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SME MODEL 20.2A

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HEADPHONES!



HIGH-END SPEAKERS

STUNNING B&W N801 TAKES ON THE RIVALS

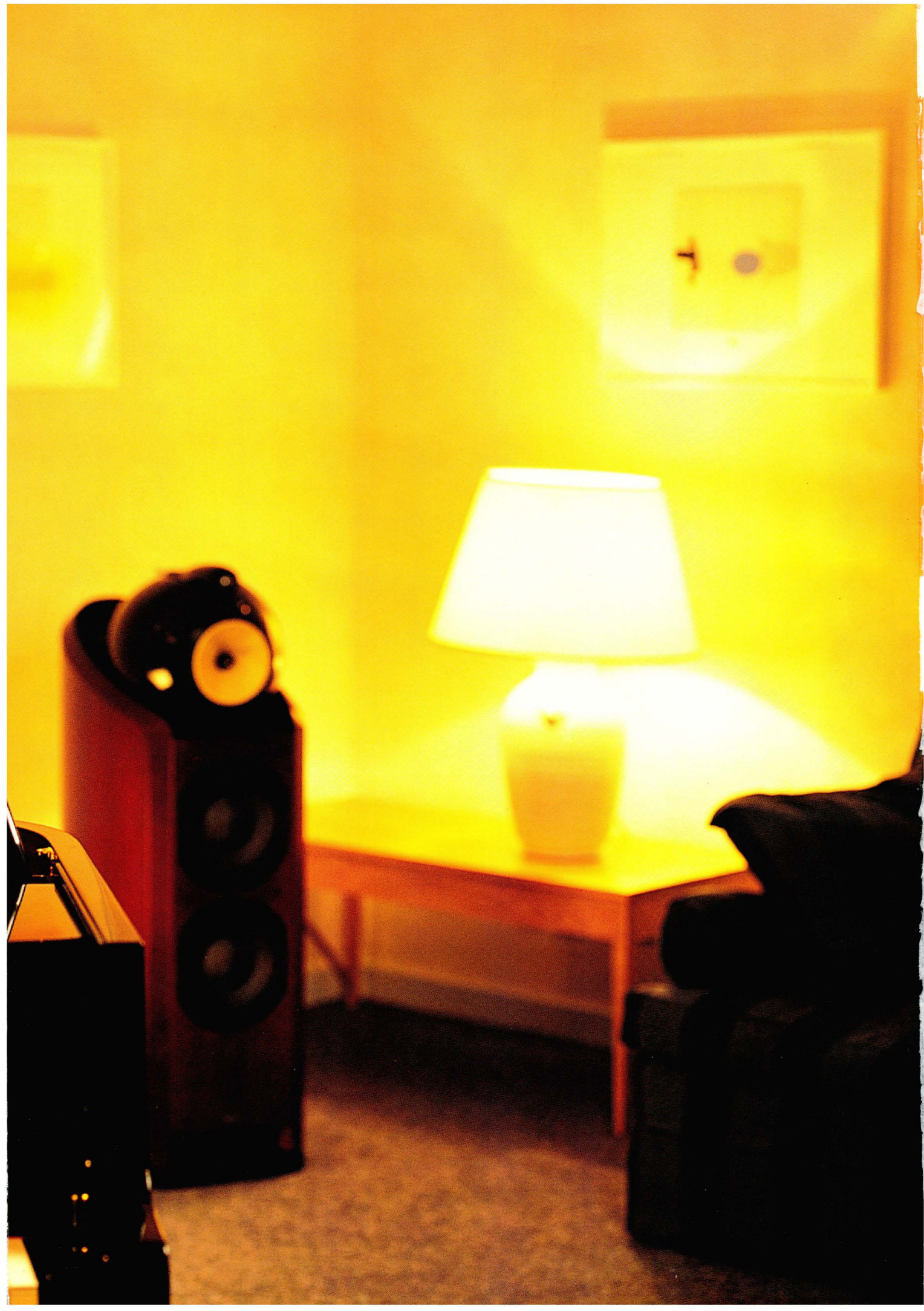



BUYER'S GUIDE

Our experts name the best hi-fi 3,500 Products ★ 400 Star Buys



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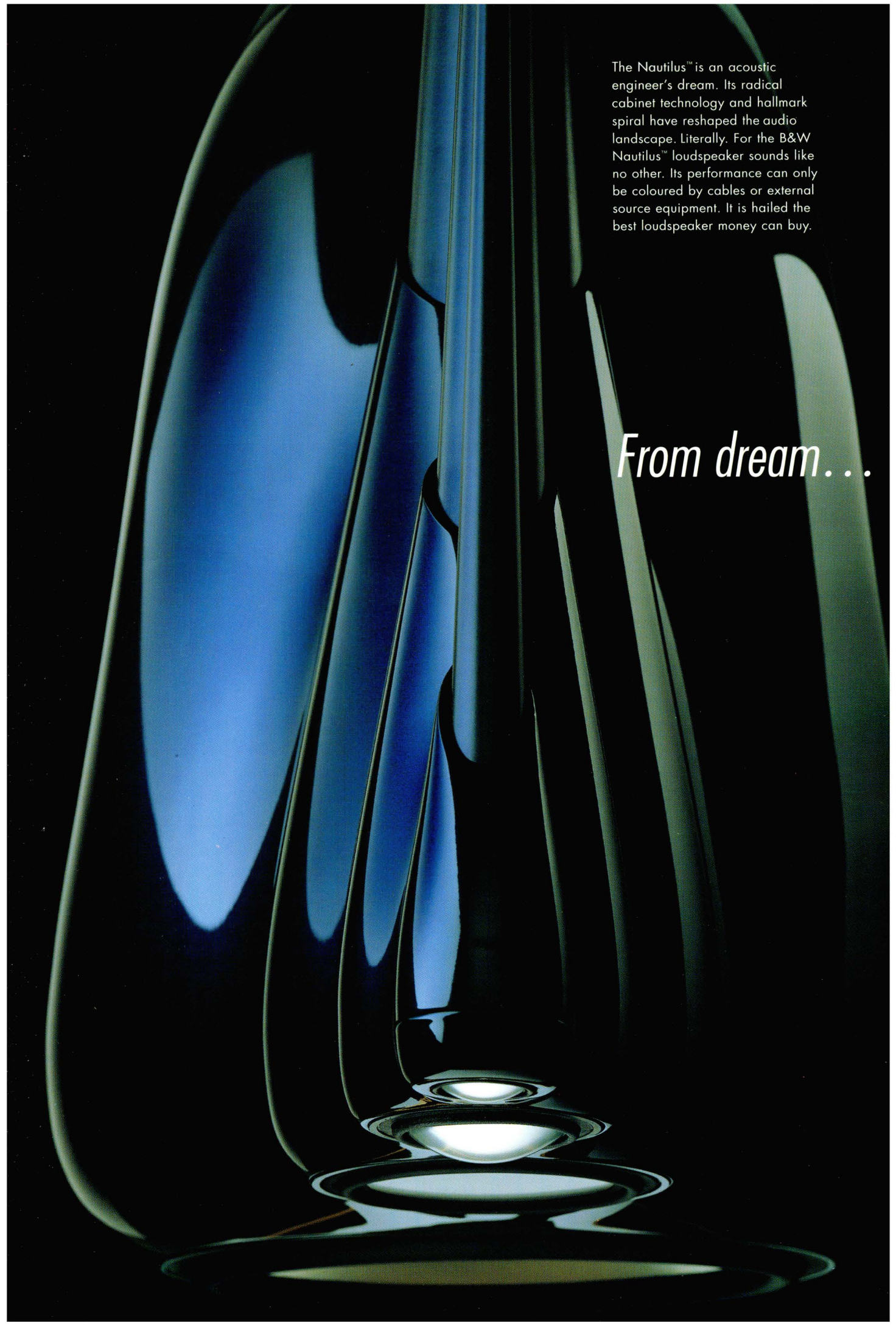




Lief Ove Andsnes has won the praise of none other than Sir Simon Rattle, who has called the brilliant Norwegian pianist 'one of the greatest musicians of his generation'. Acclaimed for his often audacious readings of composers such as Schumann, Haydn, Beethoven and Rachmaninov, Lief requires a loudspeaker which will reproduce all the dynamics and subtleties of the most complex classical music scores. For this reason he chooses the Nautilus™802.

B&W

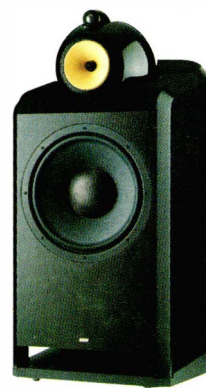
LISTEN AND YOU'LL SEE



The Nautilus™ is an acoustic engineer's dream. Its radical cabinet technology and hallmark spiral have reshaped the audio landscape. Literally. For the B&W Nautilus™ loudspeaker sounds like no other. Its performance can only be coloured by cables or external source equipment. It is hailed the best loudspeaker money can buy.

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

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Jason Kennedy provides a potted history of his esteemed career at *Hi-Fi Choice*.



Eleven years down the line and I've finally made editor. Who says that patience does not have its own reward? The advantage of such an evolutionary rise through the echelons of *Hi-Fi Choice* is that I know the magazine inside out. I may not be able to remember which issue we did a particular product or subject in, but I should have some inkling of whether we did it at all.

When I started in 1987 *Choice* was being re-launched, metamorphosing from the jam-packed A5 reviews-only issues that had sustained it for over 10 years into the diverse bag of journalistic tricks, which in turn has evolved into the copy you are holding. At that time Paul Messenger was editing, albeit from afar, and Dan Houston, Jane Hadley and I turned copy round and built the Directory. In retrospect Jane must have been unbelievably good at her job, because I was totally new to the game, Dan had come from a local paper and Paul spent most of his time out of the office. But we got the thing out and it didn't look too bad for its time either.

Product groups were enormous – 20 or 25 loudspeakers at a time – almost a continuation of the A5 books, but those were relatively easy years for hi-fi. Even in the '80s, some 10 years or so after the peak, there was so much kit around that you had no hope of reviewing it all even if the manufacturers were willing, and they were a lot more carefree then than they are now.

There seems little danger of us running out of loudspeaker manufacturers, however; a new one seems to be born every minute; well almost, and they are all leaner and fitter than they used to be. Not that the three high-end speakers that Paul Messenger reviews this month (p47) look particularly lean, but when prices get above five grand there's scope for a little luxury, and this selection is made up of sonically and aesthetically beaudacious designs from three of the top brands.

Alvin's amplifier review (p74) has unearthed some gems once more, this time in the form of budget muscle amps, which sounds like a contradiction in terms but is embodied by Rotel's £200 Watt buster. If this and December's CD player review are anything to go by it looks as if Rotel has re-kindled its star quality of yore, which is a good thing for anyone looking for a starter system.

We also have a trunk full of headphones this month, including corded and FM models that let you roam up to 100 metres from the transmitter. Find out how Charlotte fared with this ear cossetting group test on page 58.

THE CABLE GUY

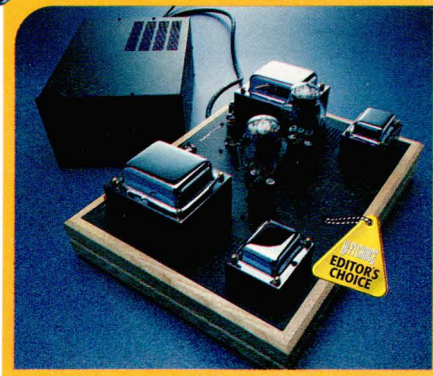
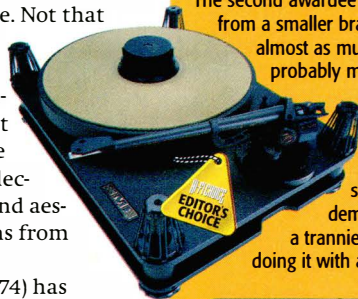
I recently met Bill Low, the man behind Audioquest cables, who got into wire in the late '70s and has been doing well out of it ever since. Unlike many in his position he has not lost sight of what hi-fi is all about, pointing out that it's not really intended to recreate the effect of having a band or orchestra in your living room, but to reproduce the energy that the ensemble put on the record and transport you to another slice of time. Hi-fi, believe it or not, is about enjoying music. By creating a decent system you can open up a direct channel to your musical pleasure centres, bypassing any intellectual barriers that might want to dissect and analyse, and allowing yourself to be emotionally transported to wherever the music's creator intended. Remember that and you should have no difficulty finding your ultimate system.

THIS MONTH'S EDITOR'S CHOICE

There are two products from this month's high-end reviews that warrant the coveted Editor's Choice flag for services to the higher senses. First there's the latest version of the turntable that I managed to borrow off Alan Sircom two years ago and have studiously avoided giving back, namely the SME Model 20.2A. Dave Wiley wrote this review when he was running the Sound Organisation shop in London Bridge, he clearly loves the deck as much as I do, realising that what many thought were shortcomings at its inauguration are in fact omissions of distortion. This turntable and arm are extraordinarily capable when it comes to reproducing solely what's in the grooves rather than the many musical effects created by other designs.

The second awardee is a more esoteric piece of kit from a smaller brand, but one which pays almost as much attention to detail and probably more to power supply design.

This is the Border Patrol 300B SE, an extremely neutral and capable valve amplifier that proves the breed need not be soft and sweet unless the music demands it, producing grunt that a tranny amp would be proud of and doing it with astonishing speed and agility.



HIGH-END TEST P44

The SME Model 2: it's a veritable beast of a turntable, but it plays like a saint.

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Phwoar! Get a load of those woofers! *Choice* brings you speakers with both beauty and brains.

B&W

AMPLIFIER MEGA TEST P74

If you thought quality amplification couldn't be had on the cheap, think again. We've sniffed out the pick of the crop this side of the £300 watershed?



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After 11 years Jason finally made it to Japan. But was it all he expected? Apparently so, and more.

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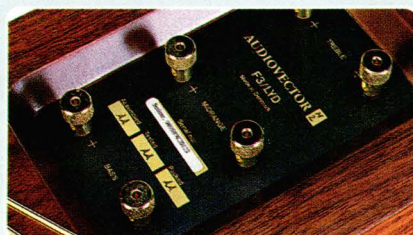
A whole plethora of lovingly pre-owned hi-fi kit is waiting for you to give it a good home.

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How to access our archive of reviews and features via back issues, factsback and photocopies.

COMPETITION

YOU CAN WIN A PAIR OF STUNNING AUDIOVECTOR SPEAKERS WORTH £1,400.



NEWS & VIEWS

What's new and hot? Catch up on the top stories with resident newshound, Charlotte Ricca.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **MORDAUNT-SHORT**, the 30 year old loudspeaker company, is sadly closing down. No buyer has yet been found, but there have been a number of enquiries. So this could be your last chance to purchase the new MS200 and MS800 series speakers. ☎ (01705) 499966



■ **ANTIFERRENT LTD** has produced an informative guide to digital terrestrial TV. This free 20 page booklet answers the most frequently asked questions about digital and is available in most branches of WH Smith. ☎ (01543) 267160

■ **THE SOUND AND VISION BRISTOL** show is to take place at the Marriott Hotel, 19th-21st Feb 1999. Over 65 brands are booked to attend, including Arcam, Denon, Sennheiser, Sony Pioneer and Jamo. Entry is £5.00 for adults, with student concessions at £3.00. ☎ (01865) 760844

■ **THE NORTHERN IRE AND HI-FI SHOW** 1999 will take place on 24th and 25th April at the Stormont Hotel, Belfast. ☎ (01868) 753606

■ **CYRUS** has developed the aEQ7 phono amp. Priced at £498 it is compatible with both MM and MC cartridges with separate circuit topologies. ☎ (01480) 451777



■ **MAGNAT** has four new active subwoofers (above) which form the Omega Series. There is the 380 at £599, the 300 at £399, the 250 at £299 and the 200 at £199. All models feature a bass-reflex, downfiring configuration and are volume controllable. ☎ (01491) 834700

■ **LOUD AND CLEAR** hi-fi of Glasgow is now available on the internet. You can visit it at www.loud-clear.co.uk. ☎ (0141) 221 0221

■ **SENNHEISER'S** new HD 570 headphones replace the 535s and are a 'bionic' design. Priced at £89.95 they are open-back and have soft velvet earpads which are replaceable. ☎ (01494) 551 532

■ **BURR-BROWN** has licensed HDCD decoding and precision filtering for its new PCM 1732 audio chip. The 1732 combines HDCD with Burr-Brown's 96kHz, 24-bit DAC technology to create a chip for a wide range of audio products, including DVD players, CD players and A/V receivers. ☎ 001 510 475 8000

Big idea, small package

■ Diamond Multimedia Systems has unveiled a revolutionary personal system. The Rio PMP300 is a portable recorder with a difference.

Based on the popular Internet music format MP3 compression and flash memory technology, it is similar to a Walkman or MiniDisc player, only far smaller and lighter. In addition there are no moving parts which means no skipping, even when used on the move.

Users simply download digital music from the Web using a PC and modem, or from a music CD loaded into the PC's CD-ROM drive. The Jukebox MP3 software automatically compresses audio files by up to one-twelfth their original size, with different compression levels offering alternative ratios of quality:time.

The Rio can run off a single 1.5V AA battery for 12 hours and includes 32MB of onboard flash memory. There are also add-on Rio flash memory storage cards in half hour and one hour configurations.

Hardware features and sound effect options such as Jazz, Classic and Rock sound stages, along with a diverse playback modes with Repeat One, Random, Repeat A-B, Repeat All and Intro modes give users added versatility and advanced functionality.

The Diamond Rio is currently available at £175, which includes software and a PC lead.

Diamond Multimedia ☎ (01189) 444431



◆ Diamond's Rio PMP300.



Bush's TR82 combines retro styling with modern technology.

Return of the retro

■ To celebrate its 65th anniversary, Bush has produced an updated version of the classic '50s transistor radio, the TR82, priced at £49.99.

Although today's retro model looks just like the original, Bush claims its performance has been considerably improved using the latest technology.

It still features the large tuning dial for FM/MW/LW bands accessed via a push button selector, but also comes with a tone control, headphone socket, mains/battery power options and a telescopic 360 degree aerial.

However, one aspect Bush says it definitely won't be reviving is the original fifties slogan, "Be the girl with the Bush". What a pity?

Bush Radio plc ☎ (01923) 859777

MiniDisc with a twist

■ JVC's latest MiniDisc recorder claims to be a "straight MD with a difference." The XM-228 allows the user to input titles for recorded MDs even during recording or playback.

It also features one-bit D/A and A/D converters along with versatile editing capabilities. Five-mode edit functions offer Divide, Join, Move, Erase and All Erase thus enabling you to create your own compilations.

In addition the XM-228 is compatible with three sampling frequencies so it is possible to record DBS and DAB (presuming these formats don't resort to copy protection systems) as well as CDs on MiniDisc.

Other features include 32-track program play, headphone output with volume control, remote control and two optical digital inputs.


Contact your local dealer for the retail price.

JVC ☎ (0181) 208 7654



The XM-228: "straight MD with a difference".

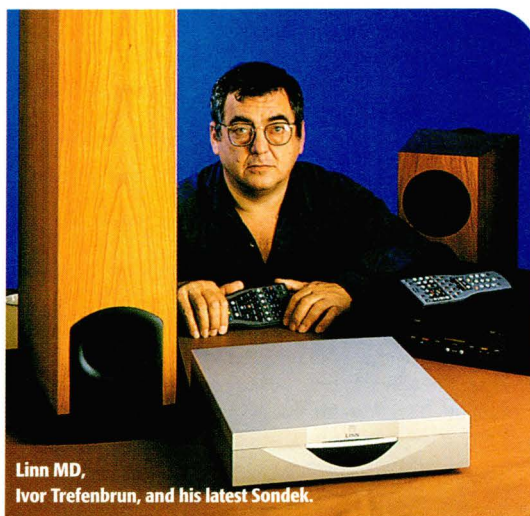
Millennial selection

 Linn's AV51 Home Theatre System and Sondek CD12 CD player have been selected as Millennium Products by the Design Council.

The CD12 has a new type of CD engine to transport the disc and, Linn claims, a completely new technique for jitterless information retrieval. It comes with remote control, but can also be operated directly from the fascia, although there are no visible controls — they are hidden in a drawer. The Sondek's suggested retailing price is a mighty £12,000.

Linn has also launched a new floorstanding loudspeaker. The Keosa is a two-way, infinite baffle model which deploys three Linn drive units. These consist of a 19mm ceramic-domed tweeter along with two 130mm woven glass-fibre bass and bass/midrange units.

They are 825x200x275mm (HxWxD) in size, weigh



Linn MD, Ivor Trefenbrun, and his latest Sondek.

a whopping 18kg each and have a nominal impedance of four Ohms.


Finished in black ash, the Keosa retails at £495 or £1,490, when bought as a complete system with the Linn Classik CD player/amplifier.

Linn Products ☎ (0550) 888909




Denon DCD-435: claims to have a more detailed sound than the 425.

Denon's bargain bucket

 Denon has produced its lowest priced CD player — ever. At just £129.99 the DCD-435 replaces the 425 and claims to deliver a cleaner, more detailed sound.

The mid-mount chassis features a Burr-Brown 1716 Enhanced Multi-level Delta/Sigma DAC and eight times oversampling digital filters. It also comes with remote control, 20 programme memory, auto edit, random play and optical output for MiniDisc and CD recording. Denon ☎ (01234) 741200

The dog's NADs

 NAD's new integrated amp, the C340 is the beefier sibling of the C320 (reviewed this month, p85) and shares many of its features. Costing £269.95 it has 50 Watts per channel, remote



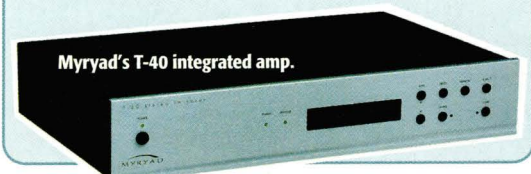
☉ NAD C340: no less than seven line inputs!

Minimalist Myryad styling

 Myryad has two new products to add its already substantial range. The £299.95 T-60 stereo power amplifier has been developed from the T-40 integrated amp, and shares the same circuit topology and minimalist looks, with an aluminium fascia. Its rear panel includes a pair of line inputs to accept a signal from a preamplifier, or a bi-amp output. The input sockets are also wired to a pair of line outputs for daisy chaining.

The £399.95 T-30 FM stereo tuner, meanwhile, can be tuned either manually or via automatic-search, or alternatively using one of 29 memory presets. The frequency is then shown on a large green fluorescent display. It uses a discrete front end, three-stage linear phase IF strip, low distortion double-tuned FM discriminator and comes with a remote control.

Myryad Systems ☎ (01705) 265508



control, a headphone output, seven line inputs and soft clipping. It incorporates NAD's new circuit topology, as per the C320, but offers more output power.

Another addition is the C440 tuner, priced at £199.95. It has 30 presets and NAD's blend function, which allegedly reduces background noise. It can also be controlled via a universal remote and rather unusually takes small 25kHz steps on the FM band, which, NAD claims, allows for more precise tuning. NAD ☎ (01926) 482017

NEWS IN BRIEF



■ **ORTOFON'S** cartridge range is being sold at reduced prices. As a result of the strong pound there are discounts of up to £250, such as on the Ortofon MC Rohmann (above) reduced from £1,500 to £1,250, the Ortofon MC30 Supreme now down to £1,000 and many, many more. ☎ (01491) 834700

■ **DESIGN AUDIO CLASSICS** of Glasgow has expanded to the east coast of Scotland, with its Sevenoaks franchise. The new Edinburgh showroom will be located at 25/27 Bruntsfield Place. ☎ (0131) 228 2777

■ **WHARFEDALE'S** new LoudPanels have won the Award for Product Excellence 1998 at the PLASA exhibition. They use NXT technology which does away with traditional cone-type drive units and acts like a sound board amplifying the signal across the whole surface. Some versions include picture panels which give no indication of their true purpose. ☎ (01480) 431737



■ **STANDESIGN** has launched a new display system (above) to coincide with its 10th anniversary. The 2000 series is "unashamedly a piece of furniture" which is designed to blend in with your home while offering a versatile support for A/V kit. Finished in natural cherry, prices range between £280 and £350. ☎ (01475) 652137

■ **JVC** and Victor Entertainment Inc have co-developed Digital K2. This system cuts out any artifacts that might alter or degrade sound quality at every stage of the digital audio production process. As such it alleges to provide sound quality that is closer to the original and can be used with CDs and DVD, as well as other digital equipment. ☎ (0181) 208 7654



■ **ONE FOR ALL** has introduced the New Generation infra-red universal remote control (above) for all types of A/V products. Even higher frequency devices can be controlled due to a specially developed chip. It features new curves coupled with optimum key positioning for greater levels of comfort and convenience. ☎ (0121) 454 9707

NEWS IN BRIEF

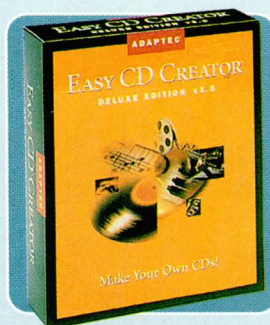
■ **SOUND IMAGE UK** has a number of new products available. JM Lab has various loudspeakers, including the £725 Mezzo Utopia and the £4,500 Mini Utopia which incorporate JM Lab's new inverted tioxid dome tweeter, and new Sandwich 'W' cone material. Meanwhile Electrocompaniet has launched the £995 M1 Monitor speaker, the £995 ECI-3 amp and the £2,650 EMC-1 CD player. There are also new cables from Tara Labs and the somewhat pricey 2050 monoblock amps from Boulder at £43,500. ☎ (0181) 255 6868



■ **JAMO** has announced the introduction of a Jubilee limited edition version of the Concert 8 (above), in celebration of its 30th anniversary. Priced at £1,500 they have 10 coats of black varnish, to give a piano lacquer finish. ☎ (01372) 300511

■ **WINTER CES '99**, the USA's biggest consumer electronics show is to take place in Las Vegas, Nevada on 7th-10th January 1999. ☎ 001 703 907 7674

■ **RINGMAT DEVELOPMENTS** has launched the MkII version of Statmat, the electrostatic control system for CD reproduction, which remains priced at £19.95. Also available is the complete Ringmat Support System, which is used to improve turntable performance. Prices start at £75. ☎ (01277) 200210



■ **ADAPTEC** claims to bring your LPs back to life with its Easy CD Creator Deluxe 3.5. This is a CD-recording software package which enables the user to copy analogue recordings onto CD, while cleaning up the hiss etc often found on worn records. ☎ (01276) 854500

■ **DEFINITIVE AUDIO** have relocated. The company's new address is Stanhope House, Harrington Mills, Leopold Street, Long Eaton, Derbyshire, NG10 1PB. Visitors by appointment only. ☎ (0115) 973 3222

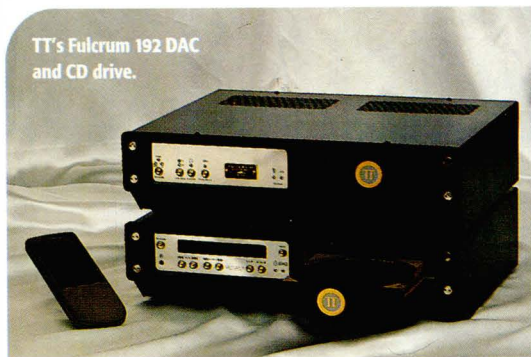
Tube-tastic

 Back in September Tube Technologies launched its first digital replay system at the Renaissance Hi-Fi show in the guise of the Fulcrum 192 DAC and Fulcrum CD drive.

The £1,750 192 DAC uses an HDCD digital filter for all formats with a sampling rate below 50kHz and a bespoke filter for 96/192 kHz operation. Digital to analogue conversion is based on FPGA technology, which is said to give "a thousand times better jitter sensitivity than Bitstream and a tenfold improvement over Multibit DACs."

Using six 6922 triodes per channel the Fulcrum 192 feeds a class A tube output stage. The input receiver, phase locked loop, clocks, DAC arrays and tube stages all have dual mono, independent power supplies.

The £850 CD drive is currently supplied for 44.1kHz operation, but is upgradable to ensure compatibility with the proposed future format changes. When used with the 192 DAC the CD Drive's master clock is generated in

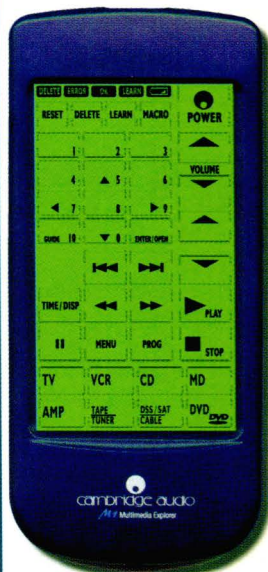


the DAC and fed through a separate clock output, thus, the company claims, eliminating jitter. In addition a CDQI (Compact Disc Quality Indicator) allows the user to assess the quality of discs.

Tube Technology has also introduced the Fusion CD player which uses similar circuit topology to the Fulcrum 192 DAC and retails at £1,100.

All three products have been designed and hand-built in England, with digital engineering by John Westlake. Tube Technology ☎ (01932) 821111

Keeping in control




CA's M1 remote control: sunglasses not supplied.

Cambridge Audio has come up with a rather novel remote control. The M1 Enhanced Multimedia Explorer is an improved version of the previous M1, incorporating new functions and a sleek blue fascia.

The unique touch-sensitive LCD screen has been redesigned with additional facilities for DVD, MiniDisc, satellite, Teletext, VideoPlus and Dolby Digital/DTS.

Priced at £79.95 it is able to learn the commands of up to eight infra-red remote controls from virtually any brand. Richer Sounds ☎ (0171) 940 2240

Southern belle


 South Coast Speakers has launched its new entry level, two-way, bass reflex design bookshelf loudspeaker, the Odette. Retailing at £325 it has been designed with smaller listening rooms in mind.

The Odettes are housed within a pair of hand-made MDF cabinets which are finished in one of a selection of nine real wood veneers. Twin rearward firing port tubes allow the bass frequencies to be reinforced, South Coast alleges, by positioning the speakers close to the wall.

The treble unit is a ferro-fluid filled 19mm aluminium dome tweeter, while the 13cm bass/midrange unit uses a coated paper cone with an elastic rubber surround and has a 25mm long throw voice coil. "Equally at home with rock, dance, classical or jazz music, the Odette is a superb all-round loudspeaker", claims South Coast. South Coast Speakers Ltd ☎ (01703) 559312

The appliance of science



 The latest creation from German company T+A is the Solitaire A2D digital speaker which is controlled by four onboard 150 Watt amplifiers. Cross-over is performed by a fully digital frequency splitter with an edge steepness of more than 300dB per octave. As a result the A2Ds define the true meaning of digital speakers, or so T+A claims.

The A3D digital speaker is a medium-size floor-stander, rated at 60 Watts continuous power. It incorporates much of the technology of the larger model, such as pure digital input, and can therefore be able to connect directly to a digital source or be provided with an analogue signal via the onboard DAC converter.

Both models come in five finishes, with the A2Ds retailing at £4,200 and the A3Ds at £1,925.

T+A took its name from the mathematical and physical principles of Theory and Application.

Richard Hirschman Electronics UK ☎ (01234) 345999

○ T+A Solitaire A2D.

Path to success



Path Premier has taken on the latest offerings from Revel and Mark Levinson, with prices starting at £3,000.

Mark Levinson has upgraded its 300 amp series, incorporating refinements typical of its flagship 'S' versions. New features include greater output power, new output stage devices, improved communications circuitry and the introduction of cyanate ester PC boards in the voltage gain stages. The new 300 series claims to achieve higher power, lower noise and lower distortion. Prices range from £5,495 to £8,995.

Also available are two new digital processors. The No360 and No360S, which replace the No36 and No36S, are the first to use the new Burr-Brown PCM 1704 24-bit DACs. Their digital interface receiver and digital filter/decoder circuits are all fully programmable, and the Madrigal design team has used components to prepare them for future DVD-based audio formats. Prices are £3,995 for the 360 and £6,495 for the 360S.

Finally Revel has a new full-range loudspeaker system available. The Salon is a four-way floorstander which, Revel purports, has an outstanding off-axis response, due to the 102mm mid-range drive unit — with its 38mm voice coil. It features a neodymium motor and titanium dome, while the aluminium alloy dome tweeter is an unusually large 28mm. The Salon has an impedance of six Ohms and a sensitivity of 86dB. Prices start at £11,995.

☎ Path Premier (01494) 441736



© Mark Levinson 300 series.

Speakers with flare



Boston Acoustics has announced details of its new VR940, a floorstanding speaker system priced at £399.99.

The enclosure is a vented design, with a down-firing 75mm diameter reflex port, flared on both ends to reduce audible turbulence. The speaker uses a Boston-built 135x191mm bass driver, which has been optimised with Boston's Finite Element Analysis (FEA) computer modelling technology. As such, Boston claims it delivers "stronger bass response and wider horizontal dispersion". In addition the 25mm anodised aluminium Lynnfield VR tweeter features a unique diecast aluminium heat-sink for alleged high power handling capability.

The VR940 is finished in dark charcoal grey cloth with a gloss black top cap.

Portfolio ☎ (01489) 795519



PAUL MESSENGER

What is the case for the use of Kevlar in drivers?

Loudspeaker makers are fond of claiming unique advantages for specific diaphragm materials, but rarely back up such assertions of superiority with any form of evidence. B&W has been using a Kevlar/resin matrix for its main and midrange driver cones for many, many years, and has often based advertising campaigns upon its implied but unspecified magical virtues.

Such is marketing, and the writer soon develops a healthy streak of cynicism after a few years in the business. So I was a trifle nonplussed, when being briefed on the company's new Nautilus 801 (review p48), to discover that there really is a solid, if somewhat surprising, justification for using a woven matrix such as Kevlar.

A midrange driver has one difficulty, and that's to try and maintain a constant dispersion or distribution pattern in its sound output right across its operating range. The trouble is, in order to do that, the source has to get narrower as the frequency rises, which is why the original Nautilus speaker used four different size drivers to cover the range.

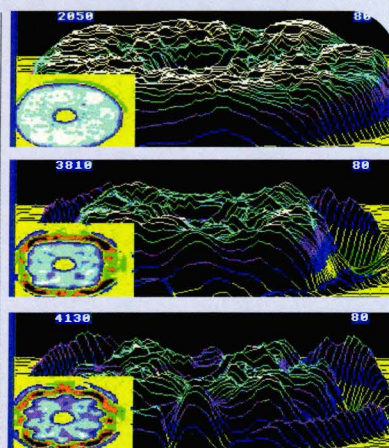
With three-way (and two-way) designs, what tends to happen in practice is that somewhere around 1-2kHz

"Woven materials are not axi-symmetric. If you cut through the cone from the centre to the outside, you'll cut through different fibre configurations..."

the cone/surround starts to flex, and first the surround and then the edge of the cone lags behind the motion of the voice coil and central portion of the cone. The edge starts to move out of phase with the middle section, tending to cancel its output. A series of harmonic modes creates notches in the frequency response, right in the frequency band where the ear is most sensitive.

By developing its 'fixed' surround, the B&W Nautilus 801 avoids the unwanted effects of the surround flexing, which is one bonus. The other, somewhat surprisingly, comes from the fact that the Kevlar matrix is based on a woven material.

Most loudspeaker cones are made from a homogeneous material, such as moulded plastics, pressed paper pulp or metal. They are, to use the jargon, 'axi-



Laser scans showing the behaviour of kevlar diaphragms. Up to 2.5kHz (top) it's a perfect piston, then as frequency rises the outer regions get left behind, and finally (bottom) the peaks and troughs cancel each other out.

symmetric', having the same physical properties in every direction out from the centre. Woven materials are not axi-symmetric. If you cut through the cone from the centre to the outside, you'll cut through different fibre configurations according to whether you slice along the woven strands (which weavers call the warp and the weft), or across the diagonals (known as the bias).

Crucially, the stiffness of the cone and the velocity of sound therein varies according to the direction of the weave. The cone is stiffer and sound travels faster across the bias than along the warp or weft, and so the frequency at which the cone starts to flex (and the harmonics series therefrom) varies too.

There are four paths from the inside to the outside edge across the bias, and four more along the warp and weft. When the cone edge goes into breakup mode, instead of the entire edge going out of phase with the centre (as it does with homogeneous cones, causing considerable phase cancellation with the central portion), the cone edge breakup is split up into eight sections, four going one way interspersed by four going the other way, ie out of phase. (B&W calls them octupole bell modes.)

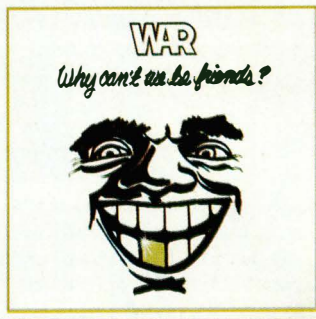
The Kevlar break-up mode is therefore effectively self-cancelling, producing little or no net sound output. And this in turn allows the centre section of the cone to carry on generating coherent sound from the desired smaller diameter source I introduced in the third paragraph. Kevlar (and presumably other woven materials, provided the designer has got the sums right).

PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD

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



AVENUE GOLD COLLECTION



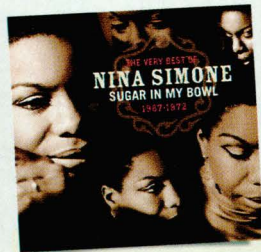
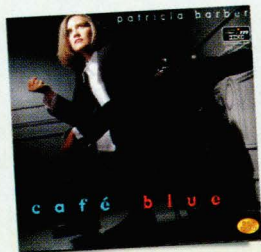
WAR *Why Can't We Be Friends?* (Above) (Avenue Gold Collection)

The fly funksters weren't the white man's burden, more Eric Burdon's legacy since the ex-Animal actually helped 'declare' War in 1970. *Why Can't We...* came out five years later and though its most famous cut — the wonderful *Low Rider* — has been on TV adverts and compilations, this is the first time it's appeared on a Digital 20 CD. The Latin medleys are lively yet fluid and even the shuffling title track sing-along has a certain rhythmic charm. Beautifully produced by Jerry Goldstein back when they used real, and really good, percussionists.

★★★★☆

PATRICIA BARBER *café blue* (Premonition FIM HDCD)

Ms Barber's much-loved *café blue* came out in 1994, but now her new blue-eyed jazz uses the FIM HD format which has a block error rate that's 95 per cent lower. And astonishingly transparent it is too, platforming Pat's individual phrasing and atmospheric songs perfectly. PB sings at Al Capone's old Green Mill haunt but this HDCD is



essential listening for those jazzers without the fare.

★★★★☆

MUDDY WATERS *Live* (Beat Goes On LP)

Muddy 'Mississippi' Waters' songs might be more politically incorrect than Bernard Manning on Viagra but he could sing the rhythm'n'blues like nobody else and the rawness cuts through on *Nine Below Zero*, *Mannish Boy* and *Howling Wolf*. This album, Donovan *Live* and The Tubes' LP below are on vinyl of fair quality — and various weights — but vinyl junkies will be attracted by the £7.99 price.

★★★★☆

THE TUBES *Completion Backwards* (Principial) (Beat Goes On LP)

Neurotic New Wavers or just white punks on dope? The Tubes, here in 1982's Heaven 17 suits, never did make up their minds but they made some crackers anyway. *Talk To Ya Later* sizzles out of the speakers while the moody *Let's Make Some Noise* still sounds tragically upbeat.

★★★★☆

NINA SIMONE *Sugar In My Bowl; Very Best of... 1967-72* (RCA)

Two CDs, 40 tracks and *Ain't Got No* and *Look of Love* are already classics while the touching *Suzanne* and the nine minute *Jelly Roll* have just escaped from the studio — and after only 29 years too.

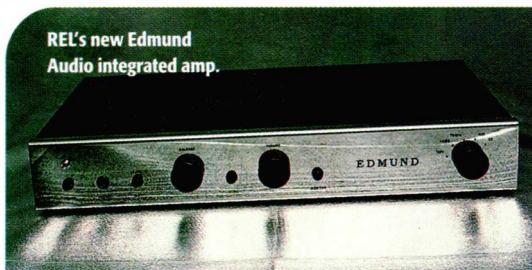
★★★★☆

BILL WITHERS *Lovely Day, Best of* (Columbia CD)

Lean On Me, *Harlem* and *Ain't No Sunshine* are but three of the singer-songwriter's self-penned gems.

★★★★☆

REL Britannia



"Quintessentially and unashamedly British" is how REL describes the new Edmund Audio integrated amp, priced at £400.

This class AB amp is rated at 85 Watts into eight Ohms and is designed to run at up to 300V for short periods for added reliability. Most of the resistors used are one per cent metal film types, and both the volume control and selector switches are ALPS units. All five inputs and tape loop in/out are gold plated, as are the touch-proof speaker outputs.

Although the Edmund is intrinsically a line amp it may be ordered with an MM or MC phono input, at no extra cost. There is also a stereo direct input which bypasses the passive preamp and feeds the power amp immediately.

Edmund Audio ☎ (01656) 768777

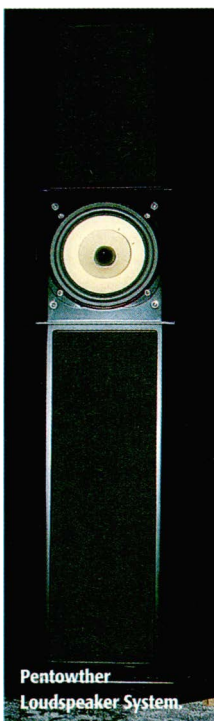
Pentacone's Famous Five



When a company claims its new loudspeaker is the result of 20 years investigation, you know it isn't going to be cheap, and at £7,000 the Pentowther Loudspeaker System is no exception.

Designed by Pentacone, these speakers were built with the exact position of the microphone(s) in relation to the auditorium and musicians in mind. They also incorporate the baby of the Lowther drive unit range, the PM6A. These are eight-inch dual cones made of impregnated paper, which when coupled to a suitable bass horn are said to be capable of "all audible frequencies". Because of this "immense accuracy" Pentacone stresses the system must be "set up very, very, very carefully and as such a length of Pentacone loudspeaker cable and 'System Harmonising' come with any purchase. This System Harmonising is a method of fine tuning which "allows the maximum electron energy to flow from system source to speaker."

They stand at 1.33m tall, weigh in at an almighty 59kg each and come in a blue/black mirror finish or, alternatively, in various real wood veneers. Pentacone ☎ (01924) 445039



Out of this world



The new Thule Audio range is now available in the UK. Previously only distributed in Europe the products are acclaimed for their surface mount technology, digital volume controls as well as the alleged high quality sound.



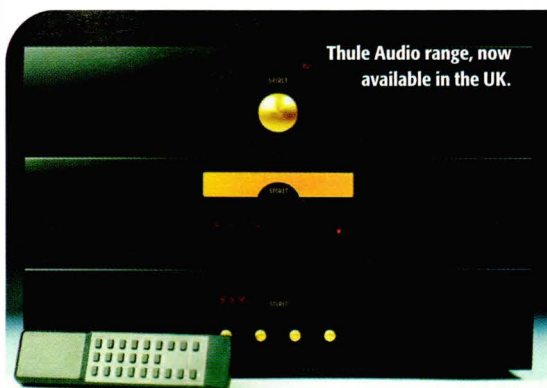
The Spirit range is more suited to hi-fi, while the Space range is aimed at home cinema.



Products include the Space IA250B amp, suitable for use with DVD and a Dolby Digital processor/preamp, to be launched this spring.

The Spirit range comprises four integrated amps, the Spirit IA60 at £449.95, the IA100 at £599.95, the £699.95 IA60B and the £999.95 IA150B. Next up are the two preamps, the £399.95 PR100 and the £699.95 PR150B along with the £599.95 PA100 (to be reviewed with the PR100, next month) and the £899.95 PA150B power amps. Keeping with the 'Ark theme', they also have two CD players, the CD100 at £599.95 (to be reviewed in *HFC* 188) and the CD150B, which has an upgrade PCB, called the Digit at £439.95. Finally there is but one tuner, the TU100 priced at £439.95.

Glaive ☎ (01622) 664070



Thule Audio range, now available in the UK.

A Token gesture



Hailey Audio has launched a new brand, Token Audio. Its electronics products are designed and manufactured by Principia in Cambridge while the Omar Skinner, based in Berkshire, is the creator of the loudspeaker range.

Integrated amps include the K50 (reviewed on p95) which comes in a finish of black, black and silver or silver with gold knobs! It is priced at £299 to £350. Then there is the more powerful, K100 integrated amp (unpriced and not available till March '99).

CD players in the range are the (as yet unpriced) CD50 and CD100, which are both based upon the latest Philips 723 CD player. There is also the HA50 headphone amp, which will be available February 1999.

Speaker models include the £395 SP 50 bookshelves, and the £635 SP 50F, the SP 300 at £1,095 and the £2,145 SP 400 floorstanders.

Hailey Audio ☎ (01992) 442425



Token's K50: sparkly in gold and silver.



JIMMY HUGHES

One small step for man, one giant leap for vinyl lovers.



May the downforce be with you.

The human race may have succeeded in putting a man on the moon, but to accurately measure the tracking force of a phonograph stylus remains obstinately elusive. Like many reviewers, I've relied on the Michell uni-pivot stylus balance for over 25 years. But it's a bit fiddly to use, and you're still not always 100 per cent certain of the exact tracking force unless you're willing to experiment with the supplied weights.

Some may say it's totally unnecessary to measure with such accuracy anyway. Playing force is best set approximately, then adjusted in small increments up and down until the sound is judged correct by ear. Though there's logic in this approach, it can still be important to measure tracking force precisely; when swapping cartridges between different tonearms, it's important to find out if the optimum downforce is the same in each case.

So three cheers for Len Gregory, AKA The Cartridge Man, and his digital stylus gauge. It gives a three-digit read out of tracking force to an accuracy of 0.02g, and is quick and simple to operate. When new, the unit needs its internal battery charged overnight using the supplied mains charger, but then at least 30 minutes' continuous use is possible.

One important design aspect of this gauge is its all-plastic case and stylus measuring pad. The expensive 'quality' look of metal may be missing, but being non-magnetic ensures accurate consistent readings regardless of cartridge type. In the '70s, Technics made a lovely little battery operated stylus gauge (SH-50P1), but spoilt it by using steel for the stylus pad! Of course, as soon as a moving coil cartridge with big magnets was

"Once the gauge is satisfied it's measured the tracking force correctly, it 'freezes' the reading on the display."

measured the readings went haywire.

The other nice thing is the size of the stylus pad — quite large and virtually flush with the main body of the unit. This greatly reduces the chance of knocking the stylus on the edge of the measuring pad and damaging the cantilever. With mechanical stylus balances, one always needs plenty of up and down movement to ensure proper operation, but this can leave dangerous protrusions. However, there's far less chance of accidental cartridge damage with this gauge than almost any other.

I wondered if the digital display might be a little nervy, and (like some digital multi-meters) subject to confusing fluctuations. However, once the gauge is satisfied it's measured the tracking force correctly, it 'freezes' the reading on the display. It does mean you can't adjust playing weight in real-time, but that's probably a blessing given the likelihood of damaging the stylus.

Obviously, the £199.99 asking price is high for something the average punter will use rarely, and on cost grounds, will be limited to serious vinyl enthusiasts, retailers, and reviewers. Nevertheless, a worthwhile investment for those unwilling to accept second-best!

The Cartridge Man ☎ 0181 688 6565

THE VERY BEST OF BRITISH

David Vivian tries out a system made up of components hailing from two highly individual British manufacturers.

Some systems are designed, some are lovingly concocted and some just happen. The ones that 'happen' a chance meeting of components across a dimly lit living room — are often the most fascinating, a kind of hi-fi alchemy occurring before your very ears.

This month's system 'happened'. It isn't one you'd dream up using a pencil and a piece of paper, however lateral your thinking. Look on it more as a happy accident. Culturally and aesthetically there doesn't appear to be much common ground or potential synergy between a mainstream silver-faced CD player from Waterlooville in Hampshire and a keenly matched all-black, compactly-packaged 'budget high-end' amp-speaker combo hailing out of Stroud in Gloucestershire.

The former is made by Myryad, the latter AV International. Respected British 'real hi-fi' brands yes. An obvious item no. So

how come we're recommending the marriage? Patience, dear reader. I'd been using AVI's top-line electronics as a reference for several months. The company's S2000MP preamp (£949 line-level, £1,149 with MM or MC phono stage) is one of those products often cited as an exemplar of the solid-state breed. It doesn't look anything special. Like other AVI components, it's smallish and squarish with a dated glossy black Perspex fascia totting flush plastic buttons and a backlit green AVI logo. But looks can deceive. Technically it's fabulous with one of the highest signal-to-noise ratios in the business. Subjectively, it's what all good preamps should be — seen and not heard; transparent to the point of invisibility.

This would be a good preamp in any system but it just so happens that AVI makes a pair of matching monoblock power amps for a reasonable £1,399. Reasonable when you consider that each one pumps out 150 Watts into eight Ohms, 225

Watts into four Ohms and treats awkward speaker loads with the sort of contempt Jeremy Paxman normally reserves for Michael Howard.

Not that AVI's slim reflex box speaker, the £899 Positron, has ever been an awkward customer — just a little ripe in the bass for some smaller rooms like mine. Essentially, it's the floorstanding version of the

THE SYSTEM

AVI Positron	£899.00
AVI S2000MM monoblocks (pair)	£1,399.00
AVI S2000MP preamp	£949.00
Myryad T-20 CD player	£599.95



excellent NuNeutron mini monitor except that it uses a higher quality 140mm bass/mid driver from Vifa to complement the 28mm Scanspeak soft-dome tweeter in a 12- rather than a 5-litre ported enclosure.

Considering the modest dimensions of the box (just 74cm tall and 17.5cm wide), the Positrons projected a big, ballsy three-dimensional sound with a surprisingly forceful — if not very extended — bass that could become boomy with some material.

For customers who find the bottom end just too fulsome, AVI now offers a crossover upgrade that alters the speaker's amplitude response to take account of the boost in bass some rooms give as well as a handy 1dB (from 87 to 88dB) gain in sensitivity and an easier amplifier load. It's the modified Positrons that take their place in this system.

RELAX... IT'S A MYRYAD

Now, of course, at this point we could have lifted one AVI S2000MC2 CD player (£899) from the shelves and had our-

“In an overall system context, the Myryad CD player brings both more insight and a less tense demeanour to the party.”

selves a ball with a hugely capable, enjoyable and user friendly all-AVI ensemble. Many have. As classic fit-and-forget one-make systems go, AVI ranks among the very best. But one thing you sometimes notice when you get a lot of AVI components working together is that the results can sound a little too forthright. The clarity, drive, rhythmic integrity, textural colour and sheer musical honesty are all deeply impressive. AVI systems tend to produce one of the great 'no frills' sounds. But for some tastes it's a little too relentless, in-ye-face and unromantic. What's needed is a slightly less tightly coiled spring, a sense of relaxation. And that's easiest to engineer in at the front end.

I thought I had it about right for a couple of months with an Arcam Alpha 8 SE CD player *in situ*. This £600 machine has a big, expansive, organic sound that has wooed many an analogue fan. In the AVI context it warmed things up a little without sapping any of the system's terrific dynamism and ability to boogie. It fared just as well when the Positron crossover mod was made and a rather bass-heavy presentation was transformed into a lean, tight and fast one. The Arcam's bass weight and control were appreciated in both set ups. I didn't see how it would be easy to improve on the Arcam.

But the Myryad T20 — £600 like the Arcam — opened my eyes. Ironically, when paired with its matching T-40 integrated amp, the T20 comes across as being a little too 'nice' to be entirely convincing — a criticism often levelled at Myryad CD players. What this 20-bit delta-sigma DAC equipped machine does have in spades, though, is poise, transparency, focus and a lovely open, fluid midband. It isn't quite as muscu-

lar-sounding as the Arcam but the utterly revealing nature of the AVI amps and speakers did expose an even tauter and more articulate bass.

In an overall system context, the Myryad CD player brings both more insight and a less tense demeanour to the party, improving long-term listenability with only a small diminution of perceived power and slam. Sonically it works. Just remember to order your T20 in black.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

SYNERGY ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£3,846.95**

OK, no awards for design compatibility, but the sound of this system is to die for. So much power, so much poise.

One year guarantee on AVI products. Three year guarantee on Myryad T-20.

AV International Ltd, Unit F3, Bath Road Trading Estate, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 3QF

(01453) 765682

Myryad Systems Ltd, 2 Piper's Wood, Waterberry Drive, Waterlooville PO7 7XU

(01705) 265508

THE SYSTEM COMPONENTS



PREAMPLIFIER

AVI S2000MP £949.00

The S2000MP offers remote control, six inputs and a set of technical stats that set the standard at £1,000 and some way above.

ALTERNATIVES: Exposure XVII £850, Audio Note M2 Line £999.

CABLES & SUPPORTS

We used van den Hul The Second interconnect between CD and pre-amp, Sonolith between preamp and monoblocks, and Audioquest Forest bi-wire speaker cable. Mains cables were from Kimber.

CD PLAYER

MYRYAD T-20 £599.95

Myryad's mid-range CD player offers clean styling, fine build and a focus on midband resolution and lucidity. No slouch in the bass department but not a player to wake up dull systems.

ALTERNATIVES: Arcam Alpha 8 SE £600, Micromega Stage 4 £600

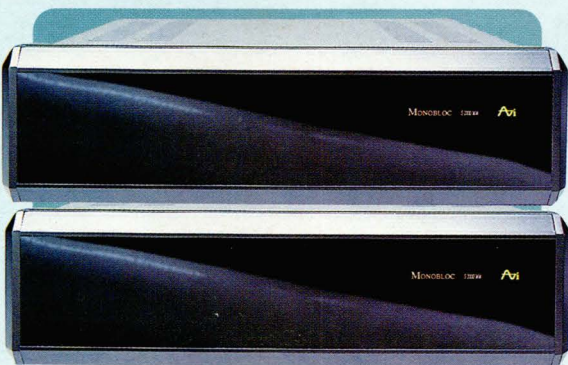


MONOBLOCKS

AVI S2000MM pair £1,399.00

True powerhouse monoblocks that will drive any speaker to window shattering levels. But they actually sound the business, too.

ALTERNATIVES: Chord SPM 400 £1,325, Musical Fidelity X-A200 £1,000



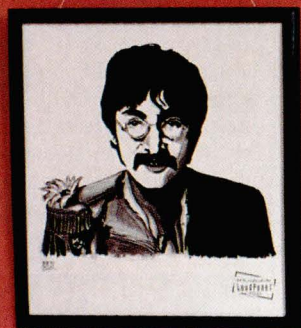
SPEAKERS

AVI Positron £899.00

These Positrons use top-notch drivers to great effect. Midband is beautifully open and coherent, bass fast and tuneful, if not very deep.

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JASON KENNEDY

From Happy Tunes to Loopmasters, there was everything at the Tokyo Show. But the emphasis was on DVD!



stages, but audio only players will follow and hopefully software as well! The medium's non audio bonuses include still video with sleeve notes, spoken interviews and lyric sheets that interact with the music, so you can jump from one verse to another by selecting it on the screen — looks like the TV will have to come into the listening room after all!

LET THE BATTLE COMMENCE

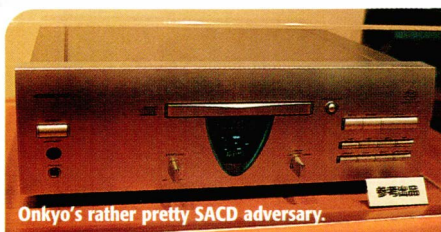
At the show the battlements were being erected for what will be the format war of 1999 — SACD versus DVD-A — two completely different formats vying to lure the public with a higher quality music medium. Presumably for amusement value the group HQs for each camp were placed opposite one another at Big Site, the SACD stand featuring suited representatives and static displays of prototype hardware while the DVD-A stand featured platform booted space babes encouraging visitors to watch a demonstration. I wonder how that approach will affect the future of each?

The SACD stand had an impressive array of hardware on show from the likes of

Perhaps it was fortuitous that I had to wait until now before I got to Japan; this is the first time since I started on *HFC* that CDs have been cheaper over there than they are here! It would have been nice to have seen the Akihabara district at its most excessive and it would have been fun to have been to a tube and horn filled Tokyo show, but it would have been frustrating being surrounded by so many desirable things that I couldn't afford. At 200 Yen to the pound the place seems almost reasonable and certainly no worse than London, and there's still a good smattering of audio madness to be found.

My sponsor for this trip was the newly re-incorporated Pioneer, which, like many companies in Japan, is having to get to grips

Spring 1999, launching six months later in Europe, has been set. At the show there were a number of prototype players from the bigger brands including Panasonic/Technics, JVC, Toshiba and Samsung as well as Pioneer, which was demonstrating the format in one of the air-conditioned 'tents' set-up in the hangar-like Big Site that housed the show.



Onkyo's rather pretty SACD adversary.



Pioneer's assault weapon for the next format war.

with a depressed home market and the near loss of many far-eastern markets. This is a perilous state of affairs that is affecting British manufacturers quite severely and attracting more imports to these shores. Pioneer, however, has responded by introducing new technologies and branching out into new markets. The Loopmaster personal CD player represents its first venture in this area, and a stylish one at that, with a Swatch-like appeal that could make it a classic. It showed an attractive micro system in a similar vein at the Tokyo show — the Happy Tune as you might imagine is not hi-fi but it has excellent styling and marks a welcome move away from black and silver.

DVD-AUDIO

At our end of the spectrum the emphasis is clearly on DVD and the forthcoming DVD-Audio format in particular. At the time of writing the format is still at the penultimate point nine stage with complications over interfacing and copyright still to be ironed out, but a Japanese launch date of

“The battlements were being erected for what will be the format war of 1999 — SACD versus DVD-A — two completely different formats vying to lure the public with a higher quality music medium.”

The DVD-A format will encompass a number of bit and oversampling rates and offer multiple channel mixes on the same disc, but discs will be single layer so there will not be compatibility with existing CD players or the competing SACD/DSD format being backed by Sony and Philips. Playback time is potentially greater than CD but ultimately depends on the mix of channels and degree of resolution. Initially DVD players are likely to be universal video and audio machines, the existing DVD-V software being an important factor at the early

Marantz, Denon, Kenwood, Sony, Sharp and TEAC; and has clearly been doing its homework with high profile figures from the studio world, the only sound on the stand being exhortations for the medium from said characters. But that's where it needs to work hardest because the DSD system is completely new for people at the soft end of the music business while DVD being linear PCM is an evolutionary step. Ultimately this battle will be fought on software, and the backwards compatibility of SACD looks very strong, but would you pay extra for a disc on the basis that you might upgrade your player in the future?

On the video side DVD will soon be getting a whole lot more attractive with the introduction of DVD-RW machines, replacements for the VCR that have the ability to record onto the end of a disc while you watch the beginning. But calm yourselves, both DVD-V and A discs will be copy protected (and probably digital broadcasts too), so don't switch to ON just yet.

Tune in next month for more on the Tokyo show.



PAUL MILLER'S OASIS OF SANITY

Technical Editor **Paul Miller** explains why two samples of the same product may not be so similar when thoroughly scrutinized.

In all areas of any industry, effective quality control will always separate the true professionals from the Saturday-night scam artists. When it comes to hi-fi, as consumers we have a right to expect that an Aardvark A-50 integrated amplifier purchased from a hi-fi emporium in Devon, for example, should offer precisely the same performance as another Aardvark A-50 integrated amplifier bought in bonny Scotland, regardless of each unit's date of manufacture. Unfortunately, in practice there will be slight variations from production batch to production batch. Whether these performance variations are intentional or even identified much of the time remains a moot point, but are typically covered by the manufacturer's 'right to alter its specification at any time'. A convenient get-out clause if ever there was one.

Many smaller manufacturers never get around to installing adequate QC protocols in the first place, but even those that take the most stringent precautions will most likely still come a cropper from time to time. After all, with the inherent complexity of today's digital products, it seems that if something can go wrong, then it will do, and usually at the worst possible time! By way of illustration, I'll refer you back to a pair of CD players that Alvin and I reviewed in *HFC* issue 184: Denon's DCD-835 and Arcam's Alpha 9.

DENON'S BAD LUCK STORY

The DCD-835 is a new budget CD player that uses the same digital building blocks as Denon's popular DCD-825, so I

was expecting to see a very familiar set of results on the lab bench. The NPC SM5841 oversampling filter, for example, always leaves behind a very characteristic set of digital images while Burr-Brown's 18-bit PCM61P DACs typically show a large jump in distortion over the top 30dB of their dynamic range. This much was true, but I was not anticipating such a large difference between the player's left and right channels.

"Whether these performance variations are intentional or even identified much of the time remains a moot point."

DENON DCD-835: LEFT VS. (RIGHT) CHANNELS			
THD VS LEVEL AT:	20Hz	1KHz	20KHz
0dB	-91dB (-108dB)	-88dB (-104dB)	-69dB (-70dB)
-30dB	-58dB (-72dB)	-56dB (-70dB)	-58dB (-66dB)
-60dB	-48dB	-48dB	-54dB
-80dB	-27dB	-30dB	-34dB
Dithered, -90dB	-7dB	-19dB	-25dB
Dithered, -100dB		-15dB	
Dithered, -110dB		-4dB	

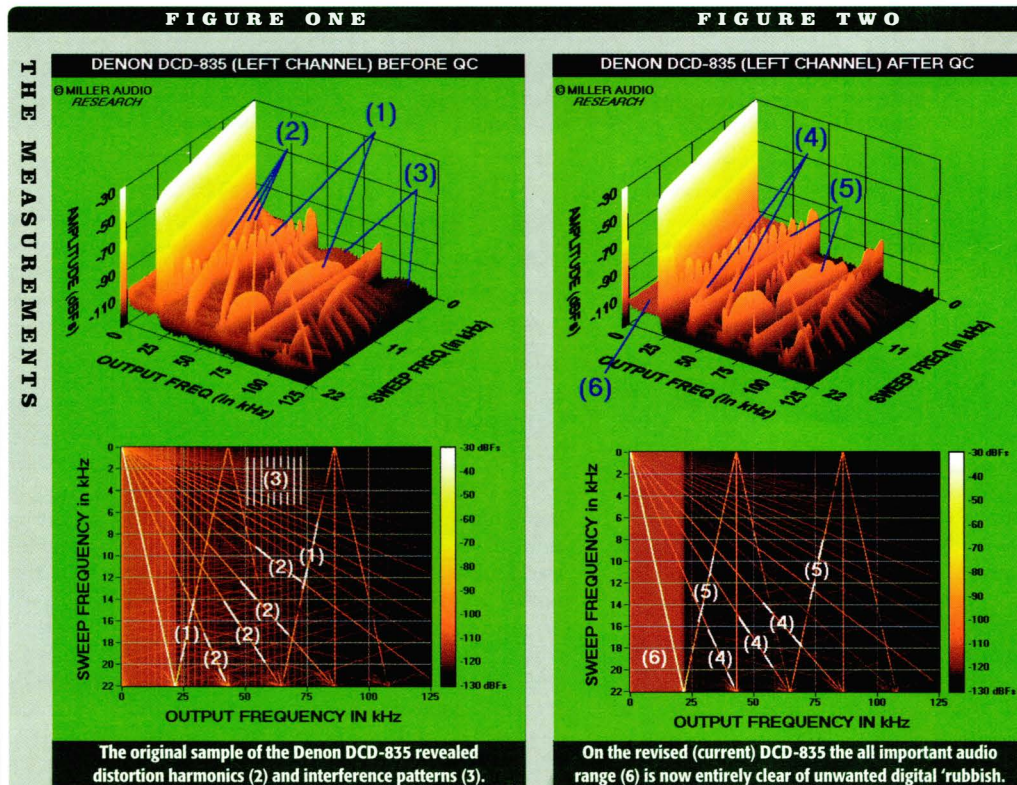


This table shows that while distortion hovered below 0.001 per cent at peak output on the right channel, it increased to 0.004 per cent on the left. Hardly significant, you might think, but this amounts to a difference of 15dB.

FIGURE ONE

My suspicions turned to horror when faced with the 3D image shown below. Sure enough, the rippled digital images (1) are meant to be there, but the bold, distortion harmonics (2) and – especially – the hugely complex interference patterns (3) were most certainly not. It's important to appreciate that

the DCD-835 is an inherently 'colourful' sounding player, so these differences between left and right channels might only be audible under very critical conditions. Nevertheless, all credit to Denon, which was not content with this level of performance, so while I sent Alvin the best of three samples, Denon set about tracing



ARCAM ALPHA 9: OLD VS. (LATEST) SAMPLE

THD VS LEVEL AT:	20Hz	1KHz	20KHz
0dB	-80dB (-100dB)	-81dB (-95dB)	-79dB (-90dB)
-30dB	-91dB (-98dB)	-89dB (-89dB)	-81dB (-88dB)
-60dB	-61dB (-60dB)	-55dB (-56dB)	-60dB (-60dB)
-80dB	-29dB	-30dB	-35dB
Dithered, -90dB	-19dB	-20dB	-25dB
Dithered, -100dB		-12dB	
Dithered, -110dB		-7dB	
S/N Ratio (A-wtd):			
with emp, 0LSB	96.7dB (99.9dB)		
w/o emp, 0LSB	96.5dB (99.4dB)		
w/o emp, 1LSB	96.4dB (100.4dB)		



Like the latest Denon DCD-835, Arcam's Alpha 9 now sounds even better than ever. Just as importantly, these extra precautions now form part of each manufacturer's QC regime, eliminating the possibility of such blights in the future. However, it does go to show that even the most confident manufacturer cannot ever afford to relax its grip on quality control.

ARCAM'S BAD LUCK STORY

Arcam's story is juxtaposed with Denon's. In this instance, I did not test our sample of the Alpha 9 until *after* it was criticised by Alvin's listening panel for lacking vitality, dynamics and 'air'. So what was wrong with this sample of a, hitherto, very well received product?

FIGURE THREE

At first sight there is nothing untoward on the Alpha 9's graphs. In this 3D plot (taken at 0dBFs and not the -30dBFs used for Denon's DCD-835), the full audioband sweep (7) prompts a strong 2nd harmonic distortion (8) that persists at 0.01 per cent across the entire range. There are a couple of innocuous interference patterns (9) but the spectrum is still remarkably free of any digital 'clutter'.

Arcam's mechanical inspection of the player did reveal

"These extra precautions now form part of each manufacturer's QC regime, eliminating the possibility of such blights in the future."

damage to the casing of a number of capacitors used in critical areas, not least the final analogue filter stage. These were surface-mount PPS (Polyphenylene Sulphide) capacitors that had become over-heated during the flow-solder process used as the PCB is populated with components during its manufacture. These miniature, or chip, capacitors are designed to withstand localised heating for the few seconds that the solder wave flashes over the PCB but here, evidently, they were 'cooked', but without failing altogether. As bad luck would have it, the difference between 'cooked' and intact capacitors was not sufficient to set the bells ringing during Arcam's QC distortion tests at the time.

FIGURE FOUR

It's only when we closely compare 'cooked' and 'uncooked' Alpha 9's that the differences emerge. This latest Alpha 9 shows a marked reduction in 2nd harmonic distortion (11) of 20dB at low frequencies, 14-15dB through the midband and 10-11dB through the treble. Our original sample of the Alpha 9 had shown a compressive trend as distortion actually increased over the top 30dB of its dynamic range. This latest sample shows a decrease over this same span while also benefiting from a 3dB increase in S/N. All under-par Alpha 9's have been now recalled and defective parts replaced.

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

the problem at its new factory in Eastern Europe.

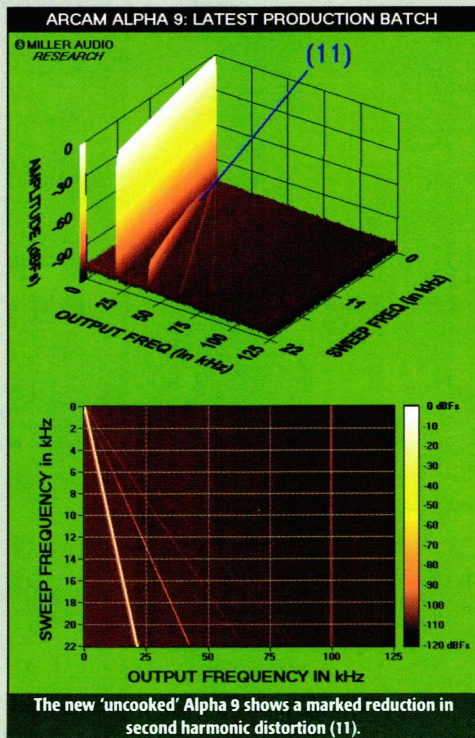
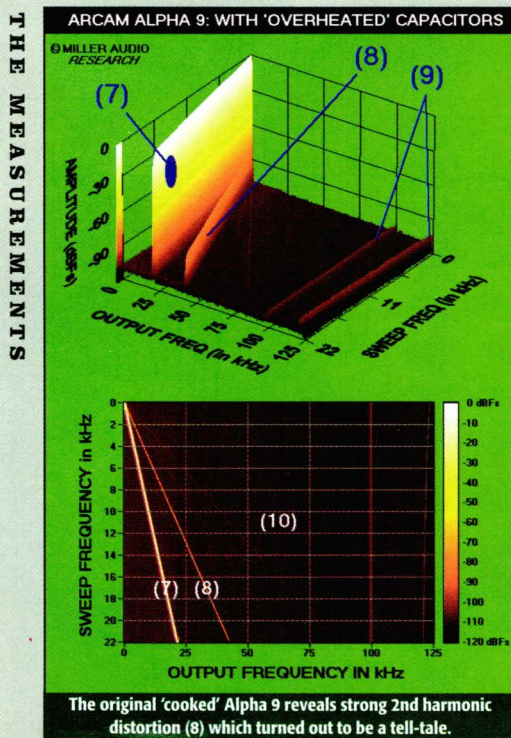
FIGURE TWO

And this is the result. By improving the selection of its DAC's and — crucially — by dressing its internal wiring away from local RF 'hotspots', Denon has brought distortion on both left and right channels into line while eliminating those unpleasant patterns of interference. Sure enough, the 3D plot is still busy with colour-

ful detail but all that remains is accountable. Notice how the amplitude of distortion harmonics has dropped (4) below the rippled stopband images (5) while the all-important audio range (6) is now entirely clear of unwanted digital 'rubbish'. The whole plot, like the player's sound, is now significantly 'cleaner'. And, thanks to our early warning, production samples of the DCD-835 are now firing sweetly on all four digital cylinders.

FIGURE THREE

FIGURE FOUR



THE MEASUREMENTS

GLOSSARY

- AMPLITUDE:** The level or loudness of a signal
- OVERSAMPLING FILTER:** A chip that digitally creates extra samples in-between existing samples to effectively increase the overall sample rate. Digital images (distortions) are pushed out to higher frequencies, allowing the use of gentler analogue filters.
- PCB:** Printed Circuit Board.
- S/N:** Signal-to-Noise, usually expressed as a ratio in dB.
- SURFACE-MOUNT:** A technique using miniaturised components, including transistors, resistors and capacitors, designed to reduce the PCB area. Surface-mount PCB's rely on machines during manufacture.

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DAVID VIVIAN

System matching can be seen as a science, but sometimes you'd be surprised by just what can work.



It isn't often that a hi-fi reviewer has to ferret around in his understair cupboard to dust off long-neglected hardware just to keep the tunes going. But it happened to me the other day.

Circumstances had conspired to deprive me of just about every component that might team up to make a decent system. The Myryad/AVI combo I'd been so enjoying (see this month's *System* test on p14) was in a photographic studio, those tight, bright little Castle Harlechs that have featured in several Vivian systems had long since been reacquainted with their maker and, only days before, my Quad 10Ls had sprung a rattle.

All I had left were a couple of 'also rans' from the shortlist that eventually spat out the Myryad/AVI system and the speakers I'd almost forgotten about under the stairs. I knew the combination would look frightful and, if I was truthful, expected it to sound even worse. It wasn't really the electronics that worried me. The bold, colourful Arcam Alpha 8SE CD at least had a fighting chance

'Whatever else the partnering components, heavy stands and expensive cables were doing, they were manipulating the Kans' character — making them more civilised.'

of making sweet music with the more reserved Myryad T40 integrated amp. It was those little black boxes from my hi-fi youth I didn't trust; they'd almost certainly muck up everything.

The reason I'd never got shot of them was... well, speakers like this have a habit of hanging around. I don't know — their notoriety made me keep them. They're a little bit of hi-fi history. Icons from the pre-CD years. Yep, I'm referring to Linn Kans. Early ones. The most cussedly awkward, antagonistic, unlistenable, brilliant, sonofabitch speakers I've ever used.

KAN YA KICK IT?

I'm not sure I ever really liked the Kans, even when I had them hooked up to the regulation Naim amplification and Linn turntable front end. They always sounded rather thin, pinched and shouty. OK, they were fast. And they hung onto a rhythm like a pit bull hangs onto a postman's leg. But they weren't what I'd call hi-fi. Maybe that was the point.

When I eventually sold

my Linn/Naim gear to move onto sonic pastures new, a ready buyer for the Kans never emerged (I think they'd become unfashionable during that period) and, after a while, I gave up trying to find one. As my hi-fi addiction moved onto a professional footing, I'd occasionally dust them off for an outing with whatever happened to be doing the rounds on the review circuit. Since none of this involved synergistic partnerships with Linn/Naim kit, the results were quite shockingly awful — especially, for

some reason, with Japanese electronics. If you want to see wallpaper self-peel, just plug a pair of Kans into a Pioneer A400 fed by a suitably 'up front' CD player and turn up the volume.

Kans are speakers that almost defy you to get a musical note out of them, a bit like a saxophone in the hands of someone who hasn't played one before. So, as I knew I'd probably never return to the Linn/Naim fold, I stowed them away for good. Until the day necessity called.

HOBSON'S CHOICE

All I could do was be smart and sympathetic with the materials at my disposal. I always felt that Linn's dedicated lightweight open-frame stands for the Kans added an unnecessary 'zing' to the sound. Mine rusted away in a shed years ago, so I wondered what would happen if Slate Audio's massive and inert 24-inchers were substituted. A few minutes and half a dozen blobs of Blu Tac later two neat and impressively solid structures had been assembled.

The organic-sounding Arcam CD player and muscular but laid-back Myryad T40 amp were probably a felicitous pairing but I reasoned some smooth, neutral cabling would help things along in the right direction given the Kans' edginess and famously exposed midrange. Best I could come up with was van den Hul The Second carbon fibre interconnect and vdH Teatrack HB hybrid halogen-free speaker cable.

