca Maroon	259
London Decca Gold	299
London Decca Maroon Dp	339
London Decca Gold Dp	379
London Decca S Gold	399
London Decca S Gold Dp	479
London Decca Jubilee	699
Lyra Lydian	999
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	1,069
Lyra Parnassus	2,295
Nottingham Analogue Tracer II	175
Nottingham Analogue Tracer III	350
Nottingham Analogue Tracer IV	550
Ortofon Concord NC S	110
Ortofon OMNC+E	120
Ortofon Concord NC E	120
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130
Ortofon MC15 Super II	130
Ortofon 540	130
Ortofon Concord NCS+2	150
Ortofon Concord DJ'S+2	150
Ortofon Concord NC+2	165
Ortofon MC25E	180
Ortofon MC25FL	249
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	300
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	425
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	425
Ortofon MC200II	750
Ortofon MC3000II	1,100
Ortofon MC5000	1,500
Ortofon MC7500	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	150
Pickering TL-4004	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	200
Pro-Ject 6/A30	1,000
Pro-Ject 6/A35	2,350
Stanton 890AL/X	118
Sumiko BPS	250
Transfiguration SPIRIT	1,000
Transfiguration AF-1 Mk II	1,595
Transfiguration Temper	1,950
Transfiguration Supreme	1,995
Van Den Hul MM-1	250
Van Den Hul MM-2	299
Van Den Hul DDT-II	699
Van Den Hul MC-10	799
Van Den Hul MC-One	999
Van Den Hul MC-One/Hi	1,149
Van Den Hul MC-Two	1,349



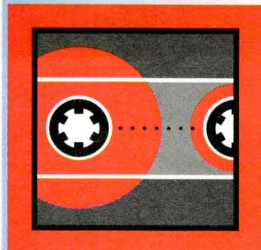
QED Profile 8 An affordable way to biwire your speakers, with innovative 'cold-welded' plugs.



Pioneer CT-S830S This impressive recorder is expensive but still great value for keen recordists.

Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIISLN	2,200
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIICMN	2,750
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIISLA	2,999
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLN	2,999
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLA	2,999
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIICHN	3,400
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	3,450

Teac W-780R	170
Teac R-560	180
Technics RS-TR373	200
Technics RS-BX501	200
Yamaha KK-390	150
Yamaha KK-W392	180
Yamaha KK-490	199



CASSETTE DECKS
Up to £200

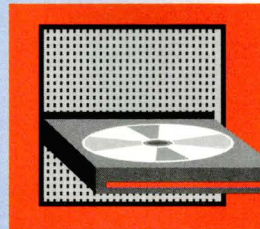
Aiwa AD-F450	120
Aiwa AD-WX727	170
Denon DRM-550	160
Denon DRW-580	200
Denon DRS-640	200
Dual CC8000 RS	200
Grundig CCF3	200
Grundig CCF3	200
JVC TD-W218BK	170
JVC TD-X372BK	170
JVC TD-R472BK	200
JVC TD-W318BK	200
Kenwood KK-W4080	160
Kenwood KK-3080	160
Kenwood KK-W6080	200
Kenwood KK-5080S	200
Luxman K-322	200
Marantz SD-53	200
Pioneer CT-S330	170
Pioneer CT-W503R	200
Pioneer CT-S430S	200
Sony TC-KE200	120
Sony TC-WE405	150
Sony TC-KE400S	180
Sony TC-WE505	200
Teac W-416	100
Teac V-610	100

Over £200	
Aiwa AD-F850	230
Aiwa AD-S950	300
Arcam Delta 100	899
Denon DRM-740	270
Denon DRS-810	310
Harman-Kardon TD420	280
Harman-Kardon TD450	350
Harman-Kardon TD470	450
JVC TD-V562BK	220
JVC TD-W718BK	250
JVC TD-V662BK	270
Kenwood KK-7060S	330
Luxman K-373	400
Marantz SD-535	250
Marantz SD-63	270
Marantz CP-430	600
NAD 613	230
NAD 614	270
NAD 616	299
Onkyo TA-RW311	320
Onkyo KR-609	350
Onkyo K-W606	370
Onkyo K-611	430
Pioneer CT-W603RS	230
Pioneer CT-W803RS	300
Pioneer CT-S630S	300
Pioneer CT-M601R	380
Pioneer CT-S830S	500
Pioneer CT-95	1,000
Sony TC-KE500S	230
Sony TC-WE80S	250
Sony TC-KE600S	300
Sony TC-K611S	300
Sony TC-KA6ES	550
Teac W-850R	250
Teac V-1030	250
Teac W-6000R	450
Teac V-6030S	550
Teac V-8030S	650
Technics RS-TR474	220
Technics RS-AZ6	230
Technics RS-TR575	280



Meridian 508 20-bit Technological wonder that sets new standards for natural-sounding music!

Technics RS-AZ7	300
Yamaha KK-W592	280
Yamaha KK-690	400
Yamaha KK-W952	599



CD PLAYER
Up to £250

Aiwa XC-300	150
Cambridge Audio CD4	150
Denon DCD-625	200
Denon DCD-825	240
Dual CD1135RC	140
Dual CD1150RC	150
Dual CD1000RS	170
Dual CD1180RC	180
Eclipse CD101a	80
Grundig CDH	170
Harman-Kardon HD710	250
JVC XL-V184BK	120
JVC XL-V284BK	140
JVC XL-F116BK	180
JVC XL-F216BK	200
JVC XL-V574BK	250
Kenwood DP-M5570	250
Kenwood DP-5060	250
Luxman D-322	200
Marantz CC-47	250
NAD 510	199
NAD 512	250
Onkyo DX-710	200
Onkyo DX-703	240
Philips CD711	120
Philips CD721	130
Pioneer PD-77	100
Pioneer PD-103	140
Pioneer PD-203	160
Pioneer PD-S504	200
Pioneer PD-M603	250
Rotel RCD-930AX	180
Sony CDP-XE200	120
Sony CDP-K1303	130
Sony CDP-XE300	140
Sony CDP-XE500	160
Sony CDP-CE405	180
Sony CDP-XE700E	200
Sony CDP-C325M	230
Sony CDP-761E	250
Teac CD-P1800	130
Teac CD-P3450	150
Teac CD-P3450	179
Teac PD-D2200	250
Technics SL-PG380A	120
Technics SL-PG480A	140
Technics SL-PG580A	160
Technics SL-PG570A	170
Technics SL-PG670A	200
Technics SL-PS770	250
Yamaha CDC-555	199
Yamaha CDC-655	249

£251 to £500

Aiwa DX-C100M	500
AMC CD6	349
Arcam Alpha One	300
Arcam Arcam 7	320
Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	470
Audio Innovations Alto	399
Audio Innovations Alto Chr	449
Aura CD100	450
Creek CD42	500
Denon DCD-1015	350
Grundig CDC14	300
Harman-Kardon HD7325	299
Harman-Kardon FL8450	300
Harman-Kardon HD730	300
Harman-Kardon HD7425	349
Harman-Kardon HD7525	400
JVC XL-2674BK	300
Micromega Minium CD	350
Musical Fidelity E60	300
NAD 514	370
NAD 517	400
Onkyo DX-7210	260
Onkyo C721	290
Onkyo DX-7510	400
Orelle CD-100	500
Pioneer PD-S703	300
Pioneer PD-M703	300
Pioneer PD-S904	400
Pioneer PD-DM802	450
Pioneer PD-S901	499

Pioneer PD-TM3	500
Rotel RCD-965BK	300
Rotel RCD-970BK	375
Sony CDP-XE900E	300
Sony CDP-XA3ES	350
Sony CDP-CX153	450
Teac CD-5	350

£501 to £1000

Arcam Alpha 8	520
Arcam Alpha 6	600
Arcam Delta 270	800
DPA Renaissance	950
Harman-Kardon HD7625	550
Harman-Kardon HD7725	800
Linn Mimik	875
Luxman D-373	550
Marantz CD-72 Mk II	600
Meridian 563	795
Meridian 200	895
Meridian 506	995
Myryad MC100	700
Naim Audio CD3	977
Onix CD33	999
Pioneer PD-F100	600
Quad 77B	700
Quad 77M	900
Teac VRDS-10SE	850
Technics SL-P2000	1,000
Thule CD100	849

Over £1000

Roksan ATT-DP3P	1,595
AVI S2000MC	1,249
Copland CDA277	1,800
Copland CDA-288	2,200
Jadis JS-1	8,068
Krell CD-DSP Mk II	5,000
Krell CD-DSPII 5000	5,000
Krell KPS20i	9,990
Luxman D500XS	4,500
Marantz CD-23	4,000
Mcintosh MCD7008	2,195
Mcintosh MCD7009	2,635
Meracur AURIGA	1,295
Meracur FLAGRARE	2,495
Meracur AMAGO	3,995
Meracur IMAGIO	4,495
Meridian 606	1,350
Meridian 508	1,685
Micro-Seiki CD-M2DC	3,695
Micro-Seiki CDM200X	4,689
Mission Disc/Dacmaster	1,900
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,499
Naim Audio CD2	1,977
Naim Audio CD5	3,751
Pioneer PD-95	2,500
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	1,299
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,450
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,100
Counterpoint DA-11E	1,495
DPA Enlightenment	725
Jadis JCDT	8,000
Krell KSP20i/I	1,100
Krell MD-20	4,999
Krell MD-10	7,990
Krell KPS 20T	8,490
Krell DT-10	9,990
Linn Kanik	1,750
Meridian 500	1,245
Meridian 602	1,750
Micromega Drive 1	700

Pink Triangle Cardinal	795
PS Audio Lambda tr	2,250
Teac VRDS-TI	550
Teac VRDS-7	599
Teac P-700	900
Teac P-30	2,500
Theta Data Basic II	2,298
Theta Data III NTSC	5,345
Theta Data III NTSC/PAL	5,879
Thorens TCD2000	900
Wadia 8	3,195
Wadia 20	4,370
XTC CDT-1LE	1,250

DACS

Arcam Black Box 50	480
Arcam Black Box 500	750
Counterpoint DA-10E	1,895
Linn Numerik	1,400
Pink Triangle Ordinal	837
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,536
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCCD	2,650
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550
Teac D-TI	500
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	1,395



DIGITAL RECORDERS

JVC XM-D1BK	900
Meridian CDR	4,500
Philips DCC730	250
Philips DCC170	250
Pioneer D-05	800
Pioneer D-07	1,150
Pioneer PDR-05	1,300
Sharp MD-R1H	400
Sharp MD-MS100H	400
Sony MDS303	500
Sony MDS535	550
Sony MDS503	550
Sony MDA-JA3ES	700
Sony DTC60ES	800
Teac R-9	1,200



HEADPHONES
Up to £40

Aiwa HP-X201	13
Aiwa HP-A360	13
Aiwa HP-X301	20
Aiwa HP-VX303	25
Aiwa HP-X705	40
Audio Technica ATH-P1	10



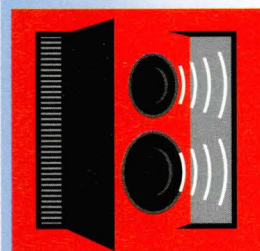
Beyer DT321 Just one in this company's extensive range of ear-cossetting cans.



Mordaunt-Short MS10i Officially declared "a kickin' little box" in our recent review.

Audio Technica ATH-P3	15	Sony MDR-E505	8	Denon AH-D650	95
Audio Technica ATH-P5	20	Sony MDR007/MK2	8	Denon AH-D750	130
Beyer DT111 Alpha	13	Sony FONTOPIA MDR5801	8	Denon AH-D950	150
Beyer DT111 Beta	17	Sony MDR-009	10	Ergo 1	120
Beyer DT111 Gamma	21	Sony MDR-W07L	11	Ergo Model2	140
Beyer DT211	34	Sony MDR-A009	12	Grado SR80	110
Denon AH-C33	26	Sony MDR-V50	13	Jacklin Float Model 1	79
JVC HA-22	6	Sony MDR15	15	Jacklin Float Model 2	99
JVC HA-CD88	18	Sony MDR-A009	15	Jacklin Float ELS	399
JVC HA-D525	20	Sony MDR-W24V	15	JVC HA-D727	43
JVC HA-F65	20	Sony MDR-25	16	JVC HA-D910	65
JVC HA-D626	25	Sony MDR-W12L	16	JVC HA-D1000	250
Kenwood KH-535	15	Sony MDR-E837	18	JVC HA-F25	699
Kenwood KH-757	20	Sony MDR-009TV	19	Kenwood KH-5000	70
Kenwood KH-959	25	Sony MDR-35	20	Pioneer SE-500D	48
Kenwood KH-1000	25	Sony MDR-CD30	20	Pioneer SE-700D	60
Kenwood KH-2020	40	Sony MDR-009TV	20	Sennheiser HD414 Class	50
Maxell EB-125	4	Sony MDR-A34L	20	Sennheiser HD445	50
Maxell HP-200	5	Sony MDR-E848KP	20	Sennheiser HD455	50
Maxell EB-225	8	Sony MDR-E848	20	Sennheiser HD465	65
Maxell HBS-150	8	Sony MDR-CD170	20	Sennheiser IS360/UK	70
Maxell HP-300	8	Sony MDR-P1TV	22	Sennheiser HD475	75
Maxell EBS-325	9	Sony MDR-P1TV	25	Sennheiser HD25 SP	85
Maxell EB-425	10	Sony MDR-CD250EX	28	Sennheiser HD535	100
Maxell HP-700	10	Sony MDR-CD270	30	Sennheiser HD545 Ref	120
Maxell HP-500	13	Sony MDR-CD370	40	Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	140
Maxell HP-1000	19	Technics RP-HT300	40	Sennheiser HD265 Linear	140
Maxell HP-2000	20	Vivanco SR60	3	Sennheiser IS450	150
Maxell HP-3000	26	Vivanco SR12	3	Sennheiser HD25	160
Pioneer SE-5	16	Vivanco SR52	5	Sennheiser IS550	180
Pioneer SE-15	20	Vivanco SR54	7	Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	200
Pioneer SE-32	23	Vivanco SR14	7	Sony SS-E500	80
Pioneer SE-52	25	Vivanco SR16	8	Sony SS86E	100
Pioneer SE-15V	30	Vivanco SR120	15	Sony SS125E	130
Pioneer SE-330D	35	Vivanco SR250	19	TDL NUCLEUS 1	60
Pioneer SE-400D	37	Vivanco SR150	20	TDL NFM1	120
Ross RE-233	5	Vivanco SR200	25	Teac LS-C8	80
Ross RIH-150	6	Vivanco SR300	30	Teac LS-X8	80
Ross RE-235	6			Technics SB-CS55	80
Ross RE-234	6			Technics SB-CS75	100
Ross RE-229	6			Visionik 5202	129
Ross RE-239	6			Wharfedale Centre Cube	49
Ross RE-2030	6			Wharfedale Valdus 100	79
Ross RMH-300	7			Wharfedale Diamond 6R	99
Ross RE-280	7			Wharfedale Valdus 200	109
Ross RE-246	7			Wharfedale Modus Micro	109
Ross RE-223	7			Wharfedale Modus Centre	119
Ross RMH-500CD	9			Yamaha NS-C80	99
Ross RIH-360CD	9				
Ross RE-2060CD	9				
Ross RMH-310TV	10				
Ross RIH-550	10				
Ross RIH-460CD	12				
Ross RDH-200CD	13				
Ross RDH-100CD	15				
Ross RDH-300CD	17				
Ross RDH-400CD	22				
Sennheiser HD26	10				
Sennheiser HD36	13				
Sennheiser HD56	15				
Sennheiser Vegas	28				
Sennheiser Manhattan	28				
Sennheiser HD60TV	38				
Sony OPEN MDR005EL	6				