Now to say that I got someone else to switch the system on because I had my fingers in my ears would be an exaggeration, but I was ready to run out of the room. There was no need. It sounded great. No really, from the first few bars of Marcus Miller's *Tales* CD, there was real, living, breathing music. At first, it was as if I wasn't listening to Kans at all; they seemed too smooth and mellow. Whatever else the partnering components, heavy stands and expensive cables were doing, they were manipulating the Kans' character — making them more civilised, easier on the ear.

WARTS'N'ALL

This, of course, would be anathema to real Kan aficionados who'd more than willingly put up with the warts to experience these speakers' breathtaking speed, timing and communication skills. But I wasn't one of those; I just wanted a system that worked in an emergency. And it did. The more I listened the more I liked it. Those old Kan strengths hadn't been glossed over either: the quicksilver timing, the fantastic bass articulation, the total lack of boominess, the outstanding handling of female vocals, the sexy sax sound and the ebullient musicality were all there. Maybe for the first time I was hearing something of what the Kans were really capable of.

I understand a little better now why a cult has grown up around the Kans. And, tell you what, I'm glad I didn't sell them.



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LETTERS

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

LETTER OF THE MONTH

KILLER BUGS OF THE FUTURE

With all the hoo-hah on the year 2000 issue, I can see the urgent need for the electronics industry to address and tackle this problem. So far, only the computer and office automation sector have made a serious effort to be Y2K compliant. What about the hi-fi industry? Oh yes, I can hear jibes from audiophiles and the old soldiers of transistor and valve ware. But what about those of us who have 'hi-tech' equipment like CD players, digitally controlled amplifiers and speakers? All have some sort of embedded microchip, right? I'm sure by the time someone reads this (if ever it will be published...!), he or she will probably be breaking out in a cold sweat and zooming off to check on their beloved system. My query is: Does the Y2K bug attack hi-fi? If so, what is the hi-fi industry

doing about it? I'm sure the public wishes to have some sort of assurance from the makers of these fantastic pieces of art that could just crumble to dust come the year 2000! What a waste! I think it would be a good idea to have this issue discussed in one of the coming months. What sayeth you, editor?

Wong, Malaysia

Editor replies... We are concerned about the Y2K issue and when he gets a chance Paul Miller will be investigating which equipment is most likely to be affected. Embedded chips, as you point out, might be a problem, and anything with digital element — be it for signal processing or logic control — contains such things. However, it's more likely that only equipment that uses the date in its operation will be affected, the most vulnerable being VCRs and Teletext running TVs.

airways' and make a lot of money in selling them off. This has forced the broadcasters to pack more and more into each 'digital channel' to make it financially viable.

So enjoy 'Analogue' broadcasting while you can.

Philip Tyler, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire

AND ANOTHER THING....

I am sorry to say I will not be renewing my subscription this year. I have been a subscriber for about four years, but I cannot understand this bar code for reviews — I have nothing to relate to. Hi-Fi World has a chart where one can see any difference between one piece of equipment and another.

Other than that my only problem is your 12 issues are not one every month like other mags — the summer months are one big cock-up. I am not interested in the latest models and what the foremen think. You fill one month with all, as you put it, Best Buys and Recommendeds, but you have already done that in your rear pages, so all you do is fill the mag with nothing but repeat reviews.

Another point — I have written in on at least four occasions with a problem or query but have never had a reply published.

PS I actually prefer Hi-Fi World.

D Rayner, Cusgarne, Truro

The Editor replies... We are sorry you feel this way about Hi-Fi Choice, however in order for us to continue publishing account must be taken of purchasing trends, and retail demand for hi-fi in the summer months is not sufficient to warrant producing separate August and September issues. The Best Buy guide is designed to appeal to the occasional reader but should also be of interest to the subscriber as it can be used as a reference guide which contains many review sections that are not listed in the Directory.



allowed a progressive invasion of air to corrode the aluminium layer.

However, since identifying the problem the lacquer has been changed.

Fortunately, as CD is a Philips invention, it is committed to rectifying the problem and will replace faulty discs.

Affected discs take on a golden appearance on the label side. Quite often these do not present difficulties but should this discoloration become darker towards the edge they should be sent back even if they still play. The sound breaks up towards the end of the playing time so try the end of the CD for faults.

All communications regarding this blight are Freephone and Freepost. Anyone concerned should call the PDO helpline for details ☎ (0800) 387063.

Ken Hasted, via e-mail

DAB IS A CON

Paul Messenger is not a 'Luddite' (HFC 184), he has in fact seen that the "Emperor is indeed not wearing any clothes". DAB, or whatever they have decided to call it now, is actually a retrograde step in audio quality. I was beginning to wonder if anyone else would notice. Apart from one other hi-fi magazine, the press have yet to catch on to this degradation in quality that digital broadcasting means. And not just audio quality — digital television will also suffer with a 'VHS' quality picture being broadcast, among other horrors.

I wrote to the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith about this and the fact they keep on about the sound being 'Near CD Quality', but did not get a satisfactory reply. So I wrote a second letter where I mentioned the Advertising Standards Association. I am still waiting for a reply to that one!

It is a great pity because 'Digital Broadcasting' could have brought us so much more, but the Government just saw it as an opportunity to 'repackage the

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

I'm surprised you guys don't know more about the problem of CDs deteriorating! I've had several discs purchased around the late '80s/early '90s which suffered this fate. All were manufactured by Philips DuPont Optical (PDO) at its pressing plant in Blackburn.

The problem was that the lacquer used was inadequate and



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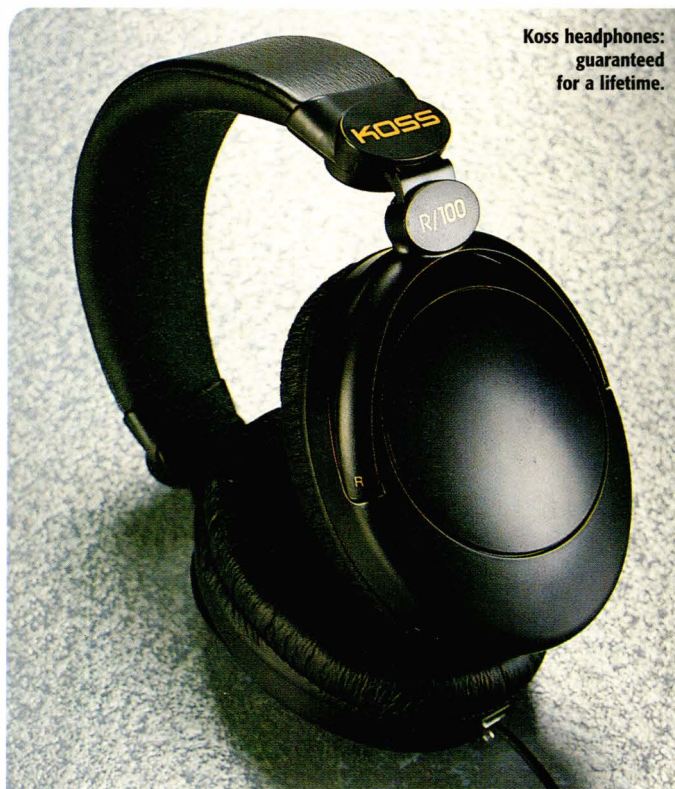




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RFI MYSTERY

Can I suggest it's time for a definitive article on Radio Frequency Interference? It is mentioned repeatedly in *Hi-Fi Choice* and by your competitors month after month, but generally only in passing.

For example in last month's *Hi-Fi News* there's a letter which discusses the effect of RFI on speaker cables. In various other magazines I've read about it coming through the mains, from computers and other electronic devices, from within hi-fi components themselves, from radio station signals, through termination points of interconnects etc.

WRITE TO US

- The Editor, *Hi-Fi Choice*,
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Maybe it is a simple topic, but I am confused!

Suppliers like Russ Andrews and Campaign Audio Design sell numerous products to combat it. And you've mentioned ferrite clamps, but before shelling out the dosh, what works best? In short I think an article which fully explains RFI in a systematic way would be a real service to your readers.

Maybe this is one for Paul Miller and his esteemed *Oasis of Sanity* column.

Kevin McHale, via the internet

The Editor replies... Before he got the jitter bug Paul Miller's 'favourite' (from a measurement perspective) source of electronic interference was RFI — if you dig out the back issue no.167, June 1997 you'll find plenty to get your audio teeth into. We haven't dealt with RFI suppressors in great detail, however, and this might be a good topic for a future feature.

LIFETIME OF LISTENING

Thank-you for the new phone number of Koss at BUK Ltd. I rang the company and it informed me that Koss offers a lifetime guarantee. If you send them back to BUK the company will carry out a full service and replace the necessary parts free of charge. The only charge BUK makes is for the cost of returning the headphones by courier, which is £15. This information may be of use to your readers. Thank you once again for the number.

John Holden, via the internet

A QUESTION OF SMUT

IRON-AGE ADVERTISING

I would like to add my support to Louise Bond's censure in the December 1998 edition of the magazine. It certainly seems that her final sentence is absolutely correct, given Mr Truckell's response, as he actually agrees with her.

I had hoped that sexist advertising died out some time ago but evidently it's alright to alienate a whole section of the audience providing you can attract the adolescent readers of puerile nonsense like *FHM* and *Loaded*. Perhaps Ms Bond is unaware that the *Hi-Fi Choice* website has been subjected to a selection of this kind of drivel for some weeks.

One can only assume that a product that needs this type of blatant promotion is probably not good enough to get attention any other way.

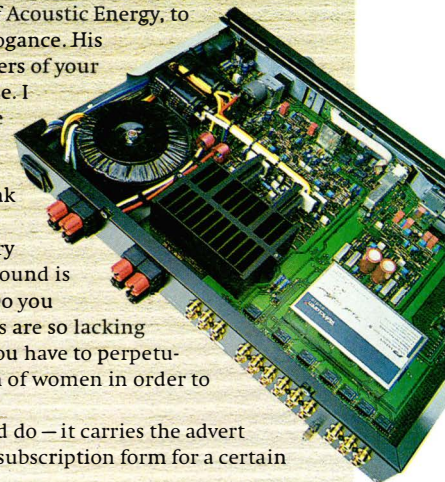
Steve Grantham, Maidenhead, Berks

INSULT TO OUR INTELLIGENCE

Following on from Louise Bonds' complaint in *HFC* 184 about the use of naked women in hi-fi adverts, I found the response of Neil Truckell, Marketing Manager of Acoustic Energy, to be quite breathtaking in its arrogance. His comments are an insult to readers of your magazine, both male and female. I buy certain hi-fi brands because they sound good and are priced right (that is the message of *HFC*, isn't it?), not because I think "Well, the woman in the advert looked pretty tasty". The allegory claimed by AE with a 'natural' sound is simplistic, crude and fatuous. Do you really think that your customers are so lacking in critical faculties, Neil, that you have to perpetuate the insulting objectification of women in order to sell your products?

But then what does *HFC* go and do — it carries the advert again! Now where did I put that subscription form for a certain other hi-fi magazine?

Robert Kyffin, Liverpool



DOUBLE WHAMMY

I have finally been prompted to write to you about a recent purchase that has transformed my appreciation and enjoyment of my system. Strangely this purchase has nothing to do with conventional hi-fi manufacturers — I simply had double glazing installed!

Up to this point I had not thought that my flat was very noisy, but the inky black silence from which the music now emerges is a revelation. This effect seems to be particularly pronounced with regard to vinyl sources and has led me to dig out many a neglected LP.

Another good thing is that my long suffering wife has taken this installation as an indication that my hi-fi obsession is being tempered with a long overdue interest in home improvement. As if!

To illustrate this law of hi-fi improvement I have just realised that one of my CD players (a Nakamichi MB2) is emitting a low hum, even when turned off. The only way to silence it is to unplug it at the mains. The player came supplied with a captive lead

attached to a two pronged connector which I have then connected to an adaptor. Is this dangerous and will it affect the unit's sound performance? Do you think I should have a standard three-pin mains lead fitted?

Anyway, all I can say is that real hi-fi improves the quality of life — well it has with mine. But it also demands a high level of commitment, so if your system sounds below par why not give it a treat — move house or maybe buy some double glazing!

Keith Horner, London

The Editor replies... I'm glad to hear your investment has reaped such rewards. With regard to your CD player, yes I would recommend attaching a proper mains plug. You might reduce hum by earthing the player, to do this connect a wire from the chassis to the earth pin on the mains plug.

INTERNET USERS
Why not catch up with the latest gossip on the *Hi-Fi Choice* web site, www.hifichoice.co.uk?



ROKSAN *Caspian* at Musical Images

Classic Design. Timeless Audio.

ROKSAN Caspian is now on permanent demonstration at all four branches of Musical Images. Experience the finest in audio at London's premier Hi-Fi and Audio Visual dealer.

An attractive, stylish amp. Caspian is a big, warm-sounding amplifier with real-world ability to perform with tricky speakers. Roksan Caspian is a cracker.

REVIEW CASPIAN AMPLIFIER
WHAT HI-FI MARCH 97

A £700 bargain. Mixes the best of solid state and valve worlds to produce a seductive sound.

The Caspian CD impresses like the Caspian integrated did. This is a very capable player and well worth £900.

REVIEW CASPIAN CD PLAYER
HI-FI WORLD JUNE 97

Hi-fi rarely sounds as good as this.

Sounds absolutely great.

Very difficult to fault.

REVIEW CASPIAN AMPLIFIER & CD PLAYER
T3 MAGAZINE JUNE 97

Clearly ranks as Best Buy material thanks to its combination of musical excellence and fine build quality.

REVIEW CASPIAN AMPLIFIER & CD PLAYER
HI-FI CHOICE JUNE 97

With four branches around the M25, twelve demonstration suites, the widest choice of top products, professional staff that can advise on every requirement and a dedicated installation and interior design team, at Musical Images we offer the complete service.



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HELP!

Having trouble reaching audio Nirvana? Worry no more, Jimmy Hughes has the answers!

QUERY OF THE MONTH

IN THE HOT SPOT

 My system comprises: Krell KAV 300 CD player, Copland CTA 301 MkII and CTA 504 amplification, and ProAc Response 2.5 loudspeakers, connected with Transparent Super Music Link/Music Wave cables, on stands. I am pleased with the sound; it's not a headbanger's delight — the amp is used in triode mode, giving 28 Watts. But that's enough for me.



I thought I heard all the things you always read about in magazines: depth, width, air around instruments, etc. After moving recently, I put the system back together again and started moving the speakers looking for the 'hot spot'. Moving my listening chair forward by about 50cm, I was struck by the change in sound. What a shock! All the qualities I mentioned earlier — depth, width, wide soundstaging — were multiplied several times over. Some focus was lost in the process, but the gain in naturalness more than offset it. Do you have an explanation for this?

Charles Luttrell, via e-mail


JH Replies... Sitting very close to loudspeakers tends to heighten the ear's sensitivity to phase — that is, the arrival time of sounds left, right, and centre. Some recordings, especially those made using simple, natural microphone techniques, can recreate an almost holographic soundstage, with enhanced width and depth, because the phase relationship between the various sounds arriving at the microphone capsules is captured. By sitting close to the loudspeakers and placing them a reasonable distance apart, you're able to recreate these phase relationships. As you move back from the speakers, this holographic quality is lost; the sound grows more blended and homogenised. You could argue that sitting close to the loudspeakers exaggerates soundstaging beyond anything you'd ever experience in real life. But it's extremely exciting!

GET A JAMO LEATHER CD WALLET!

Every issue, the reader whose letter is our Query of the Month will receive one of these stylish, leather CD wallets, courtesy of those lovely people at Jamo Loudspeakers.




AUDIO BLISS AL FRESCO

 In order to be able to listen to music while I'm gardening or snoozing in the sun (when it shines, that is!), I intend to purchase a set of FM (UHF) cordless headphones. With a budget of between £100 to £120 I could buy either the

Sennheiser RS6 or AKG's K205 UHF. The general characteristics of these 'phones seem very comparable, but the running times using rechargeable batteries differ greatly; 3.5hrs for the Sennheisers and 17hrs for the AKGs. Is there a difference in quality? Which should I choose?

Paul Stevens, Belgium

SPAGHETTI JUNCTION

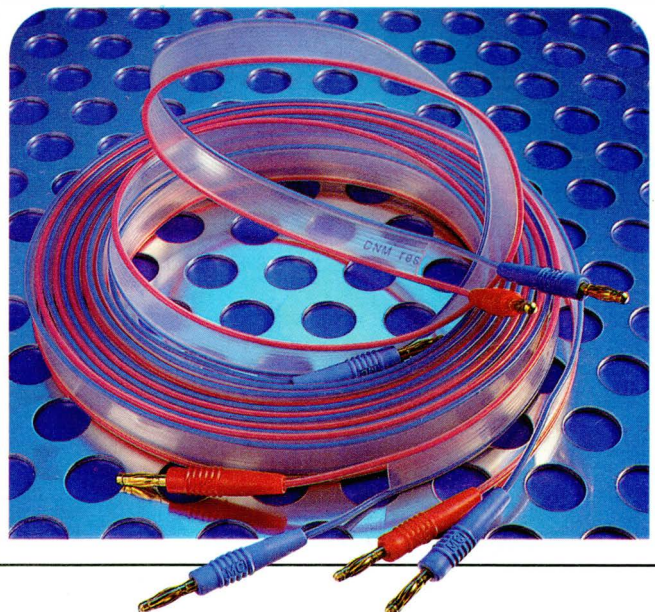
 Being a regular reader of *Hi-Fi Choice*, I would like some suggestions regarding interconnects and bi-wire speaker cables to match my current hi-fi system. I like classical music, and my listening room is 6m x 4m. My system consists of a Marantz CD-67SE CD player, Marantz PM-66SE amplifier, Denon TU 560 tuner, Denon DRM-510 cassette deck, and KEF Q35 floorstanding speakers. Current cables are the ones supplied free by my hi-fi shop.

Jose L Tagarro, Madrid, Spain

JH Replies... DNM solid-core interconnects and speaker cables regu-

larly come out well in *HFC* tests, especially the interconnect. But will the change be too radical compared to what you have? I'm assuming your shop has supplied average quality stranded cables. Expect the DNM cables to improve clarity and lucidity, but perhaps at the expense of warmth and richness. Another alternative is Kimber cable. With its RF reducing woven construction, Kimber cables should give you a cleaner, more focused sound with less high-frequency hash. The van den Hul D102 III interconnect and The Wind speaker cable are also worth considering.

♦ DNM LSC350 speaker cable.



JH Replies... Headphones are without doubt the most personal item of hi-fi you can choose. Not only do you need to like the sound they make, you've got to find them comfortable to wear. The general feeling at *HFC* is that radio headphones don't quite match up to conventional types in terms of sound quality. So much depends on whether or not you find

the quality acceptable. The comparatively restricted running time of the Sennheisers is clearly a limitation compared to the AKGs, so if you felt that honours were about even in all other respects, this would tilt the balance in favour of the AKGs. Have a read through our headphone reviews this month (p58), we tried four FM models.



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AN AMPLIFIER FOR EVERY OCCASION

 My system consists of: B&W DM602 speakers, Yamaha RX-495RDS receiver, Sony CDP-561 CD player, Sony MDS-JE510 MiniDisc recorder. I listen to all kinds of music, from acoustic to techno. I want to replace my receiver with an amplifier and have shortlisted the Yamaha AX-492 and Marantz PM-66SE. My dealer offers both at the same price, but I'm not sure which to go for. I also want to replace my existing cables, and have shortlisted Cable Talk 3.1 speaker cable and QED Qnect or Ixos 104 interconnects.

Vladam, via e-mail

JH Replies... Both the Marantz PM-66E and Yamaha AX-492 are Recommended by HFC. So you


shouldn't go too far wrong whichever one you choose. The Yamaha is more powerful, and gives a stronger, more purposeful musical presentation. The Marantz is richer and perhaps slightly more friendly. Really, it's up to you to listen and make up your mind. Either should represent a big improvement over your Yamaha receiver, which is the main thing.

Choice of cables should be postponed until after you've decided on which amplifier you're going for. Once the new amplifier is installed, you'll be in a better position to know whether any slight adjustments need to be made to tonal balance, etc, in order to achieve a balanced sound. The cables on your shortlist are good, and should compliment whichever amplifier you eventually choose.



Marantz PM-66E amplifier.

FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE...

 I have a Quad 67 CD player, Akai GX-77 reel-to-reel tape recorder, home-made passive preamp built around an Alps 100kOhm volume control, two Dynakit Mk III valve monoblock power amps, and a pair of Pro 9 TL speakers. I want to buy a good valve preamp to replace my passive, and wonder what you'd suggest. The Dynakit IIIs aren't very sensitive (1.6V for 60 Watt output) and the input impedance is high — 470k Ohms. Is it worth splashing out on an expensive active preamp?

R Joseph, London


JH Replies... The short answer is — yes. Replacing your passive pre-amp with something active, you'll find the sound becomes much more immediate and dynamic — moving from soft focus to sharp focus. At a guess, I'd say you currently have to play the music fairly loudly to get a reasonable feeling of presence. With an active preamp you'll find the sound has more impact at lower volume levels, filling the room more easily. A secondhand Audio Research SP-8 or SP-10 (if you can find one) would be a good option. At the other end



○ Musical Fidelity X-PRE preamp.


of the price scale, Musical Fidelity's excellent little X-PRE is worth trying. A different approach that might suit you, would be to buy two Musical Fidelity X10-D valve line stages, and connect one before your existing passive volume control, and the other after it. I've tried this myself, and it works well. Even just one X10-D (placed between preamp and power amp) should provide a sizeable improvement in terms of increased presence and detail, though the low sensitivity of the Dynakit power amps might remain a problem. Incidentally, if you went for the MF X-PRE, an X10-D between CD player and preamp would give the sound greater richness and presence.

HINTS & TIPS

 The volume at which each of us listens to music is obviously a personal thing. But there is a 'natural' level at which the whole sonic picture snaps into focus, giving a natural terracing of dynamics from loud to soft, and a believable sense of width and depth. When you play music very loud, the music sounds compressed so that increases in level become ironed out. It's a bit like driving at high speed; after a while the sensation of speed is lost, and it's only when you slow down that you realise just how fast you were travelling. In audio terms, the dynamic contrast between loud and soft is enhanced by playing music at a volume level that allows peaks and troughs to fall within the ear's most sensitive region, so that quiet passages remain audible and loud passages don't overwhelm.



IN THE NAIM OF LOVE?

 My current hi-fi consists of an old-style Naim NAC72 preamp and NAP110 power amp of similar vintage (but fully serviced and working well), with Roksan Ojan 3 speakers. I feel the system is under powered, with the NAP110 simply not up to driving these speakers properly. My first thought was to find another NAP110 secondhand and bi-amp, but is this a good idea or even feasible? Unfortunately, there seems to be a dearth of these power amps on the secondhand market, so this option may not be possible. I'm loath to

spend more than £1,000 to get the improvement I require, and would prefer to extract the maximum from what I currently have. What should I do?

Nick Vyse, via e mail

JH Replies... I consulted a Naim dealer friend on this, and he felt that adding a second NAP110 would not really produce the improvement sought. Instead, he strongly recommended going for an NAP180 (60 Watts) which would, he said, give you the extra power and drive you desire. He also felt the improvement in sound quality would be pretty significant too, as this later

power amp is much better than the NAP-110 (never one of Naim's best, though it looked nice), quite apart from its extra power. Alas, the retail price of the NAP180 is £1,060, so it's just outside your budget. But you might feel like stretching that bit extra if it really does do what you want. Your dealer might offer a reasonable part-exchange deal on your old NAP110 to make the cost more bearable. There's always the secondhand market of course, where (hopefully) pre-owned 180s will be more plentiful than 110s!

○ Naim NAP180 power amplifier.



EASY CLASSICAL LISTENING



I'm preparing to buy my first-ever CD player. Although I listen to a fair bit of rock (mainly progressive), it's the natural reproduction of classical music that's my main criterion when choosing hi-fi. I bought a Pink Triangle LPT turntable because of its clear, detailed, spacious, 'neutral' and 'natural' (what's the difference?) sound on classical music, and would be seeking the same qualities in a CD player. One that would cope with complex orchestral passages without getting flustered. I'm not after something with 'slam' or 'kick', but want a sound that's easy on the ear in the best sense. My budget is around £500, but

financial constraints mean I'll be keeping my 16 year old NAD 3020 amplifier for a while longer – if not forever.

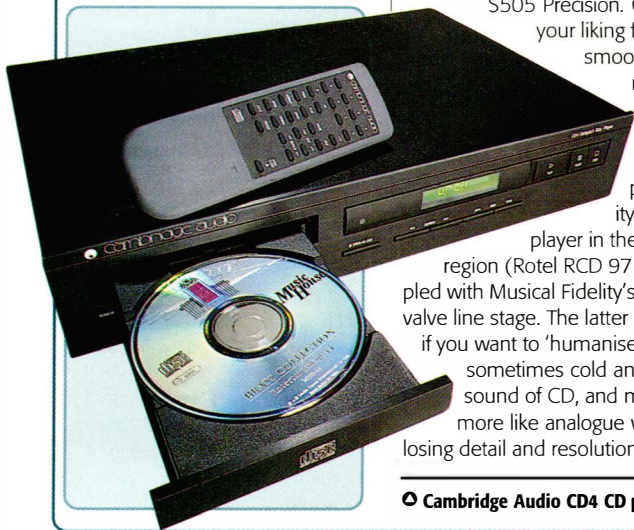
Steve Moore, Isle of Lewis

JH Replies... One CD player well within your £500 budget that's pretty easy on the ear is Cambridge Audio's CD-4. It has a slightly lower than usual output compared to most CD players, and this makes it sound less aggressive. If you find the CD-4 sounds too mellow, adding a Dacmagic 2 MkII digital to analogue converter will give increased detail and focus, and still cost considerably less than £500. Musical Fidelity's warm-sounding A2 is another contender, as is Pioneer's PD-S505 Precision. Given your liking for a smooth

refined sound, look into the possibility of a CD player in the £350

region (Rotel RCD 971?) coupled with Musical Fidelity's X10-D valve line stage. The latter is great if you want to 'humanise' the sometimes cold antiseptic sound of CD, and make it more like analogue without losing detail and resolution.

● Cambridge Audio CD4 CD player.



QUALITY OR QUANTITY?



Musical Fidelity X-TONE



I have a Marantz CD-67 CD player, Musical Fidelity 3A preamp with Musical Fidelity P150 power amp, and B&W CDM 2 speakers bi-wired with QED Qudos cable. The problem is harshness, especially on vocals. On instrumental music the sound is bright, clear, and detailed, but vocals sound sibilant and thin.

Ian Brooks, Eastbourne

JH Replies... Much depends on whether the problem is one of quality or quantity. If it's quality, you'll need to look at refining the sound by replacing one or more components in the system, or perhaps the speaker cables and/or interconnects. Your Musical Fidelity amplifier is on the bright side of neutral, which doesn't help, but to be honest you could attempt to solve this problem in a hundred different ways.

It's possible your equipment's fine so far as it goes, but maybe the listening room gives a treble oriented balance which highlights harshness problems. Also, many rock/pop recordings have treble emphasised compressed vocals to give the singer's voice more presence.

Given all this, there's no instant solution; the way forward is to achieve a series of small victories that add up to a big improvement. It could even come down to soiled CDs that are in need of a good cleaning.

Alternatively, it could simply be quantity – too much treble. One unfashionably simple but effective solution would be Musical Fidelity's X-TONE tone control, used with some treble cut! The X-TONE has three different turnover frequencies, allowing you to boost or cut at bass and treble extremes, but leaving the important midrange untouched. To clean-up your edgy high frequencies, set the high frequency turnover point at 15kHz, and reduce the treble slightly. This should lower harshness, but without sacrificing presence and detail. I do this in my own system, incidentally, and it works brilliantly, giving a smooth well-balanced tonal quality. But like I said earlier, it's not a very fashionable solution.

MONEY WELL SPENT?



Please bear with me while I try to justify spending the princely sum of £900 on a CD player. With your help I hope to convince my wife (though I doubt it) that it was money well spent. My system consists of a Cyrus II amplifier and PSR unit driving Celestion 65LIs with Cable Talk 2 cable. My old NAD CD player gave up the ghost recently, so I spent some time listening to a portable CD player connected to the amp.

Visiting Frank Harvey's in Coventry with my system to purchase a CD player and check that my amp and speakers were working well, I listened to the Marantz CD-63KI Signature (£400), but felt it sounded lightweight. I wondered if my system was sounding its age and started to think I might have to buy a new amp and speakers. However, substituting a Cyrus

dAD 3Q CD player produced an incredible improvement. My system took on a whole new lease of life. We tried a different amp (Cyrus III) and other speakers, but the combination of the dAD 3Q and my amp and speakers was unbeatable. I believe that had I not stretched my budget and bought the dAD 3Q, I'd have spent much more in the long-term replacing my entire system.

For some reason my wife is not convinced I did the right thing. Can you help?

Mr J Bannister, Nuneaton

JH Replies... Dear Mrs Bannister, Your husband definitely did the right thing and it sounds absolutely great. He seems to have answered his own question, so rest assured, it should be a while before another upgrade is necessary.



Cyrus dAD 3Q CD player.


HINTS & TIPS



Some CD players have two sets of outputs: one fixed in level, the other variable from the remote handset. It's obviously convenient to use the variable output, since it allows you to raise or lower volume levels from your listening chair; useful, especially when your amplifier doesn't offer this facility. But in nearly all cases fixed outputs sound better than variable ones! So use the fixed option where there's a choice, unless you must have remote volume control. Many CD machines have only one set of outputs, and in situations where remote volume is featured it's usually best to have the CD player's output set to maximum; you'll get a stronger, cleaner, more lively sound by doing so. Having the CD player's output set at about halfway, and increasing the amplifier volume to make up the shortfall, may seem like the same difference, but it isn't. The sound will lose focus and dynamics.



ON A MISSION

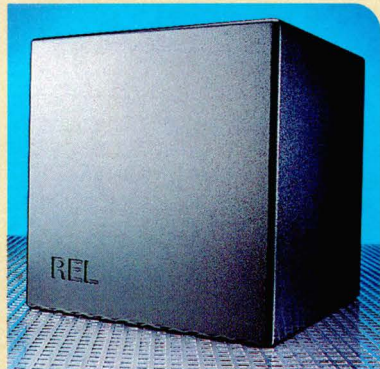
 During the past 18 months I've gradually been upgrading an elderly system that included a Technics CD player of uncertain vintage, a NAD 3020 amplifier, and KEF Caprice II speakers, circa 1982. Now I have an Arcam Alpha 7 CD player and Arcam Alpha 8 amplifier with CableTalk interconnects. With each upgrade there were major improvements in the quality of reproduction, and the final stage will be to replace the KEFs which sound a bit woolly in the bass — though the mid and top are fine. They're connected with QED 79 strand cable and sat on 30cm high stands fitted with castors rather than spikes. Would I get the wanted improvement in bass clarity merely by replacing the speaker cables, or should I buy new speakers? I've auditioned Mission 774s which

sounded great. But are these priced over the top given my source and amp? Music taste is classical and jazz.

Steve Crick, via e-mail

JH Replies... It's unlikely (though not impossible) you'll get the result wanted simply by replacing speaker cables alone, though better cables (DNM solid core should clean up the lower frequencies) allied to a set of rigid spiked support stands should give a noticeable increase in bass clarity. If you take this route, and keep the KEFs, consider adding a small subwoofer like REL's Q50, to deepen the bottom end and increase bass weight. Adding a good sub will give you a bigger soundstage, and greater spatial depth, with improved stereo imaging. Try one and see.

Mission 774s are indeed perhaps a little OTT in terms of price given the rest of your system, but if you've heard, liked, and can afford — why not? By all means also consider speakers in the £300 to £400 price range (Heybrook Heylios, Mission 733i?) but don't forget that a good set of rigid spiked stands added to the cost of some less expensive compact speakers could bring the total price within striking distance of your favoured Mission 774s.

 **REL Q50 subwoofer.**

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

 I currently have a Marantz CD-72/II CD player, Mission Cyrus 3 amplifier with PSX power supply, and Philips Legend II speakers on Ultra stands. Interconnect and speaker cables are

Oehlbachkabel NF2 (What? — JMH) and IXOS 603 respectively. I find the system needs to be played quite loud to create a three-dimensional soundstage, and then the sound lacks control. Played at medium levels the soundstaging is flat and one-dimensional. Why? If I replaced my Philips speakers with Dynaudio Audience 50s, will my amplifier have enough power to drive these lower efficiency models in a room 15m sq? Are there any other speakers I should listen to? Mission 753s were too sweet for my taste.


Tony Peters, Hong Kong

 **Royd Doublet loudspeaker: a lively-sounding alternative.**



JH Replies... Sometimes systems sound dull and flat at low volume levels because the speakers are over-damped internally. Removing some or all of the internal wadding will make the sound livelier and more articulate at low volumes, but possibly with some loss of control when played louder. Removing the internal damping panels should give you the best of both worlds; articulation and control. If you're not into DIY, consider replacing the speakers. The Dynaudio Audience 50 has a rated sensitivity of 86dB which is not high, but the Cyrus 3/PSX should cope. Really, it depends on how loud you want to listen. A lively-sounding, more efficient alternative would be the Royd Doublet.


HINTS & TIPS

 Quite a few moving coil high frequency drivers have four bolts situated around the dome which hold the magnet to the tweeter chassis. You should never remove these bolts, in case the magnet shifts and rubs against the voice coil, but it's not a bad idea to check for tightness every so often. If these fixing bolts are loose, you may get an edgy sound with increased sibilance. Certainly, tightening the tweeter magnet fixing bolts should improve treble cleanness as well as giving better dynamics. It's also good practice to check that the bolts which fix the

speaker drive units to the cabinet are tight — always assuming you can gain access to them; quite a few modern speakers hide their fixing bolts behind decorative trim. But, be careful not to overdo it, especially with budget designs.



WATTS THE PROBLEM?


 I have a Kenwood DP-7090 CD player connected directly to a Bryston 4B-NRB amplifier driving Mordaunt-Short MS20i Pearl loudspeakers. My interconnects are Cambridge Audio Studio Reference, with bi-wired Ixos 6003 Gamma for the speakers.

Since I usually listen to music at low volume levels, the speakers have so far survived the recent addition of the Bryston amplifier. However, I am now looking for some more suitable speakers, and I quite like the Mission 753 Freedom. But as these only have a power rating of 150 Watts, would it be safe to use them with the Bryston amp? Or must I choose from the limited number of speakers rated at 250 Watts or more that are priced within my budget of £800?

Daniel Taylor, Brixton, London

JH Replies... The Wattage rating of speakers is intended to give an idea of the maximum amplifier power that can safely be handled when reproducing average speech and music signals. Using speakers rated at 150 Watts with an amplifier capable of 250 Watts will be okay providing the music isn't excessively demanding (say, synthesiser music with heavy bass and treble extremes) and you don't play at floor-shaking volume levels. Over-driving speakers in this way causes physical damage to the cones due to excessive movement, and/or coil burn out. But, if you're pushing a speaker to such extremes, usually it's obvious from the sound, which will be congested and distorted. Don't forget that a small amplifier, pushed to the point where it clips, can do more dam-

age to speakers (particularly tweeters) than a big amplifier that produces lots of clean power.

 **Mission 753 Freedom.**





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Actually, they don't seem expensive at all.



Reference Series

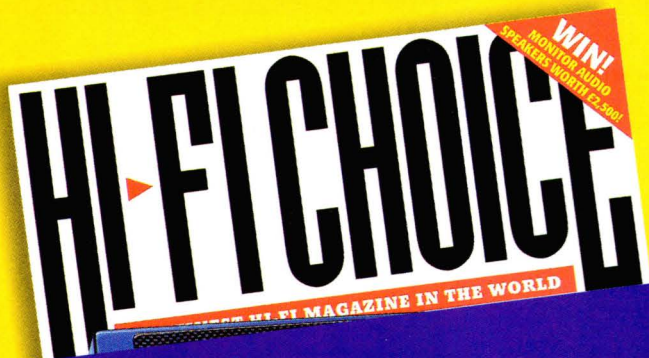


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THE RIGHT COMBINATION

 I recently upgraded my speakers, buying a secondhand pair of B&W CDM 1s for approximately £300. Now I want to know if my other proposed changes will do these speakers justice.

I intend to buy an Arcam Alpha 7 CD player and Arcam Alpha 8 amplifier, linked with Audioquest Quartz interconnects and Audioquest Type 4 bi-wired speaker cables. Is this a good combination, and if not what would you recommend to get the best out of the B&Ws? My room measures 4m x 5m and I listen to anything from Pearl Jam to Beethoven.

George Oua, United Arab Emirates

JH Replies... The system you propose seems eminently well-balanced and should make pleasing noises. The Alpha 8 amplifier was mildly criticised in *HFC* for a certain lack of urge. But one man's 'lacking in urge' is another's 'sweet, relaxed and musical'! Sometimes a prod-

uct fails to impress on comparative evaluation because it's not obviously 'special', yet may turn out to be very satisfying to live with, long-term. In my experience, Audioquest cables tend to spice up the sound a bit. Therefore, an amplifier that's sweet and not too forward may be just right. So listen and see what you think.


If, however, you agree with the *HFC* verdict after hearing the Alpha 8, why not audition the slightly more expensive Marantz PM-66 KI Signature? This should give a more detailed sound, if that's what is required. The Alpha 7 CD player is very good and received a Best Buy in *HFC* 179. So no problems there, hopefully. It should compliment the Marantz if you were to plump for this over the Arcam Alpha 8. The Marantz CD-67SE CD player would be the obvious one to go for if an all Marantz combination were required, and this player gives a smooth refined sound.