Vivanco SR200IFL 140



LOUDSPEAKERS
Up to £130

Advent Mini	99
Alison AL100	100
AMC WM50	120
B&W Solid HCM1S	125
B&W DM302	130
B&W Solid HCM2	130
Bose XL1000	130
Canon SV15	100
Canon S-C10	130
Celestion CC1	90
Celestion Little 1	99
Celestion Impact 10	129
Celestion CSC	129
Denon SCM2	80
Gale Ref Monitors	100
Genexxa GX330	80
GLL Arena HF	99
Goodmans Active 75	65
Interaudio XL1000	100
Jamo Studio 80	70
Jamo D100	80
Jamo sat90	90
Jamo Studio 110	100
Jamo D110	100
Jamo Cornet 20.4	100
Jamo SAT170	110
Jamo Artina	120
Jamo D115	120
Jamo Cornet 30.4	120
Jamo JAMO 28	120
Jamo SAT 200.11	130
JBL Control One	115
JPW Minim SGL SHD	50
JPW Minim Pair Solid	89
JPW Sonata Vinyl	100
JPW Sonata	120
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
JVC SP-V50	60
JVC SP-X220TBK	100
JVC SP-X550BK	130
KEF Coda 7	129
Mission 73	100
Mission 731i	130
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100
Pioneer CS-3030	120
Realistic Minimus 3.5	30
Realistic Minimus 21	30
Realistic M mus 26	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-7	60
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100
Revolver Beretta	100
Sony SS-E300	50
Sony SS-E300	50
Sony SS-E500	100
Sony SS86E	80
Sony SS125E	130
TDL NUCLEUS 1	60
TDL NFM1	120
Teac LS-C8	80
Teac LS-X8	80
Technics SB-CS55	80
Technics SB-CS75	100
Visionik 5202	129
Wharfedale Centre Cube	49
Wharfedale Valdus 100	79
Wharfedale Diamond 6R	99
Wharfedale Valdus 200	109
Wharfedale Modus Micro	109
Wharfedale Modus Centre	119
Yamaha NS-C80	99

£131 to £200

Acoustic Energy AE100	200
Advent Baby 2	149
Alison AL105	170
AMC WM75	160
B&W CWM5	150
B&W DM601	199
B&W Solid Monitor	200
Bose 101 M'ble Monitor	190
Bose XL2000	200
Boston Acoustics HD5	139
Boston Acoustics 325	139
Boston Acoustics CR6	149
Boston Acoustics Runabout	169
Boston Acoustics 350	179

Boston Acoustics 335	179
Boston Acoustics Satellites	179
Boston Acoustics 351	180
Boston Acoustics CR7	190
Boston Acoustics Runabout II	200
Canon S-25	150
Canon S-30	180
Canon S-B20	200
Celestion CS135	139
Celestion 3 MKII	139
Celestion Impact Centre	149
Celestion MP1	149
Celestion Centre 2	189
Celestion STYLE 1	199
Celestion Impact 15	199
Cerwin Vega HED165	200
Denon SC-E313	160
Gale Model 4	200
Genexxa GX650	140
GLL Arena SW	139
GLL Imagio IC100	170
Grundig BX1	160
Harman-Kardon LS0200	149
Harman-Kardon LS0300	199
Heybrook Prima	139
Heybrook Solo	199
Infinity SM65	150
Infinity Reference Ii	150
Infinity Reference 11i	200
Interaudio XL2000	140
Interaudio XL3000	160
Interaudio XL4000	200
Jamo Studio 140	140
Jamo SAT300.11	150
Jamo D135	160
Jamo Studio 180	180
Jamo 38	180
Jamo Converta	180
Jamo D165	200
JBL TLX111	140
JBL TLX121	170
JPW P1 Vinyl	150
JPW P1	170
JPW AP2	200
KEF Coda 8	189
KEF 60S	199
Kenwood LS-200G	200
Mission 73C	150
Mission 732	200
Monitor Audio MA301	200
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140
Mordaunt-Short MS20i	200
Naim Audio NA PXO	133
Ortofon Concord 2	170
Philips Legend FB720II	200
Pioneer CS-5030	170
Polk RT3	200
QLN PROJEKT A3	135
QLN PROJEKT A4	180
QLN QuBic111	200
Rega Flyte	198
Revolver Colt	139
Revolver Purdey Mk II	199
Rogers LS1	149
Royd The Herald	198
Sequence 200	199
Sony SS-176E	200
Tannoy 631	149
Tannoy 632	189
TDL RTL1	180
TDL SBR	200
Technics SB-CS95	150
Technics SB-M20	200
Visionik 6003	143
Visionik 5001	170
Wharfedale Modus Mini	139
Wharfedale Valdus 300	149
Wharfedale Modus One	159
Wharfedale Modus Sub-bass	179
Wharfedale Modus Three	199
Wharfedale Valdus 400	199
Zyp A1	199

£201 to £300

Advent Graduate	219
Advent Prodigy	299
Alison MS200	220
Alison AL110	220
Alison AL115	280
Alison CD6	300
AMC WM100	210
Audio Gem Opal	230
B&O Beovox CX50	300
B&W CWM6i	240
B&W Solid HCM1	249
B&W DM602	300
B&W Solid Powerbass	300
B&W CWM8i	300
Bandor Loudspeakers VOICE	270
Bandor Loudspeakers PICTURES	300
Bose XL3000	230
Bose 151 Environmental	270
Bose 161 Freestyle	275
Bose 201 Ser III	290

Bose XL4000	295	Polk M5	300
Boston Acoustics 360 Ser II	209	QLN Projekt A5	225
Boston Acoustics 361	210	QLN Projekt B3	240
Boston Acoustics CR8	239	QLN QuBic 121	250
Boston Acoustics 380	249	QLN 122	270
Boston Acoustics 381	250	QLN A6	270
Boston Acoustics CR9	279	QLN Projekt B3i	285
Boston Acoustics Voyager	299	Rega EL8	298
Boston Lynnfield VR10	250	Rogers LS33	249
Boston Lynnfield VRS	300	Royd Minstral	269
Boston Lynnfield VR12	300	Royd Merlin	298
Canon SV15KIT2	210	Sequence 300	249
Canon V-100	210	Sequence FW120	249
Canon V-100W	220	System Audio 905	250
Canon V-100EX	240	Tannoy 633/II	300
Canon SV15KIT1	250	TDL RTL 2	280
Canon S-35	250	Visonik 7003	203
Castle ISIS	229	Visonik SUB5	259
Castle Durham 900	300	Wharfedale Modus Five	259
Celestion Impact 20	279	Wharfedale Valdue 500	299
Celestion CSW	299	Yamaha NS10M	300
Celestion STYLE 2	299	Zyp A1T	219
Celestion Impact 23	300	Zyp A2S	275
Cerwin Vega HT120	250	Zyp A2ST	295
Cerwin Vega VS8	250		
Cerwin Vega HED265	300		
Cerwin Vega SAT-6	300		
Dali 102B	260		
Faraday FS1	245		
GLL Imagio IC110	300		
Heybrook HB1	269		
Infinity SM85	250		
Jamo 68	230		
Jamo 307A	230		
Jamo ART	270		
Jamo ATMOSPHERE	280		
Jamo Deco Art	300		
Jamo D265D	300		
Jamo D265C	300		
Jamo Classic 4	300		
JBL TLX50	250		
JBL TLX60	300		
JPW AP3	230		
JVC SX-SW10	300		
KEF Q10	229		
KEF Coda 9	299		
KEF 70S	299		
Kenwood LS-300G	300		
Lumley Reference Premenade SP1	299		
Micromega Minium MS1	300		
Monitor Audio Monitor 1 Gold	245		
Monitor Audio Monitor 7 Gold II	299		
Monitor Audio Sub /W/200/92	300		
Monitor Audio MA201	300		
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275		
Mordaunt-Short MS25i	300		
NAD 802	279		
Ortofon Concord 4	230		
Pioneer CS-7030	230		
Pioneer S-4UK	250		
Pioneer S-60	270		
Pioneer CS-9030	280		
Polk M3 II	220		
Polk RT5	250		
Polk RT7	300		

£301 to £500

Acoustic Energy AE109	330
Advent Legacy 2	349
Advent Laureate	499
Allison CD7	380
Allison AL120	420
Audio Innovations Alto	329
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 ASG	500
B&W DM603	500
B&W Signature 7	500
Bose 301 VM	380
Bose 305	430
Bose A'mass AM3 II	500
Bose 401	500
Boston Acoustics SW10	449
Boston Acoustics SubSat 6	449
Boston Lynnfield VR20	380
Boston Lynnfield VR500	450
Castle York	370
Castle Severn	500
Celestion Impact 25	399
Celestion STYLE 4	399
Celestion STYLE 3	399
Celestion Impact 30	429
Celestion SL6Si	429
Celestion CS6i	449
Celestion CS8i	499
Cerwin Vega VS10	350
Clements 300si	395
Dali 104B	370
Dawn Audio Chorus BS	482
Epos ES12	499
Faraday SG	345
Faraday Siren	445

Fullers Sultan	349	UKD-Opera Prima	450
Fullers Sultan H.E.	475	Visonik TB1S	366
GLL Imagio IC120	420	Wharfedale Modus Seven	339
Grundig BX3 Mk II	350	Wharfedale Modus One-Three	439
Heybrook Trio	373		
Heybrook Heylo	389		
Heybrook Heystak	499		
Infinity SM105	350		
Infinity SM115	450		
Infinity SSW-10 Sub	500		
Jamo 407A	350		
Jamo JAMO 98	360		
Jamo CLASSIC 6	360		
Jamo BX 100A	370		
Jamo D365B	400		
Jamo THX SUB ONE	400		
Jamo THX LCR ONE	400		
Jamo GRAPHIC	400		
Jamo CLASSIC 8	430		
Jamo BX 150A	460		
Jamo JAMO128	500		
Jamo 477A	500		
Jamo CONCERT CENTRE	500		
Jamo SILHOUETTE	500		
JBL TLX151	350		
JBL TLX70	400		
JBL TLX161	400		
JBL TLX171	500		
JPW Ruby 1	500		
KAL Mini-Ref MKII	395		
KEF Q30	379		
Keswick Audio Aria II	329		
Linn Tukan Passive	500		
Lumley Reference LM4	375		
Lumley Reference PREMENADE SP2	399		
Lumley Reference LM5	499		
Lumley Reference PREMENADE SP3	499		
Mission 733	330		
Mission 751 Freedom	348		
Mission 734	499		
Monitor Audio Monitor 9 Gold II	350		
Monitor Audio MA302	400		
Monitor Audio MA202	450		
Monitor Audio MA303	500		
Monitor Audio Monitor 14 Gold II	500		
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	500		
Mordaunt-Short MS40i	450		
Musical Technology Harrier	400		
Neat CRITIQUE	445		
Origin Live OL-1AS	399		
Origin Live Monarch	399		
Origin Live OL-2A	470		
Ortofon Concord 6	330		
Pentachord A	469		
Pioneer S-80	370		
Polk RT8	400		
Polk LS f/x Surround	449		
Polk RT10	500		
Prof Monitor Co TB1S	366		
Prof Monitor Co TB1SM	403		
Prof Monitor Co TB1	410		
Prof Monitor Co TB1M	447		
Prof Monitor Co XB1	499		
QLN Projekt B4	320		
QLN Projekt B3ii	329		
QLN Projekt C3	330		
QLN Projekt B MULTI	330		
QLN Projekt D3	360		
QLN Projekt C3i	370		
QLN QuBic 222	400		
QLN Projekt C3ii	400		
QLN Projekt B5	400		
QLN Projekt C3iii	400		
QLN Projekt D3i	440		
QLN Projekt C3iv	440		
QLN Projekt C4	440		
QLN Projekt C3iv	440		
QLN Projekt D3ii	470		
QLN Projekt D4	480		
QLN Projekt CMULTI	500		
Rega ELA	498		
Rogers AB33	379		
Rogers DB101	399		
Rogers LS55	429		
Rogers Studio 3	499		
Royd The Squire	350		
Royd Doublet	450		
Ruark Swordsman Plus II	329		
Ruark Icon	359		
Ruark Sabre II	449		
Ruark Templar	499		
Sd Acoustics SD3R	399		
Sequence 400	329		
Spendor 2020	399		
Tannoy Subsat3	399		
Tannoy 636	419		
Tannoy 637	499		
TDL RTL 3	400		
TDL RTL 3	400		
Technics SB-M300	350		
Technics SB-M500	450		
Totem Mite	495		
Triangle Titus TZe	325		
Triangle Comete TZe	475		