◊ **Marantz PM-66 KI Signature.**



A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN



 My system consists of a Musical Fidelity A220 amplifier, Sony DTC-55ES DAT player, Sony CDP-X33ES CD player, and Tannoy Berkeley speakers. The latter are connected with van den Hul Wind MkII Hybrid cables with other components linked with van den Hul D 102 MkII interconnects.

Do you think the Musical Fidelity A220 amplifier is a good match for the Tannoy Berkeley speakers, and if not how would this amp fare with B&W 603s, Mission 752s, or Dynaudio Audience 50s?

Niksic Bakir, Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina

JH Replies... In the Musical Fidelity A220 you've got a clean-sounding powerful amplifier that will drive most loudspeakers comfortably. If you're happy with the Tannoy Berkeleys why not keep them? They're pretty old now, but what the heck? If still in good working order (check the cone surround for wear) they should deliver a


◊ **Musical Fidelity A220 amplifier.**

strong powerful sound. Tannoys of this vintage are very different to most modern speakers, and replacing them with something more up to date is likely to result

"In the Musical Fidelity A220, you've got a clean-sounding powerful amplifier that will drive most loudspeakers comfortably."

in a very different sound — more open and uncoloured perhaps, but less focused in the midrange. The three models listed represent an upgrade over what you're used to in terms of clarity and neutrality — though whether actually preferable to your Berkeleys depends on what you want from your system as well as the music you listen to.

RICH, WARM AND LAID BACK

 I do appreciate reading *Hi-Fi Choice*; it gives a different slant on hi-fi compared to our magazines here in France.

My system consists of a Rega Planet CD player, An Audiolab 8000S amplifier, and a pair of Celestion A1 loudspeakers bi-wired with Triangle cables. I like the sound of my system, but sometimes wish it wasn't quite so relaxed and laid back. I'd like a bit more presence and detail; would bi-amping with an Audiolab LX be a significant step forward? Also, what would you recommend for interconnects and speaker cables?

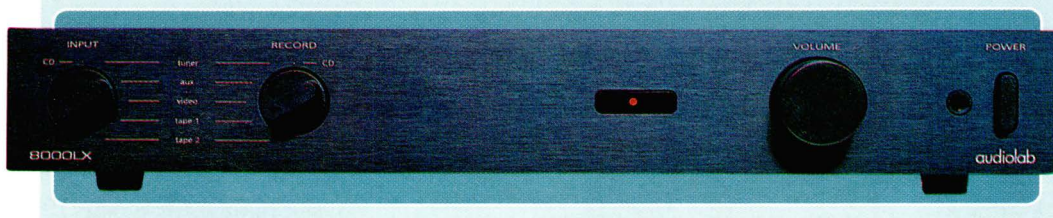
Michel Stoltz, Limersheim, France

JH Replies... Our Directory (p122) describes the Celestion A1 speaker as 'Rich, warm, and laid-back' which seems an accurate assessment of the way you say your system sounds. The problem is, you may make significant changes in order to get the kind of forward sound you are after, only to find it too immediate and not relaxed enough! So proceed with caution and make sure you listen to any shortlisted products with care.

Adding an Audiolab LX (some dealers may still have stock, otherwise you'll have to look on the secondhand market) and bi-amping will improve power and detail, but it's difficult to say if the difference will be sufficient to answer your

complaints. If you've got the cash to spend, adding an LX now (on the basis that the product is discontinued and might be difficult to obtain in the future) would be a good move long-term, even if (ultimately) it doesn't fully give you the sound you wanted with your current speakers. Basically, you may have to accept that the Celestion A1 is too gentlemanly for your taste, and look for another loudspeaker that's more detailed and up-front. Listen to the Mission 753 Freedom, and the B&W CDM7, and see what you think.

◊ **The old Audiolab LX power amplifier: could be a significant step forward to adding presence and detail.**



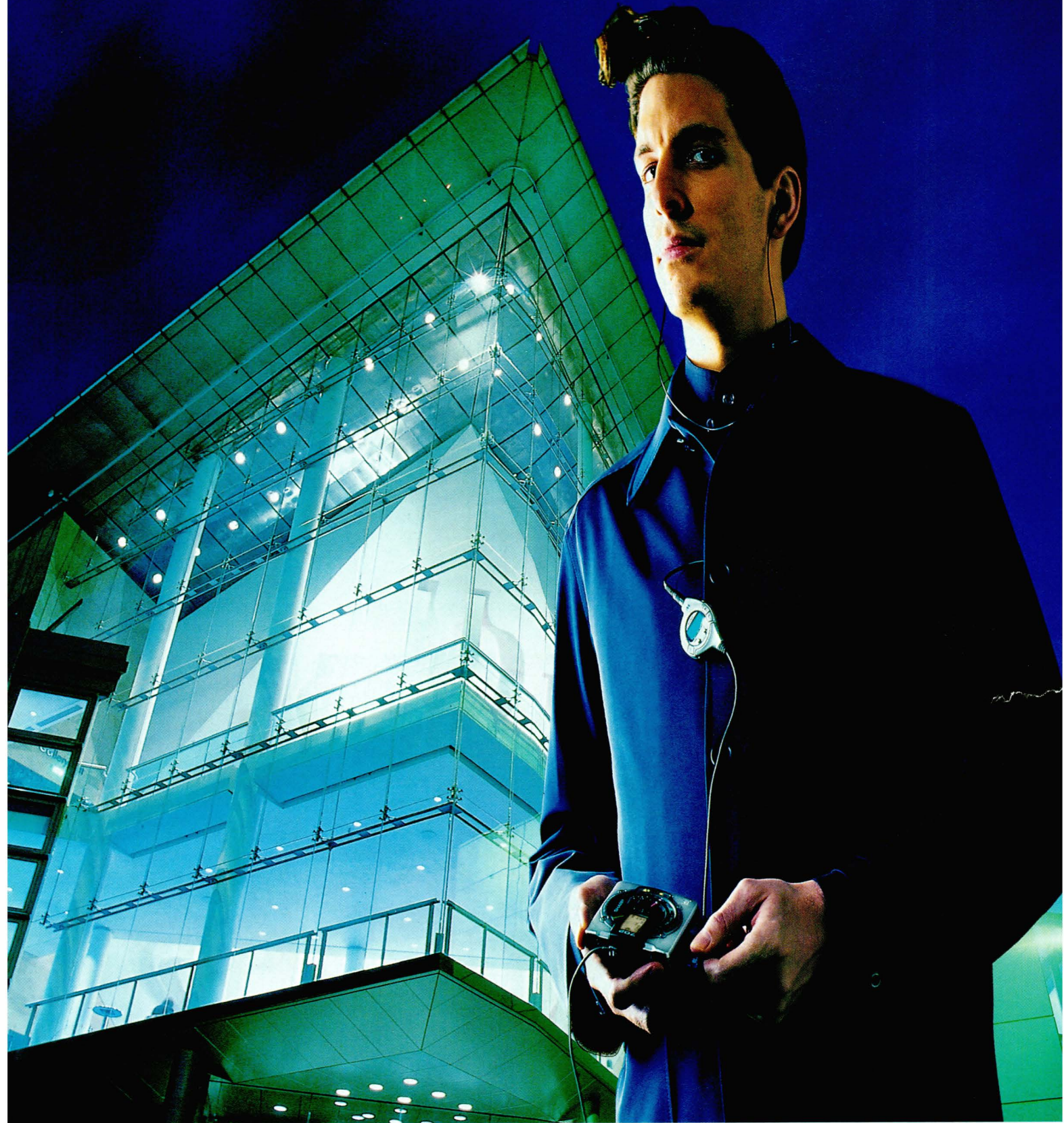
HINTS & TIPS



As a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so a hi-fi system is said to be only as good as its weakest part. At least that's the theory! Most people aim for a balanced system where the component parts are all of roughly equal standard and there are no obvious weak links. Yet while this remains a laudable aim, sometimes it's possible to get excellent results with what is (on paper at least) a mis-match. Some efficient horn-loaded loudspeakers, for example, give surprisingly good results when used with comparatively modest source components and amplifiers. When strengths are emphasised, rather than weaknesses and shortcomings, the result will be satisfying music. This isn't to say a higher quality source or a better amp won't result in superior sound. Rather, it points to the fact that an exceptional component can still shine, even when surrounded by mediocrity.



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April 1998



MD-R2H
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Sept 1998



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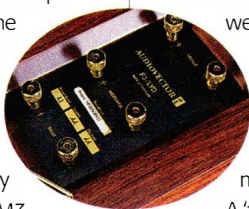
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COMPETITION

TALL DARK AND HANDSOME

A pair of Audiovector M2 loudspeakers, worth £1,400, must be won by one lucky *Hi-Fi Choice* reader!

We have a pair of superb Audiovector loudspeakers up for grabs this month; the M2s. Recommended in *HFC* issue 180, these £1,399 speakers are the base model in the company's M-series. One of this fine speaker's many features is its ability to be upgraded to the company's M3 or M3 Signature models, which feature better drive units and enclosure engineering.



Standing over a metre tall, these speakers will enhance any listening room, and are well built to boot, with real wood veneer covering five sides of the enclosure. They sit on a chunky, angled plinth which provides secure accommodation for four meaty spikes, and a decent footprint. A 'two-and-a-half-way' driver configuration uses both main drivers (and the rear port) through the bass region, rolling off the lower one early and running the upper one right up through the midband to the tweeter crossover point.

Praised on test for having an evenhanded neutrality, clarity and overall smoothness, the M2 also has a rich bass with fine momentum and decent timing. So, if you want to seriously liven up the back end of your system, don't delay and enter our competition today! All it costs is the price of a stamp!

HOW TO ENTER

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

The Questions

1) Which models can the M2 be upgraded to?

- a) Naomi Campbell or Claudia Schiffer
- b) M25 or M1
- c) M3 or M3 Signature
- d) M1 Super or M1 Signature

2) Which issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* were the M2s reviewed in?

- a) June 1998
- b) July/August 1998
- c) September 1998
- d) October 1998

Post this entry form to:

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC901A)

Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ

All entries must arrive by First Post, Thursday February 4th, 1999.

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

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Please tick one only of the following:

Are you a current subscriber? OR

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COMPETITION RULES

1) The Closing Date for the Audiovector competition is First Post, Thursday 4th February 1999.

2) Winners of the Audiovector Competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, and drawn at random after the Closing Date given in 1) above.

3) All winners will be notified by post.

4) The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.

5) The Audiovector Competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, Audiovector, nor their suppliers, agents or associates.

6) We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.

7) No cash alternatives will be offered.

8) We reserve the right to substitute alternative prizes with equal value to those shown, in the unlikely event of stock being temporarily unavailable.

9) By entering the competition, you agree to be bound by the rules.

10) All entries must be on this official entry coupon. If you do not wish to cut your magazine, you may send a photocopy of the page instead. Please note: only one entry form per household.

CHFC 901A

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b) Cool

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S Cowley of Stafford

A Calnan of London

7 x Second prizes of a box of 5 TDK MDs go to:

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J Ngan of London

P Davies of Shropshire

C Dersley of Ipswich

B McCausland of Aberdeen

R Davis of Hants

J Williamson of London

■ In October's NAD/Dali competition, the correct answer was:

1 c) Crossover-overlap. 2 a) 35 Amps

First prize of a NAD/Dali system goes to:

A Ecclestone of Kent

■ In November's Monitor Audio competition, the correct answers were:

1 d) Monitor Audio's Studio 60

2 b) Silver

First prize of a pair of Studio 20 SE Celebration

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S Marriot of Nottingham



Audiovector's M2 is covered in real wood veneer on five sides of the enclosure, and stands at over a metre tall!

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APRIL 97

WHAT HI-FI?



BREAK FOR THE BORDER

Jason Kennedy reckons the new Border Patrol tube amp proves that you can get welly out of a 300B.

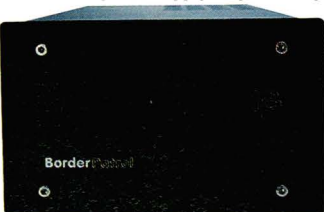
Novices to the valve amp scene may not be aware that all tubes were not created equal, and that the 300B triode power tube had a legendary reputation that seemed way beyond the potential of an audio component. That was until this '30s tube returned to production a few years back – the Chinese started making them first; then the Russians and finally Western Electric, the American company whose original tubes had created the legend, re-joined the game.

In the meantime there have been more than a few amplifiers created that use the 300B and its meagre seven and a half Watt output, most of them single-ended designs like the Border Patrol where one tube drives one channel. This is the least powerful yet also least compromised way of operating a triode tube.

What marks out the Border Patrol 300B SE is the attention that its maker Gary Dews has paid to power supply design and the resulting neutrality of the amplifier. Virtually every single-ended amp I've encountered creates a slightly rose-tinted view of the music it reproduces, and often it's this euphony that turns regular music lovers into tube fetishists. It's a very appealing sound. However, very few SEs have the bandwidth, power and transparency of a good transistor design. Bass and treble extension is often compromised, the designer apparently blinded by the irresistible midrange. However, unless you listen to solely acoustic music the lack of bass grunt can be a significant shortcoming.

By going to town on the power supply, however, the Border Patrol puts pay to the

❖ BP takes power supply very seriously.



Border Patrol, for those who want to hear passion, grace and fire.

“If I hadn't used this amp I would still be wondering where the 300B tube got its reputation from.”

notion that SEs can't play bass. The secret lies in the hefty black box that accompanies the solid-wood framed BP chassis. This contains three separate choke input filter power supplies for the high voltage, negative bias and heaters. Which leaves only signal amplifying tubes on the main chassis.

This is not the BPs only USP – even rarer is the use of inter-stage driver transformers which are designed to enable large voltage swings with low distortion, and present a very low impedance to the output tubes. Having heard SEs with serious PSUs before I suspect that it's this latter aspect which gives the BP its surprising low frequency grunt.

SOUND QUALITY

I listened to the BP in two different systems and with Svetlana and WE 300B tubes, the latter adding £500 to the £3,995 price tag on the amp.

For the most part it coexisted with a DNM 3C Twin preamp and B&W Nautilus 802 speakers, but also had a spin with JBL 4312 MkIIs and the more sympathetic combination of an SJS Arcadia preamp and Living Voice Avatar speakers.

Having heard the BP a few times in the past I was not surprised by its nimbleness, speed, agility and grunt – quietly enthralled would be a more appropriate description. I was, however, shocked to hear that it could cope with the N802s. These fine speakers have proved more difficult to drive properly than most I have encountered, so to find an amp whose output is claimed to be nine Watts at best producing rockin' beats through them was quite a surprise. It couldn't reproduce the level that the 200 Watt Sirius achieved but it did a more convincing job than amps with five times its output.

But being an SE design, the BP isn't just about power, it's about the ability to reproduce music with its timbral and dynamic elements fully intact. You tend to take good tone for granted with tubes but when it's created with so little coloration, as it is here, you can fully appreciate its beauty and

richness. Instruments are created for their tonal character, yet so little audio equipment can reproduce this in its full glory. Trannie amps usually dry it up, while most tube amps add extra lushness. The 300B, when used with this much attention to detail, appears to add no colour of its own and combines the skill with lightening speed, removing any sense of electronic intervention.

In some respects the lack of tube-type colorations make this an extremely difficult amplifier to get a handle on – the broad bandwidth means there's a lack of euphony. The BP has a more honest, bare-bones style that rewards improvements in source material to a far greater degree. It makes a lot of trannie amps sound thick and earth-bound with its superb transparency and fleetness of foot. It doesn't quite match good trannie bass but does a far better job than any other SE I've heard. What's more you get the purity of midrange and treble that such amps are renowned for, say goodbye to grain forever. Add to this superb high frequency extension and you've got some idea of its prodigious capabilities.

CONCLUSION

The Border Patrol review has been a long time coming. Gary's been building the amp since 1992, but it has been worth the wait. If I hadn't used this amp I would still be wondering where the 300B got its reputation from. One evening with this fine amplifier was enough to reinforce that reputation a thousand times.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £3,995.00

Uncommonly capable single ended design with less coloration and more grunt than any of the alternatives – resolution guaranteed.

■ EIGHTEEN MONTH GUARANTEE

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DVD AS EASY AS A,B,C?

Isn't 'audiophile DVD' an oxymoron? Alan Sircom thinks a Pioneer/MF combo might prove otherwise.

A lot of people are asking questions about their choice of digital player, these days. With DVD-Video players that can play CDs, is it wise to buy a CD-only player or cover both bases? With the introduction (albeit in a limited sense) of DVD-Video compatible 24/96 Advanced Audio Discs, this question becomes even more clouded.

To answer this question, take the latest leading-edge Pioneer DV-717 DVD player and add the X-24K digital to analogue converter from Musical Fidelity and see how they perform with both current and new music formats.

This format 'war' has breathed new life into the sleeping digital to analogue converter market, as owners of DVD-V players can now upgrade. Never one to leave a bandwagon un-jumped upon, Musical Fidelity is one of the first to DAC-up with its 24-bit Delta-Sigma, eight times over-sampling converter that talks just about every digital audio lingo out there and converts it into two-channel stereo. It uses the conventional coaxial and Toslink optical inputs to connect to the digital source (I2S bus or Firewire may end up as digital interfaces for DVD-A), and is an out and out audiophile's dream.

Strangely, the very aspects that are used to sell the Pioneer DV-717 to the mainstream DVD buyer are the least important to the audiophile. Yet, they make all the difference to the video fan and are added bonuses for the music enthusiast who isn't totally tellyphobic. The DV-717 has an excellent picture quality, an easy to navigate on-screen menu system and a digital output that can deal with PCM as well as Dolby Digital and Digital Theater Sound.

HITTING THE HEADLINES

Last year, when DVD finally arrived on these shores, a fuss was made over their performance and it was suggested that DVD players also made the best CD players. Much hype was



“This unassuming little DAC does help the 24-bit sound start to sing, and extends the harmonic structure of brighter sounding instruments right up into the Gods.”

due to Emperor's New Clothes syndrome, however, and more level-headed listening tests highlighted mediocre performance in most cases. Pioneer's DV-717, spear-heading a new generation of 'audiophile-ready' players, is one of the first exceptions we have heard. It performs extremely well as a CD player and equally efficiently as a DVD player. Compared to more expensive CD reference points, the tonal balance of the DV-717 was just about perfect – it had a nice boppy rhythm when required (with tracks from The Beautiful South and the Propellerheads, for example) yet also maintained a good tempo with something more challenging (such as Prokofiev at his most avant-garde). Stereo imaging was nicely spaced, although the sound did lack the excellent front-to-back image depth of top-class CD players. The 717 on its own did have some image depth, but orchestral passages didn't

sound like layer upon layer of musicians playing in an acoustic, instead they sounded like one set of musicians in the front of the soundstage and another set at the back.

Switching over to 24/96 discs on DVD-Video added some more layers to the image depth, but more importantly added space and air around instruments – and more instruments, too. Brass and woodwind instruments especially took on a more fluid, extended and realistic tonality that seemed just 'right'.

EVOLUTIONARY FORCES

When you add the Musical Fidelity DAC to the system, things really begin to take off. Whether on 16 or 24-bit, the sound becomes that bit more layered, that bit more refined. In truth, the difference between the MF and the on-board sound is more evolutionary than revolutionary, but remember that it is evolution that got us from tree-dwellers to DVD-playing bipeds in the first place. In 16-bit regular CD mode, the X-24K is slightly more warm and natural sounding than the on-board processor. There is also a little more élan to the soundstaging,

although the depth flattening is still apparent. Moving over to 24-bit really ups the ante, though. While not a panacea, and there was no running

through the streets proclaiming the start of the musical revolution, this unassuming little DAC does help the 24-bit sound start to sing, and extends the harmonic structure of brighter sounding instruments right up into the Gods. This makes orchestras sound, well, more orchestral and individual instruments sound simply more authentic.

With a limited repertoire of software on 24/96, I found myself drawn to the live, acoustic end. Amplified rock and blues didn't seem as important, but the ability to listen into an acoustic that contained more real sounding instruments than I can normally hear through digital audio made me hungry for more. Sadly, although it does a fair job at playing 16-bit CDs, there is only a limited amount of polishing that is possible for that format and even the best CD replay cannot compare with 24/96.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

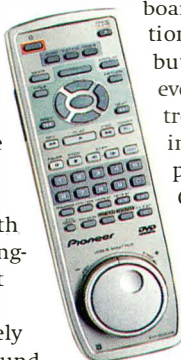
VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £600/£300

Used alone or together, the Pioneer and MF do offer the user good performance on regular CD and DVD as well as decent AAD 24/96 sound.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE (M.F.)
■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE (PIONEER)

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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

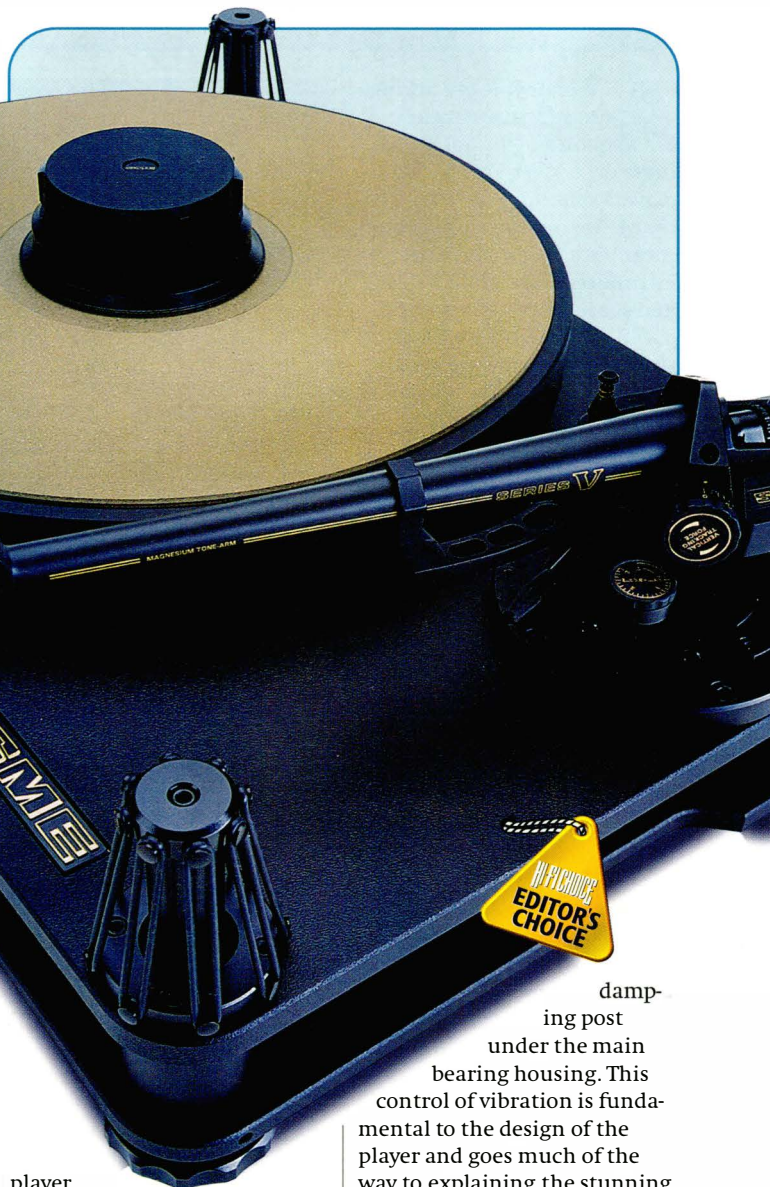
The SME Model 20 is a modern classic. Now that a new power supply has taken it to 20.2 status, **David Wiley** thinks it's unbeatable.

What is so special about a record player that costs over £4,500 without cartridge? Firstly the British hi-fi enthusiast has been accustomed to paying a lot for good record players, ever since the hugely expensive (for its time) Linn LP12/LVII Ittok was released at the beginning of the '80s. In this decade it became commonplace for the record player to take the lion's share of the budget as it became apparent that the skills required to build really top-class players were very expensive. Despite the massive lowering of costs of just about all things electronic, precision engineering remains as expensive as ever. Secondly, there is the small matter of time. The Model 20 is designed to 'last a lifetime' and is engineered to do so, with the minimum of service or set-up hassles. Averaged over a life span of 20-30 years the price seems reasonable. This truly is the only record player any practical person will ever need.

The original turntable released in 1992 was called the Model 20 and cost £2,500 without an arm. With a 'special edition' Series V tone arm fitted, it became the Model 20A player

and cost around £3,800. By mid-1995 the price for a Model 20A was a little over £4,000. Earlier that year it became apparent that the outboard power supply would not meet CE regulations, so rather than modify the existing unit a decision was taken to design an all-new supply. The improved power supply allowed a better motor to be used and these changes improved the performance of the player significantly. This became the Model 20.2, currently priced at £3,402.51 and the Model 20.2A at £4,863. At all times there was a small but worthwhile saving of around £150-£200 to be made by purchasing the turntable and 'Special Edition' Series V arm together as the complete

❖ Isolation is achieved via oil damped pistons with rubber suspension.



damping post under the main bearing housing. This control of vibration is fundamental to the design of the player and goes much of the way to explaining the stunning tonal and dynamic neutrality that it exhibits. This neutrality and evenhanded behaviour is the great strength of this player, in fact I would say that it imposes less of its own character onto the music than any other player I have ever used. The SME Model 20.2A is not 'boppy', it does not 'boogie', it isn't 'fast' nor does it exhibit outrageous 'dynamics'; in fact these euphemisms for an identifiable sonic character that are so often used in praise of other players, simply do not apply. In hi-fi terms this player is the absolute embodiment of the term, 'less is more'!

SOUND QUALITY

The Model 20.2A has remarkably little identifiable sonic signature of its own. This lack of

player. By word of explanation, the 'Special Edition' arm is a specially selected Series V, detailed in gold to match the Model 20 and 20.2 turntables.

DON'T JUDGE BOOKS...

Most people's first reaction on seeing an SME player for the first time is to comment on how small it is, and then, when invited to lift it, they are amazed by the weight. The footprint is smaller than any other serious player – it will fit inside the plinth of a Roksan Xerxes, yet it weighs well over 40lb, at least twice the mass of an LP12, Xerxes or Pink Triangle. The player is deliberately small and heavy, designed that way to reduce vibrations, which are further controlled by the huge

character has caused some commentators to suggest that this player is somehow bland or boring — “rather laid back” is a comment I have heard often. To suggest that I think these people are wrong and that they are completely missing the point of this player is to seriously understate my views.

Changing the cartridge alters the sound so completely that it's crystal clear just how neutral a platform the turntable and arm provide, it enables any good cartridge to really give of its best. Different production styles become obvious, good

performances sound great and great performances simply take your breath away. Lesser performances are not ‘pulled apart’ as happens with a fair few other decks; and in

some cases, performances that refuse to involve the listener on lesser players really come to life on the 20.2A. Beware though, there are musical performances out there that are genuinely mediocre and the SME absolutely refuses to ‘paper over the cracks’. It is also pretty tolerant of the quality of normal pressings, surface noise is not exaggerated and even older, well played records can sound very good indeed. Some ‘audiophile’ and other premium quality pressings sound absolutely stunning, but then so do some of my vintage Deccas and Blue Notes. All in all, if you're records refuse to involve you, then you can lay the blame firmly at the feet of the musicians and the cartridge.

Comparisons with this player are difficult as there are few, if any, comparably priced players easily available. Most of the recognised good players (Linn, Michells, Roksans, PTs etc) are all about £1,000-£1,500 less expensive, but interestingly it is the comparisons with these less expensive players that most enthusiasts will be interested in making. For the dedicated vinyl lover, who is seriously thinking in terms of that final major upgrade, the 20.2A is an absolute must audition. Once assembled, this player is virtually immune to variations in set-up, it does not go out of adjustment and does not require a visit to a dealer every year or two for a reset or other servicing. Such adjustments as may be required in time can be done by the owner in about 10 minutes and moving the player to another loca-

“Anybody who is lucky enough to live with an SME for a period of time finds that adjusting back to any other player is very difficult.”

tion is very simple.

Furthermore the player does not need an expensive support — a rigid, flat surface is all that is required. SME recommends placing the player on a sheet of metal or glass, about 5-6mm thick, placed on a flat table, a simple and elegant solution that works well. Improvements can be made by using a top class support like the



Townshend Seismic Sink, but the improvements are relatively small compared to what this excellent support does with most other players.

Long term users of other players can sometimes find it difficult to come to terms with the fact that the SME is not ‘a better Linn’, nor is it ‘a better Roksan’ or a better anything else — it is totally itself. The lack of sonic signature can be a problem, when coming to the SME from any other, there is an immediate feeling that something is missing, that some aspect of the performance is gone. It takes a while to realise that what is missing is the character of whichever player you are used to, and unconsciously using as a reference. Anybody who is lucky enough to live with an SME for a period of time finds that adjusting back to any other player is really very difficult. After a while, the almost total sonic invisibility of the player becomes normal and the way that the character of other players simply gets between the listener and the music comes as something of a shock. A good recording with a well defined soundstage will produce a well defined soundstage on playback, where as a less good recording will not. It really is as simple as that.

CONCLUSION

If I have appeared to be too uncritical of this player, then I apologise but it is one of the few truly great components to come my way in recent years. As an evaluation and demonstration tool the 20.2A is unsurpassed. On occasions I have tried to set up top class systems only to be frustrated when, despite hours of setting up and fine adjustment, the system

◆ The SME may look small but it weighs in at a whopping 18.2kg!

simply fails to gel. This never happened with an SME player at the front end! I can specifically remember setting up a pair of Martin Logan CLS11z's with top quality amplification to evaluate a highly regarded and very expensive CD player. The sound produced was so poor despite hours spent on the system set up, that I actually began to think that there was something wrong with the speakers! After the CD player was removed, the SME was connected and a record placed on the platter. The result was quite superb.

Listening for pleasure gives another insight into its qualities, it is the only player that I have ever used that is totally forgettable. In fact you forget that you are listening to records, you forget that other record players even exist, you forget about everything but the music. I rest my case.

David Wiley formally ran The Sound Organisation dealership.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £4,863

■ A superb and substantial turntable and arm, which shows no character, but just simply plays music without fuss.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

■ SME, Mill Road, Steyning, W Sussex BN44 3GY
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The Special Edition Series V tonearm is detailed in gold to match the turntable.

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SUPER TEST

SPEAKERS

Paul Messenger treats himself to three high-end wonders priced £7,000-£8,500 in our special round up of speakers.

THE CAST LIST

B&W's Nautilus 801	£8,500	p48
JM Lab Mezzo Utopia	£7,250	p50
Ruark Excalibur	£7,000	p52

Three enormous, massively heavy and exceedingly expensive loudspeakers are a very different proposition from our regular 15-at-a-time group tests of the more cost-effective and affordable. The £7,000 to £8,500 per pair price spread is not unduly large, and each is fundamentally a three-way design, so it's not unreasonable to consider them as direct competitors, even though each

takes its own individual approach to the task of music reproduction.

Ruark is a relatively small company, with its roots in cabinetmaking skills, but the £7,000 Excalibur gives nothing away to its rivals in presentation or perceived value.

With massive, decoupled, two-box, constrained-layer enclosures, five drive units from top Scandinavian driver specialists operate in a three-way configuration, yet keep the front view attractively slim.

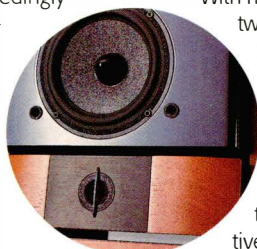
JM Lab's £7,250

Mezzo Utopia is the smallest and arguably the most elegant of

the assembled cast. It uses three of the company's top Focal drivers, each in its own separate box, the whole mechanically coupled together and arranged so that each driver is equidistant from the seated listener's ears to give accurate time alignment.

B&W's £8,500 Nautilus 801 is an astonishing engineering *tour de force*, sacrificing some style and domestic acceptability in the interests of a magnificent 15-inch bass driver. The midrange and tweeter drivers and enclosures are even more radical in concept and execution, and the whole has more than

one eye on the requirements of recording studios for high-level accurate monitoring.



HINTS & TIPS

Speakers are unlike other hi-fi components: they need to be positioned with care. As they come closer to a wall or floor, bass output increases – see individual reviews for specific advice. You may also see advice to 'toe-in' a speaker to adjust its tonal balance. This means rotating speakers inwards, towards each other. They need to be placed roughly as far apart as they are from the listener. PLUS: Don't forget, a good speaker needs quality cable for hook-up to amps to give of its best.

GLOSSARY

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

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

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

BI-WIRE (sometimes tri-wire): Loudspeakers equipped with separate access terminals to each driver can be driven by separate cable runs between power amplifier and each driver.

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

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

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

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

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

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

NETWORK: see Crossover.

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

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

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

TWEETER: Treble driver.

WOOFER: Bass driver.

B&W NAUTILUS 801

B&W has long been Britain's leading hi-fi speaker manufacturer on the world stage, and its big story for 1998 is a brand-new upmarket Nautilus 800 Series, with five models of different sizes in the stereo range, plus a couple of matching dialogue speakers for home-cinema use. Top of the line is this £8,500 Nautilus 801 – dubbed 'The Fat One' – aimed at least partly at the professional market for high-level studio monitoring applications.

Regular readers might recall that Jason Kennedy reviewed the Nautilus 802 in *HFC* 183, a somewhat slimmer and less expensive model which not only looks more elegant, but is also likely to be a better match

for typically modest-sized British lounges. However, I've long had a passion for 15-inch bass drivers, and wasn't going to let footling aesthetic or practical considerations stand in my way in this case.

The one problem with 15-inchers is that you have to

“A total weight of around 104kg is testament to the substantial amount of physical engineering that has gone into this design.”

make the box 20 inches wide to accommodate them. I reckon B&W has done a fine job under the circumstances. £8,500 is a hefty price for any pair of loudspeakers, but you do feel you're getting your money's worth here. A total weight of around two hundredweight (104kg) is testament to the substantial amount of physical engineering that's gone into this design, never mind the awesome amount of background research and technology that's gone into its creation.

To summarise a 100 page technical white paper into a two page review is quite impossible. A brief rundown on the virtues of Kevlar for midrange

cones can be found in my column on p11, while an overview of some of the key enclosure features is covered in the Technicalities box.

This is a three-way design which applies various advanced engineering techniques to each driver. The 15-inch bass driver has a 315mm Kevlar-reinforced paper cone, and uses carbon fibre for the dust dome and coil former reinforcement; the 140mm Kevlar cone midrange has a 'free-edge' surround and unusually skeletal frame; and the tweeter uses a 25mm aluminium dome, again with 'free edge' surround.

If the width of this speaker is daunting, the overall height is quite modest. The bass enclosure is a monumental piece of construction, artfully curved and shaped to reduce internal standing waves, and further stiffened by B&W's Matrix internal latticework. A large gas-flowed port outputs in the gap between the box and a cast metal plinth, which accommodates the castors (or cones) and crossover. Twin terminals are conveniently sited at floor level, though it seems a shame in this instance that triples were not fitted to give full tri-wire/amp flexibility.

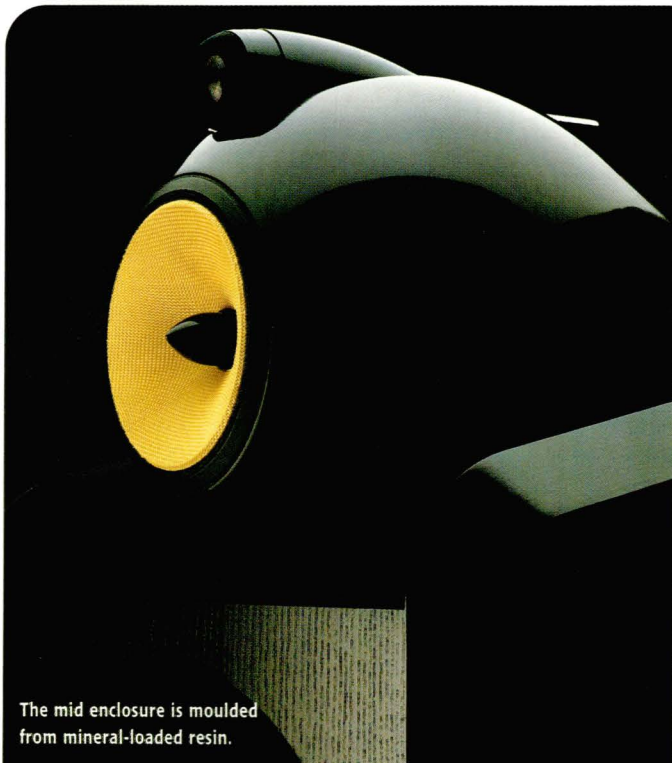
The far-field in-room averaged frequency response is particularly interesting, if not as obviously neutral as one might expect. The broad midband decade is impressively flat, 150Hz-1.5kHz, but there's a quite obvious depression of around -5dB in the presence zone 2-4kHz, while the treble proper stages an equally pronounced recovery above 4kHz. There's also a distinct discontinuity at 2.5-3.5kHz.

The bass is full and strong yet cleverly managed to avoid over-emphasising my main room mode at 55Hz, and even more cleverly managed to deliver massive output in the lowest 20-40Hz octave, at the sort of relative level (+4dB ref mid-band) I've never previously encountered with a passive speaker system.

That exceptional deep grunt is a function of a port tuned to a very low sub-20Hz. As far as impedance is concerned, this is

♦ The three drivers on the Nautilus 801 are each made of a different material.





The mid enclosure is moulded from mineral-loaded resin.

a brute of a load, hovering around three Ohms through much of the bass region, and therefore making hefty demands on the current delivery of the partnering amplifier. However, it's a fair price to pay for the high specific output through the bass region, and the generally high sensitivity, which I put at 91-92dB (bang on B&W's claimed 91dB). The bi-wire network separates the bass driver from the mid/treble sections, crossing over at 500Hz electrically, around 350Hz acoustically.

SOUND QUALITY

From the opening bars it was obvious that this speaker was going to be some experience. The bass is the first thing that hits you — literally, given enough power on tap and the right music playing. It goes astonishingly deep, sounding clean and immensely powerful with a genuine and decidedly uncommon stop/start grip, and effortless headroom.

Which is not to say that the midrange isn't something

“The bass is the first thing that hits you — literally, given enough power on tap and the right music playing.”

rather special, and the treble too for that matter. It's just that in my 4.3x2.6x5.5m room the bass was unexpectedly obvious and strong, which, coupled with its exceptional analytical

abilities, proved a fascinating experience. (I'd never realised that the Channel 5 studio sound was so bad, or what a problem wind noise was in outdoor interviews.) Indeed at high levels the bass actually seemed to be pressurising the listening room, giving a different effect according to whether the door was open or closed. Quite how typical these findings are is difficult to say: I also heard the Nautilus 801s in B&W's own listening room in Steyning, which is larger at 5x3x8m, but not dramatically so, and here the bass was much less obtrusive.

Like the bass, the midband has a marvellously wide dynamic range and unusually low distortion. Instrumental timbre and tonality sounds uncannily 'right' and makes the whole experience very engrossing. I was particularly impressed by how stable the sound and image remained as one moved around the listening room. There were no phase discontinuities, and perspectives remained remarkably consistent.

The power tests were a hoot. With 1.5 kiloWatts available and tracks 3 and 4 from the new Chemical Brothers CD, it looked like a three-way battle for survival between the speakers, the listeners and the room. I reckon the room gave up first, just as the sound level meter was flickering above 115dB, giving the listeners a face-saving opportunity to back off from the sort of levels one would only normally encounter at a live gig. The speakers seemed quite unperturbed!

Although this is an extraordinarily capable loudspeaker which sets new performance benchmarks in many respects, it's not beyond criticism. The recessed presence output is a little too obvious at low and normal domestic listening levels, slightly hampering voice intelligibility; and the subsequent treble recovery is a bit too pronounced as well. This character helps avoid high level harshness, and so acts as a positive encouragement to keep on winding up the volume, which is fine for

TECHNICALITIES

The Nautilus 801 has three separate enclosures, one for each driver. The bass is the most conventional, a large box with two-inch curved walls and Matrix stiffening is port-loaded by a high capacity, low turbulence, 'dimpled' FlowPort.

The bass enclosure provides the platform for mounting the midrange, via special gel-based gaskets and provide mechanical decoupling which isolate the midrange enclosure from vibrations generated in the bass. A similar gasket in turn isolates the tweeter from the midrange.

The teardrop-shaped mid enclosure is particularly interesting. Moulded from mineral-loaded resin, the external shape avoids potential sources of acoustic interference, while the internal shape combines a sphere with a tapered tube or 'reverse horn', an arrangement which computer modelling predicted and experiment showed was very effective at absorbing rearward driver radiation without the need for damping materials. The tweeter also absorbs the rearward radiation, here using a long tapered tube similar to that used in the original Nautilus.

high-level monitoring, but not always practical or sociable in the home.

CONCLUSION

An astonishing engineering *tour de force* in so many different ways, the Nautilus 801 richly deserves its Monitor tag. It's definitely the business if you like your music loud, but a little too laid-back and under-projected at domestic listening levels. That said, it has a grip, authority and dynamic range rare at any price, especially in the bass, and is a remarkably revealing, wide-band transducer, ruthlessly revealing the quality of recordings, sources, amplification and ancillaries. It's also a whole lot of fun, especially with modern dance music and a big amplifier.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £8,500

■ The 801 is a magnificent loudspeaker in nearly every respect, but it is one that likes to play loud.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

■ B&W Loudspeakers Ltd, Marlborough Rd, Lancing, W Sussex BN15 8TR

☎ (01903) 750750

○ A 20-inch width was necessary to accommodate the 15-inch bass driver!

JM LAB MEZZO UTOPIA

France's leading hi-fi speaker manufacturer, JM Lab is a relative newcomer to Britain, but shows every sign of going places, despite the difficult market conditions. Starting from the mid-price sector and moving upwards, the company makes numerous ranges of speakers, as well as the highly-regarded Focal drive units which were the original foundation on which this relatively young company is based.

The top of the line models are the extravagantly styled, engineered and priced Utopias.

◀ When not in use the Mezzo Utopias retreat behind a wooden shell.

There are four all told, including a stand-mount Mini, then this floorstanding £7,250 Mezzo Utopia, plus two still larger and more expensive floorstanders. The Mezzo is

“Styling and presentation are delightful... because of the clever way form not only reflects function, but does so with flair and elegance.”

therefore by no means a huge loudspeaker, but it does stand well over a metre tall, and also feels uncommonly hefty and solid considering it's not unduly bulky.

Styling and presentation are quite delightful, to these eyes at least, the more so because of the clever way form not only reflects function, but does so with considerable flair and elegance. The surface finish is an artful mixture of high-quality piano gloss with hardwood panelling, and if the latter

lacks the strong grain figuring beloved of British cabinetmakers, it nonetheless manages to look very classy in a more contemporary way.

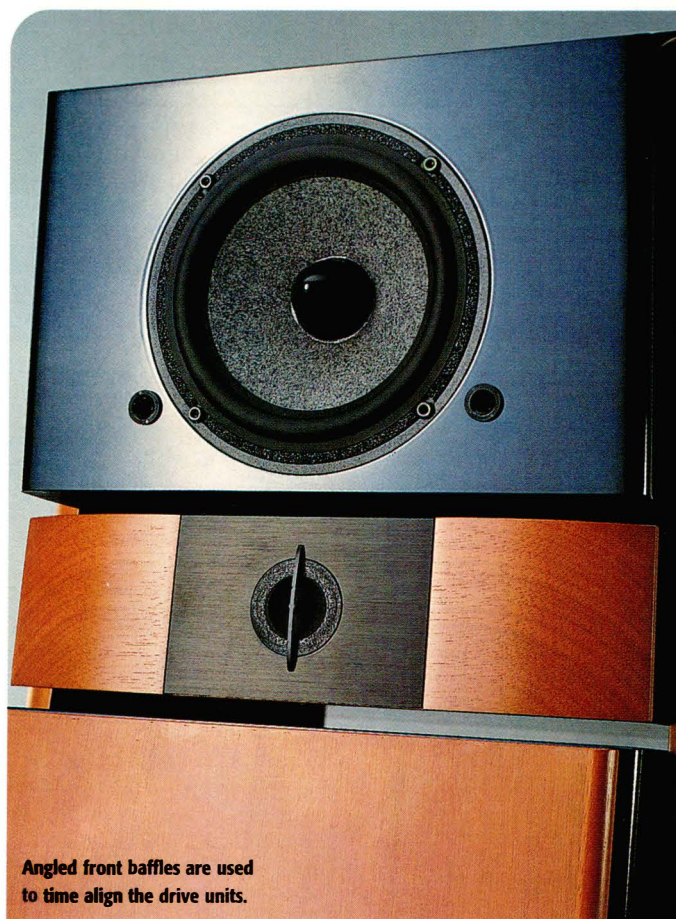
Although one visitor described the appearance as 'Dalek-like', my favourite design feature is the way you can see right through this loudspeaker, which somehow manages to lighten up its otherwise imposing presence. A three-way design, it's constructed in three separate boxes, one for each driver, all held together by the full-height wooden side panels.

The largest port-loaded bass chamber is at the bottom, a surprisingly generous top box houses the midrange driver, while a slim section between the two, right at eye level, accommodates the tweeter and crossover network, a centimetre gap above and below giving a glimpse of the room behind. Both top and bottom boxes have angled front baffles, bringing the cone drivers slightly in front of the tweeter and creating effective time-alignment since each driver is the same distance from the ears of a seated listener.

Mounting the crossover network within the tweeter box will help isolate its components from the vibrations generated by the larger cone drivers, but does mean that the input terminals are set rather high off the ground, making it difficult to avoid a trailing loudspeaker cable. There's just a single pair of very classy multi-way terminals, as JM Lab is, like several other respected brands, unconvinced of the merits of bi-wiring or bi-amping.

The speaker looks wider than it is deep (which it isn't), but the fore-and-aft footprint stability could be better, especially as the spikes are 6mm affairs which seem rather feeble to handle the 63kg all-up weight. The width is necessary, however, to accommodate the quite large bass driver, which has a 270mm frame and 195mm 'W-type' cone, plus a large port tuned to 30Hz. The midrange unit has a 165mm cast frame and 115mm cone, while the tweeter uses a 25mm inverted oxide-coated titanium dome,





Angled front baffles are used to time align the drive units.

driven from a low-inductance 19mm voice-coil. It's as well these drivers are good looking, as the 'grilles' are solid-wood protectors which look elegant when in place, but have to be removed when the speakers are being used.

The far-field in-room averaged responses look very well balanced overall, with an impressive bass alignment which combines good ultimate extension with a freedom from midbass heaviness that's unusual for such a large loudspeaker. The lower midband is a little lean; the upper mid is slightly forward (though impressively flat); the presence band (2-4kHz) is slightly recessed, by about 3dB, while the treble stages a recovery, but looks well judged.

As is usual with three-way

"The real strength of this loudspeaker is very much the way it pulls everything together into an unusually coherent whole."

designs, the impedance looks a fairly demanding load, reaching a four Ohm minimum at 100Hz and staying pretty low through the midband. The port is tuned to 30Hz. JMLab claims 92.5dB sensitivity, though on my broad band averaging 90dB is closer to the mark.

SOUND QUALITY

The Mezzos don't have what you might call a spectacular sound, and my first reaction was to find them slightly underwhelming. As time passed I got used to the fact that they're not the last word in deep bass grunt, or in any other specific respect for that matter, but found myself getting deeper and ever deeper into their groove.

It may be a cliché to state that the whole is more important than the sum of the parts, but the strength of this loud-

speaker is very much the way it pulls everything together into an unusually coherent whole, which makes it all the easier to ignore the sound and concentrate on the music.

There's no tendency to boom, and indeed there's a slight lack of ultimate weight, scale and grip. But the bottom end is firm, deep and stays refreshingly light on its feet, providing plenty of information about what's going on, and merging seamlessly with a truly outstanding midband.

Voices do have a slightly 'shut in' character, but it isn't pronounced enough to spoil things, and does ensure that any aggressive recordings are kept under control, even when you're tempted to turn up the wick loud enough to annoy the neighbourhood. The top end is just a shade exposed and inclined to draw attention to itself, but it's also exceptionally clean and precise, delivering loads of incisive, crisp detail.

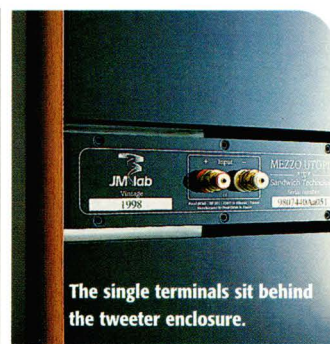
I've never been entirely convinced that 'time alignment' was really worth the effort involved, but the Mezzo Utopia has gone a long way towards changing my thinking. The imaging here is absolutely superb — exceptionally well focused, stable and precise, and at the right height too.

High-level power tests were handled very satisfactorily, even though heavyweight dance music is perhaps not this speaker's natural forté. Indeed, the bass alignment was particularly well judged in our 4.3x2.6x5.6m room, with good ultimate extension and deft avoidance of mid-bass boom.

CONCLUSION

Big loudspeakers have obvious virtues of scale and drama, but tend to fall down on subtlety, delicacy and image precision compared to smaller, simpler models. The magnificent Mezzo gives the best of both worlds, with all the virtues of a high-class baby, ample slam for all but the largest rooms, and a total musical coherence that's rare in three-way designs.

I daresay JM Lab's larger Utopia and Grand Utopias will offer a bit more grunt and headroom, but loudspeaker design is all about compromise, and that compromise needs to take full account of the listening room. In my opinion, for



The single terminals sit behind the tweeter enclosure.

the typically modest-size British living room, the Mezzo Utopia is simply the best all-round compromise I've heard (or seen). Just give its subtleties time to work the seduction, and don't expect to be blown away after a 10-minute dem.

TECHNICALITIES

Focal driver technology sets JM Lab apart from the herd. Its inverted (concave) dome tweeters have long been a particular trade mark, and those fitted to the Utopia models are equipped with exceptionally powerful magnets, using a special high purity iron core which permits unusually high magnetic flux.

The bass and mid driver cones are made out of a quite different material from that used by other brands. Known as a 'type W' sandwich material, it uses a special structural foam held between sheets of woven and resin-impregnated glassfibre. Sandwich construction makes intuitive sense when trying to optimise the conflicting requirements for high stiffness, good internal damping and low mass that choice of diaphragm material involves, while the use of synthetics should ensure good consistency.

It's not a new technique — way back in the '60s several British companies explored the sandwich approach, most famously the successful Leak Sandwich models, so its return is perhaps overdue, with the added advantage of a far wider range of foam materials to choose from today.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£7,250

Looks good and sounds even better. A genuinely big speaker with the sort of coherence that gives small speakers a good name.

■ FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

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RUARK EXCALIBUR

Ruark is just one of several companies which are threatening to make Southend-on-Sea one of Britain's centres of hi-fi excellence. A well-established speaker specialist founded in 1986, Ruark has remained a fairly small-scale operation, aiming its products at a discerning minority which appreciates high standards of physical as well as sonic presentation.

The company's grass-roots skills lie in the high-class cabinetwork which has always distinguished its speakers from the rest of the herd, but it's headed up by serious hi-fi enthusiasts prepared to go to

considerable lengths to develop models to satisfy their own sensibilities, taking advantage of the considerable talents available from specialist drive unit manufacturers.

"It's reasonably discreet, and very tastefully styled too, with classic overtones which should fit in well with both period and modern decor."

The resulting combination has often proved a winning formula, synthesising the talent and experience base than is usually available in one company.

Ruark has long been active in the mid-price sector, with models priced from £300 up to £2,000, but the £7,000

Excalibur represents the company's first real attempt at a serious high-end loudspeaker. It's an impressive debut — this two-box system looks exceptionally handsome and impos-

ing, with plenty of evidence of innovative thinking.

The Excalibur is better suited to larger rooms because it stands well over a metre tall, which is the unavoidable consequence of using twin midrange drivers in a d'Appolito configuration, mounted above and below a single tweeter situated at 'seated ear height'. Ruark also makes a similar but shorter and less expensive Solstice model 4000, with just one mid-band driver.

It's a deep speaker too, but that's no bad thing as it improves the fore-and-aft footprint stability, while the decision to go for twin bass drivers allowed the front view design to be kept fashionably slim. As big speakers go, it's reasonably discreet, and very tastefully styled too, with classic overtones which should fit in well with both period and modern decor. The surface finish is a mixture of textured black highlighted by large real-wood flanks with scalloped edging, the mid/treble section matching and flush-fitting on top of the bass enclosure, which is fitted with a matching plinth and floor-cones.

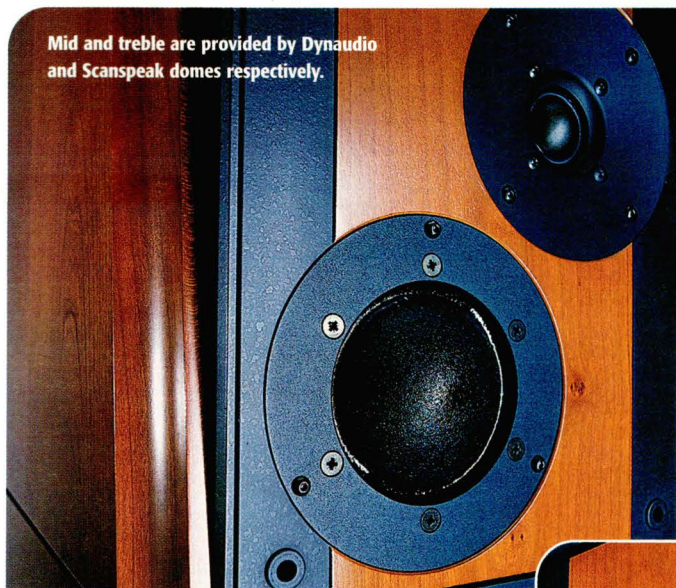
A total weight of 80kg for each complete loudspeaker gives some evidence of the considerable engineering content involved here. The two-box construction is therefore something of a relief from the point of view of shipping, handling and installing.

The bass section reminds me of the Wilson Audio Puppies in overall configuration, but Ruark isn't the only brand to recognise the logic behind the port-loaded twin eight-inch arrangement. The inset top surface of the bass enclosure is a sheet of steel, providing a firm foundation to support the mechanically decoupled mid/treble enclosure. The base of the latter is fitted with Base-style elastomer decoupling inserts, helping to isolate the mid and treble drivers as well as the crossover network from vibrations generated by the bass drivers. This top enclosure doesn't really need to be as big as it is, acoustically speaking,

○ The 80kg Excalibur thankfully has a two-box construction.



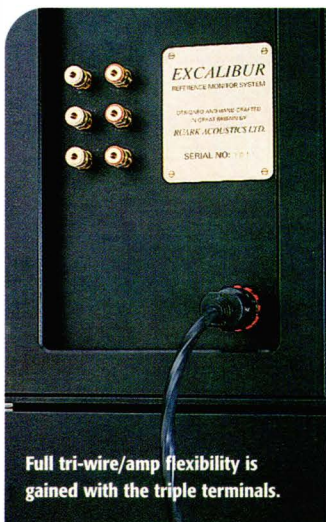
Mid and treble are provided by Dynaudio and Scanspeak domes respectively.



the shape presumably having more to do with styling than function. But it does ensure a massive inertial platform for mechanically loading the three drivers. It's good to find triple terminals on this three-way design, giving full tri-amp/wire flexibility.

Enclosure engineering is arguably more important than driver design when you're dealing with serious upmarket speakers. The Excalibur is a real belt'n'braces job, which not only has extensive internal bracing and very thick (30-40mm) walls, but uses constrained layer damping between the box proper and the real wood side cheeks, further to reduce unwanted internal vibrations from reaching the outside world.

Far-field in-room averaged response measurements confirm that this is an essentially neutral and very well balanced design, although the traces do look a bit uneven



Full tri-wire/amp flexibility is gained with the triple terminals.

through the broad midrange, and the overall trend shows a gentle down-tilt across the band, amounting to some 10dB in toto from 20Hz up to 15kHz.

Nevertheless, even under reflective in-room conditions, the balance holds within impressive +/-4dB limits from 60Hz right up to 10kHz, and the mid-to-treble crossover transition is very well handled, with a nicely judged relative tweeter level. As one might expect (and indeed probably want), the bass is just a little full, registering an average +4dB above the midband datum. The 55Hz main-room mode is perhaps a little too strong, but the low bass shows fine ultimate extension, with the 20Hz in-room datum at -4dB

Again as one has come to expect of three-way designs, the amplifier load is rather demanding through the upper bass region, where it hits four Ohms, but is relatively easy elsewhere. The port is tuned to a low 30Hz here, and the electrical crossover points are at 900Hz and 3.5kHz. Sensitivity is a broad church, depending on all manner of measurement conditions, but my broad-band average estimate is around 89-90dB, very close to Ruark's 90dB claim.

SOUND QUALITY

A big, generous and gently laid-back sound makes the Excalibur very easy to like and to live with. There's plenty of effortless, articulate, driving bass on offer here, which is nice for its own sake, especially if you enjoy dance music, but which also means this speaker is very well suited to delivering high-impact movie soundtracks, without the need for additional subwoofery.

In some systems and rooms the overall character might be just a little too heavy, and the midband a trifle under-pro-



Eight inch bass drivers mean the front view is kept slim.

jected, but the absence of any obvious balance anomalies right across the band, alongside an obviously wide dynamic range, has its own rewards in minimising long-term listening fatigue or irritation.

Excalibur handles high powers with aplomb, plenty of room-shaking ability, and a fair measure of dynamic tension. Timing is good, but the bass did sometimes seem a little detached from the rest of the band in terms of tonal timbres and shading. The midband might have been sweeter, more delicate and more transparent, and the top end seemed if anything a little cautious, sometimes making it difficult to follow delicate cymbal figures.

Imaging is precise and well focused, adding to the sense of scale because the apparent source is placed at or above ear height, though depth perspectives seemed a trifle foreshortened. Over time I found that the Excalibur seemed happier

TECHNICALITIES

If the cabinetwork richly deserves a Best of British tag, Excalibur's drive units are a tribute to the collective skills of the very successful Scandinavian OEM driver industry.

The twin bass units use cast magnesium baskets, long excursion spiders, four-layer coils, a ventilated magnet system and 150mm treated paper cones. The solitary tweeter is ScanSpeak's latest 'state-of-art' model, using a 28mm treated silk dome, improved magnetics and cavity shaping to minimise compression, a low-mass aluminium voice coil, and a carefully shaped, over-size front plate for optimal dispersion.

The most distinctive of the drivers, however, are the two Dynaudio dome midrange units, similar to the one used in the Crusader. There's long been debate over whether a midrange driver should be a scaled-down bass unit, or a scaled-up tweeter. The cones are the popular choice, for obvious cost reasons. The domes need bigger magnets for their bigger 'edge-drive' voice coils, which in turn enhances power handling. This example uses a lossy, felt like material for the 75mm dome, presumably to provide damping which is done by the surround in a cone driver.

dealing with rock and dance material than with classical and other acoustic material.

CONCLUSION

Reminiscent in a number of ways of the Ruark's Crusader, albeit with a greatly enhanced sense of scale and headroom, the Excalibur has a warm, rich and full balance with a mildly laid-back overall character, yet cleverly manages to avoid sounding 'shut in' at the same time. The result is not only a large and very handsome looking loudspeaker, but also a sound which is exceptionally easy going and free from strain.

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£7,000

9 A big handsome speaker with a big, laid-back but open sound, rocking bass and loads of headroom.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

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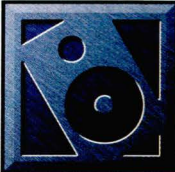
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SPEAKERS

CONCLUSIONS

The problem with reviewing loudspeakers is that you can never be certain whether you're writing about the speakers, or the system you've connected them to. A good speaker should be a window onto the driving system, and the better the speaker, the wider and clearer the window.

That's especially true of this trio. Change even something quite small further up the chain, and the effect is immediately audible, and may well favour one model more than another. These three loudspeakers are all very fine examples of the craft, and each is capable of

"A good speaker should be a window onto the driving system, and the better the speaker, the wider and clearer the window."

truly excellent results — provided that the rest of the driving system is up to it. And it's not just a matter of putting the right components together. It's the whole install job that has to be done properly, as the following cautionary tale shows only too clearly.

At one point I started getting disappointing results from a model, and was sure it had sounded better a few weeks previously. I'd recently done the rounds of all the system and mains connectors, so that wasn't the problem — or was it? I'd fettled the system end of the mains, but hadn't done any-

thing about the other end of the mains supply in many months. I switched off the system, went back to the mains unit, loosened and re-tightened the relevant 'tails' with a heavily insulated screwdriver, threw the circuit-breaker on and off half a dozen times, went back to the system — and the Excaliburs started singing again, as I knew they could.

The cautionary bit is that it would have been all too easy to have blamed the Excaliburs for a failing in a completely different and unexpected part of the chain. The only thing the speaker had done was show up the bad news rather too clearly for its own good.

At the end of the day, I could happily live with any of these three, but I'd want to be absolutely certain that the dealer who put the whole package together for me knew exactly what he/she was doing, and was also prepared to go to plenty of trouble in 'fine-tuning' the whole system in order to get the best possible results.

Although any of these three is capable of delivering a superb performance under the right circumstances, as is the way with loudspeakers, each has different strengths and weaknesses.

Given these differences, it would be over-simplistic to try and put these three into some sort of ranking order. I could happily live with any of them long term, and any attempt to choose between them must necessarily take careful account of the taste of the listener and the characteristics of both the system and the room.

COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	B&W	JM LAB	RUARK
MODEL	NAUTILUS	MEZZO UTOPIA	EXCALIBUR
PRICE	£8,500	£7,250	£7,000
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	5 years	5 years	5 years
SIZE (W×H×D) IN MM	520×1,110×690	350×1,150×465	300×1,250×530
WEIGHT	104kg	63kg	80kg
SENSITIVITY	91-92dB	90dB	89-90dB
MINIMUM IMPEDANCE/2.83V	3 Ohms	4 Ohms	4 Ohms
RELATIVE BASS OUTPUT 20HZ IN-ROOM	+7dB	-6dB	-4dB

THE BEST IN THE TEST

B&W Nautilus 801

B&W's £8,500 Nautilus 801 might be the most expensive, but it more than justifies its price in sheer engineering content. It's also the most capable loudspeaker across the broad perspective, especially through the bass and in loudness capability. But that doesn't necessarily make it the automatic choice. I suspect it's better suited to larger rooms than my 4.3x2.6x5.5m space, and because the voicing is oriented towards high level studio monitoring, it sounds a little too restrained at more typical domestic listening levels.



JMLAB Mezzo Utopia

The £7,250 Mezzo Utopia wins my vote not only for being the best looking in the group — aided in no small part by being the smallest in terms of bulk — but also the one most likely to make the best match with typically modest size British lounges. It lacks a little of the sheer grunt and weight of its rivals, but has an absolutely glorious, beautifully voiced midband-to-die-for, and wonderful overall coherence to boot.

RUARK Excalibur

The £7,000 Excalibur, with its five drive units, is fashionably slim, but also quite tall so difficult to ignore. Sonically it has the most even-handed and neutral in-room balance under our test room conditions, delivering superb deep and weighty bass free from unwanted boom. It should also be the easiest to drive, which is a worthwhile bonus. However, the midband and treble seemed a little less transparent and incisive than its rivals.



HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

These loudspeakers are so large, heavy and time-consuming to install that unsighted panel testing is impractical. Instead, by selecting a convenient gap in the group test schedule, and by borrowing them for an extended period, we were able to adopt a more relaxed approach with this test. Although we did conduct a formal session, the opportunity to spend three or four weeks with each speaker gives the opportunity to build up a picture of its performance across a far wider range of operating conditions than is possible with short-term panel tests.

The main reference system consisted of the usual collection of Mana-supported Naim and Linn components, viz: Linn LP12 turntable, Naim ARO tonearm, Linn Arkiv 2 cartridge, Naim CDS CD player and NAT01 tuner. A selection of amplification included Naim NAC52 preamp and NAP135 power amps, and the Lavardin IT integrated amplifier. Speaker cables were NACAS and Nordost SPM.

Because these speakers are all able to handle considerably more power than the above amplifiers can supply, I arranged to borrow a Chord CPA3200 preamp, plus four SPM1400B monoblock power amps, the latter in bridged mode capable of some 1,400 Watts unclipped. This set-up added a new dimension to proceedings, so my thanks to Mike Gregory at Chord Electronics.

SOFTWARE

Music used included excerpts from the following albums. BBC Radios 3 and 4 were also used extensively.

THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS: *Dig Your Own Hole* on XDUSTCD2 42950 2 8

CAMBRIDGE SINGERS: *There is Sweet Music* on Rutter/Collegium COLCD 104

JONI MITCHELL: *Turbulent Indigo* on Riteprise 9362-45786-2

JOHN OGDEN: *plays Chopin* on PCD 834
GRATEFUL DEAD: *Reckoning* on DARTY9

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01872 79809</p> <p>TUNBRIDGE WELLS
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Home Entertainment

(August '98)

Cable Talk Studio 2
Verdict *****

▲ . . . handles music & video sound with equal aplomb . . .

▼ . . . the cable is excellent & can be used almost anywhere.

Hi-Fi Choice

(December '96)

Cable Talk Studio 2
Sound *****

THE VERDICT

▲ Tonally, dynamically and rhythmically a truly first-class cable

▼ Very little to criticise.

Price: £65 (1m pair)

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SUPER TEST

HEADPHONES

Are you tired of your neighbours pounding on your wall and yelling at you to turn down the volume? **Charlotte Ricca** tries out a selection of headphones to cure the neighbourhood blues.

THE CAST LIST

AKG K 240 DF	£99.95	p59
Audio Technica ATH-M40	£120.00	p59
Beyerdynamic DT 431	£81.00	p61
Beyerdynamic DT 831	£140.00	p61
Grado SR125	£150.00	p63
JVC HA-W200RF	£70-£80	p67
Koss R/100	£99.95	p63
Sennheiser HD 500	£69.99	p64
Sennheiser RS 400	£79.95	p67
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Vivanco 8180	£99.00	p69

The quest for hi-fi nirvana is a long and often arduous one. Constant tweaking, upgrading, reading about the latest technology and saving your pennies for new products. It's a wonder there's any time left to actually sit down and listen to your music, let alone waste time with trivial accessories such as headphones. After all, no serious audiophile would even contemplate letting their high-end rig's perfect signal talk through such things. Right? Wrong.

Think of all those times you've wanted to blow the cobwebs away with a loud blast of Deep Purple, or wallowed in the mournfulness of Massive Attack at full volume, but have had to make do with a barely audible Enya to keep the peace with your neighbours, spouse or parents. Or what about that upgrade you've been after, but just can't find the budget for both speakers and amp? Well, look no further than the humble headphone. No amp, no speakers, just direct access to bass-thumping, spine-tingling music via your choice of source component, with no fear of waking up the neighbours and at a price everyone can afford. The only added requirements are a headphone socket and volume control.

There is also the added bonus of quality music on the move. You'll find most headphones come with dual-size jack plugs,

so you can plug into your personal MiniDisc, CD or DVD player and annoy your fellow commuters in fine style. Besides, these days, anyone with a respect for their music and a healthy distaste for discomfort and ear wax is binning their in-ear phones and donning something far more substantial.

COMMUTER BELTIN'

However, if the thought of givin' it up for the headphone massive on the 8.20 to Victoria, with your briefcase under one arm and the *Telegraph* under the other is a rather unappealing one, then why not give FM cordless headphones a try? They still offer the freedom of portable music, but in the safety of your own home, or even gar-

den. Most have a range of up to 100 metres and because they are not limited by an infrared beam they allow you to appreciate your music all around the house.

Instead, operation is via a base transmitter which broadcasts an FM radio signal to the headphones. However, as this frequency consists of three different bands it is necessary to fine-tune the 'phones to their specific signal. This is done using either a self-tuning button or a manual control, depending on the model you purchase. Long gone are the days of gardening while straining to hear the faint tones of Radio Four on your old wireless.

Headphones open up a whole new world, in which you can share

an intimacy with your music, never previously experienced. Strings will sound warmer, bass lines fatter and vocals more alluring. The melody is actually in your head and gives a fantastic feeling of exclusion from real life.

However, with this intimacy can come fatigue. There's no doubt about it, turn the volume too high during a long bout of headphone listening, and you're in for an intense experience. You have been warned!

You pay your money and you deal with the headache. Unless, of course, you follow *Choice's* essential guide to pain-free in-head listening. We took 12 top quality headphones consisting of eight standard corded phones and four of the rather interesting cordless FM models and tested them until we thought our heads might explode. For as a wise man once said, many headphones make light heads. Or something like that.



GLOSSARY

OPEN BACK: These 'phones have a grill-type back which offers an open sound but also lets in noise.

CLOSED BACK: Useful in noisy environments, these have solid ear-pieces and, as such, keep out external noise.

SUPRA-AURAL: This is a style of 'phone where the ear-pieces consist of a flat pad which sits on the outer ear.

CIRCUM-AURAL: Here, the style of ear-piece is one which encloses the ear.

JACK ADAPTOR: Can be used with mini-jack equipped components, such as personal stereos.



HINTS & TIPS

Listening to your headphones for long periods at high volume levels is most definitely not advised. Your mother was right, it really will make you deaf. Decent headphones sound clean even at ear-shattering volumes, so there are none of the natural loudness cues of loudspeakers. Don't wait till tinnitus sets in, keep your volume down to a reasonable level and you'll be enjoying your music for many years to come.

AKG K240 DF



On looks alone, these studio 'phones are the business. Old-skool, circumaural earphones and a rather natty headband make for a pure professional look that

wouldn't be out of place on the most esteemed producer's head. They're comfy too, if a little on the loose and large side, but then that never did Meatloaf any harm.

Another bonus is the cord, which gives you enough 'rope' to hang yourself with, should the acoustics not match the high standard set by the design.

Although the claimed frequency response of 15,000-20,000kHz isn't as spectacular as other models in this price range, it is still more than sufficient for most signal sources.

SOUND QUALITY

From the word go, these AKG cans showed detail with strong stereo imaging, but lacked that extra indefinable spark to hold my attention to the music. Perhaps it was simply that the sound was almost too relaxed.

I found strings which had previously sounded effortlessly fresh now seemed strained and reserved and, at times, filtered out. The midrange also sounded thin, and the bass on *Frozen* almost imperceptible.

However, on *Black Gold of the Sun* vocals were sharp and easily understood, but there was still a lack of grunt. Cranking up the volume seemed an easy solution to increase the excitement, but that

wasn't really enough incentive to keep listening, and is not recommended for those attached to their ear drums.

There is, however, a positive outcome in all this — there is little danger of listening fatigue.

CONCLUSION

If you've had a hard day at the office and you want an easy life, then the K240DFs will do little to offend or upset. However, excitement is also a missing emotion.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE **£99.95**

■ Inoffensive 'phones that are very laid back, but lacking in grunt.

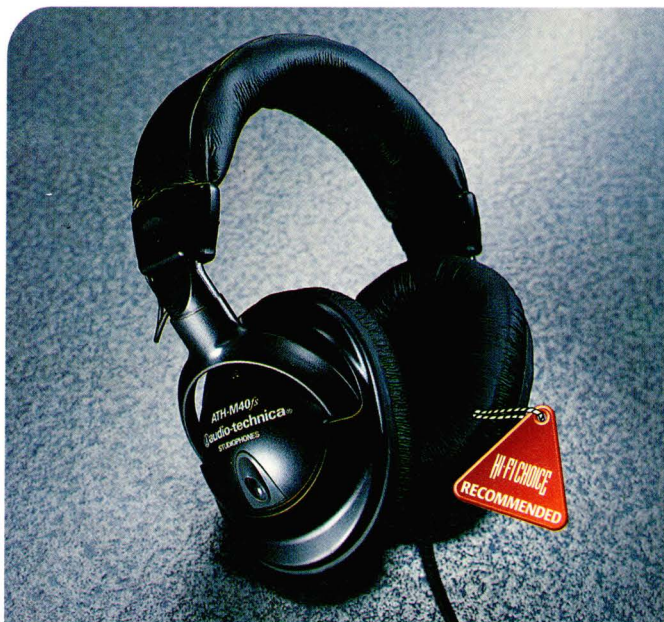
ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Path Group, Unit 2 Desborough Industrial Estate, High Wycombe, Bucks HD12 3BG
☎ (07000) 443426

FEATURES

■ Weight	240g
■ Length of cord	3m
■ Type	Open back

AUDIO TECHNICA ATH-M40



From the moment I slid these cans over my head I knew I was in safe hands. The circumaural cushions sat snugly around my ears, while the headband held my head in a reassuring, yet gentle way. You'd have to do some pretty serious head-bang-

ing to get rid of these babies.

The look of the 'phones is also quietly confident, with no lairy colours, no gimmicks, just a pair of quality cans doing their job.

However, further investigation did reveal one party trick, which is the ear-pieces ability to turn 180

degrees, enabling easy listening through one phone. Probably only of use to the jobbing DJ, or those using them for their original purpose — in a studio.

SOUND QUALITY

These 'phones have an uncontrollable desire to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. They quite simply take a piece of music and tell it how it is.

I have to admit at first I found this strict professionalism somewhat irritating. These are the 'phones that would never have one drink too many, would never do a sicky from work or sneak off early on a Friday. I felt like shaking them and shouting "chill out!". But apart from not wanting to look like a nutter, this almost clinical edge began to grow on me. The percussion on *You Goin' Miss Your Candyman* was so clear, I began to pick out instruments and effects not previously noticed, and indeed every percussion note was spot on.

When I gave them a blast of Zappa they were so rocking I nearly picked up my air-guitar.

The more I listened, the more I heard, and the more I liked.

CONCLUSION

A pair of good honest headphones, which refuse to add anything to the original recording, yet take nothing away. If you like your music to have that raw, 'straight out of the studio' edge then these headphones are a must. A rockin' Recommended.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE **£120.00**

■ Incredible detail, and honesty from these classically designed studio 'phones.