£501 to £800

Roksan 1	595	Ruark Talisman II	749
Roksan Ojan Sub	795	Shahinian Super Elf	790
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Spendor 2030	599
Acoustic Energy AE1-II	795	Spendor LS3/5A	630
Advent Heritage	579	Spendor SP3/1	795
Allison CD8	550	Tannoy 625	595
Allison AL125	650	Tannoy 638	599
Allison AL130	800	Tannoy D100	649
Audio Gem Emerald	540	TDL T-Line 2	550
B&W CDM1	600	TDL RTL4	650
B&W P4	675	TDL T-Line3	750
Bandor Loudspeakers TRIDENT	720	Totem Rokk	695
Bose SE-5 Ser II System	760	UKD-Opera Seconda	550
Bose A'mass AM511	500	UKD-Opera Riferimento	595
Roksan Acoustics SubSat 7	549	UKD-Opera Operetta	660
Boston Lynnfield VR30	600		
Canon V-200	600		
Castle Chester	700		
Castle Harlech	599		
Celestion Impact 35	529		
Celestion 100	539		
Celestion 100	539		
Celestion Impact 40	629		
Celestion IMPACT 45i	670		
Cerwin Vega VS12	550		
Cerwin Vega DC10	550		
Cerwin Vega DC12	650		
Cerwin Vega VS15	700		
Clements 600si	595		
Dawn Audio Chorus FS	698		
Epos ES14	675		
Faraday FS10	795		
Fullers Sultan H.E.	625		
Fullers Pharaoh 1	749		
GLL Imagio IC130	530		
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699		
Harbeth HL-P3ES	799		
Heybrook Quartet	575		
Infinity SM125	550		
Infinity SM155	650		
Jamo BX 200A	550		
Jamo THX SURRE ONE	550		
Jamo CLASSIC 10	700		
Jamo 507A	800		
JBL TLX181	600		
Jordan Watts JH200	510		
Jordan Watts JHFLG	560		
JPW Ruby 2	600		
JVC SX-911WD	700		
JVC SX-500 Spirit	700		
KAL Mini-Tower	619		
KAL Compact Ref	650		
KAL Tunejal	795		
KEF Q50	529		
KEF LS3/5a	649		
KEF Q70	729		
Keswick Audio Volante	629		
Lineaum LFX Wood	649		
Linn Sekrit Aktiv	650		
Linn Kelidh Passive	700		
Lumley Reference LM6	650		
Lumley Reference PREMENADE SP4	650		
Manticore Minaret	695		
Meridian A500	580		
Mission 752	578		
Mission 735	650		
Mission 753 Freedom	798		
Monitor Audio Studio 2	600		
Monitor Audio 702PMC	799		
Monitor Audio MAG501	800		
Mordaunt-Short MS50i	550		
Naim Audio INTRO	596		
Naim Audio NA PX03	705		
Naim Audio S-NAXO 3-6	719		
Naim Audio S-NAXO 2-4	719		
Naim Petite	595		
Neat Mystique	650		
Neat Petite II	745		
Orelle Orator II	699		
Origin Live Resolution	732		
Origin Live Victory	750		
Pentachord B	519		
Pentachord Pentode	995		
Pioneer S-200	600		
Polk RT12	600		
Polk LS50	800		
Proac Response 1	599		
Proac Tablette 50	599		
Proac Studio 100	699		
QLN 313	600		
QLN 929	700		
QLN Classic One	800		
Quad Q7710L	600		
Rogers AB1	549		
Rogers LS3/5A	699		
Rogers Studio 5	699		
Royd The Sorcerer	595		
Royd Abbot	665		

£801 to £1500

Roksan Ojan 3 Rosewood	995	Audio Physic Step	1,299
Roksan Ojan 3X Black	1,195	Audiovector 2X	850
Roksan Ojan 3X Rosewood	1,395	Audiovector 3X	1,500
Acoustic Energy AE2-II	1,095	B&O Beolab 4500	1,200
ATC SCM10	1,000	B&O Beolab 6000	1,450
ATC SCM20	1,500	B&W P5	875
Bose AE2	1,299	B&W Matrix 805 V	995
Audio Physic Step	1,299	B&W DMG04	1,000
Audiovector 2X	850	B&W P6	1,095
Audiovector 3X	1,500	Bandor Bandora	1,140
B&O Beolab 4500	1,200	Bandor Bandora/Mora	1,260
B&O Beolab 6000	1,450	Bandor Mora	1,260
B&W P5	875	Bose A'mass AM7	900
B&W Matrix 805 V	995	Boston Lynnfield VR40	1,000
B&W DMG04	1,000	Canon S-75	1,000
B&W P6	1,095	Castle Howard S2	1,100
Bandor Bandora	1,140	Celestion SL600si	820
Bandor Bandora/Mora	1,260	Celestion 300	1,099
Bandor Mora	1,260	Celestion 700SE	1,435
Bose A'mass AM7	900	Cerwin Vega DC15	850
Boston Lynnfield VR40	1,000	Cerwin Vega 1515	1,300
Canon S-75	1,000	System Audio Signature	850
Castle Howard S2	1,100	Clements Reference 1	995
Celestion SL600si	820	Electrocompaniet Qubette	1,195
Celestion 300	1,099	Electrocompaniet Qube	1,390
Celestion 700SE	1,435	Epos ES22	1,185
Cerwin Vega DC15	850	Fullers Pharaoh 2	1,400
Cerwin Vega 1515	1,300	Gamma Acoustics Epoch Five	1,499
System Audio Signature	850	Harbeth HL-K6	975
Clements Reference 1	995	Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,259
Electrocompaniet Qubette	1,195	Harbeth HL Compact 7	1,329
Electrocompaniet Qube	1,390	Heybrook Sextet	1,129
Epos ES22	1,185	Impulse Kora	1,250
Fullers Pharaoh 2	1,400	Infinity Kappa 6.1i	995
Gamma Acoustics Epoch Five	1,499	Infinity Kappa 7.1i	1,195
Harbeth HL-K6	975	Jamo 707i	900
Harbeth BBC LS5/12A	1,259	Jamo Concert 8	1,300
Harbeth HL Compact 7	1,329	JBL L20	850
Heybrook Sextet	1,129	JBL L40	1,100
Impulse Kora	1,250	JBL L60	1,200
Infinity Kappa 6.1i	995	JBL L80	1,300
Infinity Kappa 7.1i	1,195	JBL L90	1,300
Jamo 707i	900	JBL L90	1,500
Jamo Concert 8	1,300	Jordan Watts JH400	820
JBL L20	850	Jordan Watts JH400M	970
JBL L40	1,100	JPW Ruby 3	1,000
JBL L60	1,200	JPW Ruby 4	1,300
JBL L80	1,300	KAL Trans-double	1,5

Atacama SE24 Support your local speaker!
And a pair of these are an ideal way to do it...



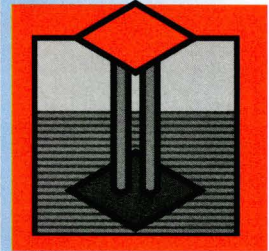
Prof Monitor Co LB1	935
Prof Monitor Co AB1	1,496
QLN Signature	1,000
QLN Prestige	1,500
QLN Sig Splitfield	1,500
Rega XEL	1,040
Rogers Studio 7	899
Royd The Albion	1,270
Ruark Broadsword II	899
Ruark Paladin	1,099
Sd Acoustics SD5	1,235
Sonus-Faber Minuetto	898
Sonus-Faber M Amator	1,498
Spendor 2040	899
Spendor SP2/3	930
Spendor SP1/2	1,330
Tannoy D500	1,470
TDL Studio 1m	899
Technics SB-M1000	1,500
Thiel SCS	1,379
Thiel 2	1,499
Thiel CS-5	1,499
Totem Model One	1,195
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
UKD-Opera Divina 2Ce	1,395
Visonik LB1	935

£1501 to £3000	
Acoustic Energy AE1 Sig	1,695
Acoustic Energy AE2 Sig	2,695
Allison I.C. 10	2,500
ATC SCM20 Tower	1,999
Audio Physic Spark 2	1,749
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999
Audiovector 5	2,500
B&O Beolab 8000	1,999
B&O Beolab Penta 3	2,500
B&W Matrix 804	1,595
B&W Matrix 803s2	1,995
B&W Matrix 802s3	2,795
Boss 901 V1	1,650
Boston Acoustics Lynfield 300L	2,000
Boston Lynnfield 300L	2,000
Castle Winchester	1,650
Celestion Kingston	2,500
Clements Reference 7	1,995
Dawn Audio Symphony	1,995
ECA SERVO A.2	2,450
Epos ES25	1,655
Fullers Pharaoh 3	2,800
Fullers Sphinx 2	3,000
Gamma Acoustics Epoch Ref Five	2,999
Genelec 1019A	1,572
Genelec Blamp 1031A	2,068
Harbeth HL-5ES	1,799
Harbeth HL-S8	1,895
Helius Syrius II	2,395
Helius Syrius I	2,850
Impulse Lali	1,850

Jamo CONCERT 11	2,000
Jamo THX SYSTEM	2,500
JBL Ti 1000	1,600
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
KEF 104/2 REC	1,799
KEF Model Three	1,999
KEF Model Four	2,999
Linn Kaber Passive	1,800
Linn Kaber Aktiv	2,440
Lowther Fidelio	1,999
Lowther Academy	2,399
Lowther Bel Canto	2,699
Lumley Reference LM2	2,500
Lumley Reference L/M 2	2,795
Magneplan MG-10 SE	1,650
Magneplan MG-1.5 SE	1,780
Magneplan MG-2.7 SE	2,650
Magneplanar MG-10 SE	1,650
Magneplanar MG-1.5 SE	1,780
Magneplanar MG-2.7 SE	2,650
Martin-Logan Aeries	2,288
Martin-Logan Stylos	2,993
Monitor Audio Studio 20SE	2,200
Mordaunt-Short Performance 860	1,895
Mordaunt-Short Performance 880	2,795
Naim Audio SBL Active	1,743
Naim Audio SBL Passive	1,876
Origen Live Conqueror	1,600
Pentachord P ² column	1,649
Polk LS90	1,700
Posselt Albatros	2,200
Proac Response 2S	2,000
Proac Studio 250	2,249
Proac Response 2.5	2,700
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
Ruark Crusader II	1,599
Ruark Equinox	1,849
Ruark Accolade	2,699
Sd Acoustics SD1E	2,695
Shahinian Arc	1,675
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

TDL Studio Monitor m	2,449
TDL Studio	2,450
Thiel CS2.2	2,749
Totem Mann-2	2,795
Triangle Aitinis	1,950
Triangle Altair	2,850
UKD-Opera Caruso II	2,250

Tannoy Canterbury 15	7,000
TDL Ref Standard-m	4,999
Thiel CS3.6	3,899
Triangle Octant TXe	3,950
Wilson WAP Puppy II	5,600
Wilson Puppy 5	7,290
Wilson WATT 5	8,800



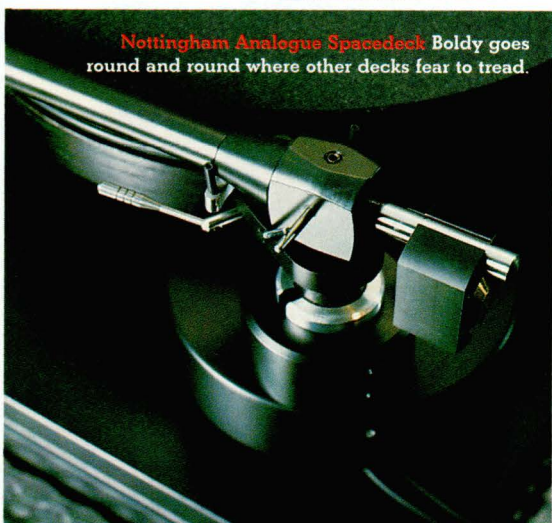
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS	
Speaker Stands	
Canon STD525	70
Deadrock 903	60
Deadrock 902	60
Deadrock 901	60
Harbeth HL-Stands	199
Royd	99

Equipment Supports	
Alphason R24/24	100
Alphason R17/17	100
Alphason R12/12	100
Alphason GR24/24	130
Alphason GR17/17	130
Alphason GR12/12	130
Alphason VR24/24	160
Alphason VR17/17	160
Alphason VR12/12	160
Audiophile Furniture Base	480
Deadrock 701	60
Deadrock 703	130
Deadrock 704	190
Deadrock 705	230
Fi-Rax R4	321
Ixos 800	35
Ixos 701	40
Ixos 711	60
Ixos 802	70
Ixos 803	90
Ixos 802P	100
Ixos 703	100
Ixos 803P	110
Ixos 804	110
Ixos 713	130
Ixos 804P	140
Ixos 704	140
Ixos 705	170
Ixos 714	190
Ixos 715	230
Jamo TLS1	40
Jamo ST80	130
JPW Add-on	50
JPW 3 tier	80
JPW 5 tier	100
Kenwood SR-CM7	45
Kenwood SR-WB7	100
Mana Acoustics Sound Frame	125
Mana Acoustics Mini Table	150
Mana Acoustics Sound Table	235
Mana Acoustics Reference Table	350
Mana Acoustics 2 Tier Amp stand	375
Mana Acoustics 3 Tier Amp Stand	450

Over £3000	
Acoustic Energy AE5	7,995
Allison I.C. 20	5,500
ATC SCM50	3,499
ATC SCM100	4,149
ATC SCM50A	4,999
ATC SCM100A	5,699
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&W Matrix 801s3	3,795
B&W Silver Signature	5,000
Boston Acoustics Lynfield 500L	4,449
Boston Lynnfield 500L	4,500
Bravura Brio	4,750
Bravura Accelerando	5,500
Definitive BP2000	3,600
Genelec Triamp S30	3,055
Genelec Triamp 1037A	4,982
Horning Aristophane	3,570
Impulse Ta'us	3,100
Infinity ARS Epsilon	9,995
Jamo ORIEL	7,000
JBL S2600	3,500
JBL Ti 5000	3,700
Jordan Watts JH2K	3,230
Jordan Watts Classic JH2KM	4,250
Jordan Watts Classic JH5K	4,875
Jordan Watts Classic JH5KM	5,860
Jordan Watts Classic JH10K	9,340
KEF 107/2 REC	3,999
Keswick Audio Zero2	6,000
Linn Keltik Aktiv	4,400
Lowther Delphic	3,999
Lumley Reference L/M 2 SIGNATURE	8,500
Lumley Reference LM1	4,500
Lumley Reference L/M 1	9,500
Magneplan MG-3.5 SE	3,800
Magneplanar MG-3.5 SE	3,800
Martin-Logan Sequel II	3,399
Martin-Logan CLS IIz	4,555
Martin-Logan Quest Z	5,350
Martin-Logan Monolith III P	8,730
Meridian DSP5000	3,295
Meridian DSP6000	9,400
Monitor Audio Studio 50	4,000
Monitor Audio Studio60	7,000
Naim Audio DBL Active	7,414
Proac Response 3.5	4,250
Prof Monitor Co MB1	4,370
Prof Monitor Co MB1P	4,681
Prof Monitor Co BB 5	6,270
Prof Monitor Co BB5P	6,754
QLN Artec 1600	4,500
Quad ESL63	3,450
Rehdeko RK145	4,250
Rehdeko RK175	7,750
Shahinian Hawk	4,950
Shahinian Diapason	8,350
Sonus-Faber Guarneri	5,500
Sonus-Faber Extrema	5,991
Spendor SP9/1	3,400
Tannoy GRFM TW	3,500
Tannoy Canterbury 12	5,500
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,000



KEF 30B Packaged with the 60S surrounds and 80C centre, it has won two major awards this year.



Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck Boldly goes round and round where other decks fear to tread.

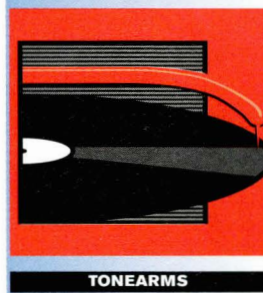


Wilson benesch Turntable Deploys high-tech technology in the name of harmonious sound.

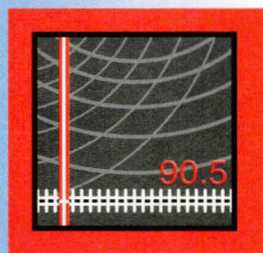
Micromega Minium FM	300	Sony PSLX150H	90
Micromega Tuner	700	Systemdek I/920	136
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	Systemdek IX/900	230
Musical Fidelity E50	300	Systemdek I/920/Moth	235
Musical Fidelity E500	499	Systemdek IXE/900Ap	388
NAD 412	190	Technics SL-BD20	160
Naim Audio NATO3	566	Technics SL-BD22	180
Naim Audio NATO2	1,028	Technics SL-1210MkII	500
Naim Audio NATO1	1,645	Technics SL-1200MkII	500
Onix BWD1	420	Thorens TD-180 AT91	190
Onix T-409	230	Thorens TD180/S500	200
Onkyo T-411RDS	280	Thorens TD280 IV/UK	200
Onkyo R-811RDS	420	Thorens TD166 V/UK/BC	200
Pioneer F-203RDS	130	Thorens TD-280 IV UK AT95E	209
Pioneer F-303RDS	180	Thorens TD-180 STANTON 500	219
Pioneer F-502RDS	250	Thorens TD166 V/UK/AT	270
Quad FM66	554	Thorens TD-166 VI UK BC	300
Rega RADIO	229	Thorens TD166 V/UK/RB	300
Rotel RT-990BX	500	Thorens TD166 VI REGA 250	400
Sony ST-SE200	100	Thorens TD311I TP50	500
Sony STS-E300	120		
Sony ST-S117	120		
Sony STS2111B	130		
Sony ST-S261	140		
Sony ST-S361	180		
Sony STS-E700	180		
Sony STS-5200	200		
Sony STS-A3ES	250		
Teac T-R400	120		
Teac TB-X10	400		
Technics ST-GT350L	150		
Technics ST-GT550L	200		
Technics ST-GT650L	250		
Thorens TRT2000	450		
Yamaha TX-480L	120		
Yamaha TX-590RDS	180		

Mana Acoustics 4 Tier Amp Stand	500
Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand	600
Mana Acoustics 6 Tier Amp Stand	700
Projekt A3	125
Projekt A4	165
Projekt A5	205
Projekt A6	245
QLN Modulus	125
Quadraspire Q4	200
Sound Organisation Z022	60
Sound Organisation Z230	70
Sound Organisation Z021	75
Sound Organisation Z030	95
Sound Organisation Z060	115
Sound Organisation Z550	125
Sound Organisation Z038	130
Soundstyle X300	180
Soundstyle X053	200
Soundstyle X050	200
Soundstyle X305	210
Soundstyle X100	220
Soundstyle X058	230
Soundstyle X310	250
Soundstyle X120	250
Soundstyle X105	250
Soundstyle Select 6105	280
Stands Unique Sound Tower	249
Target B5	175

Roksan Tabriz Basic	275
Roksan Tabriz Zi	420
Roksan Artemiz	895
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 SLS	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
Linn Akito	350
Linn Ekos	1,500
Manticore Musician	425
Manticore Magician 1	750
Manticore Magician 2	850
Moth Arm	95
Moth Mk III	146
Naim Audio ARO	992
Nottingham Analogue Space	350
Nottingham Analogue Mentor	750
Nottingham Analogue Alien	1,200
Rega RB250	109
Rega RB300	174
Rega RB900	598
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
Wilson Benesch ACT1	975
Zeta as	469

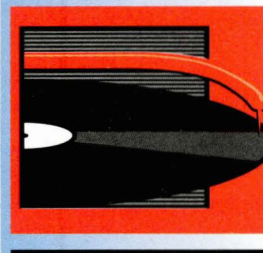


TONEARMS



TUNERS

Arcam Alpha 5 Plus	220
Arcam Alpha 7	230
Arcam Alpha 8	280
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
Grundig T12	170
Harman-Kardon TU930	180
Harman-Kardon TU950	200
Harman-Kardon TU9400	299
Kenwood KT-2080	130
Kenwood KT-3080	180
Linn Kudos Sneaky	500
Linn Kudos	775
Linn Kreminn	2,600
Luxm an T-353	200
Marantz ST-55	150
Marantz ST-72	300
Mcintosh MR7084	1,550
Meridian 504	695
Meridian 604	1,350
Michi RHT-10	895



TURNTABLES

Up to £500

+ Radius	460
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
Grundig TT1	180
Kenwood KD-492F	100
Michell Mycro	435
Moth Alamo	175
Moth Turntable	199
Moth Kanoot Mk I Arm	249
Moth Kanoot Mk III Arm	299
Pioneer PL-225	120
Pioneer PL-335	150
Pro-Ject 0.5 (OM10)	160
Pro-Ject 1(S10)	200
Pro-Ject Project 2 MC10	300
Pro-Ject Project 6(MC15)	450
Rega Planar 78	214
Rega Planar 2	214
Rega Planar 3	274
Rega PLANAR 3 COLOUR	289
Sony PS-LX56	70

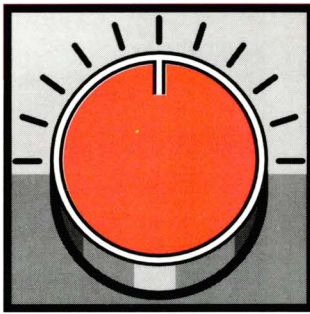
Over £500	
+ Radius/Tabriz	735
+ Radius/Tabriz zi	855
+ Xeres 10	1,295
+ TMS	2,750
Alphason Sonata	835
Alphason Sonata/Atlas	1,235
Alphason Symphony	1,860
Audiomeca Romance	1,675
Audiomeca J1	2,500
Audiomeca J1/SL5	4,250
Basis BASIS 2001	2,750
Basis Ovation II	4,800
Basis Debut Gold Std III	7,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum	9,250
DNM Rota 2	4,800
DNM Reson Rota 1	3,500
Impulse Moskito	695
Linn LP12 Basik	1,050
Linn LP12 Valhalla	1,200
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750
Lumley Reference STROSPHERE STI	6,250
Manticore Mantra	950
Manticore Magister	3,990
Michell Mycro/arm	577
Michell Gyrodek	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
Pink Triangle Export	948
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,797
Pink Triangle Anni/DC PSU	2,173
Pro-Ject 6/Sumiko	850
Rega PLANAR 9	1,598
Sme Model 20	3,240
Sme Model 20A	4,631
Technics SL-1200LTD	1,000
Thorens TD-146 V1 TP50	550
Thorens TD300IBC	630
Thorens TD-2001 TP90	700
Thorens TD2001	700
Thorens TD3001/UK	770
Thorens TD520	900
Thorens TD-520 SME	1,050
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



Audiolab 8000T Acclaimed as a frequency-fondler of note. On your wavelength, missus!

Remember that all entries printed in **RED** refer to hi-fi products that we have reviewed. Turn to page 122 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):	information page.
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.	
MM PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving magnet (normal output) cartridges.	RECEIVER: If an amp has a built in radio tuner.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
	REMOTE CONTROL: If amp is couch potato ready.		
	HEADPHONE SOCKET: If an amp is can friendly.		

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Maxim APD30A	299	Vivid and colourful sounding amp that's just too bold and brassy.	5	●				30	1737	154	
AMC 3050	220	Low-price NAD-like amplifier that is polite and modest but rather wooden. Phono better than line.	4	●			●	45	1738	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	1739	154	
Arcam Delta 290	500	Combines dry restraint with detail, dynamics and musical colour.	6	●	●	●	●	75		116	
Audio Innovations Alto	300	Probably because of a lack of deep bass, this stylish amp 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	1740	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	149	
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	1741	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	
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, boïd, up-front presentation but musically unexciting.	5	●	●	●	●	97	1802	157	
Densen Beat B100	600	Seriously well controlled amp that does everything well. Very slightly shut-in sounding.	6					60	1742	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	1743	154	
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but low power, mundane sound and poor build	3					12	1416	148	
Grundig Fine Arts V-11	160	Rhythmically dull. Never gets out of first gear.	5	●		●	●	55	1803	157	
Harman/Kardon HK610	200	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●			●	30	1465	149	
Harman/Kardon HK1200	300	Big sound with little bite. Becomes confused with complex music	7					45	1804	157	
Harman/Kardon HK1400	400	Relaxed, confident sound is only troubled by the most dense of recordings.	5	●	●			40	1011	129	
Harman/Kardon HK640	450	Breezy, nimble sounding amp lacks grip and fortitude - it can sound artificial and insubstantial	6				●	55	1542	138	
John Shearne Phase 2	649	Either a natural-sounding superstar or nasal and hard to listen to — make up your own mind!	5					50	1744	154	
JVC AX-V4	200	Respectable performance for a Pro-Logic AV amplifier. Lacks resolution and sparkle, though.	5	●		●	●	63	1805	157	
JVC AX-R5	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●		●	●	45	1466	149	
Kenwood 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)	725	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 MkII SE	200	Two generations on from the PM-40SE, this new model gives a disappointingly grey view of music	5	●			●	40	1131	134	
Minium Amp	350	Excellent musical performance but doesn't like high levels or low impedance speakers	6	●		●	●	40	1806	157	
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	1746	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	1747	154	
NAD 310	100	Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness	5					20	1468	149	
NAD 314	260	Lively if coloured presentation that is musically engaging and easy on the ear	6	●			●	53	1807	157	
Naim Nait 3	550	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes.	5					30	1748	154	
Onix OA21S	430	CD input sounds dead, but via MM disc, this amplifier has a fresh, vibrant sound.	4	●	●			50		97	