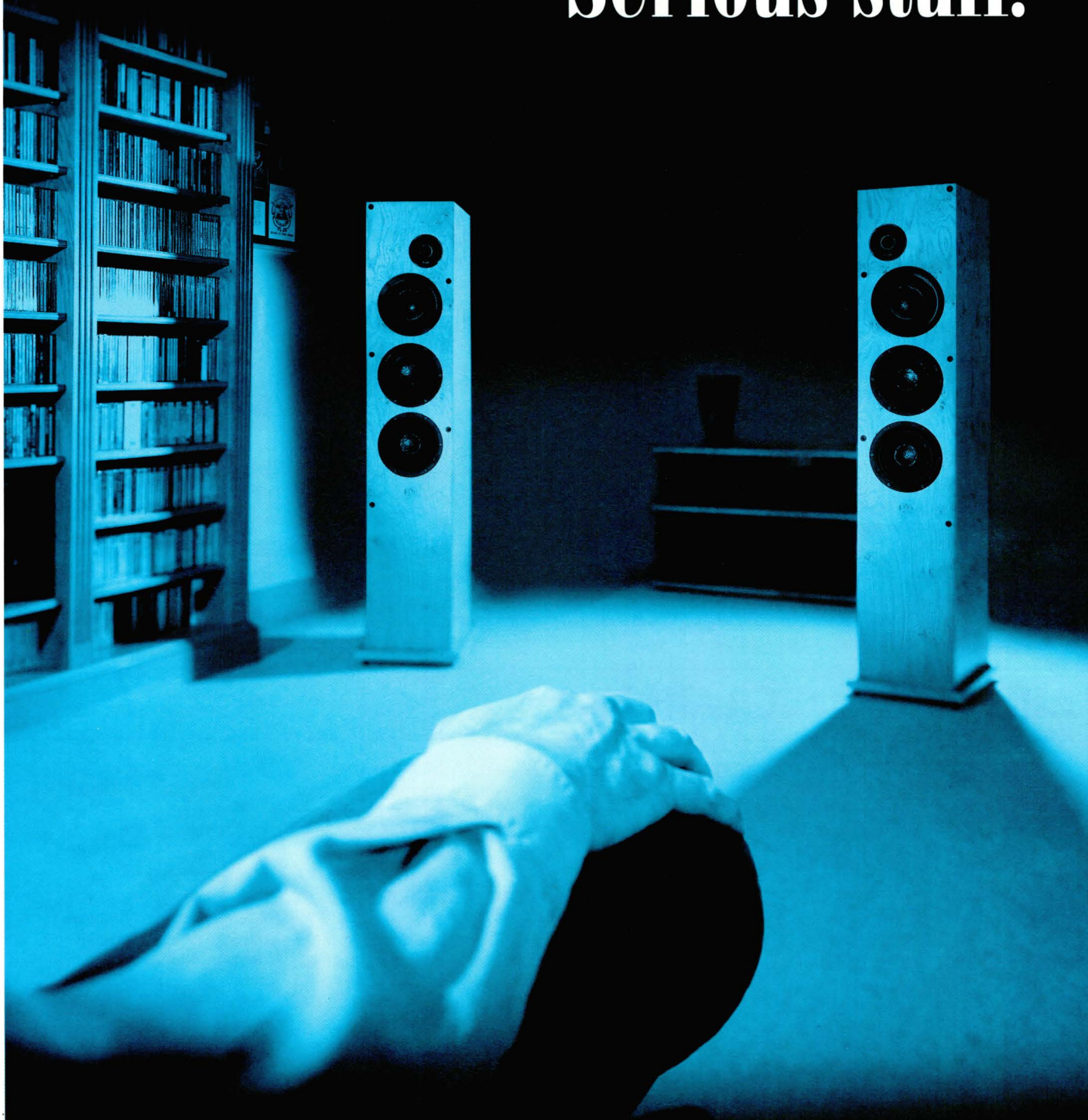
ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Audio Technica, Technica House, Royal London Industrial Estate, Old Lane, Leeds LS11 8AG
☎ (0113) 277 1441

FEATURES

■ Weight	250g
■ Length of cord	3.4m
■ Type	Closed back

Serious stuff.



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BEYERDYNAMIC DT431



Although they are not quite in the same comfort league as their lush big brothers these 'phones are very wearable. Despite their reasonable size they

sat firmly on my head and tight to my ears. As a result, despite the open-back design, I felt the music was still for my ears only.

Their design is fairly classic, but

with a dash of blue on the ear-pads they make their stylistic mark. Altogether, a sturdy and dependable sort of chap.

One very interesting feature, also found on the DT 831s, is the use of Braille to indicate left and right 'phones. Is this a first I wonder? It is for me, and I was suitably impressed.

SOUND QUALITY

Initially I was struck by the openness and freshness of these Beyerdynamics, but with further listening this turned into a slight feeling of distance. The grill type back creates such openness you could hold a conversation while listening. Nonetheless they were honest 'phones that didn't colour the music and seemed to be trying their best under the circumstances. The Fila Brazillia track had all elements present and correct in a clear and unfussy manner but could've done with a bit more attack on guitar and drums. Frank Zappa and Madonna were enjoyable with good resolution and a warm bass, but again a touch aloof.

I felt the best thing about these

'phones was that they were in my corner musically, and didn't put any strain on my lugholes.

CONCLUSION

These Beyer DT431s are very much junior 831's; aspiring to their sibling's quality and coming fairly close. If you like your music as open as the corner shop with no fuss, you could do much worse.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £81.00

Nice looking 'phones that may not be the best players on the field, but will always give you 100 per cent.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Veda Products Ltd, 5 Burchanger Industrial Estate, Stanstead Road, Bishop Stortford, Herts CM23 2TH
(01279) 501111

FEATURES

Weight	210g
Length of cord	2.5m
Type	Open back

BEYERDYNAMIC DT831



If pipe and slippers are where you're at, these DT 831s are the 'phones for you. They may look like they've been covered in the remnants of those nifty silver slacks you wore in the '70s, but they feel fantastic. In fact the velvety cushions were such a joy to my cheeks that my ears had to fight to get a look in.

The only whinge I might have is that they were rather cumbersome and heavy on my dainty little head. Also the cord is attached to both 'phones which I found a bit restrictive, and is only emphasised by the coil in which ensures you and your hi-fi remain at a cosy touching distance at all times. I forgot this a few times only to have

them nearly ripped from my head. Luckily the velvet pads prevented any friction burns.

However, one look at the frequency response and it's clear you should throw away your slippers and get out your party shoes. With an awe-inspiring claimed bandwidth of 5-32,000Hz these 'phones were made for dancin'.

SOUND QUALITY

And what a treat it was. Fila Brazillia's *President Chimp Toe* was so lifelike I felt I could close my eyes and touch the birds I heard singing. The bass was clear and strong and each chord of the guitar so sweet it sent shivers right through me. The midrange was confident and all vocals took on a crispness and reality so lacking in the other headphones.

Each track I listened to just seemed to improve with age, like a full-bodied red wine, gaining in maturity, depth and life. Bongos were so clear that I swear I heard the player's fingers tap the skin before the note was made.

The only criticism I can muster is that at higher volumes the bass

could be a little boisterous. But on the whole the music had a warm glow that made me want to curl up and listen and listen...

CONCLUSION

Sheer, unadulterated comfort with the ability to recreate all types of music the way the artist intended. Dynamic, delightful and de-lovely. An undeniable Best Buy.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £140.00

The DT831s provide silky, smooth textures in abundance and I'm not just talking about the velvet ear pads.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Veda Products Ltd, 5 Burchanger Industrial Estate, Stanstead Road, Bishop Stortford, Herts, CM23 2TH
(01279) 501111

FEATURES

Weight	295g
Length of cord	3m
Type	Semi-open back



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GRADO SR125



"Truly the world's finest", Grado's box claims. Presumably they're not referring to their design team, as both the packaging and 'phones themselves are decidedly dreary. These SR125's seem to take an almost perverse pleasure in their retro styling. However, if looking like a

radio operator on a Cold War era submarine appeals, these hard plastic cans will fit the bill perfectly.

It's possible that their minimalist style is making a defiant statement that they are aimed at the listener who puts sound quality over looks. Nonetheless, there is fair amount to moan about with the design of

these 'phones. From the stethoscope style hard lead with only 1/4 inch jack plug, to the half-hearted attempt at comfort.

That said, I did find them surprisingly wearable as their compact size and supra-aural ear-pieces meant they sat very snug and neat on my head. And besides, the moment you put them on all is forgiven. These Grados do the business and then some.

SOUND QUALITY

As soon as I pressed play on my CD player, I felt that the SR125's and I were going to be good friends. The top end sparkled without ever feeling too sharp and the acoustic guitar parts on *President Chimp Toe* were handled with great sensitivity and refinement. The sound as a whole was open and warm with the bass part handled easily, never becoming boomy even with sub bass. Probably the best thing for me was that these ugly ducklings brought out sounds and textures on my chosen tracks that I didn't even know were there, and that's got to be a bonus.

One slight criticism is that over

the course of a long listening session the upper frequencies became a tiny bit pushy and bright. But they were still a joy to put on each time, never causing fatigue and always trying their best to entertain.

CONCLUSION

If you can put up with the styling, these are headphones at their very finest. You'll have to drag yourself away. A very highly Recommended.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £150.00

What these 'phones lack in style they make up for ten-fold in musical quality.

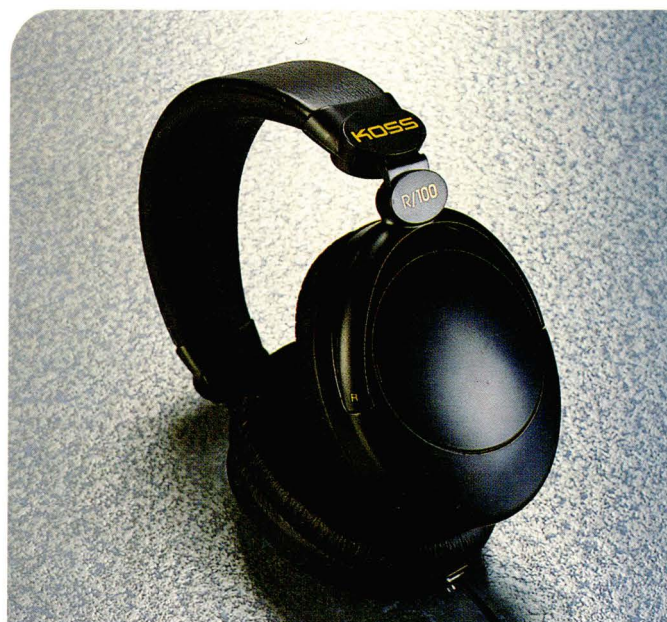
ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Goldring Products, 8 Greyfriars Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 7DX. (01284) 701101

FEATURES

Weight	200g
Length of cord	2.13m
Type	Open back

KOSS R/100



When hi-fi comes with a gimmick of some sort, I worry. What is wrong with its good, old-fashioned audio quality, I wonder, that necessitates an alternative selling point? Then, when the instructions on the box don't match up with the wording

on the actual 'phones, I worry just a little bit more.

The R/100's gimmick is optional surround sound. US company Koss obviously had a good idea with this model, but I feel it never really carried it through to its conclusion. The surround sound controls are found

on the cord but are far from clear, the result being I never really did get to grips with what it was actually supposed to achieve.

They are a closed-back model and are black, simple and understated, if a little cheap looking. So, no real complaints there. Well, actually just one, very tiny one, in fact it's so tiny you can hardly see it — the left/right symbols that are so small as to be imperceptible.

SOUND QUALITY

After all this fussing I was relieved to discover that the R/100s were capable of a lot more than they first let on. Detail was good with a smooth, well integrated bass and a strong treble. However, it seemed to be let down by the midrange which can only be described as weak. It felt as if it had been shut behind closed doors and so could only be heard in half measures. Vocals sounded distant and somewhat lost in the mix, giving an overall feeling of a lack of life.

Frank Zappa and his crew sounded more like a bunch of choir boys — these cans just

don't have the grunt to cope. The surround sound facility did seem to give some depth and 'oomph', but mainly added an effect akin to listening to music in a cathedral.

CONCLUSION

An inoffensive, warm-sounding headphone, if a little weak, that needs to open up and let midrange flood out.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £99.95

Rather cheap looking 'phones that supply good detail but are severely lacking in midrange excitement.

LIFETIME GUARANTEE

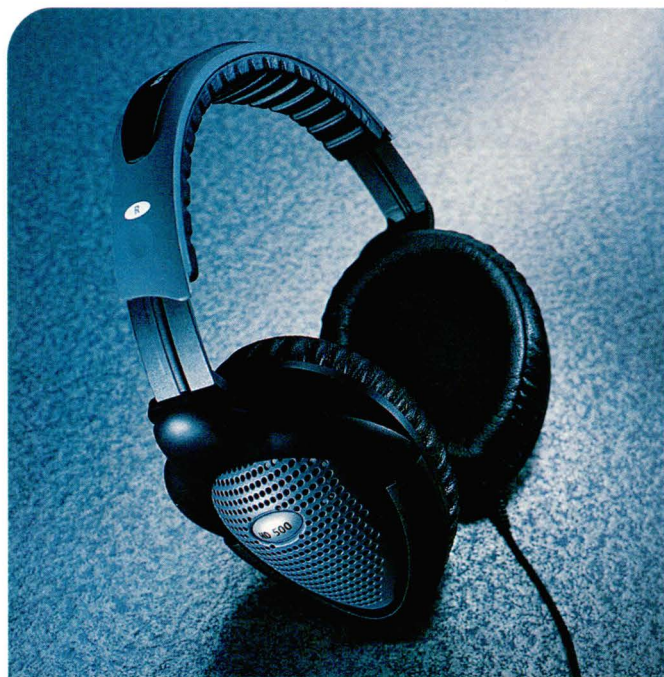
Bandridge, Premier House, 18 Deer Park Road, London SW19 3BW. (0181) 543 3633

FEATURES

Weight	215g
Length of cord	3m
Type	Closed back

SENNHEISER HD500

SENNHEISER HD500



Many a DJ has raved about the quality of Sennheiser headphones, often refusing to use anything but. So I approached this model with great

enthusiasm and expectation.

First impressions weren't that great — the grey and black finish was a nice look, but overall the 'phones felt insubstantial and not

up to Sennheiser's usual indestructible standards. But, hey, I'm open minded, so, moving on to the cord I was pleased to note its generous length, and gold jack plug with adaptor. They were also very comfortable to wear and the semi-open style meant more music with less interference.

I was admittedly less impressed with its specifications of only 14-21 Hz frequency, but again, specs can be deceiving.

SOUND QUALITY

Time and time again two words sprung to mind while using the HD 500s. Flat and lifeless. Terry Callier's exquisite throaty tones were muffled and seemed held-back in some way. The midrange in general lacked that openness which holds one's attention, and it just seemed to make no effort to entertain me. With Fila Brazillia the treble was almost indiscernible and the whole image created was very one-dimensional.

The HD 500s did produce a warm string section with Madonna's *Frozen*, but again the

rest of the track seemed rather tired. In their favour they tried hard with separation of the various instruments and coped easily with stereo imaging.

CONCLUSION

Disappointing results from a company which should know better. Perhaps all the hype has gone to Sennheiser's head, rather than its 'phones.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆☆

PRICE **£69.99**

■ A disappointing pair that offers good stereo-imaging, but little else

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Sennheiser UK Ltd, 3 Century Point, Halifax Rd, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3SL
☎ (01484) 551551

FEATURES

■ Weight	210g
■ Length of cord	3m
■ Type	Open back

SONY MDR-605LP

SONY MDR-605LP



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At £50 these are the cheapest 'phones in the bunch, and it's this price tag along with the metallic finish and funky, Japanese design that suggests they are

aimed at 'the kids', the rich kids.

They were very light to wear and fitted snugly over my ears. However, they are a very open-back design which is intended to

create a wide soundstage around your head, but with the consequence that they offered very little protection from external noise. The long cord is a definite bonus for those fortunate enough to boast large living rooms and is attached to only one phone, to maximise freedom of movement.

SOUND QUALITY

Unfortunately I can't help thinking the sonics of these cans have been aimed at the teenage market as well. They are very loud, up front and at times a little brash. With impeccably produced pop tracks, such as Madonna's *Frozen* they coped admirably. Strings were lush and full and the music seemed to pour through every nook and cranny of my mind. But after a while this keenness and unceasing energy began to wear me out. Were I a bright-young-thing with the world at my feet and the Spice Girls on my Walkman I could have bopped till I literally dropped. But for those of us who like our music more raw and earthy, the Sonys just couldn't bring home the goods. Bass was boomy, and coloured and all other detail just seemed to be

thrown out, and left for me to suss out. When I could, I found these a lot of fun and they certainly got my attention with their vivacious treble during the sound track of the *Piano*.

CONCLUSION

The MDR-605LP's are funky looking headphones that are clearly mad-for-it. They are very up front, with vibrant treble and mid-range, although sometimes this is at the expense of distorting the bass.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆☆

PRICE **£50.00**

■ Funky-looking headphones for the young and restless. Very bold, but tiring sound, with coloured bass.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Sony UK Ltd, Customer Information, Pipers Way, Thatcham, Berks RG19 4LZ
☎ (0990) 111999

FEATURES

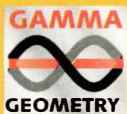
■ Weight	145g
■ Length of cord	3m
■ Type	Open back



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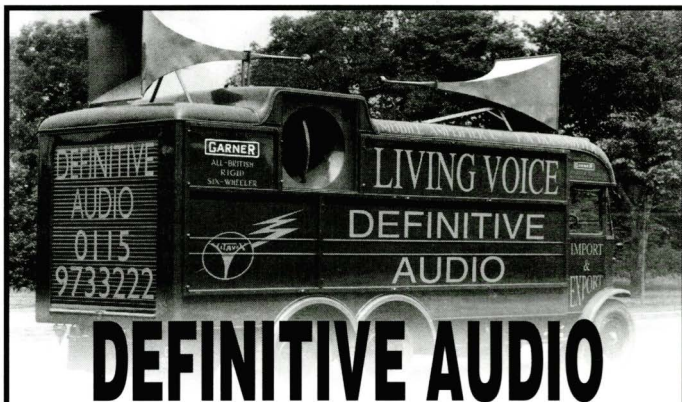
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JVC HA-W200RF FM Cordless



Simple but effective is how I'd sum up JVC's styling with the HA-W200RFs. The double headband ensured they sat firmly on my head, and the circumaural ear pads had maximum squidgeyness for my (by now rather sensitive) ears. They are a closed back design, and I definitely felt that external interference was well and

truly kept at bay. Even the ever passing police cars of Brixton Hill were but a distant memory.

Another nice touch is the fact that the aerial doubles up as a stand for the 'phones when not use. If you're anything like me for putting things down in easily forgettable places, this is a big bonus. The only complaint I might

have with these 'phones is they aren't self tuning, and although the dial requires the minimal adjustment, it can be a little problematic when they're on your head. Even more so as the volume control is right next to it and not very clearly marked. Also the transmission range is only 50 metres, half the distance of the other FM models in the test.

SOUND QUALITY

Once I'd overcome the problem of tuning these 'phones in, they were really rather good. There was almost no discernible hiss, and all types of music I ran through them were conveyed with warmth and real beef. There was also good clarity, even during the most hectic bouts of music and I had no effort in hearing the full story.

Drums and bass were punchy without being dominating, and the treble was clean, and cut effortlessly through the mix. However, if I was to be picky, at times these higher frequencies were a little unrefined and lacking in sensitivity.

The closed-back design did result in a slightly shut-in sound, but on the whole they provide a

very pleasant listening experience. Moving around the house barely affected the signal, and even then re-tuning was a reasonably simple process.

CONCLUSION

These 'phones are the Delia Smith of the headphone world. A good all-rounder that knows its job and likes to get on with it. No nonsense, no messing and, thankfully, no hiss. A tasty Recommended.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £70-£80

Distinct lack of hiss ensures that detail and depth are easily heard.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

JVC UK Ltd, JVC House, JVC Business Park, 12 Priestley Way, London NW2 7BA
(0181) 208 7654

FEATURES

Weight	280g
Range	50m
Type	Closed back

SENNHEISER RS400 FM Cordless



The RS 400s are very light, and comfortable 'phones. They fitted easily and securely over my head, although the elasticated double headband did feel a little loose.

They are only the 'phones in this FM group to have supra-aural ear pads that sit on, rather than around your ear. Subsequently they felt less protected and led to an

increase in outside interference.

One of the reasons for the Sennheiser's lack of bulk is the use of an accupack, custom designed rechargeable batteries. This is charged overnight in the base and then slots neatly into the right capsule. The 'phones are definitely lighter as a result, but on the downside, this rather unique method means you are tied to Sennheiser branding if they need replacing, which

could be both time consuming and expensive.

The claimed listening range is up to 100m, but first it is necessary to 'set them up'. This entails turning up the volume on your source component

until the green LED on the base unit is blinking roughly in time with the music. Sennheiser explains that this is to ensure the bass unit is sending out the optimum signal.

SOUND QUALITY

True to Sennheiser these 'phones pack a musical punch. Unfortunately, it seems to be at the expense of the subtleties of the higher frequencies. I felt as if I was listening through a veil of cotton wool; the music was there, but I just couldn't quite get at it.

Strings and midrange electronic effects were almost ignored, and on the whole the treble was cloudy. Bass, however, was very bold, and there was a strong attack on drums. So if you like your drum and bass look no further.

However, once again interference was a problem and a high-pitched hiss, although barely audible, could constantly be heard. As mentioned above, ensuring the

LED is blinking in time with the music does improve the quality of sound, but does not filter out hiss completely.

CONCLUSION

The RS 400s are lightweight 'phones that are easy to wear, but not so easy to listen to. The sound was a little woolly, and hiss is a problem. They strike a rapport with drums though.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £79.95

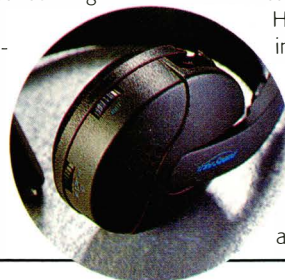
Very wearable, but are a bit woolly sounding and have slight interference problems.

TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

Sennheiser UK Ltd, 3 Century Point, Halifax Rd, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3SL
(01484) 551551

FEATURES

Weight	160g
Range	100m
Type	Semi-open

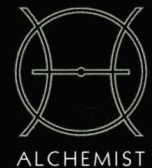


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VIVANCO 7980 FM Cordless



Just one look at the 7980s reveals they are the younger sibling of the 8180s. Certain features can be correlated, such as the snug-fitting double headband, but essentially their design reflects the price tag.

The circumaural capsules don't have quite the padding of the 8180s and also as they are open, noise insulation isn't quite as effective. They do, however, still come with tuning button and a claimed extended range of up to 100m.

Their batteries are also charged in the same way, although they have a shorter operation time of 16 hours.

Again Vivanco hasn't pushed out the boat in terms of design, but they have a classic look that should appeal to all ages.

SOUND QUALITY

Being in the lower price bracket, one wouldn't expect the 7980s to outshine their slightly up-market brother, but all things considered these 'phones, on occasion, hold their own. The main bone of contention was the high-pitched whine and crackle which seemed more prolific. A strong signal was also harder to achieve while moving about the house, although with perseverance it was possible to sit back and concentrate on the music.

On the whole I found these 'phones had a warm and open quality. The bass, however, did lack the requisite grunt and in consequence tracks which had previously grooved and moved me, now sounded a little tired.

The midrange was fairly confident and vocals were clear, but often other detail was lost behind

them. It was this rather one-dimensional aspect of the music that failed to hold my attention and I often found it wandering back to that whine.

CONCLUSION

For novelty and convenience the 7980s are warm and inoffensive 'phones. However, if you demand more grunt and less whine with your gardening, then look elsewhere.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £80.00

■ A fair amount of whine and crackle detracts from 'phones which are otherwise very listenable.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

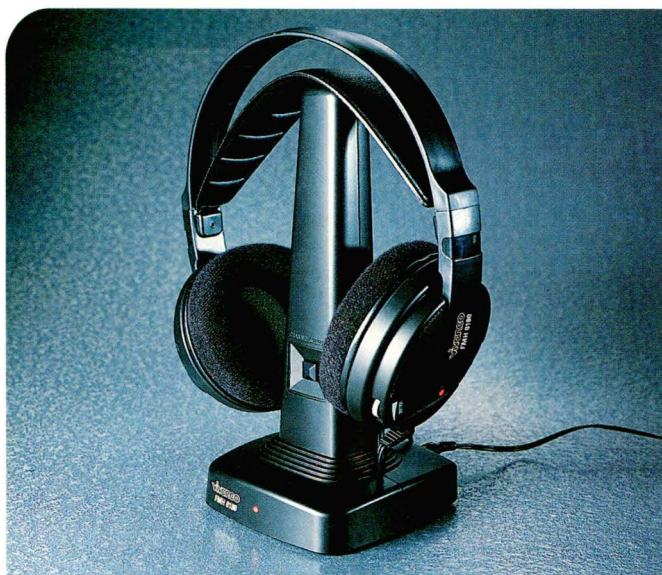
✉ Vivanco UK, Maxted Court, Maxted Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 7BY

☎ (01442) 403020

FEATURES

■ Weight	280g
■ Range	100m
■ Type	Closed back

VIVANCO 8180 FM Cordless



Vivanco has obviously put some thought into the 8180 and for pure ease of use they get a massive thumbs up. The double headband has an elastic core which means they stretch over your head and then slide back into perfect position. No adjusting tension, no fiddling, just instant comfort. In addition tuning is via a

button which you simply press, and hey presto, you're in business. I wouldn't say these are the sexiest looking headphones, but when they feel this good, who's complaining?

These are also a closed-back design, and have a claimed range of up to an impressive 100 metres. Rechargeable batteries

come as standard, just plug the 'phones into the base unit for 12 hours and you have 30 hours of mobile music.

And there's more. For those who don't have a headphone output the lead can be reversed and connected via phono plugs into a spare output on your amp. Very nifty.

SOUND QUALITY

It has to be said a slight, but constant hiss does distract from the enjoyment of these 'phones. But then nobody said they'd be perfect. So, all things considered I found washing my dishes a considerably more enjoyable experience with their aid.

They have a warm character, with a competent midrange and strong, but slightly woolly bass. *Black Gold of the Sun*, for example, just wasn't given its full dues, and seemed slightly lacking in its usual luster. However, the higher frequencies of the *Piano* soundtrack were easily able to hold their own. Put it this way, if you've got some serious household chores to be done, the 8180s will while away many a

cheery hour. In fact the longer you wear them, the less definable the hiss — either that or my ears have blown!

CONCLUSION

The 8180s are comfortable in every sense, although a little lacking in pizzazz. They do need a little patience with background hiss, but stick with them and you'll be pleasantly surprised.

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆

BUILD ★★☆☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆☆

PRICE £99.00

■ Well thought out features and a better than average sound are, at times, marred by intrusive hiss.

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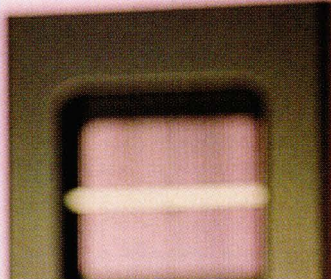
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FEATURES

■ Weight	240g
■ Range	100m
■ Type	Closed back

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Vinyl Replay

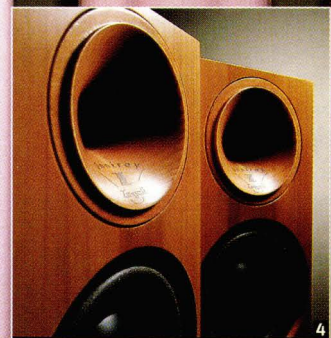
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HEADPHONES

CONCLUSIONS

After a considerable amount of time spent 'inside' headphones and the music they create, I can honestly say I feel one thing. Tired. Hours of listening have made me truly appreciate just how intense an experience music played that close to your brain can be. All the more reason to get yourself a pair and all the more reason to make sure they are a decent pair.

No speaker can ever offer you the intimacy with your music that a good pair of headphones can. Songs you've heard a thousand times over will take on new life and reveal instruments you never knew existed. On the other hand, buy a grotty pair and you could limit musical enjoyment and wear out your ears.

However, as with all choices today, making the right one for you is never easy. Not only are the standard cord 'phones being upgraded and churned out at an alarming rate, we have infrared and now FM cordless. What's more, a lot of them are pretty good. So, how do you choose? Ultimately it comes down to personal taste. We've picked out our favourites, but that's all they are — our favourites. There is nothing to

say you won't have very different opinions, so it is essential you try before you buy.

I hope we have helped narrow things down for you, but don't just take our word for it — get out there and have a listen for yourself.

HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

To assist with the test I called upon the finely tuned ears of *DJ Choice* contributor, Dean Smith to assist. Each of the headphones were auditioned with a Pioneer PD-S505 Precision CD player. As well as this I added a QED headphone amplifier to the chain. Recordings listened to included:

FILA BRASILIA: *President Chimp Toe* from *Power Clown* on Pork 055

MADONNA: *Frozen* from *Ray of Light* on 9362-46847-2

THE PIANO: *Motion Picture Soundtrack* on 0777 7 88274 2 9 Virgin America

FRANK ZAPPA & THE MOTHERS: *Andy* from *One Size Fits All* on K59207(LP)

AQUA BASSINO: *Milano Bossa* from *Deeper EP* on F076

ROTARY CONNECTION: *Black Gold of the Sun* from *Journeys by DJ; Desert Island Mix* on JDJ CD15

TERRY CALLIER: *You Goin' Miss Your Candyman* from *The Best of Terry Callier* on Cadet on CD ARC 514

THE BEST IN THE TEST



BEYERDYNAMIC DT 831 £140

These are the headphones that will rekindle your love affair with music and '70s velour. An absolute pleasure to have in the home.



JVC HA-W200RF £70-£80

Virtually untraceable hiss and a warm, detailed sound make these the best FM cordless 'phones currently available. Probably.



GRADO SR125 £150.00

They may not be beauties, but these headphones will bring life, detail and a whole lot more to your tunes.



AUDIO TECHNICA ATH-M40 £120.00

Accurate to a fault, these are for those who want to hear the true recording.

COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE MODEL	AKG K 240 DF	AUDIO TECHNICA ATH-M40	BEYERDYNAMIC DT 431	BEYERDYNAMIC DT 831	GRADO SR125	JVC HA-W200RF
PRICE	£99.95	£120.00	£81.00	£140.00	£150.00	£70-£80
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	1 year	1 year	1 Year	1 year	1 year	1 year
WEIGHT	240g	250g	210g	295g	200g	280g
CORD LENGTH	3m	3.4m	2.5m	3m	2.13m	N/A
RANGE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	50m
OPEN BACK	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE MODEL	KOSS R/100	SENNHEISER HD 500	SENNHEISER RS 400	SONY MDR-605LP	VIVANCO 7980	VIVANCO 8180
PRICE	£99.95	£69.99	£79.95	£50.00	£80.00	£99.00
SOUND	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆	★★★★☆
GUARANTEE	Lifetime	2 years	2 years	1 year	1 year	1 year
WEIGHT	215g	210g	160g	145g	280g	240g
CORD LENGTH	3m	3m	N/A	3m	N/A	N/A
RANGE	N/A	N/A	100m	N/A	100m	100m
OPEN BACK	No	Yes	Semi	Yes	No	No

Five Stars

Paul Messenger explains why you should visit an independent

Why use a specialist hi-fi dealer? The short answer is because he knows one hell of a lot more about hi-fi than you do. And if you've gone to the trouble of picking up a specialist magazine on the subject, you're obviously interested in something rather more than a mini system from the nearest electrical superstore.

You've probably bought this magazine for one of two reasons. You're looking for advice (presumably unbiased and good) on choosing and using your hi-fi system, and/or you're checking out the ads to decide where to go and buy it.

The independent specialist dealer doesn't know everything, and he doesn't know much about you, but if music's an important part of your life, he's the only guy around who's able (and hopefully willing) to help you choose the equipment which will give you the best long term satisfaction.

Power of the Press

Dealers sometimes moan to me about the power of the press, and the disproportionate influence of its 'Best Buy' and multi-star ratings. Well, I've been in the press for twentysomething years, and still feel more ignorant than powerful.

The more I mess around with hi-fi gear, the more I become aware of our lack of real understanding of the subtleties involved, and the more I appreciate the importance of the dealer's skills and experience, in bringing together components so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

We hacks get paid to write words, often about components in isolation, because individual product reviews are still the staple diet of the press. They can sometimes provide a useful guide to the way a product performs, but only under the particular circumstances in which the review was conducted.

The hi-fi reviewer attempts, with varying

degrees of success, to evaluate a particular component, and find something interesting (and hopefully positive) to say about it. That's about the end of it, and it's on to the next product.

The magazine prints the review, and that very process magically confers a measure of authority. Experienced hi-fi enthusiasts, who read reviews over a period of years and try out various products themselves, soon start to realise the limitations of that approach. Some reviews are better than others, but none can get to grips with the real heart of the problem - whether a given product will improve your musical satisfaction, in your system and your room.

The Role of the Dealer

The dealer's role is very different, and potentially much more valuable. He has the chance to talk one-on-one. If he's good at his job, he'll use that opportunity to find out what you as an individual are looking (or listening) for.

His motivation is very different too. Sure he wants to make a sale. That's the lifeblood of any shop. But he also knows that if something he sells really does deliver long term satisfaction, there's a very good chance you'll come back again to see if he can repeat the trick some time in the future.

If you go into a shop and demand a particular CD player, on the basis that it got seven stars (out of five) in last month's magazines, the shop will probably simply take the line of least resistance and sell it to you. (Or switch-sell you to a similar price alternative, if he's fresh out of stock

For Value

specialist dealer if you are searching for real hi-fi satisfaction

of that particular flavour-of-the-month.)

If you go in and say you're looking for a CD player, and want his advice on what to choose, things are liable to become more interesting. The onus is now on the dealer to show what he can do. His first task is to ask the right questions to try and get some idea of what you might be after.

Asking the questions is the easy bit. The real skill comes in using the information to come up with a shortlist of likely contenders, and then conducting a demonstration so that you have a real chance to play a central role in the decision making process.

Putting together a successful hi-fi system might not be as difficult as it was twenty or thirty

"If music is an essential ingredient in your daily diet, you owe it to yourself to become a member of the discriminating minority."

years ago, but it's just as easy to make a mess of things. Put the 'wrong' combination of components together and it'll still sound a lot better than any cute little mini system package. It might even rate a five star review. But it won't match the potential of a carefully balanced and properly installed system, and it certainly won't cater for your own particular preferences and personality.

We British are notoriously indiscriminating consumers, at a mass market level at least. The majority of the population don't even bother to drive a car they're thinking of buying, never mind take the trouble to listen to hi-fi equipment.

The majority will therefore end up with hyperstore mediocrity, and hi-fi that's about as tasty as supermarket bread. But if music is an essential ingredient in your daily diet, you owe it to yourself to become a member of the discriminating minority.

You know full well that your music collection is as individual as your wardrobe, and just as

precious too, so it's worth taking the time and trouble to search out the dealer and equipment that will make that collection come alive, and give you a new buzz every time you play your favourite discs.

The independent specialist may not beat the chain store on price, but he continues to thrive in a hostile environment because real hi-fi is so much more than a matter of price. The people who work in these shops are themselves enthusiasts, often with many years of experience in meeting customer's needs, and the very necessary expertise to ensure that the whole thing is properly set up to deliver the best results.

The better the hi-fi, the more important it is to get the fine details right at the installation end of things, but even the least expensive equipment can be made to sound a whole lot better if good care is taken over the fine details - the support furniture, the cabling, the positioning of speakers and so on.

Without expert assistance even high class hi-fi can give mediocre results. With it you'll stand a very good chance of ending up with something rather more than a consumer durable - something which will be a source of considerable pleasure and genuine emotional satisfaction for decades to come.

I agreed to write this signed piece, irrespective of the specific sponsors, because I believe the independent specialist dealer plays a vital role in giving customers long term hi-fi satisfaction.

Paul Messenger

The specialist Dealers listed here are professional and enthusiastic.

Give your nearest a ring for a demonstration.

STAR QUALITIES

value for money	★★★★★
service	★★★★★
facilities	★★★★★
verdict	★★★★★

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216 Moulsham Street
01245 265245

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AUDIO DESIGNS
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Lakeside Retail Park
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Dansk International Furniture
World
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Rayleigh, Essex
RAYLEIGH HI-FI
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01268 779762

Southend-on-Sea
RAYLEIGH HI-FI
132/4 London Road
01702 435255

Uxbridge UXBRIDGE AUDIO
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01895 465444

MIDLANDS

Banbury OVERTURE
3 Church Lane
01295 272158

Birmingham SOUND ACADEMY
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01922 493499

Leicester CYMBIOSIS
6 Hotel Street
0116 262 3754

Northampton LISTEN INN
32 Gold Street, 01604 637871
Shrewsbury CREATIVE AUDIO
9 Dogpole 01743 241924

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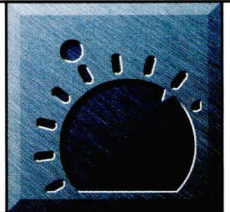
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ON TEST!



AMPLIFIERS

Alvin Gold (listening tests) and **Paul Miller** (lab tests) get their sources and speakers ready for the onslaught of 10 budget amplifiers in this month's *Hi-Fi Choice* Mega Test.

THE CAST LIST

AMC 3100A	£199.95	p81
Arcam Alpha 1	£229.90	p91
Cambridge Audio A500RC	£199.95	p83
Kenwood KAF-3010R	£179.95	p77
Marantz PM-48	£149.95	p79
NAD C320	£199.95	p85
Pioneer A-407R	£225.00	p93
Rotel RA971	£199.95	p87
Technics SU-A600mkIII	£199.95	p89
Token Audio	from £299.00	p95

GLOSSARY

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER: A complete amplifier, consisting of pre and power amplifiers in a single housing.

PREAMPLIFIER: The early stages of an amplifier, consisting of a volume control, source selector and tape monitor switching, sometimes including tone controls and/or the early gain stages.