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	FACTS				RECEIVER	ISSUE NUMBER
			MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER SOCKET		
Onix OA31	480	Eager to please, dynamic and fresh sounding, but it's grip is wafer thin	5	●	●	●	60	1587 140
Orelle SA-100	449	A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble.	5				50	1749 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
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
Rotel RA920AX	120	Commendable performance at the price. Tuneful, robust bass	4	●		●	32	1808 157
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
Sony TA-F448E	250	Confused and coloured sounding, it needs a large dose of delicacy adding to its presentation	5	●		●		1809 157
Technics SU-A600 Mk2	230	An amplifier that's great fun to be with, but a little untidy from time to time	5	●	●	●	37	1472 149
Technics SU-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								
Alchemist Kraken/Pre	380	Quirky Class A design with an equally warm and colourful sound.	4					124
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
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
Conrad-Johnson Premier 7	11,000	The 7 is designed without compromise, and is clearly one of the finest (valve) preamplifiers money can buy.	5					C91
Copland CTA-301MkII	1,349	Sweet sounding - but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●				1630 151
Creek P42	279	Tested with bridged A42 power amps, an articulate and open combo with tight tuneful bass (optional phono stage & remote)	6			●		155
Cyrus Pre	650	Tested with Cyrus Power. High tech design Punchy, light footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth	5	●		●		155
DPA DSP200S	495	Dramatic but detailed and transparent sound belies modest power rating (tested with DPA-200S).	6					124
EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with £3499 509 Mk II - see comments in power amp section	4	●	●			63
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
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	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. Tested with 555	5	●		●		1303 145
Meridian 562V	995	Transparent and capable preamp, also features 6 digital inputs	9	●	●	●		140
Moth 30 Passive	149	Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy (tested with 30/Stereo 60).	4					109
Moth 30 Active	249	Tested with 100W monoblocks. While demonstrating solid, even balance it proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	4					155
Musical Fidelity E200	599	Weighty, luxuriant but hardly scintillating. Tested with MF E300	7			●	●	1304 145
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	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid back and occasionally smeared sound (tested with RB980BX).	5	●	●	●		155
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
YBA 2 Pre	1,699	Superbly finished, good space and transparency. Needs transformer for MC cartridges (tested with £2150 2 Pwr).	4	●				56
YBA 1 Pre	3,750	Tested with £4250 1 Pwr - see power amp section for comments.	5		●			62
Power amplifiers								
Acurus A150	1400	Price includes RL11 preamp with which it was tested. Powerful remote control US combo with a slightly forward inclination	1				150	151
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless.	1				60	124
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around. Surprisingly gutsy.	1				15	109
Audio Innovations S800 Anni	1475	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
Creek A42	279	Tested with bridged P42 pre in bridged mode. Articulate and open combo with tight tuneful bass	1				100	155
Cyrus Power	450	Tested with Cyrus Pre. Punchy, light footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth (bridgeable)	1				50	155
DPA 200S	750	Dramatic but crisp, open sound belies power rating (tested with DSP-200S).	1				60	124
EAR 509 Mk II	3,499	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with £2599 802).	1				100	63
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
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	750	By providing an open window on the music, this amp is wide open to RF and low level IM distortions	1				60	1303 145
Moth 30 Stereo/60	549	Tested with 30 Passive. Modular system gives cracking results	1				60	109
Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. While demonstrating solid, even balance it proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1				100	155
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	1100	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	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid back and occasionally smeared sound (tested with RC980BX).	1				120	155

CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	CABLE TYPE					ISSUE NUMBER			
			SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	FAXBACK	DIG CABLE	NUMBER	NUMBER
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
van den Hul Source HB	50	(Priced for 0.8m) Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness. Airy and well controlled.			●	●		●			160
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
Digital Interconnects											
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 Optilink 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 Kable 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
LFD Digilink 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. Ve y 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 Green	60	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
Loudspeaker Cables											
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that should be twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward.					●	●			109
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 ² conductor produces weighty but ploddy music that lacks transparency	●		●		●	●		1714	133
Bandridge LC7409	3.85	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings			●		●	●		1800	157
Cable Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained			●		●	●		1800	157
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
Gale XL315	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value					●	●		1800	157
Gale XL160-2	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy sounding bi-wire cable. Slightly manipulative sounding					●	●		1800	157
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





Connections

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CONNECTIONS

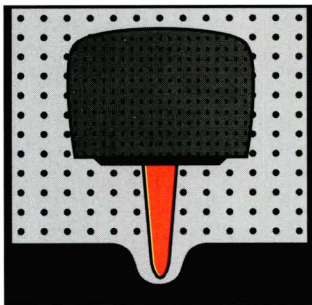
Contact us by phone, fax, or letter and we'll do our best to help you achieve your goal.
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13 John Princes Street, London W1M 9HB (A division of Connection 90' Travel Ltd.)

CABLES (CONTINUED)

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER FAXBACK NUMBER ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
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	5.11	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
Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound — but too messy and bloated for its own good				●	●	●	1800	157
Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design, shame about the sound quality	●			●	●	●	1800	157
QED Qudos	2.50	Despite high tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, the music failed to gel				●	●	●	1800	157
QED Profile 8	5	Sophisticated flat cable that lacks decent bass and get up and go				●	●	●	1800	157
SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced				●	●	●	1800	157
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
Tech+Link OFC79	1	Bargain basement cable that sounds cosy, but suffers from a wobbly bass				●	●	●	1800	157
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.

B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY	REPLACEABLE STYLUS:	OUTPUT (MV):	FACTSBACK NUMBER:
MM: Moving magnet cartridge with a normal output suitable for all vinyl disc amplifier inputs. MC: Moving coil cartridge with a low output only suitable for high sensitivity vinyl disc amplifier inputs.	Most MM cartridges have a stylus that can be removed and replaced	Cartridge output in millivolts. Mass (g): Cartridge mass can affect arm choice.	The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

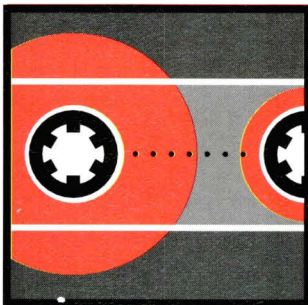
CARTRIDGES

REPLACEABLE STYLUS OUTPUT (MV) FAXBACK NUMBER ISSUE NUMBER

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (MV)	FAXBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Arcam C77	30	A sensible moving magnet package with good bounce at a competitive price.	●	4.0	6	48
Arcam C77MG	40	Punchy, with plenty of energy to liven things up. The solid body is well worth the extra £10.	●	4.0	6	67
Arcam E77MG	60	Our sample had a disappointing stylus, but gave a coherent, rich and laid back sound.	●	4.0	6	48
Arcam P77MG	73	Preferred to its cheaper partner thanks to a better tip. Channel balance poor	●	4.0		48
Audio Note Io IIV	1,395	One of the best, giving an extraordinarily relaxing midrange clarity. Needs a transformer.	●	0.1		100
Audio Technica AT-95E	19	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced.	●	2.8		48
Audio Technica 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 setail.	●	0.1	6	103
Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether and a top notch bargain too.	●			103
Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	449	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent.	●	0.15	5.3	158
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
Grado Prestige Gold	150	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●	4	6	158
Linn K5	65	Not as crisply focussed as the other Linn magnetics, but the K5 is smoother.	●	4.5	6	67
Linn K9	150	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 Lydian	699	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed	●	0.3	7	158

CARTRIDGES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS MM	MC	OUTPUT (mV)	FACTSBACK NUMBER MASS (g)	ISSUE NUMBER
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.		●	3.3	4	48
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	110	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle - take it as it comes.		●	3.3	7	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 MC30 Supreme	450	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings		●	0.5	10.7	158
Ortofon MC3000I	950	A real eye-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere, one of the very best.		●	0.12	10	84
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo		●	0.12	10	91
Rega Bias	34	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow build, the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound.		●	5	4	67
Rega Elys	74	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is both more detailed, accurate and convincing.		●	5.0	5	67
Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but more civilised and smoother.		●	6.5	5	91
van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through		●	5.5	6	103
van den Hul DDT	699	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy		●	0.35	7.6	158
van den Hul MC-10	799	A neutral, balanced performer gives, fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass		●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-One	999	This extended all the positive qualities of the '10, but added greater authority and scale - worth all the extra money.		●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-Two	1,349	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal.		●	0.4	6	72
van den Hul G' hopper IIIGLA	2,999	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available, it has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse.		●	0.4	6	122
Wilson benesch Matrix	689	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive.		●	0.58	6	158



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

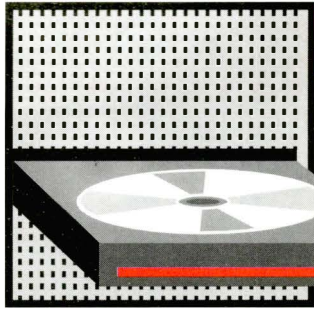
KEY

<p>DOLBY C: A rather extreme noise reduction system not usually associated with high sound quality.</p> <p>DOLBY S: A desirable derivative of the Dolby SR professional noise reduction system.</p> <p>DOLBY HX PRO: System designed by B&O to extend headroom</p>	<p>for cassette recording.</p> <p>3-HEAD: If you want to monitor a recording whilst you are making it a third head is essential.</p> <p>TWIN DECK: Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play, in most instances only one deck will record.</p>	<p>AUTOREVERSE: Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.</p> <p>AUTO CALIBRATION: The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.</p> <p>ADJUSTABLE BIAS: Bias can be manually set to suit the tape being used.</p>	<p>FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.</p> <p>BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.</p>
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CASSETTE DECKS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN HEAD	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
Denon DRM-550	160	There are some technical limitations, but this remains a fine sounding deck, and excellent value.	●							158	
Denon DRS-640	200	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
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-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●								158
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	140	Gives best value results with lower bias tapes, helped by a successful Dolby C installation.	●							1382	146
Luxman K-373	350	Decent performance, but a little costly. Includes microphone inputs.	●								158
Marantz SD-53	200	Modestly equipped player is short-changed by a rough transport, and dull prerecorded quality.	●							1383	146
Marantz SD-63	270	Poor pitch stability is a major snag in an otherwise nondescript design.	●								158
NAD 602	199	Minimalist deck for the audiophile market. Unfortunately engineering is minimalist too.	●								127
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise.	●								158
NAD 616	320	Double deck whose music sounded shut in and prosaic, as though its energy content had been ironed flat	●							1648	152
Onkyo K-611	430	Cute drawer loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport.	●							1384	146
Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound.	●							1385	146
Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open and un-cassette-like sound.	●								158
Technics RS-AZ7	300	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in the state-of-the-art.	●								158
Yamaha KX-490	199	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck, whos only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter.	●								158
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 converter, or DAC. Although most players are contained in a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs.

B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY

ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT: Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For optical connection to an outboard DAC.
AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT: High speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT: Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: For can users.
VARIABLE OUTPUT: Remotely adjustable volume controlled output.
MULTI-DISC: Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc
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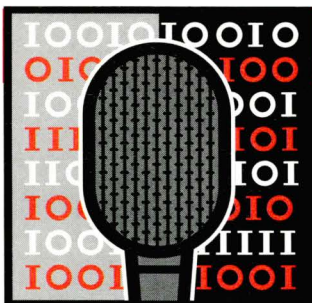
CD PLAYERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
AMC CD6	349	Based on Rotel's RCD-965BX, but has a raunchier, beefier but less transparent sound.	●			●				BS	124
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
Cambridge Audio CD6	300	A sharp, lively and articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems.	●					●		BS	159
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear.	●						●	MB	1269 147
Denon DCD-825	240	Despite extensive revisions, this latest player still sounds like a typical 18-bit Denon, which is no bad thing!	●						●	MB	1531 137
Denon DCD-1015	350	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 HD710	250	Player of integrity, but can sound a tad hard and rough when extended, and is somewhat amplifier fussy.	●							1bit	159
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	500	Crisply styled, well equipped and slick, sound quality is fast and assured, if slightly 'obvious'	●						●	MB	1761 155
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-Z574	250	Strong resolving power and good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin.								1bit	159
JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●							1bit	1637 151
Kenwood DP-3080	170	Bold, dynamic and outgoing sound, though somewhat aggressive. Poor build quality and finish							●	1bit	159
Kenwood DP-7060	380	Fleet-footed, but will appear bright in lightweight systems	●							1bit	1601 141
Krell KPS 20i	9,900	Forthright, edge of the seat sound with outstanding bass performance (tested in Statements)	●		●	●	●	●		MB	1734 155
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multiroom features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●							Hyb	1762 155
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-67	270	Dynamic, authoritative, and wide tonal response, but also shut-in and mid-forward balance	●						●	1 bit	159
Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●							BS	1763 155
Meridian 506	995	Crisp, clean and detailed player now seems a little flat and mechanical: a dated balance	●			●				Hyb	1764 155
Meridian 508	1,685	Excellent partner for Meridian digital systems, and one of the best neo-high end systems (tested in system)								DS	140
Micromega Minium	350	Dynamically weak and some roughness offsets the pleasing tonal balance, articulate mid and strong bass	●							1 bit	159
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	Simple, well focused presentation, and articulate with it, though hard nosed quality is not everyone's cup of tea.	●							1 bit	159
NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●							BS	1639 151
Naim Audio CD3	978	The idiosyncratically packaged CD3 is solid and highly articulate. Always has its feet on the ground though								MB	1765 155
Nakamichi MB4s	350	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	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●						●	BS	1640 151
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	1766 155
Philips CD-721	130	Surprisingly well sorted, articulate if slightly lossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead.								1 bit	159
Philips CD-740	170	One of several Philips players using hybrid DAC technologies. Still sounds insufferably boring, however.	●			●			●	MB	1567 139
Pioneer PD-204	150	Generally easy on the ear, but can bite back, especially with complex high frequency music content. Well endowed.							●	1 bit	159
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	1767 155
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	1767 155
Sherwood CD-4030R	180	Easy on the ear, smooth sounding player, with limits set by the slightly soft, compressed quality - and messy facia							●	BS	159
Sony CDP-361	150	Bantamweight it capable and resolute machine with no serious shortcomings at the price							●	BS	1628 151
Sony CDP-XE500	160	Fine all-rounder, and a good match for middle ranking systems. Jog dial works well, but display is messy							●	BS	159
Sony CDP-761E	250	Tarted up CDP-561E with less widgets and a slightly overcooked but nonetheless fine performance.	●						●	BS	1267 147

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NUMBER
DAC TYPE
MULTI-DISC
VARIABLE SOCKET
HEADPHONE OUTPUT
BAL. ANALOGUE OUTPUT
OPTICAL DIGITAL OUT-
AT&T OPT DIG OUT
AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT

CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIGITAL OUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	BAL. ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE OUTPUT	VARIABLE SOCKET	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Sony CDP-XE900E	300	Refined and analytical disc scavenging tool, but there are some distinctive colourations making auditioning vital.							BS	159
Sony CDP-XA2ES	400	Strong-willed, heavyweight sound; not for the feint-hearted	●						BS	1642 151
Teac CD-P3200	150	A primitive looking CD player, housing 16-bit electronics delivering an equally primitive and uninspiring sound.	●						MB	1277 147
Teac CD-5	350	Bright, breezy and up-beat - but short in the trouser department	●						BS	1643 151
Teac VRDS-7	599	Although bold and outgoing, this player can sound both intrusive yet lacking fine detail	●						BS	1769 155
Teac VRDS-10	770	A basic analogue stage compromises performance. Lacks bass energy.	●						BS	119
Technics SL-PG480A	140	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unobtrusive, slightly harsh top end.						●		1 bit 159
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	1729 155
Thule CD100	849	A little muddled via single ended output, but the sound comes alive when balanced connections are used	●				●		BS	1770 155
Trichord Genesis	549	Modified Pioneer PD-S504 that's a bit like a Williams Renault Clio — astonishing at the price (tested in Sessions)	●					● ●	BS	1753 155
Yamaha CDX-490	170	Big, blowsy sound, is undermined by lack of precision and focus						● ●		1 bit 159
TRANSPORTS										
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
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	1,750	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing.	●						-	1323 144
Meridian 500	1,245	Used with the 563 DAC, the combination is thin, brash and uncomfortable.	●						-	1103 133
Mission Discmaster	1,500	Powerful performance - large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Dacmaster)	●							1104 133
Pink Triangle Cardinal	875	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 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	1,400	A new 20 bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a tad dry and humourless.							MB	1323 144
Meridian 563	795	Warmer but no less detailed than the earlier 200-series, the 563 flies with a top rate transport.							DS	1103 127
Mission Dacmaster	1,500	Powerful performance - large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Discmaster)							MB	1104 133
Pink Triangle Ordinal	925	The cheapest dual-differential DAC7 converter available offers top-flight sound quality.							BS	1524 136
Pink Triangle DaCapo	1,765	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	1,750	Battery power supply for Cardinal and DaCapo							-	1324 144
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590	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.



KEY

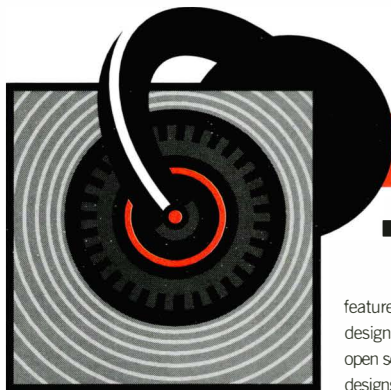
FORMAT: Type of recorder, see above for descriptions.	ADC TYPE: Analogue to digital converter types as per DACs.	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital socketry for electrical cable.	BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc.	PORTABLE: Can be run off batteries but not necessarily personal stereo size.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	
	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital socketry for optical cable.		

DIGITAL RECORDERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS	OPTICAL 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	●	●	●	1652 152

DIGITAL RECORDERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL I/O/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	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.

B Best Buy **R Recommended**

KEY

TYPE: Operating principle: D - dynamic, E - electrostatic.
 SUPRA-AURAL: Style where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.
 CIRCUM-AURAL: 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	CIRCUM-AURAL TYPE	SUPRA-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	WEIGHT(G)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
B AKG K240 Monitor	82	Something of a classic, these AKGs are very user-friendly in all respects; priced on the warm side of normal.	D	●	●	●		240	600		63
B AKG K1000	646	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs.	D	●	●	●		270	120		99
B Audio Technica ATH910PRO	80	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found with headphones.	D	●	●	●		280	40		55
B Beyer DT100	152	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail.	D	●	●	●		350	600		157
B Beyer DT311	49	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone.	D	●	●	●		124	40	●	1098 133
B Beyer DT331	82	Tonally bright and deficient in bass, but exceptionally comfortable, articulate, detailed and refined.	D	●	●	●		210	40	●	1801 157
B Beyer DT411	69	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price.	D	●	●	●		120	250		111
B Beyer DT531	129	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D	●	●	●		245	250		144
B Beyer DT911	219	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps, these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans.	D	●	●	●		275	250		111
B Denon AH-D550	80	A competent 'phone with integrity, but little panache or charisma. Hard headband causes brain strain.	D	●	●	●		200	35	●	1801 157
B Grado SR-80	110	Clear, open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes.	D	●	●	●		60	8	●	1801 157
B Jacklin 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
B Jacklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in long term, despite lack of adjustment.	D	●	●	●		400	200		63
B JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations.	D	●	●	●		220	32	●	121
B Kenwood KH-1000	20	First step up from a true mini: a near miniature which is cheap, comfortable and inoffensive	D	●	●	●		30	32	●	121
B Maxell HP-3000	30	Solid, smooth sounding supra-aural headphone, but congested and undynamic. Includes in-lead controls.	D	●	●	●		120	32	●	1099 133
B Pioneer SE-400D	37	Acceptable, if unexciting all-rounder, this supra-aural phone has good long-term comfort levels.	D	●	●	●		185	35	●	1099 133

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 June 1995

SR 250

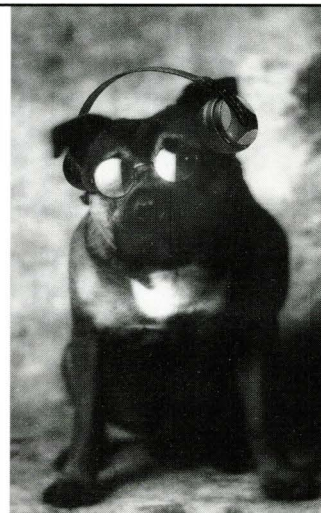


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 Hi-Fi Choice
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"All round giant-killer"

Hi-Fi Choice
 March 1995

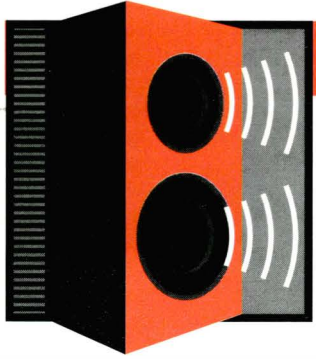
SR 850



Vivanco UK Ltd, Unit C, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7SS
 Tel: 01442 231616 Fax: 01442 2355421

HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	Supra-aural Type	Circumaural	Open Back	Closed Back	3.5mm Jack Adaptor	Weight(g)	Impedance(Ω)	Factsback Number	Issue Number
Ross RDH-300CD	17	In-lead controls are the highlights of this shoddy, sometimes aggressive sounding design.	D	●	●	●		155	8	●	133
Sennheiser HD445 II	40	Still the one by which others at the price are measured, though now slightly leaden sounding, with a cold treble	D	●	●	●		125	52	●	121
Sennheiser HD455	50	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound, modular, but can become dislodged from head.	D	●	●	●		185	60	●	1801 157
Sennheiser HD565 Ovation	140	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable.	D	●	●	●		255	150	●	1801 157
Sony MDR-CD770	100	Neutrality and comfort make the Sony easy to live with. Technically correct sounding too, yet musically unrewarding.	D	●	●	●		-	-	●	1801 157
Stax Lambda Pro	449	Tested with SRD-7B PSU, this is an industry reference, and is frighteningly revealing.	E	●	●	●		325	-	●	55
Stax Lambda Sig	549	With SRM-T1. Electrostatic - the Signature must be the most transparent headphone available.	E	●	●	●		325	-	●	72
Technics RP-HT700	70	Well-finished but physically crass and grubby sounding.	D	●	●	●		255	-	●	1801 157
Vivanco SR606	40	Although slightly overblown at times, this model is easy on the ears and essentially enjoyable	D	●	●	●		225	32	●	1101 133
Vivanco SR650	50	Unusually comfortable 'phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive, thanks to tweeter resonance.	D	●	●	●		175	-	●	1801 157
Vivanco SR750	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound an pricing, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics.	D	●	●	●		188	-	●	1801 157
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

As 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.

B
R

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.	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.
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HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	Size WxHxD(CM)	Floorstander	Sensitivity(dB/W)	Bass From (Hz)	Free Space	Close to Wall	Factsback Number	Issue Number
Allison AL100	100	Loud and lively budget wall-mount is big and beefy, but lacks sparkle and refinement	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	
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	highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45	●	1778	156
B&W DM601	200	Great main driver for the price, entertaining dynamics	20,5,35,5,23		88	6	30	●	1779	156
B&W DM602	300	Prefers tall stands and space, but offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension	24,49,31		90	8	30	●	1654	15
B&W CDM1	600	Gorgeous stand-mount delivers unusually good bass for its size	22,38,28		88	6	30	●	160	
B&W Matrix 805 V	995	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low colouration.	33,33,21		87	8	30	●	98	
B&W Matrix 80153	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	
Canon S-75	1000	Unique 'wide image' floorstander has great charm despite some sonic flaws	25,79,25	●	87	4	26	●	160	
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	●	1729	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	A brilliant throwback, using a horn type approach to provide startling dynamics and coherence.	23,91,25	●	90	8	44	●	98	
Castle Harlech	800	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33	●	88	8	28	●	160	
Castle Howard S2	1,100	Ably fills the gap between Chester and Winchester,h as 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	It sounds a bit scrappy and untidy, but its heart is in the right place.	16,27,21		86	8	50	●	114	
Celestion 3 MKII	139	Smooth and polished by budget speaker standards, if a bit laid back for some tastes.	21,31,18		88	8	45	●	1036	130
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	●	1758	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)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
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	●	1758 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	●	154
▶ Epos ES12	500	High quality luxury stand-mount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25	● 85	8	45	●	160
▶ 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	●	1780 156
▶ GLL Imagio IC130	550	Lots of speaker for the money, but sound is decidedly dull and shut in	22,112,29	● 88	4	20	●	160
▶ 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	150	Pretty presentation and a strong box, but poor driver fixing. Decent if bright sound.	20,32,22	● 89	8	48	●	1038 130
▶ Jamo BX100A	370	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	●	1758 155
▶ Jamo Classic 8	430	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	●	1758 155
▶ JBL L20J	850	Pricy, heavy and a bit laid back, but this is a fine rock 'n' roller which is dynamic and communicative	26,42,28	● 86	8	30	●	1550 138
▶ JBL 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	●	1781 156
▶ JPW Gold Monitor	80	More informative than Mini Monitor - but fiercer too	18,27,17.5	● 86	8	50	●	1782 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 pricy 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	●	1783 156
▶ KEF Coda 8	190	Outstandingly well balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29	● 86	6	28	●	1784 156
▶ KEF Coda 9	300	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	● 89	6	30	●	1785 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	700	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive.	20,83,28	● 87	4	22	●	1552 138
▶ Linn Kaber Passive	1,800	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	●	1786 156
▶ Mission 751	300	Gorgeous looking, very petite; boogies with a sting at the top	17,5,32,26	● 87	8	45	●	1788 156
▶ Mission 734	430	Fine all rounder, and good value, but dynamically a bit lazy, if 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 MA703 PMC	800	Lovely but pricy floorstander has up-front, coherent 'shiny' sound	20,89,27	● 88	8	50	●	160
▶ 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	●	1789 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

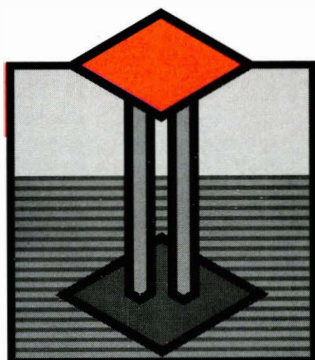
SIZE WxHxD(CM) SENSITIVITY(OB/W) IMPEDANCE(O) BASS FROM (Hz) FACTSBACK NUMBER CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE ISSUE NUMBER