POWER AMPLIFIER: The high-level circuit that boosts the output of the preamplifier to a level suitable for connecting to the loudspeakers.

BIWIRING: The use of separate power amplifiers to feed the bass units and tweeters of a loudspeaker.

TONE BYPASS SWITCH: A link that bypasses the tone control circuits (see Direct switch).

DIRECT SWITCH: Feeds the designated direct input past any tone and balance controls, and sometimes tape monitor stages direct to the volume control and power amplifier.

TAPE MONITOR: A feature that allows the user to hear the output of a tape recorder (off-tape if it is a three-head cassette deck) without interrupting the recording in progress.

The subject of this month's test is integrated amplifiers costing up to £350. In fact most of them cost £200 or less, and even the £350 model (from Token Audio) is available with a simpler finish at £300. The question that arises is this: at these prices, is it possible to buy an amplifier that really does justice to the ideals of high fidelity? There is always some room for doubt about the real meaning of this term, but if we take a pragmatic, common-sense view, the answer is simple: yes it is. Not in every case, of course, but surprisingly often, and certainly more often than in the immediate past. On the whole it is not advancing technology that allows this. It is the poor state of the world's economy, and the high Pound, which mean that imported amplifiers can be sold at prices that would have seemed out of the question only a few years ago. There are some outstanding bargains in this test, the Rotel model being as good an example as any. This increased competition has had the effect of galvanising indigenous manufacturers too, and there are also some very impressive deals from British producers such as the models in our group from Arcam and Token Audio.

At the risk of teaching granny to suck eggs, the purpose of any amplifier is very simple. It must



AMC 3100A p81



Arcam Alpha 1 p91



Cambridge Audio A500 p83

accept the low-level output of your source components and boost them to a level suitable for driving loudspeakers — and that's all. There has been a tendency for the amplifier to gather gadgets and controls of various kinds, but in practice all that is necessary is a means of adjusting the volume level, switching to select each of the various inputs available, and a mains on/off switch.

All the rest is window dressing, and although this may well be simple stuff to many readers, all the evidence is that for many others the message has not been

made forcefully enough. Tone and loudness controls feed a convenient fiction that their simplistic effect can even begin to address the peculiarly complex non-linearities of loudspeakers, rooms — and ears. There is more to be said in favour of some of the other gadgets such as speaker and headphone switching, tape monitoring and the like, but each one extracts a cost in sound quality at some level, and so do the various bypass switches used to supposedly ameliorate their effects. Remember this as you read through the reviews that follow.

DIRECT

BASS

TREBLE

BALANCE



Kenwood KAF-3010R p77



Marantz PM-48 p79



NAD C320 p85



Pioneer A-407R p93



Rotel RA971 p87



Technics SU-A600mkIII p89



Token Audio K50 p95

GROUP A BELOW £180

GROUP B £180-£220

GROUP C OVER £220

THE PRICE BANDS

We divide our candidates into groups based on price (see right). Each band is colour-coded as above.



HINTS & TIPS

Amplifiers need to be stretched before they fulfil themselves. They need running in (for maybe a week), and warmed up (typically for an hour). Amplifiers also sound best when used on proper supports, ideally with no other component on the same surface, or on top. If an amplifier must be stacked with other equipment, put it on top to ensure proper heat dissipation. If tone controls are fitted, set them to zero, and bypass them if possible. If there is a direct input switch, so much the better.

CD PLAYERS GROUP A

BELOW £180

The entry-level group in this test consists of two models, both well equipped and moderately powerful, and at first sight indistinguishable for all intents and purposes from the more expensive models in the group. They both serve to set a pattern for the fuller feature models that make up the bulk of this month's group, and indeed the larger part of the budget amplifier market as a whole, and help underline the principal paradox of hi-fi amplifiers as a whole, which is that as costs are driven down, you will find them becoming more and more fully equipped. The Kenwood KAF-3010R and the Marantz PM-48 both have a high feature count, reflecting their budget status.

Kenwood KAF-3010R	£179.95	p77
Marantz PM-48	£149.95	p79

CD PLAYERS GROUP B

£180-£200

The amplifiers in this middle group, which tip the scales at exactly £200, share little if anything else in common, though none of them can be described as minimum feature designs. There are still big differences between them, in power output and in their features. The reviews tell the story here, but one of the most obvious differences is that the AMC and NAD include remote control. There is also the little question of history, with the latest replacement from NAD for the amplifier that started the high performance budget amplifier revolution well over 20 years ago.

AMC 3100A	£199.95	p81
Cambridge A500RC	£199.95	p83
NAD C320	£199.95	p85
Rotel RA971	£199.95	p87
Technics SU-A600mkIII	£199.95	p89

CD PLAYERS GROUP C

OVER £200

Of all the groups in this test, this one best serves to illustrate the diversity on offer in the amplifier market. The Pioneer, for example, exemplifies the added feature approach: it has a full range of tone controls, speaker switching, and high-tech internal components, and also boasts remote control. Power output is moderate on paper, though it's unlikely you'll find it lacking in the real world. The alternative minimalist stripped-down approach is best exemplified here by the Token Audio design, which includes just the bare minimum of controls and facilities. The Arcam Alpha, meanwhile, sits in between, with one foot in each camp.

Arcam Alpha 1	£229.90	p91
Pioneer A-407R	£225.00	p93
Token Audio	from £299.00	p95

HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

The amplifiers were subject to the usual battery of tests, including a close physical examination, unsighted panel-based listening tests in a high-grade system chosen to extend the amps fully without being unrealistic electrically or sonically, hands-on listening using a range of speakers and CD players, and PM's computerised measurement test programme. Each player was thoroughly run in and warmed up prior to being auditioned, and kept running during the panel test runs to keep the AC mains condition consistent. Two days of panel testing included a number of repeats,

with no panel member knowing the identity of the amplifier on test, and with levels matched between test runs.

The system used for these tests included **Ruark Prologue One** loudspeakers for the unsighted tests and others including **Tannoy R1s** and **B&W CDM7SE** speakers for hands-on testing. The main CD player was an **Arcam Alpha 9**, but a **TAG McLaren** player was also pressed into service. Speaker cables were from **Nordost**, and interconnects were from **Ixos** (screened) for the panel tests, and included **Nordost** (unscreened) for the hands-on work.

THE LISTENING PANEL

This month's batch of celebs included:
 ● **John Bamford** (Pioneer)
 ● **Alan O'Rourke** (Ruark)
 ● **Keith Haddock** (REL)
 ● **David Gamble** (Mission)
 ● **Abbas Hussein** (Orelle Hi-Fi)
 ● **Geoff Hill** (GLL)
 ● **Guy Sergeant** (JPW Loudspeakers).
 Many thanks to the panel, industry luminaries one and all. Said panel's infatuation with the particular brand of cheese on toast dished up at the local Pizza Express is in danger of turning into an obsession.

WHAT MUSIC DID WE USE?

VICTOR FELDMAN: *Secret of the Andes* on Audiophile/JVC XR-0016-2
FRIEND 'N FELLOW: *Fly like an Eagle* on Purple Rose/TAG McLaren RUF1029
BEETHOVEN: *3rd mvt from Piano Sonata Opus 31 No 2* played by Alfred Brendel on Philips 438 134-2
BARTOK: *Agitato mvt from The Miraculous Mandarin* Budapest Festival Orchestra, Ivan Fisher (cond) on Philips 454 430-2
 A selection of other titles were used for hands on testing.

MISSION MISSION MISSION MISSION

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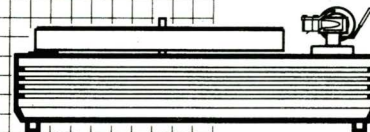
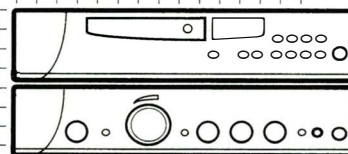
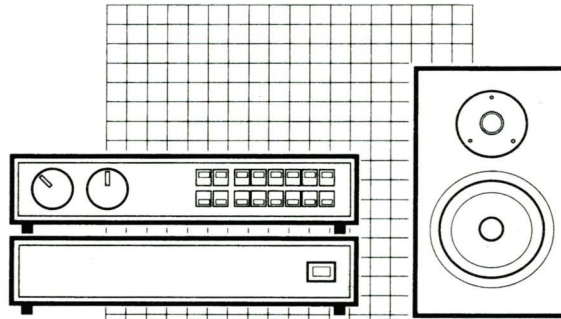
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KENWOOD KAF-3010R

The second least expensive amplifier in this test, the KAF-3010R is one of the larger and more impressive models tested. It has an IEC power output of 70 Watts per channel (64Hz – 12.5kHz, 0.7 per cent THD – no RMS figure is given).

The headline feature is the use of Linear TRAIT output transistors, a derivative of the TRAITR (Thermally Reactive Advanced Instantaneous Transistor) devices used in the last generation of Kenwood amplifiers which included a heat sensing mechanism on the main substrate to ensure optimum biasing as the device tracked varying music dynamics. But we found that TRAITR gave uneven results in practice under certain dynamic conditions. Fairly subtle changes in the transistor and a much needed name change are said to eliminate these anomalies.

The KAF-3010R features a remote control using a system handset, tone and balance controls, a loudness circuit, switching for two pairs of speakers, a headphone socket, and muting. In a concession to the sound first brigade, it also has a source direct feature which makes a bigger contribution to overall transparency than usual. The continuous rotary input selector selects from five inputs, including two tape circuits and a phono input. Bearing in mind that most people these days will have no use for the phono input, they will be left with just



‘The KAF-3010R also has a source direct feature which makes a bigger contribution to overall transparency than usual.’

four line level inputs (the tape circuits can double up for the purpose). Finally, just to rub home the impression of a lack of real flexibility where it counts, there is no tape monitor facility.

SOUND QUALITY

The tough Bartok piece from *The Miraculous Mandarin* elicited remarks such as the following: “Shades of Stockhausen present and correct. If it was louder it could become frightening”, a comment that fits the music well, and reflects favourably on the amplifier. Another described the orchestra as “laid out in front of me – this one images well, the

tension building as the piece moves on”. In the Beethoven sonata excerpt, however, the Kenwood was described as “small scale and a bit flat” and “light-weight”, though the general prognosis across the full range of musical extracts was positive, with mild criticisms of a “shouty, though still enjoyable” balance in the *Friend ‘n Fellow* song, and particular praise for strong timing and dynamics, especially in the percussive track.

The KAF-3010R failed to completely justify its good showing in the hands-on testing, especially with the throttles opened up more widely where the amplifier frequently sounded hard and unatmospheric with some chamber recordings, though it was happier with less dynamic material at moderate volume levels. Tried briefly with low sensitivity speakers, the Kenwood failed to cope convincingly, and although there were no obvious problems with low impedance loudspeakers, it is probably best to stick to reasonably sensitive designs, say 89dB/Watt in rooms of average size.

One of the larger models on test, the Kenwood boasts a host of features.

CONCLUSION

There were times when this amplifier shone, and it seems reasonable to suggest that the basic architecture is sound, but it is hamstrung in a way that prevents it working consistently over a wide volume range. Driven hard the sound flattens out and becomes dry and midband led. And, there is every facility imaginable except the ones that would be of most use – extra line inputs especially. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£179.95

As so often with amplifiers, impressive technology doesn't undo the harm done by an over-complex preamp, and this shows in an amplifier that works well at low levels but which falls rather flat at higher ones.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Kenwood Electronics UK Ltd, Kenwood House, Dwight Road, Watford, Herts WD1 8EB (01923) 816444



THE LAB REPORT

This amplifier displays some unusual foibles that might just have an impact on its sonic performance. On paper, its specification looks both sturdy and straightforward. For example, Kenwood's 70W/100W rating is quickly exceeded at 95W/145W into 8/4 Ohm loads, increasing to 131W/181W under dynamic conditions. However – and here's the first foible – Kenwood's in-built current-limiting switches the KAF-3010R off if its output exceeds 8.0A, even momentarily. Hence the 181W limit into 4 Ohms, falling to 92W into

Hold back by protection circuitry.



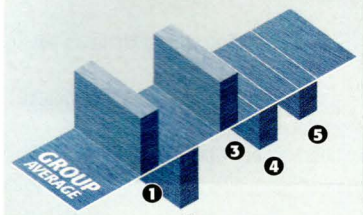
2 Ohms and 64W/5msec (48W/10msec) into 1 Ohm. The amplifier is surely capable of more, but the 'big brother' protection circuit refuses to let it try!

Then there's distortion. Traditional steady-state tests show a remarkably uniform performance, with distortion (mainly an innocuous 2nd harmonic) holding constant at 0.03 per cent. However, looking at the dynamic profile of the amplifier's output, we see that distortion climbs rapidly from 2V to 7V output – regardless of the speaker load. So, into 8 Ohms, dynamic distortion climbs from 0.005 to greater than 0.1 per cent over 0.5–6W, which is equivalent to 1–12W into a 4 Ohm load. This sort is unusual but it means that big swings in distortion will be experienced right through the vital, 'early Watts' of the amplifier's range. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

This amplifier looks powerful but its high output impedance and voltage-dependent distortion could make for unpredictable listening with some speakers. Watch out for big swings throughout the 'early Watts' of the amp's range.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	40%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-35%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	35%
4 NOISE	-25%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	-20%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	70W	95W
Distortion 20Hz–20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.06%	0.03%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	200mV	311mV

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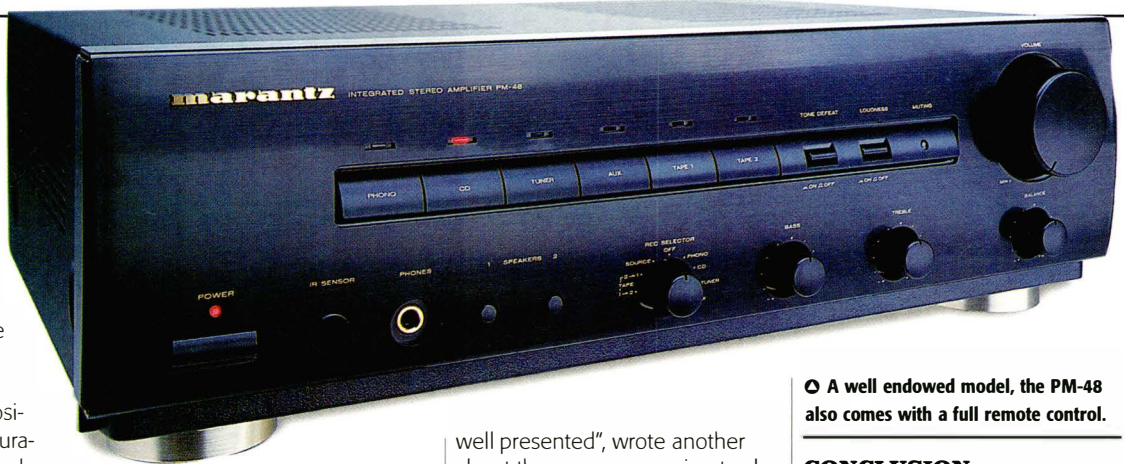


MARANTZ PM-48

With a retail price of £150, this is the least costly amplifier in the group. Power output (50 Watts per channel) and the features count (see later) don't betray the cost savings, the only really obvious external evidence for which is the plasticky front panel. The controls, however, feel light and positive, and the circuit configuration is said to be simple and symmetrical.

The PM-48 is pretty well endowed in the features dept. The input count includes two for tape, three other line inputs and a phono input. Tone controls can be bypassed with the obligatory tone defeat switch, and there is also a loudness switch, independent switching for two pairs of speakers and a record selector which can be set to any input, source or off. Source means that the tape outputs reflect the setting of the main input selectors, and the 'off' setting offers a performance edge when the tape feed is not required. It is also possible to monitor off tape from either tape circuit, or to dub in both directions between two recorders. Rear panel hardware includes Marantz D Bus system control sockets and two pairs of 4mm loudspeaker binding posts, blanked off ready for the ministrations of your Swiss army knife.

Last but not least, the PM-48 comes with a rather full



'The PM-48's music making is full of incident and detail, with strong stereo imagery, especially in the lateral plane'

system remote control, which adds muting to the basic control set, but be warned: this one is not for granny. Come to that I too found it rather intimidating, and in the end decided I could do without the brain strain.



SOUND QUALITY

The panel clearly thought this was one of the better amplifiers on test, and the author agrees. "A slightly laid-back performer", wrote one about the percussion piece, "but compensated for by its ability to reveal the elements of the mix very well". "Dynamics are

well presented", wrote another about the same percussion track, where a laid-back balance might have been expected to predispose against the Marantz, and he also wrote of the Beethoven sonata as sounding "realistic". A third wrote tongue in cheek of the Bartok as "quite a nasty piece of work that emotionally reminds me of *The Exorcist*". So what did he think of the Marantz's ability to cope with this nasty piece of work? "Good". Of the Brendel recording he was equally pithy. Following a number of inferior presentations, he simply remarked "Brendel's back!". There was one dissenter who felt that the PM-48 was "leaden", but overall it was clear that the panel liked this amplifier, which is reflected in the high panel test score.

The hands-on testing also proceeded well. Although not the most solid and dynamic amplifier on test, the PM-40's music making is full of incident and detail, with strong stereo imagery, especially in the lateral plane, though the bass sounded a little lumpy and 'slow' with some of the test material.

● A well endowed model, the PM-48 also comes with a full remote control.

CONCLUSION

The price almost says it all. The PM-48 is well equipped, arguably a little too well, and it sounds attractive, detailed and expressive, even impassioned. Its main limitation other than a plasticky finish is a somewhat lumpy, slow pass bass, but this will probably be unnoticed when used with appropriately priced compact loudspeakers like the Tannoy R1 (an improved M1) used in the hands-on testing. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£149.90

It's all down to price, an excellent midband and a sensible feature set, which go a long way to offsetting the somewhat lumpy bass.

FIVE YEAR GUARANTEE

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

THE LAB REPORT

This looks to be the more impressive of our two budget contenders, despite its lower 30W rating. On the lab bench I coaxed a continuous 50W into 8 Ohms, up to which point distortion remained very low indeed at typically 0.001 per cent through the midband. This increased to no more than 0.02 per cent at maximum output at high treble frequencies. Noise is adequately low at -85dB (re. 1W/8 Ohms) while the 200mV input sensitivity, low DC offsets and 11.5V input overload margins

● The PM-48's power output increases smoothly under dynamic conditions.



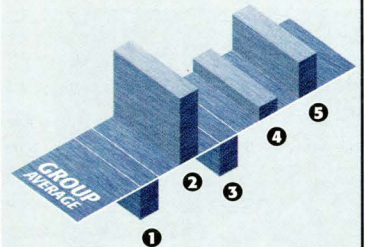
are all par for the course. Only the poor 2.3dB channel balance error is disappointing, thanks to Marantz's selection of volume control, but it's conceivable that other samples might be slightly better than this.

Otherwise, the PM-48's power output increases quite smoothly under dynamic conditions from 74W into 8 Ohms to 129W and then 191W into 4 Ohm and 2 Ohm loads, respectively. The maximum 16.9A current is realised into 1 Ohm for periods not exceeding 10msec, despite evidence of VI-limiting. Any 'transients' exceeding 20msec are cut short at 35W/1 Ohm (or 5.9A) by the PM-48's protection circuitry. This is a sensible precaution, in case the user accidentally shorts the speaker terminals while the amplifier is busily beating out a tune. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

Though the 30W Marantz is ostensibly less powerful than the 70W Kenwood, in practice it's far better suited to a wider variety of different speakers. Distortion remains low at up to 50W into 8 Ohms, typically at 0.001 per cent.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-20%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	45%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-20%
4 NOISE	10%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	25%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	30W	50W
Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.005%	0.008%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	150mV	195mV

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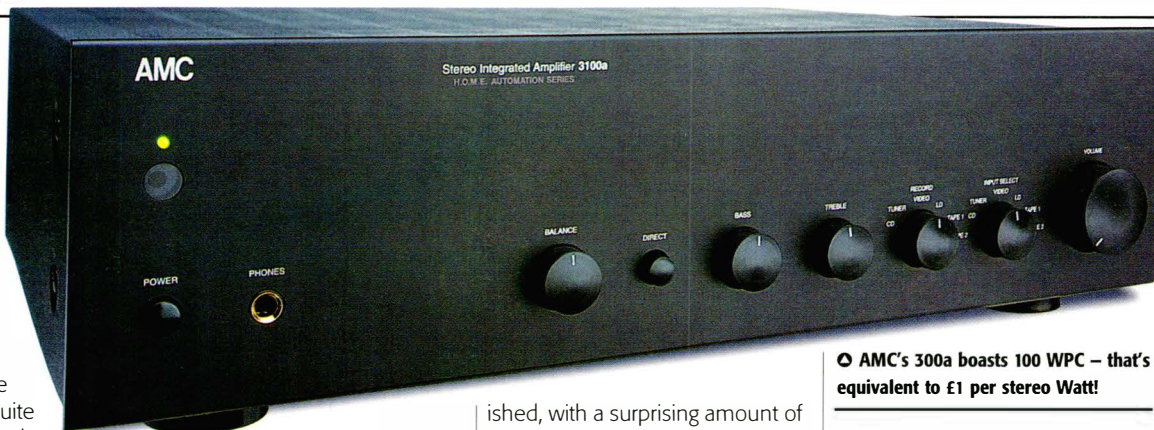
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AMC 3100a

AMC has carved itself a niche as a supplier of high value budget amplifiers, solid state and also valve powered. Although rated at 100 Watts per channel, and with a 30 amp peak current capability, the 3100a should be able to drive any reasonable, and quite a few unreasonable loud-speaker loads without breaking into a sweat. The selling price is £200, which is just £1 per stereo Watt – that speaks of a bygone age. The specifications include tone controls which can be bypassed using a front panel switch, and independent record and listen selectors. The amp accommodates four line inputs and two tape circuits, either of which can be monitored, and the preamp and power amp are connected via external removable links, enhancing flexibility. The 3100a also comes with remote control that allows the volume to be adjusted, and inputs selected.

There was a major construction flaw on the test sample, namely an extended mounting screw through the toroidal transformer which stops just a few millimetres short of the top plate. If the screw was to touch the top panel, perhaps because something heavy was stood on top, the case would form a shorted turn around the transformer, which would result in a substantial current flow and



“The AMC strutted its stuff, with the panel commenting on the amplifier’s ‘gusto’ and ‘genuine’ dynamics at last.”

heat buildup: it is not clear that this would blow a fuse immediately. Clearly the amp could not have gained its CE safety certification as received, but to try and ascertain whether this was a one-off, a second sample was obtained without specifying the problem, which was identical. The problem was reported back to the manufacturer



and in the end the decision was made to shorten the screws on current stock (none of which had been dispatched to dealers at the time), and to ensure that all future products will use shorter screws.

In other respects, the AMC is rather crudely built and fin-

ished, with a surprising amount of point to point wiring which most designers attempt to minimise to improve consistency.

SOUND QUALITY

Making sure the top panel was unobstructed, the AMC strutted its stuff, with the panel commenting on the amplifier’s ‘gusto’, and ‘genuine dynamics at last’. The panel was slightly more ambivalent about the other qualities that it brought to the table. Features of the AMC that were singled out repeatedly, though not necessarily universally, included complaints of a strident and sometimes sibilant treble, notably in the percussion and piano tracks, both of which draw large momentary power peaks, and of a ‘muggy’ midband. The piano track was declared ‘thick’ by one and ‘a little jangly’ and ‘sat upon’ by another.

The author too felt that the AMC lacked class and subtlety, and there were inconsistencies in the sound. It generally favoured material that was not too percussive, though there was no power shortage with any of the test speakers. The reasons for this remain obscure.

● AMC’s 300a boasts 100 WPC – that’s equivalent to £1 per stereo Watt!

CONCLUSION

With the construction related shortcoming addressed (look for a non-protruding centre screw on the transformer, which is clearly visible through the top panel cooling vents) this is a reasonably attractive proposition, especially for those people with very large spaces to fill with sound, or for those who are intent on falling out with their neighbours in a big way. Refined it ain’t. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
BUILD	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
PRICE	£199.95

■ The 3100a sets a marker for value for money that few will be able to equal, and this is simply an astonishingly powerful amp at the price, but sound quality is firmly in the budget league, with some inconsistencies in sound with different music types.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Tangent Acoustics UK, 115 New London Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 0QT
☎ (0500) 828620

THE LAB REPORT

On paper, AMC’s 3100A seems to be a very capable performer. After all, what other amplifier in this test can match its prodigious 140W and 235W power output into eight Ohms and four Ohms, respectively? This increases still further to 174W, 312W and 471W into eight, four and two Ohms under dynamic conditions, the latter equivalent to 15.3A of current. So where’s the catch? In practice, this power is not given entirely willingly, judging by the ‘creeping’ distortion that not only increases with decreasing load – as

● Lots of power – but at a price.



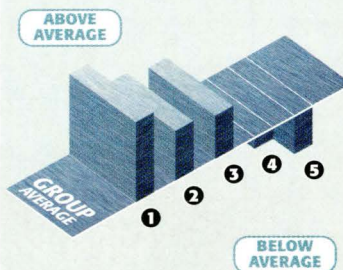
expected – but also slowly escalates with increasing output. For example, 100W/eight Ohms is achieved at 0.018 per cent distortion but this increases to 0.06 per cent at 100W/four Ohms and 0.25 per cent at 100W/two Ohms. As a result, momentary bursts into one Ohm achieve 650W (25.5A for 5msec) but are limited to 108W (equivalent to 10.4A) for longer, 10-20msec, ‘transients’.

This type of progressive VI-limiting is just as easily caused by a limitation in the amplifier’s power supply (especially the transformer) as the power amp section itself. This aside, and whatever other distortion might colour the 3100A’s performance, it remains sufficiently powerful to grapple with any budget loudspeaker you’re likely to happen across. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

All specifications are comfortably exceeded, but AMC’s transformer mounting could still represent a safety issue. The possibility that it might effectively short its secondaries and draw a huge current from the wall, remains a genuine worry.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	55%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	35%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	30%
4 NOISE	-5%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	-25%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	100W	140W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.03%	0.01%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	200mV	216mV

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CAMBRIDGE AUDIO A500RC



A sleek and rather attractive slimline design, the A500RC owes something to the A3i (HFC 167) that preceded it. The fascia is an attractive alloy extrusion, and the controls include a large central volume knob, the remaining oval shaped controls being smaller and neater than with previous models, though they still feel somewhat clunky. The amplifier has a very straightforward control set which includes tone controls and a 'direct' bypass switch, balance, an input selector and a tape monitor switch which answers the question of whether the A500RC can monitor off tape when recording. Rear panel stuff includes two sets of good quality terminals capable of accepting four mm plugs for bi-wiring. It also comes with a remote which operates just the volume control on the amp, though it will also control the basic features of a complete Cambridge Audio system. Power output is specified as 50 Watts per channel, with a very small increase in output into lower impedance loads, which

“The panel’s score rather understated the musical integrity of this model based on subsequent hands-on testing.”

suggests that the eight Ohm figure is about optimum.

Technically the amp has evolved significantly from earlier Cambridge designs. All stages, including the output stage, have full voltage regulation (not zener diodes), and the main power supply uses an overrated toroidal transformer and multiple small value electrolytic smoothing caps. A preamp output has been added to drive an outboard power amp (the P500, cost £150) in a bi-amplified system.

SOUND QUALITY

The panel’s score rather understated the musical integrity of this model based on subsequent hands-on testing. By most standards this is

an ambitious budget amp, at home with revealing loudspeakers and sources alike, and which has a strong sense of drive and compulsive timing – the Beethoven track was chosen partly to illustrate just this point – and the A500RC did particularly well here, though it was not as explicitly detailed as some.

This was not a universal view. One panellist described the A500RC as “finely detailed” with “plenty of drive”, “good punch and dynamics” in the percussion track. From others, however, there were complaints about the A500’s tonality, which was described as “a shade dark and muted” and as “warm, comfortable and easy on the ear, but lacking in sparkle – like your favourite old Roberts Radio”.

The piano recording was deemed to offer “impressive stereo, L-R and front to back” by one, while another described it as “pretty dramatic, and with good depth (of image)”. Another, though, felt that the amp “has a forward quality, and hardens up relatively early” as the music swelled in volume.

CONCLUSION

The panel test loudspeaker was chosen in part for its easy drive characteristics, and this turned out

to be fortuitous in the case of the A500RC since it produced barely a squawk with a pair of low impedance (electrostatic) loudspeakers which were briefly connected up as a test of load tolerance. Stick with eight Ohm loudspeakers, and preferably relatively sensitive ones (say, 88dB/Watt or better if you have an average size room and reasonably normal loudness requirements). In other respects this is an amplifier with clearly above average sound quality. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★

BUILD ★★★★★

VALUE ★★★★★

PRICE £199.95

■ Slim, attractive amplifier which has a problem with low impedance and/or reactive loudspeakers, and a slightly dark tonal balance, though it has excellent timing and reproduces most music with conviction.

■ ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Richer Sounds, Gallery Court, Hankey Place, London SE1 4BB

(0171) 940 2222



THE LAB REPORT

Cambridge clearly states that the A500 is optimised for speakers of 6-16 Ohm impedance, and for very good reason. In practice, we find the amplifier able to sustain 45W into eight Ohms, increasing to 49W and 88W under dynamic conditions into eight and four Ohms, respectively. Nevertheless, if the load momentarily dips below four Ohms, for example, the Philips-based power output stage quickly collapses, leading to a maximum capacity of just 3.2W into two Ohms and 1.2W into one Ohm. In this instance, it’s absolutely vital

○ The Cambridge Audio is optimised for speakers of 6-16 Ohm impedance.



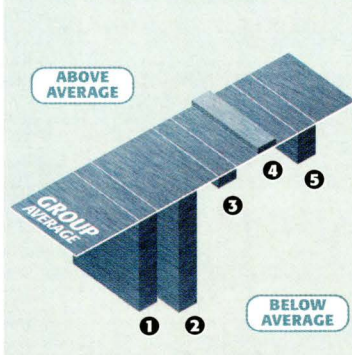
to stick with sensitive speakers offering a nominal eight Ohm load. If you are a budding DJ, never – and I mean never – attempt to drive two sets of speakers in parallel (i.e. two speakers on each socket).

Ironically, the A500 has an exceptionally low 0.008 Ohm output impedance, helping it remain immune from the variations in impedance imposed by those speakers it is capable of driving! Noise, too, is very low indeed at -89dB (re. 1W/eight Ohms) and would ordinarily earn the A500 a bolder showing in the ‘Noise’ bargraph. In this instance, however, all four remaining amplifiers in this group are skewed by the miraculously low noise achieved by NAD’s C320. So, the A500 shows great potential provided your choice of speakers are no more challenging than cotton wool. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

This early sample may fail to meet its rated specification, but it’s the inability to tackle tricky speakers that proves its Achilles’ heel. Stick with sensitive speakers offering a nominal eight Ohm load. Never attempt to drive two speakers in parallel!

- 1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT -60%
- 2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE -75%
- 3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION -5%
- 4 NOISE 5%
- 5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY -20%

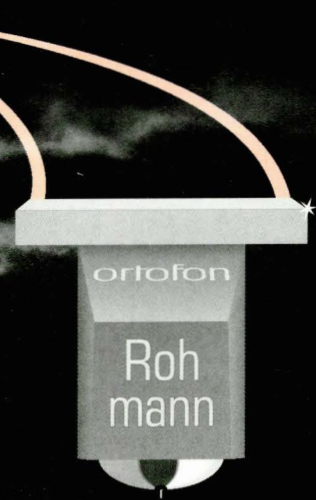


SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	50W	45W
Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.02%	0.09%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	250mV	228mV

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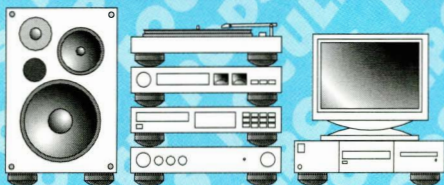


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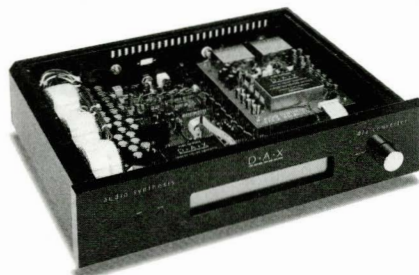
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NAD C320

The C320 is billed as the true successor to the NAD3020, the model that virtually invented the killer budget amplifier as long ago as 1977, and made NAD's reputation. Somehow NAD has managed to avoid topping its original, and over the years there have been a number of pretenders to the 3020's legendary status. The C320 is the most recent of these, and stakes the strongest claim so far.

The C320 retains the grey facia and the control set is not too dissimilar: the phono input has disappeared, though a line input labelled 'disc' remains which can be used with a matching outboard phono stage (PP1, £39.95). Familiar features including switchable high level limiting (soft clipping) and externally accessible pre output/main input sockets. Like most NADs, tone controls are retained, with a bypass switch. The NAD also has a headphone socket, and the amp is remote controllable, using a system handset.

The 3020's build quality and consistency were distinctly below par, but the new amp is certainly well built using good quality components on a well made PC board, a substantial toroidal transformer and a minimum of point to point wiring. Input switching is by vacuum relays, a welcome refinement, and the design features Class A



“It is surprisingly powerful, with an unusual consistency as the volume is raised within reasonable limits.”

driver op-amps. The 3020's legendary ability to cope with virtually any load has been addressed using Impedance Matching Circuitry (ISC), which minimises feedback requirements, yet allows the amplifier to generate 40 Watts RMS continuous output, about 3dB more than its predecessor.

SOUND QUALITY

For all the external and internal changes that have been made, the experience of listening to the NAD C320 is a comfortingly familiar one. Sure, it is a little crisper and drier than the sometimes lush sounding 3020, but it has an attractive blend of qualities, being both informative and relaxed which

sits well with comparably priced sources and loudspeakers. It is also surprisingly powerful, with an unusual consistency as the volume is raised within reasonable limits. At high volume levels, the NAD sounds very big and three-dimensional, a good result for such a low cost amp.

The panel gave the NAD a moderately strong overall score, with some complaints of blandness and excessive warmth from a couple of listeners, actually a criticism better levelled at the test speakers. It was described as “open and detailed” and with “good bass weight” by others (all seven panellists heard this amplifier in three separate presentations, and once in its role as the ‘reference’ amplifier). One thought it offered a “great sense of atmosphere and pin-sharp imaging, with a vibrant sense of timbre that sounded very natural in the percussion excerpt”. Strong dynamics were remarked on consistently, yet there was a hint of softness, and a mild defocusing of fine detail, making this amplifier something of a mailed fist in a velvet glove.

○ NAD has kept tradition afloat with its trademark grey facia.

CONCLUSION

The NAD is an interesting amplifier with bottle and finesse, detail and approachability. It would not disgrace itself in the company of more expensive amplifiers, and with a strong feature set, notably remote control and the ability to drive headphones, this is a great budget buy – but leave the soft clipping switch off unless you're giving a party and your speaker voice coils are really at risk.

Recommended. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£199.95

■ A worthy son of a famous ancestor that combines civilised performance which is entirely appropriate for modestly priced systems, with fine quality and finish – NAD 3020 owners take note!

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ The Audio Club, Adastral House, 401-405 Nether Street, London N3 1QS
☎ (01296) 482017

THE LAB REPORT

Having checked and checked again, I am bound to report that the C320's noise is exceptionally low, within the top one per cent of all integrated amplifiers, in fact. Its 1W/8 Ohm figure of -99dB is lower than most amplifiers can achieve relative to two-thirds or even full output power, though with this reduction in noise comes the increased chance of exposing hitherto 'hidden' distortions like RFI. Indeed, it's not uncommon to discover that very low-noise amplifiers can sound rather hard or unforgiving in some systems as these esoteric distortions are unmasked. Under ideal circumstances, however, it means the C320 will be able to realise the full dynamic range of your CD player, for example.

The C320 should also wrestle most choices of speakers into submission with



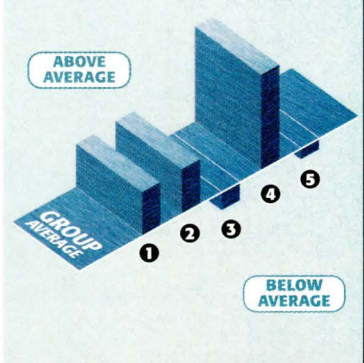
○ The NAD has exceptionally low noise.

its substantial 21.5A reserve of current, this falling only slightly to 19.4A or 377W/1 Ohms over 10msec. Under dynamic, music-like conditions, the C320 will sustain up to 139W into 8 Ohms and 243W/353W into 4/2 Ohms, respectively. The +2.4dB jump from 8 to 4 Ohms is very significant and with the comparatively weak 0.6dB increase under continuous conditions (95W to 105W), suggests the amplifier has a very loosely regulated power supply. This is simply an observation – no criticism is implied. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

The barchart indicates this amplifier's healthy power output and speaker tolerance but the shifts in distortion with frequency and power mark it down in this category. It also suggests a very loosely regulated power supply.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	30%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	30%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-10%
4 NOISE	65%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	-5%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	40W	90W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.03%	0.014%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	165mV	376mV

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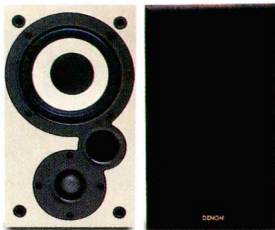
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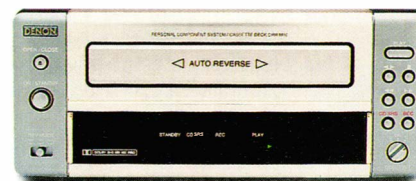
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ROTEL RA971



It may seem incredible for a brand known for quality budget electronics, but which steers clear of the real barrel scraping stuff, that this £200 model is the most expensive of Rotel's three integrated amplifiers. The power output of 70 Watts per channel is even more surprising given that these are real-world Watts, backed by ample reserves of current, and that the amplifier is capable of delivering the goods into almost anything short of a short circuit. Incredulity turns to astonishment when the insides turn out to be built to the kind of standards that really belong on something with a £300 price tag.