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	Size WxHxD(CM)	Sensitivity(OB/W)	Impedance(O)	Bass From (Hz)	Close To Wall	Free Space	Issue Number
Morel 704/2	1,000	There's real potential here, but it's not fully realised	23,80,21	● 88	8	20	●	●	1350 143
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	1,878	Lively and punchy - smoother but more upfront than before.	27,89,27	● 86	6	25	●	●	1352 143
Neat Mystique	575	Elegant compact floorstander has good allround sound and value	20,85,18	● 84	8	25	●	●	160
Neat Petite II	745	Compact design now utilising ribbon tweeter with a fine sense of timing and surprising musicality (tested in Sessions)	20,30,18	86	8	33	●	●	160
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 Ventrical	896	If you are after Quad Electrostatic type transparency but can't afford the price . . . (Sessions)	15,80,32	86	11		●	●	142
Pioneer S-4UK	250	Latest version now balances pretty well, with a coherent lightweight bass.	21,37,28	88	6	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
PMC TB1	500	Superb transparency, subtle laid back sound, well worth seeking out	20,40,31	87	8	45	●	●	160
PMC LB1	998	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited.	18,53,25	89	4	33	●	●	110
PMC AB1	1,598	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room.	26,79,43	89	6	22	●	●	114
Polk RT16	800	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39	● 91	4	22	●	●	160
QLN Qubic 222	400	Ugly but good value floorstander with loads of bass and a smooth balance	21,87,29	● 88	6	25	●	●	160
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	●	●	1578 139
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing.	20,82,30	● 89	6	40	●	●	1083 132
Revolver Beretta	100	Great bass for the price, a bit crude further up	19,35,22	87	8	45	●	●	1790 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	●	●	1731 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 ROkone	600	Large stand-mount is musically very communicative if a little coloured	21,45,33	89	6	30	●	●	160
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance.	28,76,46	● 88	8	20	●	●	1082 132
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 Doublet	450	Great value compact floorstander; lively and very informative, if a little uneven	18,93,19	● 90	4	28	●	●	160
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		●	●	1756 155
Spendor 2030	600	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid back sound	18,89,27	● 87	8	30	●	●	160
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	●	●	1791 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 635	450	Beefy low-line floorstander packs real bass punch and an up-front balance	17-29,85,27	● 90	6	22	●	●	160
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
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 Valdus 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 Valdus 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	●	●	1758 155
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun.	14,22,12	88	8	30	●	●	110

SUBWOOFERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
B&W AS6	500	Good material value with a fair amount of low bass from 100W active design	45,51,45,5	●		30	1736	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
Infinity RS10	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		1736 154
KEF Model 30B	500	Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension (active)	38,5,37,43	●		45		1736 154
KEF AV1	2500	Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky	56,43,50	●		45		128
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		1736 154
Mordaunt-Short SW1	150	Fair value, can help sensitive small speakers but no serious extension to match upper bass	58,24,25	●	85	45		128
REL Q-Bass	350	Smashes the price barrier for deep bass performance	40,41,5,40	●		20		1670 154



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

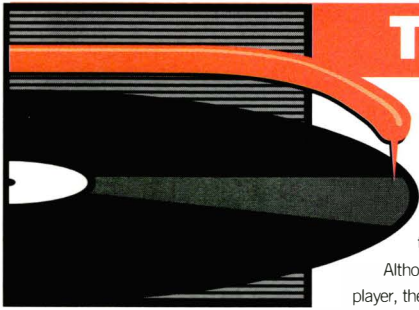
Recommended

KEY	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)	NUMBER OF SHELVES FILLABLE	WELDED	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Equipment Supports								
Audiophile Furniture Base	480	Easy to set up, well ordered sound	40				4 Wood 1633 151	
Fi-Rax R4	250	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass					5 Glass 1633 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	
Mana Acoustics 5 Tier Amp Stand	600	Infinitely upgradable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle iron design that adds speed and bandwidth to components upon it					● 5 Glass 1633 151	
Quadraspire Q4	200	Easy to live with, and tonally neutral					4 MDF 1633 151	
Sound Organisation Z038	130	Too lively and lacking order - but cheap	50	40,84	●		5 Wood 1633 151	
SoundStyle Select 6105	280	Respectable sonics, structurally solid and smart					5 Glass 1633 151	
Stands Unique Sound Tower	249	Adds colouration, and lacks weight. Optional Isolation Platform	81	72,42			5 Glass 1633 151	
Target B5	175	Free of colourations, fine grip and good value					● 5 Wood 1633 151	
Speaker Stands								
Alphason NC I	45	Filled single column design without threaded spike holes that's appropriate for non-critical applications	40-60	16,16	●			1373 146
Alphason NCII	80	Tall, slim and elegant, though sound and value are unexceptional	40-60	17,17	●			159
Alphason Titan	120	Excels in the midband and allows voices to come across in a detailed and expressive fashion	40-60	16,16	●	●		1373 146
Apollo AZ6	80	Fine engineering value, but sound unexceptional and top-plate small	66	15,13	●	●		159
Atacama BD21	55	Good looking and good value but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17	●			159
Atacama SE24	70	Stand out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of the performance	61	19,5,17	●	●		1373 146
AVF Tower 400	35	Ridiculously cheap and much better than no stand at all	54	17,20	●			159
Ixos Deadrock 903	50	Smooth and tonally even but short on definition. Deep bass is soft which doesn't help timing	60					1373 146
Gale Reference 600	60	Smooth sounding with impressive bass well suited to less civilised speakers					● ●	1373 146
Kudos S50	100	Better sound than the budget stands, particularly at the bottom end	60	15,21	●			159
Kudos S100	270	The best all round stand around... Probably...	63	15,21	●			159
Mana Soundframes	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks these make music effortless and natural, can be stacked for greater effect	5			●		1373 146
Partington New Merlin	60	Although light in weight, the stands performance seemed remarkably muscular but musical rendering lacked a little precision				● ●		1373 146
Partington Discovery	80	The depth and substance of the presentation truly added to the convincing nature of the system's portrayal				● ●		1373 146
Partington Trophy	100	Four column design with damped top and base plates, sound is tight and cogent with smoothly integrated detail				● ●		1373 146
Revolver RS1	70	A good blend of performance and appearance for the price	53	18,18	●			159
RMS/Stands Unique Vivas	550	Pricey carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A				159
Soundstyle 124	100	Big, shiny and solid, with fine midband projection	65	17,16	●			159
Sound Style Z024	100	Three pillar triangular based design with high gloss finish. Enthusiastic sound suited to better systems	61		●	●		1373 146
Stands Unique HP	220	Real wood disguises high performance tuned technology	59	22,23				159
Sound Organisation Z124	80	Atacama style big pillar. A pleasantly balanced performer, tonally even with good timing and dynamics, but leaks sand!	61		●			1373 146
Sound Organisation Z129	110	Heavy four pillar design, extracts detail well and very little colouration together with an excellent sense of timing	74		●			1373 146
Target R1	280	Truly high mass four pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack and outstanding imagery	53	15,21	●	●		1373 146
Target TR60	67.50	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less than audiophile oriented twin column design	60	15,15	●			1373 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.

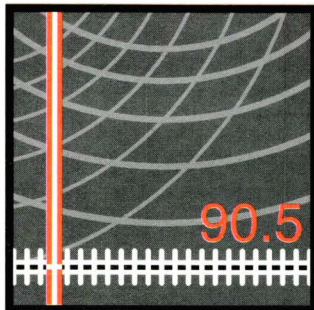
B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY

EFFECTIVE MASS: This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.
PARALLEL TRACKING: An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
PIVOTED: Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.
UNI-PIVOT: Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm): Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.
ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT: Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

TONEARMS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	PARALLEL TRACKING	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH(cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK 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	
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	



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**

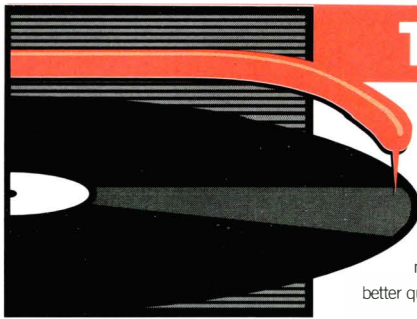
KEY

WAVEBANDS: Only the FM (VHF) 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 to find the Factsback information page.
BACK ISSUE: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

Tuners

Product	Price(£)	Comments	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER	FACTSBACK 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	●	●	●	1254	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	●	●	●	1254	142
Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound.	FM,M,L	20	●	●	●	93	
Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Sound quality is among the best in its price range, only exposing its rough edges at high playback levels	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	1810	157
Harman/Kardon TU9400	299	This striking tuner exceeded our expectations. On stereo FM, it's HK's best yet	FM,M	24	●	●	●	1254	142
Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price. The reviewer's saving up but you should check it out for yourself.	FM	80	●	●	●	1254	142
Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation.	FM		●	●	●	72	
Micromega Tuner	700	Has digital output but even without the Micromega DAC, this provides exceptional sound quality. Looks good too.	FM	39	●	●	●	1810	157
Mission Cyrus FM7	400	Open, generous soundstaging gives the music plenty of foundation, if a touch shut in at the top	FM	29	●	●	●	1254	142
Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and with a subjectively larger than life presentation	FM	20	●	●	●	1810	157
Naim NATO1	1,645	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one.	FM		●	●	●	1254	142
Onkyo T-430RDS	190	Pleasingly neutral, but rather undynamic and congested	FM/MW	30	●	●	●	1254	142
Quad FM66	554	Very pretty and compact but technically unadventurous. Sound is smooth, but only makes sense in Quad system context.	FM	19	●	●	●	1254	142
Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to its best	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	1810	157
Technics ST-GT350L	150	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	1254	142
Thorens TRT2000	450	Not exactly neutral sounding, it nonetheless makes listening fun	FM,M	59	●	●	●	1810	157

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.



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 PSU	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	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 Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended.	●					33/45	●	91
Linn LP12 Basik	1,050	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●					33	●	103
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains.	●					33/45	●	91
Michell Gyrodek	765	Sweet and natural sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●					33/45	●	55
Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm1.125		No frills, just a first rate, outstandingly natural sounding deck that will last forever.	●					33/45	●	159
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,980	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	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●					33/45	●	48
Rega Planar 3	274	The '3 (with RB300 arm) sounds musical in a balanced and coherent manner, needs decent isolation	●					33/45	●	48
Rega Planar 9	1,598	Featuring the RB900 arm and a ceramic plinth this deck puts Rega into contention with the best decks available	●					33/45	●	151
Reson RS1	675	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail.	●					33/45	●	159
Rivelin Eclipse	1,100	Tested with SME 309. Tends to simplify things and add a slightly ragged edge to the proceedings	●					33/45	●	1328 144
Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight.	●					33/45	●	159
SME Model 20A	4,631	Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval.	●					33/45/78	●	118
Systemdek 1/920/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 2X2	499	Neutral, flexible and dynamic deck that begs to be used with a good arm and cartridge.	●					33/45	●	159
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	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled	●					33/45	●	159
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	6,962	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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 Harman/Kardon • Gamepath Ltd • tel 01908 317707 • fax 01908 322704 • Dealers 85
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 Hørning • Definitive Audio • tel 0115 981 3562

I

Impulse Loudspeakers • tel 0181 766 0474 • fax 0181 766 0468 • Dealers 11
 Infinity • Gamepath Ltd • tel 01908 317707 • fax 01908 322704 • Dealers 85
 lateraudio • Bose UK Ltd • tel 01795 475341 • fax 01795 427227
 Ixos • Path Distribution • tel 0121 749 2240 • fax 0121 748 3838 • Dealers 700

J

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 Jamo UK Ltd • tel 01327 301300 • fax 01327 300511 • Dealers 300+
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K

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 KEF Audio Ltd • tel 01622 672261 • fax 01622 672939 • Dealers 240
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 Keswick Audio Research • tel 01977 671823 • Dealers 13
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 Kiseki • Presence Audio • tel 01444 461611 • fax 01444 461510 • Dealers 10 + direct
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 Koetsu • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962 • Dealers 20
 Koss • HW International • tel 0181 808 2222 • fax 0181 808 5599
 Krell • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962 • Dealers 17
 Kronos Distribution • tel 018687 48632 • fax 018687 48281
 Kudos • tel 01732 461648 • fax 01732 462949
 Kuzma • Audiofreaks • tel 0181 948 4153 • fax 0181 948 4250 • Dealers 12

L

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 LFD • tel 01255 422533 • fax 01255 221370 • Dealers 7
 Lineaum • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962
 Linn Products • tel 0141 644 5111 • fax 0141 644 4262
 Living Voice • Definitive Audio • tel 0115 981 3562
 London • Presence Audio • tel 01444 461611 • fax 01444 461510 • Dealers 10 + direct
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 Lumley Reference • Reference International • tel 01435 868004
 Luxman • Hi-fi Direct • tel 0171 827 9827 • fax 0171 827 9009 • Dealers 23
 Lynwood Electronics • tel 01709 873667 • Dealers 25
 Lyra • Path Premier • tel 01494 441736 • fax 01494 461209

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 Magnepan • Audionord UK • tel 01235 813058
 Magnum • Hailey Audio Ltd • tel 01992 442425 • Dealers 6
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 Mana Acoustics • tel 0181 868 2788 • fax 0181 429 0118
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 Martin-Logan • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962 • Dealers 20
 Matisse • GT Audio • tel 01895 833099
 Maxell UK Ltd • tel 01923 777171
 McIntosh • MPI Electronic UK Ltd • tel 01483 454993 • fax 01483 454992
 Meridian Audio Ltd • tel 01480 434334 • fax 01480 432948 • Dealers 98
 Metaxas • UK Distribution • tel 01753 654531
 Michell Engineering • tel 0181 953 0771 • Dealers 8
 Michi • Gamepath Ltd • tel 01908 317707 • fax 01908 322704 • Dealers 18
 Micro-Seiki • Absolute Sounds • tel 0181 947 5047 • fax 0181 879 7962
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 Minstrel • Quantum Audio Ltd • tel 01563 571122 • fax 01563 571133
 Mission • Centralforce Ltd • tel 01480 451777 • fax 01480 432777 • Dealers 259
 Monitor Audio Ltd • tel 01223 242898 • fax 01223 214532 • Dealers 45
 Monrio • UK Distribution • tel 01753 654531
 Monster • Gamepath Ltd • tel 01908 317707 • fax 01908 322704 • Dealers 181
 Mordaunt-Short Ltd • tel 01705 407722 • fax 01705 400099 • Dealers 200
 Morel • Clere Electronics Ltd • tel 01635 297717 • fax 01635 297717
 Moth Marketing • tel 01234 741152 • Dealers 30
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 Thorens • Portfolio Marketing • tel 01494 890277
 Thule • Virtual Reality Audio Systems • tel 01277 227355 • fax 01277 224103
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V

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 Woodside Electronics • tel 01934 520248

Y

Yamaha Electronics UK Ltd • tel 01923 233166 • fax 01923 244930
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Z

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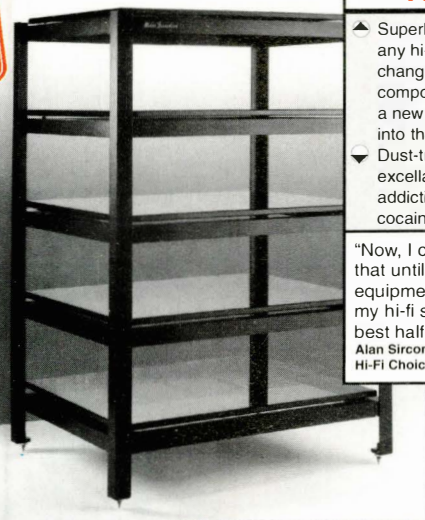


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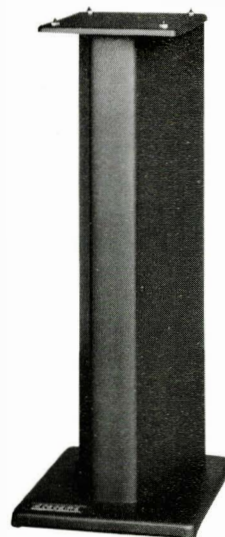
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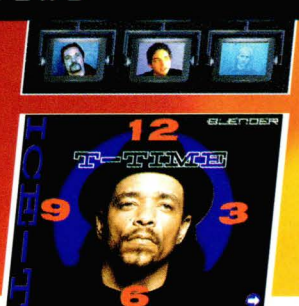
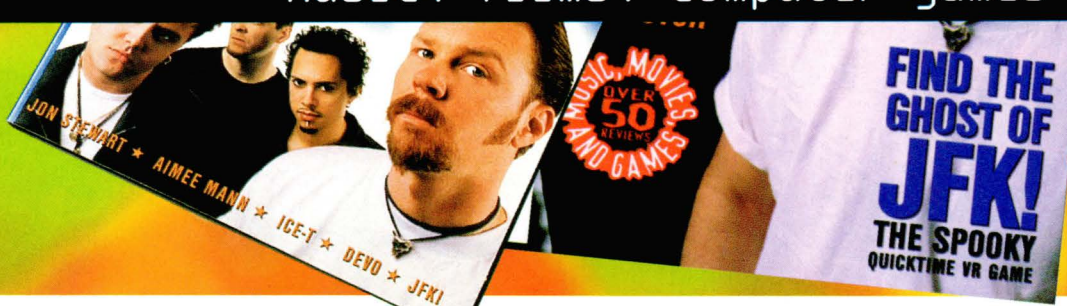
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Music, films, computer games reviews

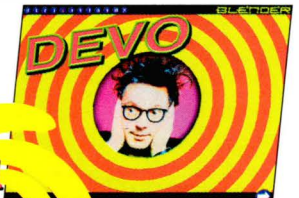
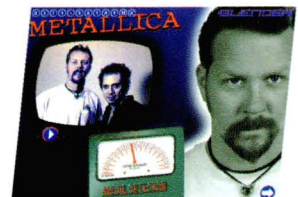


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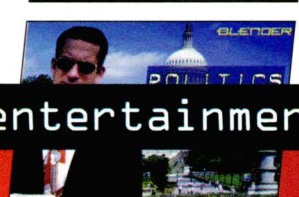
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 486 or Pentium PC required
 4 Megabytes FREE RAM (6 recommended)
 Sound Card (Most modules)
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 Quicktime 2.02 for Windows (supplied)
 CD-ROM drive (double speed or better recommended)

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 Macintosh System 7
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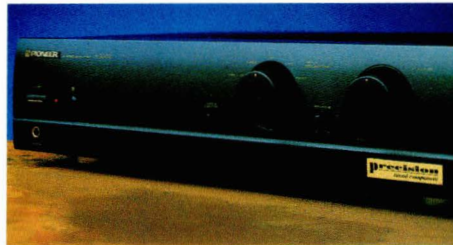


NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

HELLO CHILDREN! GUESS WHAT'S IN THE JANUARY ISSUE OF HI-FI CHOICE!

AMPLIFIERS

Next month, in the garden we can see that the integrated amplifiers between £300 and £700 have sprouted at last. These little beauties are blooming in many colours and varieties, including Arcam, Pioneer (right), Musical Fidelity and Talk Electronics. Ever since we had to cut back on the dog-walking budget, and let Goldie run amok among the dahlias, things have been growing fine, although most of the cat-nip died and all the sunflowers succumbed to mildew.



TRANSPORTS/DACS

Now then, here's how we make a Transport and DAC combination. All we need is an empty washing-up liquid bottle, some sticky-back plastic and a pair of round-ended scissors. Oh, and a CD player, and an oxy-acetylene torch.



First get a grown-up to cut the CD player in half with the blow-torch. When this has cooled, cover the exposed internals with bits of washing-up bottle, cut up with round-ended scissors and cover everything with loads of sticky-back plastic. And there you have it — a two box CD player. Or, you could read about the real thing from the likes of Audiolab (left), Thorens and others.

WILSON BENESCH LOUDSPEAKERS

Oh, look children. Here comes Wilson. And here comes Benesch, too. Oh, and just look what they have with them — it's a loudspeaker. And it's made of carbon-fibre. Isn't that clever, boys and girls? We know a song about carbon fibre loudspeakers, don't we, kids? Shall we sing it now? Perhaps not.

MULTI-CD PLAYERS

Make sure there's a grown-up nearby when you do this! Take a handful of CDs and try to squeeze them all into a single player. If they do not fit, simply use a couple of cardboard loo-roll holders and a load of sticky-back plastic. Cut the cardboard like so, to make a simple rhomboid shape. Then stick this to the CD player and you have a multi-disc spinner that is nowhere near as good as the excellent new machines from the likes of Sony, Pioneer and harman/kardon.



PLUS: A tortoise who didn't quite make it through the winter ● Loads of amusing new stuff ● Next month is our charity fund-raising special, so smear a traffic warden in fish paste for Africa



● A troupe of motorcycle-display nuns ● Special ludicrously expensive Etymotic in-ear headphones featured in Statements ● Yet another baby elephant with a bowel problem ● Save your milk-bottle tops for underprivileged hi-fi journalists ● And much, much more...

January's *Hi-Fi Choice* is on sale Friday, December 6. And don't miss our special **Best Buys** issue, on sale **Tuesday, November 19!**

Ultra

What do you do when your CD collection is threatening to take over?

David Vivian debates what to throw out...

Vivian Scene

Iworry about my CD collection. It worries me that I worry about it. The fact that I think about it at all — other than when I want to listen to something — is worrying. But then my relationship with my CD collection is going through a dysfunctional phase right now. I'm trying to analyse the problem, and that's a bad sign, too.

By this time, of course, my CD library should be magnificent: a massively-engineered, well-oiled, twenty-wheeled juggernaut of a collection dedicated to giving joy. And it does — don't get me wrong. Twelve years old, 1,500 strong with a marked jazz bias, it's a thing of character and beauty, and a considerable force for good in my life. We're talking about music, after all, the reason for having hi-fi in the first place. It's just that, as juggernauts go, it's way over payload, hasn't been looked at by a trained mechanic in a long time and the driver hasn't got the faintest idea where he's going. That said, if it was stolen, I don't know what I'd do.

Well, actually, I do. I'd start again with a Fiat *Cinquecento*-sized collection. Small but perfectly formed. And you know what? I reckon that, in a strange sort of way, it would be a relief. I'd buy a small but exquisitely designed CD rack and feel excited at the prospect of filling it. In twenty or so inspired moves I'd have a CD collection that really mattered. Quality not quantity. Something I could embrace and cherish and understand at a glance. Something with nimble handling. It would be the most succinct essential collection in the history of the world (ever) with Joni Mitchell's *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* sitting right there on top. A Dire Straits free zone.

But how can I say that? I've got all the Dire Straits albums. Weird thing, I can't recall buying any of them. Can't remember the last time I played one, either. I guess that's the genius of Knopfler. Anyway, it brings us closer to the nub of my neurosis, which is this. I know, with chilling certainty, that there are CDs in my collection I will never, ever play again. This is not, I admit, the sort of crisis that will convene an emergency session of the United Nations. But it bugs me.

It isn't just one or two CDs, either. There are whole tracts of my collection I haven't looked at in years. Maybe as much as 30 per cent. And as the collection continues to grow (and it does grow, without fail, by about three

CDs every week) the chances of the whole thing getting a spin, get slimmer. So, I ask myself, what's it doing there taking up valuable shelf space? Why not flog it or exchange it for something I do want to listen to?

And this is where the guilt creeps in. About half the collection I didn't buy. I used to review jazz albums for a magazine. At the time, around ten new releases would drop through the letter box every week. Some became immediate favourites, others played once then filed under "get back to you later when I've got more time". Most have stayed there ever since. As a part-time hi-fi reviewer, the freebies still come my way, albeit at a slower lick. But the ratio of hits to "have to waits" is about the same. The thing about the freebies is that they come with the warning "Promotional Copy Not For Sale". So I've kept every single one of them, grateful to be doing what I do and reasoning that a bit of forced eclecticism never hurt anyone's collection. Mostly it's all good stuff. Jazz FM could run off it for a week.

But I just sit there and look at it and worry about its size and that I'm not getting maximum enjoyment from it. About a year ago, I had to lock myself away in my study for a solid month to finish a book about American cars that was long overdue. I decided to attack the wall of CDs to my left in a completely arbitrary fashion, starting with the top left hand corner and working my way along. Since they were in no particular order at this time (I've had them arranged alphabetically, chronologically, by genre, even spine colour), there'd be plenty of variety and slowly I'd get back in touch with the heart and soul of my collection.

It worked for a few days. I discovered treasures I'd missed on the first time

round. Then I just slipped back into the usual practice of listening to what I was "into" at the moment, a handful of albums I'd bought at Tower Records the week before. Just as most of us apparently use a fraction of our brain's capacity to function, a minuscule portion of my CD collection was assisting me to write this book. Pathetic or perfectly normal? I don't know. Perhaps I should listen to the radio.

Or perhaps it's just me. My short concentration span. The hectic, scatter-gun approach to the way I work. The need for instant gratification. Now, plonk me on a desert island with a clockwork stereo and, given enough time, I'm sure I could divine the meaning of life through my CD collection. As it is, I nibble away at the edges. True, it's my own personal library and I love to browse. And if I browse long enough, I know that I will always find something that exactly suits my mood. That's why I won't trim it down. As it expands it resolves into ever-finer shades.

In a sense, I suppose, that's what it's all about; knowing that you've got it, even if you don't play it. But if you don't play it what's the point of having it? Because it's rare? Because it's a first edition or "a classic"? Music reduced to the level of stamp collecting? It's rampant in the world of vinyl and might well drift across to the digital domain.

My collection isn't like that. It's just for listening to. And there's a lot of listening still to do. Stuff I'm sure I never even suspected will only become apparent as my hi-fi improves and digs out a deeper level of hidden detail. But it will all have to wait. That's the trouble with music, it never stops. The fun is trying to keep up. My best CD? Easy. I haven't bought it yet. ▲

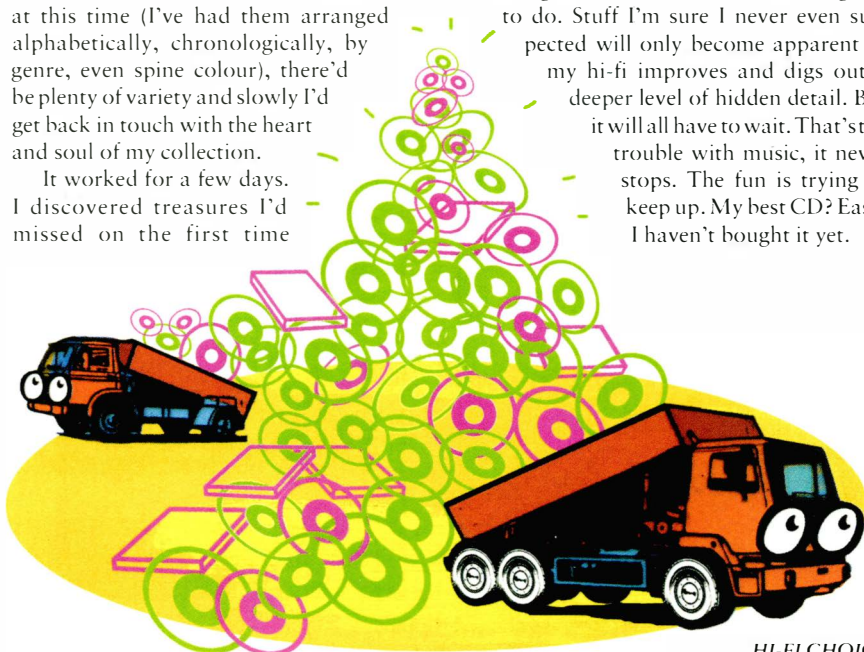


ILLUSTRATION: BRETT RYDER

Norman had noticed an improvement in his quality of life



The UK's first FM stereo cordless headphones

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*range: up to 30 metres






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DM 601



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CDM1



"...the CDM1 gives excellent sound, not only in terms of correct imagery and transparency, but also in precision, extended response and dynamic low-frequency performance."



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