Resources haven't exactly been lavished on the exterior decorations, but it looks neat enough, and the faceplate is an aluminium extrusion, not a plastic moulding. Internally, the RA971 boasts such refinements as a twin mirror image channel layout, and selected 'audiophile' components, including slit foil reservoir capacitors (a real coup at this price) and a Burr-Brown IC line stage (probably cheaper than a discrete line stage).

"It is capable of playing at virtually any volume and into virtually any loudspeaker load while retaining its poise."

The feature count includes six inputs: two tape circuits but no phono input, with independent record and listen selectors. Tone controls are included, along with a tone off switch, but not a full direct facility because the volume control is of the split friction coupled type. This provides a rough and ready means of adjusting channel balance while avoiding the degradation endemic in standard balance circuits. Furthermore, the tape monitor control can be left switched 'off, further improving sound quality marginally. The Rotel even manages to include two sets of 4 mm binding post speaker terminals, one switchable from the front panel, which is invaluable if headphones are to be used.

SOUND QUALITY

The score was average across three runs, with little variation between listeners or test runs, but there are reasons to believe that the tests didn't stretch this amplifier fully. In particular, it is capable of playing at virtually any volume and into virtually any loudspeaker load while retaining its poise. When you hear this amplifier strutting its stuff at window rattling volume or at something more reasonable, the Rotel retains its poise and consistency. Even at low volume levels where some amplifiers sound annoying, it is possible to follow the path of a complex musical argument with ease.

Another reason this amplifier may have underachieved on panel tests is that it is not always the most likeable sounding amp with simple material, but it more than makes up for this when the music becomes dense and difficult. The Bartok was a particularly good test bed for this view, and sure enough it yielded such comments as "the most frightening rendition by far – it's a complex piece....that suits this amp", though there was some criticism of a "hazy" quality and, as another put it, "this amp struggles

○ The Rotel's neat fascia is built on an extruded aluminium face-plate.

to extract the....detail from the recording. A slightly dissatisfying performance" he concluded.

CONCLUSION

Maybe, but this could equally be a criticism of the panel test speakers, and certainly there was little evidence of any obvious haziness or loss of detail with other speakers (mainly from B&W and Tannoy). There are lots of civilised Watts on offer here from an amplifier that rattles and rolls well above its price point – Best Buy. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£199.95

■ This is what value is all about: an amplifier that offers sacks full of Watts, a complete indifference to alternative loudspeaker loads, and a civilised, even refined sound quality.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

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

THE LAB REPORT

This may be one of the slimmest amplifiers in our test but its incredible power output belies these modest proportions. Under dynamic conditions, the RA-971 is capable of sustaining 126W, 223W, 366W and 494W (equivalent to 22.2A over 10msec or 24.5A over 5msec) into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads, respectively. This makes the RA-971 the most load tolerant amplifier in our survey. In all probability, it's one of the most capable – if not the most capable – £200 amplifier at driving difficult or insensitive speakers. Whatever your choice, the

○ The RA971 is the most load tolerant amplifier in this month's test!



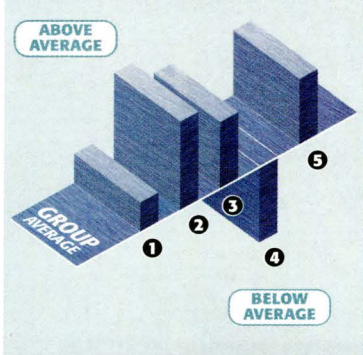
RA-971 cannot fail but hammer home its musical message.

Neither is the RA-971 to be found significantly lacking in any other area. Sure enough, the -83dB A-wtd noise figure (re. 1W/8 Ohms) might stand some improvement, but the low 0.001-0.007 per cent distortion achieved right across the audioband (at all power levels) is unusually impressive. The amplifier's low 0.015 Ohm output impedance is also good news as is the symmetrical circuit layout which, among other things, helps keep stereo separation high right through the treble octaves. All these features – including the moderate 30mVDC offset – have been distilled from earlier Rotel amplifiers, so it looks as if the company is sticking with a design that's proven itself over many years. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

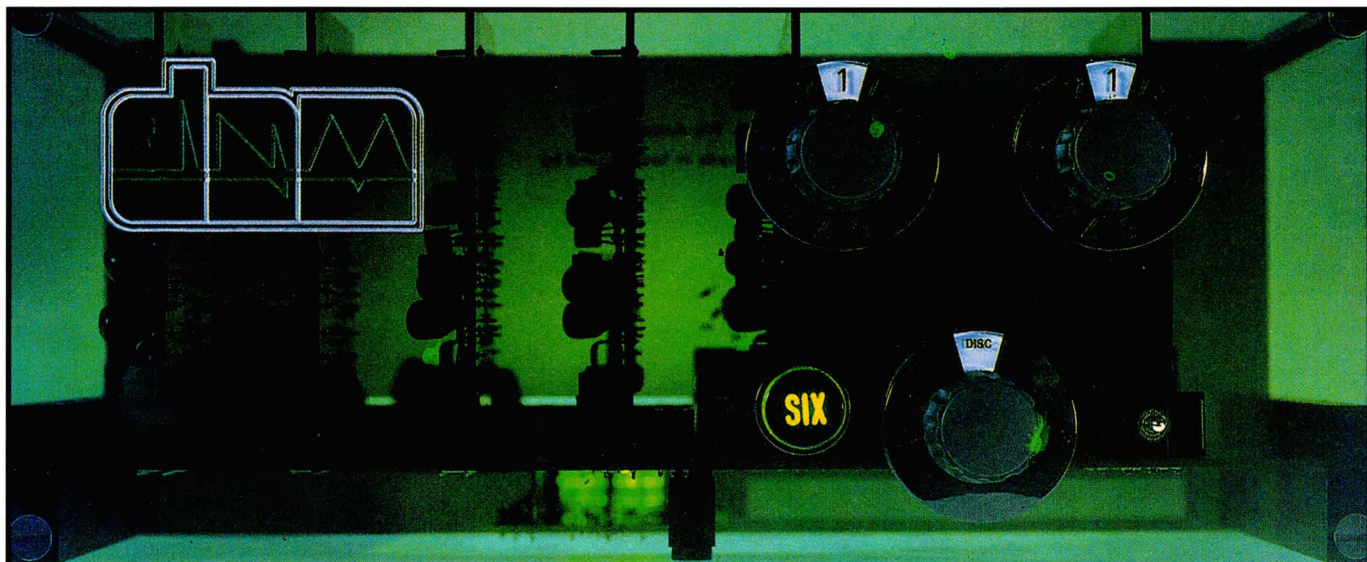
This is the best balanced result within this price group: a combination of high power, high current and consistently low distortion. Possibly the most capable £200 amplifier at driving difficult or insensitive loud-speaker loads.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	20%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	60%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	45%
4 NOISE	-50%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	45%



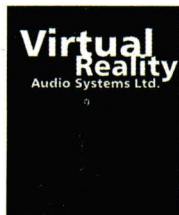
SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Continuous Power Output, 8ohm	70W	90W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8ohm	0.03%	0.005%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	150mV	192mV



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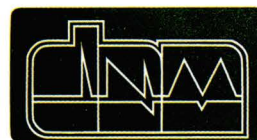
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TECHNICS SU-A600MK3

This new amplifier from the Technics stable follows broadly the pattern established by most of the Far Eastern sourced amplifiers in that it is fully equipped, in this case with bass and treble controls, a balance control, independent switching for two pairs of speakers and a tone defeat switch. The SU-A600MK3 can field two tape decks in total, and monitor from either, and headphones can be connected. In addition to the two tape circuits, there are three line inputs and a moving magnet phono input. Remote control link sockets are fitted to allow control via a Technics system handset, but the amplifier itself has no remote control capability of its own.

The power rating is a modest 37 Watts per channel from Technics' proprietary MOS Class AA output stage. MOS refers to Technics variant on MOSFET devices, and Class AA is designed to emulate the benefits of Class A operation, namely elimination of zero cross distortion, without the cost and complexity of true Class A operation, which would have put up the price of the amplifier several times over. Other cost saving measures include a thermostatically controlled cooling fan, which allows use of smaller heatsinks at the cost of audible noise if the fan cuts in – a measure borrowed



“According to the panel, the best features of this amplifier were its pace and dynamics: it really drives the music along.”

from mini-system practice. Unlike many previous Technics models, this one is fitted with UK standard blanked off 4 mm binding posts and although the front panel is plasticky, the overall effect is of a well considered quality product.

SOUND QUALITY

The Technics was heard on three occasions by the panel, which yielded two low scores and one maverick high score, but this last was at the first test of the day, and experience teaches that this one is not to be taken too seriously.

According to the panel, the best features of this amplifier were its pace and dynamics: it really drives the music along. Comments such

as “open, clean and exciting” and “quite fast – almost frightening” greeted the percussion track from one listener, and another described the same piece in almost identical terms. Nevertheless, there was a persistent feeling that the Technics lacked weight, leading to a ‘flat’ orchestral sound, and a lack of power in the left hand piano playing, and that the amplifier was on the whole a little dull and shut in. There were also some criticisms of the midband. The Friend and Fellow track for example came across as “hard and shouty at times”, and the piano was “slightly unnatural”.

The hands-on listening tended to confirm the negative elements identified above, and consistently this amplifier sounded grainy and opaque, though it was regularly scored as bold and dynamic. The inevitable result was coarse instrumental textures and a lack of separation in the orchestral parts, which make listening unrewarding, even tiring in the long haul. Stereo depth information was often rather undifferentiated in the depth plane, although there was no lack of left-right separation.

◉ This Technics can field two tape decks and monitor from either of them.

CONCLUSION

There is a persistent, almost paradoxical character to this amplifier that once identified is hard to overlook. It is certainly bold and well projected, and it was consistent in sound whether the volume was set a whisper or a roar. At the same time, the amplifier sounded coarse textured and grainy, even congested at times, and there were significant losses of ambience and other information. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★☆☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£199.95

Attractive and well equipped amplifier has plenty of real world power (despite a modest power rating) but its ability to kick butt is not matched to an equivalent level of subtlety or fine detail.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ Panasonic UK Ltd, Panasonic House, Willoughby Road, Bracknell, Berks RG12 8FP.
☎ (0990) 357357

THE LAB REPORT

It is rare to discover an amplifier's frequency response that's less than flat through the audioband these days, though I still take the trouble to check. In this instance, the SU-A600MK3 has a slightly droopy treble: -0.4dB down at 10kHz and a full -1.6dB at 20kHz. This is well outside the +0.0/-0.3dB specification laid down in Technics' literature and probably explains the slightly dull sound reported by Alvin's panel. Engage the tone controls (even with the knobs in their default or 'zero' position)

◉ A load-tolerant budget amplifier, holds distortion below 0.01 per cent.



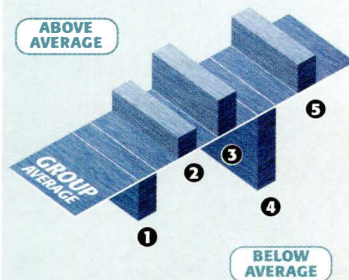
and the response becomes more irregular still, so I'd advise the tone defeat switch to be left on (i.e. in the 'out' position) when listening critically.

In other respects, it's another surprisingly load-tolerant budget amplifier. Rated at 45W/8 Ohms, it actually achieves 55W which increases to 76W 127W, 173W and 181W (or 13.5A) under dynamic conditions into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm respectively. Sure enough, Rotel's RA971 still has more beef, but the Technics' amplifier is singularly adept at holding distortion below 0.01 per cent under these dynamic conditions, whether driving 8, 4 or 2 Ohm loads. Ordinarily, an amplifier's distortion will increase with decreasing load impedance as a matter of course, so the SU-A600mk3 is highly unusual in this respect. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

Distortion is exceptionally low through midrange frequencies but increases through the treble and exceeds the basic specification. The response, meanwhile, drops away at HF. It has a slightly droopy treble, contributing to the dull sound reported by the panel.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-25%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	15%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	25%
4 NOISE	-50%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	20%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Continuous Power Output, 8ohm	45W	55W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8ohm	0.01%	0.03%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	150mV	185mV

Musical Instruments

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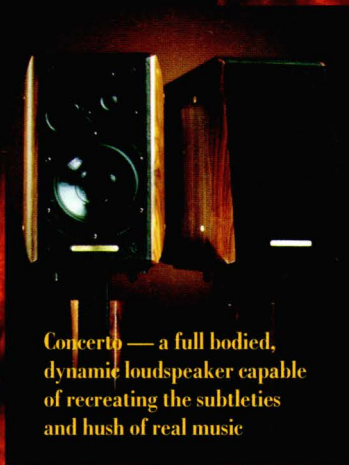
Homage, a unique lute-shaped speaker with the strong tonal personality of a Guarneri violin.

Guarneri was a 17th century Cremonese master violin maker whose instruments were intensely sculpted acoustic masterpieces characterised by a unique ability to combine tonal strength and full bodied sound with sweetness.

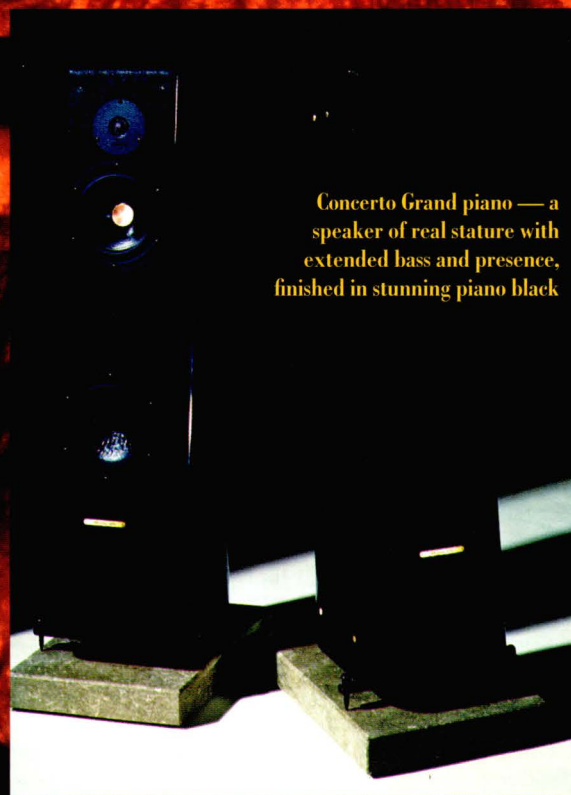
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Baby of this family is the **Concertino**. Its cabinet with solid walnut sides, insulated with non-resonant material brings new meaning to the expression 'substantial'. Ken Kessler reviewing the Concertino (HFN&RR 3/96) referred to it as 'a small speaker for grown-ups' and concluded that 'it's one of the least expensive introductions yet to the joys of "real hi-fi"'. What Hi-Fi (8/96) wrote of the Concertino: 'considering their size they deliver bass of stupendous power, speed and accuracy'. The bigger **Concerto** two-way

was described by Alvin Gold (HFN&RR 4/97) as 'a truly



Concerto — a full bodied, dynamic loudspeaker capable of recreating the subtleties and hush of real music



Concerto Grand piano — a speaker of real stature with extended bass and presence, finished in stunning piano black

remarkable loudspeaker'. He praised the 'exquisitely refined and articulate midband' before concluding 'listening through the Concerto was like listening through an open window. Music sounds completely unmanipulated and utterly clear with a sweetness, purity and a sense of presence...all sense of artifice simply vanished'.

Jason Kennedy (Hi-Fi Choice 4/97) simply said 'an admirable design that achieves its sonic goals and looks beautiful'.

After many successful years the popular **Electa Amator** is revised and appears in MkII form with a revolutionary new cabinet.

As exciting comes the news of a Sonus Faber integrated amplifier — the **Musica** — so you can now hear how the Sonus Faber designers listen to their own products.

Sonus Faber has also introduced a floor-standing speaker the **Concerto Grand piano** — indeed it has all the physical and musical presence of a concert grand. Ken Kessler (HFN&RR 5/97) found it 'an odd but delightful blend, a small speaker's energy and vim with a large speaker's authority'. He even christened it 'a perfect rock speaker for the headbanger who want the energy and levels the music demands, minus any rough edges'.

Which just goes to show that what can recreate the sound of a Guarneri can recreate the sound of a Gibson!

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ARCAM Alpha One



Arcam's stock in trade has always been as a Japanese/Far Eastern replacement brand, bringing the values and integrity of a specialist producer into an area of the market traditionally dominated by feature-led designs. The problem for Arcam is two fold: progressive quality improvements from at least some of its main competitors, and falling prices of imported, mass produced competition. This has left Arcam high and dry at the budget end of the market, and it is this gap that is being addressed with its new starter amplifier, the 35 Watts per channel Alpha One.

To look at it, nothing appears to have changed when compared to other recent Arcam designs. The only obvious feature to distinguish the Alpha One from the previous entry-level model, the Alpha 7, for example, is the deletion of the remote control sensor window, and indeed of the remote control itself. Around the back there is just one switchable set of BFA speaker terminals (don't worry: 4 mm plugs can still be accommodated using side entry holes) where the Alpha 7 has direct and switched

"...praised for its solid soundstaging, and for the way each instrument in a mix could be distinguished from the next."

sets. The power output and other specifications come in just below Alpha 7 levels too. Otherwise the two share a feature set that includes tone and balance controls, a direct switch which bypasses the former, a speaker on/off switch and a headphone socket. There are six inputs in total if the tape circuit is included, all at line level, and an output is available to drive an external power amp, the Alpha 8P, in bi-amplified mode.

SOUND QUALITY

Complaints about this amplifier from the panel were mild and varied, and on the whole not repeated between listeners, which is a good sign. So one listener only described the amp as "sibilant and lacking in momentum", and similarly only one felt that the Arcam

was "a little lacking in variation in the (tonal) colours it can reproduce", though this has been an identifiable failing of some Arcam amplifiers in the past.

"There's plenty of 'air' around this amp (which is) nice dynamically and (has) good grip" was a more typical comment from a listener whose sum up included the observation that the Alpha One is "authoritative (and) especially good with piano and orchestra". The orchestral excerpt had "superb scale and ambience", and the piano "flows well" and was even described as "mellifluous", though another listener felt there was a touch of "top-end compression at times". The Alpha One was also praised for its solid soundstaging, and for the way each instrument in a mix could be distinguished from the next. The overall test scores across three presentations were satisfactory, but the consistent strong showing with a range of loudspeakers in the hands-on testing would tend to push the score higher.

CONCLUSION

The long and the short is that Arcam's newly hatched baby is no more circumscribed than you

❏ The Alpha 1 is almost but not quite an Alpha 7 without remote control.

would expect of any budget amplifier, and is perhaps less so than the last Alpha 7 we tested. Arguably it has a few too many features, though this is part of the territory given the marketplace that Arcam competes in, but it is otherwise hard to criticise, managing a particularly good blend of agility, dynamics, strongly painted stereo properties and power output. This makes it an unusually fine starter amplifier, and clear Best Buy material. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£229.90

❏ A cut-price Alpha 7, with only slightly less power and without remote control, and apparently somewhat better sound quality and a reduced price to suit, the Alpha One comes close to being an ideal budget all rounder.

■ TWO YEAR GUARANTEE

✉ A&R Cambridge Ltd, Pembroke Avenue, Denny Industrial Centre, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB5 9PB
☎ (01223) 440964

THE LAB REPORT

Arcam's new baby amplifier is a very solid performer that clearly benefits from the technology and experience gained with its 'bigger' Alpha's. It'll achieve closer to 45W than its rated 35W into 8 Ohms with a dynamic capacity that stretches from 72W/8Ohms to 130W, 211W and 272W into 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads, respectively. The latter represents a clean 16.5A of current that is achieved without a steady deterioration in noise or distortion. In-circuit protection is provided, though this only kicks-in during sustained outputs at high frequency

❏ Alpha One: easier to match to speakers than CD Players.



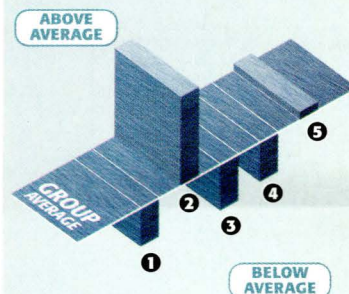
and will not cause the Alpha One to trip under normal circumstances.

Noise, at -84.9dB (re. 1W/8 Ohms), is about average in general terms but is undermined as far as this trio is concerned by the lower -89dB of the Pioneer. Distortion, meanwhile, shares the traits of earlier Alpha's where a low 0.002 per cent midband figure increases closer to 0.06 per cent at high frequencies. And it's this change, typically caused by a reduction in compensation (feedback) at HF, that results in the Alpha One losing points in the 'audible distortion' stakes. The low-ish 15kOhm input impedance just might be problematic with CD players equipped with unbuffered variable analogue outputs but, otherwise, the Alpha One looks to be a strong entry. **PMi**

HOW IT COMPARES

Arcam specifies its distortion at 1kHz only where it achieves a low 0.003 per cent, although this increases to 0.06 per cent at higher (20kHz) frequencies. Excellent power delivery, meanwhile, improves the Alpha 1's compatibility.

- 1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT -25%
- 2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE 60%
- 3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION -30%
- 4 NOISE -25%
- 5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY 5%



SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
■ Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	35W	45W
■ Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.01%	0.06%
■ Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	230mV	243mV



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PIONEER A-407R

Rated at 45 Watts per channel, the A-407R is comprehensively equipped, and is likely to sell for around £230. As such it costs significantly more than a number of superficially similarly equipped models in this group, some of which boast similar or higher power outputs, but it doesn't take long to see why. The front panel, for example, is an alloy extrusion, and a number of anti-resonance features have been included, both in the construction of the case and in a new heatsink design, though the top panel remains rather rattly. Other design highlights include proprietary Direct Energy MOSFET output devices for which a low output impedance and a wide linear operating area are claimed. Another proprietary circuit, the Wide Range Linear Circuit, eliminates the usual output choke and phase compensation capacitors, the benefits of which are said to be a wider bandwidth and reduced output impedance at high frequencies.

The feature set is similar to other mainstream designs, and includes a system remote control, and bypassable tone and loudness controls. Two pairs of speakers can be connected and switched independently, and there are inputs for a record deck, three line inputs and two tape decks, with monitoring available on one tape circuit. A record selector can be set to the CD or phono inputs, source (which tracks the input



“The hands-on testing... did nothing to puncture the picture of a fine, detailed and airy sounding amplifier.”

selector) and off (which optimises sound quality). Uniquely in this group, the speaker sockets are clamps which don't accept 4 mm plugs directly.

SOUND QUALITY

Panel test scoring was extremely consistent in the two presentations of this amplifier, and in each case there was considerable unanimity of opinion, which increases confidence in the story they tell. The score was not in itself remarkable, but the character of the comments was more than just benign. “Very taut and musical, with holographic imagery”, and the *Fly Like An Eagle* test track from the TAG McLaren *Friend 'n Fellow* CD, which didn't

attract too many favourable comments from the panel, was deemed “sprightly, dynamic, incisive and detailed”. The track was also said to have a “nice bass”. Another wrote of a “tendency to shallowness and thinness” in the Bartok and complained that “the presentation leaves me cold and uninvolved” (but that) “the resolution of the various strands of the arrangement is good”. A third wrote that the Beethoven piano “flowed naturally”.

The hands-on testing, conducted over a wider range of volume levels and a wider range of partnering equipment, did nothing to puncture the picture of a fine, detailed and airy sounding amplifier. There's a fair amount of meat on the bones too – the Pioneer sounded solid and in command of the various speakers used, though without the forcefulness and weight of one or two of the alternatives (the Rotel RA971 is a particularly good example). The A-407R's ability to reproduce a coherent sound stage and not to smother subtle ambient cues was as valued as its general tunefulness and tonal credibility.

Direct Energy MOSFET output devices are one of the Pioneer's highlights.

CONCLUSION

Anyone who has spent any time using different amplifiers will know that there is always a trade-off for adding features to an amplifier, but if your requirements are for an amplifier with tone controls, speaker switching, a head-phone socket and so on, the A-407R is a particularly good choice, with a consistent and fine-grain sound picture of considerable subtlety and range. Recommended. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£225.00

This amplifier gave a good, consistent account of itself, both to the panel and when tested with a wider range of partnering speakers and source components.

ONE YEAR GUARANTEE

Pioneer High Fidelity (GB) Ltd, Pioneer House, Hollybush Hill, Stoke Poges, Slough Berks SL2 4QP
(01753) 789789

THE LAB REPORT

Not unlike Technics' MOSFET amplifier, Pioneer has managed to ensure that distortion does not rise appreciably above 0.02 per cent as the amplifier drives 8, 4 and 2 Ohm loads under dynamic conditions. In terms of power output, it achieves 78W, 149W and 261W (11.4A) into these loads, with protection cutting-in above 13A (for 5msec) or 12.2A/149W (for 10msec) into loads as low as 1 Ohm. This is a precautionary measure, but it still suggests the A-407R is less speaker-tolerant than, say,

The Pioneer is a fully featured and reliable mass-market design.



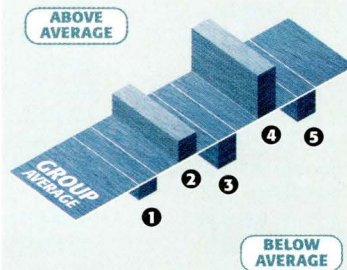
the ostensibly less powerful Alpha 1. Like Arcam's model, the A-407R also enjoys low levels of distortion through bass and midband frequencies (typically 0.003 per cent) which then increase closer to 0.05 per cent through the treble. Importantly, however, this trend remains relatively unaffected by power output even if it will inevitably creep upwards with decreasing load impedance.

Pioneer has also specified a good quality volume control with a low 0.5dB channel error over a 60dB range just as the sensible PCB layout helps keep stereo separation high through the treble. Noise is low at -89dB (re. 1W/8 Ohm), input loading appropriate at 42 kOhms and any DC offset held in check to +/-1mV. Looks like a reliable, mass market design. **PMI**

HOW IT COMPARES

Conservatively specified, Pioneer's A-407R exceeds its power rating while just sneaking under the 0.06 per cent limbo-bar for THD. The amp also boasts low levels of distortion through bass and midband frequencies, but then goes up to 0.05 per cent.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	-5%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	15%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-15%
4 NOISE	30%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	-15%



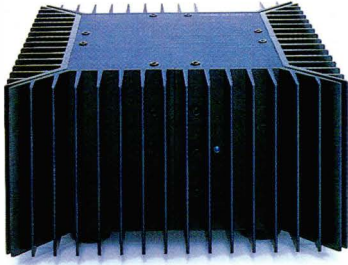
SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	45W	60W
Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.06%	0.05%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	200mV	224mV

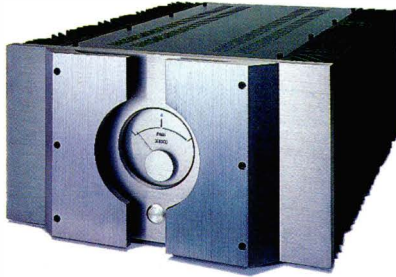
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TOKEN AUDIO K50



Although distributed through the same channel that bought you Magnum, Token Audio is an independent brand, designed and manufactured by Principia of Cambridge, headed by one Kelvin Newton (goddit?). The products are generally a little more affordable than Magnum, and although the K50 amplifier tested here is the most costly in this month's group at £345 with a stainless steel finish and gold plated control knobs, it can be bought for just £299 in a more utilitarian black suit of clothes. There's even a half way house version with a black carcass and a stainless steel fascia at (you guessed it) £325. For a small volume amplifier from a specialist brand, these prices seem almost too low.

Notwithstanding a rather stiff input selector and a mains on/off switch apparently straight from the RS catalogue which is really a match for the rest of the front panel furniture, the test amplifier looked good and handled well. Our favourite feature is the Token badge with a reversed K motif, mirrored incidentally on the pair of gloves thoughtfully provided to help avoid

'The K50 acquitted itself well in two presentations to the panel, with extremely consistent scoring between listeners.'

fingermarks when handling.

Rated at a minimum of 50 Watts per channel into eight Ohms and 80 Watts into four, the K50 is a minimum features straight-line amplifier with no tone controls or other audio signal path impediments other than source selection, tape monitor switches and a volume control. Additional socketry described as an auxiliary output is in fact a preamp output taken from after the volume control — there is no input buffer or gain in the pre-amplifier — which can be used in conjunction with another K50 whose volume control is set to full gain in a bi-amplified system.

The amplifier is bipolar, with 'very low' feedback, whose circuit is contained on a single PCB, with a minimum of hard wiring, star earthing and a leavening of 'selected' passive components.

SOUND QUALITY

The K50 acquitted itself well in two presentations to the panel, with extremely consistent scoring between listeners, and between sessions. "Very clear, informative, detailed and dramatic" wrote one panellist of the percussion piece, and of the *Friend and Fellow* track he described this amp as "possibly the clearest amp yet", though he felt the vocals "could be warmer and friendlier", a judgement that presupposes the track has this quality to start with, which is arguable. Another described the Beethoven piano sound as "comfortable and mellow, with good scale and weight, but lacking a little air", and most of the other comments were in the same ballpark. The average test panel score was a good indication that this was one amplifier that emerged from the test smelling of roses.

The hands-on listening painted a picture of an amplifier that was naturally distanced, with a smooth, unprocessed quality, though dynamics were not particularly, and there was comparatively little adrenaline in the music. The tonal balance is notably warm, but the overall prognosis has to be favourable, in part because it is so lacking in the usual transitory

⊙ The K-50 is also available in black or a mixture of black and stainless steel.

cues that the test systems built around it tended to sound very believable.

CONCLUSION

This is a quality minimum features amp that differs from others of its type thanks in part to surprisingly reasonable pricing. It is not the most powerful or dynamic amplifier around, and detail resolution is only fair, but transparency is first rate, and despite some tonal anomalies this is an amplifier that doesn't get in the way.

Recommended. **AG**

VERDICT

SOUND	★★★★☆
BUILD	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★☆
PRICE	£345.00

Whether the stainless steel and gold finish meets your requirements is a matter of taste, but other finishes are available, and sound quality is genuinely natural and organic

■ THREE YEAR GUARANTEE

Hailey Audio Ltd, 328 Ware Road, Hailey, Herts SG13 7PG
(01992) 442425

THE LAB REPORT

The Token's frequency response is just a little wayward by modern standards, showing a broad +0.5dB boost across bass and treble regions, not unlike a very mild loudness contour designed to enhance the amplifier's subjective 'oomph'. Nevertheless, whatever the basic specification of this new amplifier, it's the behaviour under dynamic (music-like) conditions that defines its 'real world' performance. Regardless of the speaker load, the K50 is at its most linear when supplying 1-1.5A. This is equivalent to 8-18W into 8 Ohms

⊙ A slightly wayward frequency response may not be noticeable.



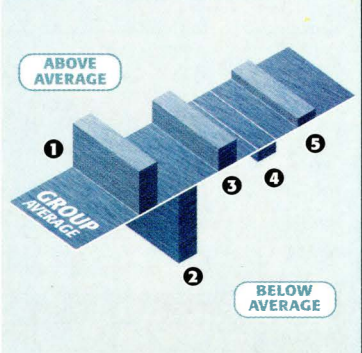
where distortion falls to a minimum of 0.09 per cent and 4-9W into 4 Ohms where 0.18 per cent THD represents its 'best case' performance.

At lower and higher power outputs, distortion progressively creeps upward until it reaches 1 per cent at 99W, 168W, 127W and 23W into 8, 4, 2 and 1 Ohm loads, respectively. A maximum current of 8A is available into 2 Ohm loads but falls back to 4.8A into 1 Ohm. Token Audio rates the K50 at 7.1A, which is not unrealistic. Nevertheless, the entire 'shape' of its dynamic profile, and extended nature of distortion harmonics, suggests that while low impedance and/or insensitive loudspeaker designs are best avoided, even the most easy-going speakers will still be subject to the K50's unique, harmonic 'colour'. PMI

HOW IT COMPARES

At 70W this might seem to be the most powerful of the trio, but its limited current also restricts its tolerance of difficult speakers. A profile of its dynamic output shows that distortion is directly linked to the current being drawn.

1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT	30%
2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE	-45%
3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION	15%
4 NOISE	-5%
5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY	5%

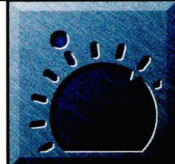


SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATION	CLAIMED	MEASURED
Continuous Power Output, 8 Ohms	50W	70W
Distortion 20Hz-20kHz, 1W/8 Ohms	0.1%	0.18%
Input Sensitivity (CD/Aux)	200mV	322mV

AMPLIFIERS

CONCLUSIONS



THE BEST IN THE TEST



1 ARCAM Alpha 1

New entry-level Alpha 1 is a clean, effective all-rounder in the familiar Arcam mould, with a more concise, agile quality than older Arcam designs. It is a cut-price Alpha 7 with only slightly less power and without remote.



2 ROTEL RA971

An enthusiasts choice, this amplifier is not only unfeasibly powerful, it is also adept at negotiating the most difficult and densely scored music. It also has a complete indifference to alternative loudspeaker loads.



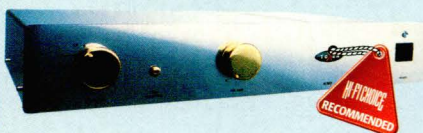
3 NAD C320

A worthy successor to the original killer budget amp, the 3020, this is a warm, comfortable model with strong detail resolution and dynamic integrity.



4 PIONEER A-407R

This amplifier is well equipped, and has a fine-grain, airy sound of considerable subtlety and is not far behind the leaders in this group.



5 TOKEN AUDIO K50

Under the garish stainless steel and gold exterior treatment is a highly capable, transparent medium power amplifier with stripped down features.

The budget amplifier market today is viciously competitive, and there is simply no room for under-achievers. This month's group doesn't have quite the variations that are often found in such groups. There are no stinkers, and unlike the position 20 years ago when the NAD 3020 set the standards, its successor is no longer able to lord it above all challengers. A certain level of competence can almost be taken for granted, at least if this group is representative.

It was a little disappointing, however, to find that some amplifiers continue to be overly fussy about the nature of the loudspeakers they are teamed with. The otherwise likeable Cambridge Audio A500RC is an example of an amplifier with a load sensitivity that is severe enough to need particular attention when choosing a loudspeaker. Models like the Rotel RA871, by contrast, seem blithely indifferent to speakers, and is capable of almost obscene volume levels without any obvious signs of strain. This means that it is much easier to choose speakers since the main criteria is sound quality and not whether it is suitable for any particular amplifier.

This is often particularly important with smaller budget loudspeakers which are generally less sensitive and demand more from amplifiers. It is important to take account of the fact that the nominal impedance of a loudspeaker with a simple test signal is not the same

AMPLIFIER COMPARISON TABLE

MAKE	AMC	ARCAM	CAMBRIDGE AUDIO	KENWOOD	MARANTZ
MODEL	3100A	ALPHA 1	A500RC	KAF-3010R	PM-48
PRICE	£199.95	£229.90	£199.95	£179.95	£149.90
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	1 year	2 years	1 year	1 year	1 year
SIZE (WXHXD) IN MM	430x112x288	430x85x330	430x90x300	440x145x400	442x154x410
WEIGHT	10.8kg	4.4kg	6.5kg	8.3kg	13.5kg
RATED CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 8 OHMS	100W	35W	50W	70W	30W
ACTUAL CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 8 OHMS	140W	45W	45W	95W	50W
RATED DISTORTION 20HZ-20KHZ, 1W/8 OHMS	0.03%	0.01%	0.02%	0.06%	0.005%
ACTUAL DISTORTION 20HZ-20KHZ, 1W/8 OHMS	0.01%	0.06%	0.09%	0.03%	0.008%
RATED INPUT SENSITIVITY (CD/AUX)	200mV	230mV	250mV	200mV	150mV
ACTUAL INPUT SENSITIVITY (CD/AUX)	216mV	243mV	228mV	311mV	195mV

as its dynamic impedance when tested with real-life music signals.

It was also a little disappointing to find that so many of the amplifiers tested are loaded to the gunwales with gadgetry that is not merely superfluous, but actively harmful to sound quality, which (for various reasons there isn't room to elucidate on here) is generally the case even when the circuits can be bypassed. It would not be true to say that such amplifiers can't perform since the evidence of this test is the opposite. The proper question to ask is this: how much better might these amplifiers be if they simply concentrated on the main task at hand?

Build quality was only seriously called into question in one case: the AMC; though the company was quick to take the honourable step of stopping shipment of the model until the criticism raised in the review was tackled.

These points aside, there seems to be much for the manufacturers represented in this test to feel smug about, and it was hard work whittling them down to arrive at the final list of Recommendeds and Best Buys. At least some of the misses were near ones that under different circumstances might well have made the A list.

TEST INNOVATOR OF THE YEAR

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



BEST BUYS & RECOMMENDATIONS



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



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

HOW TO BUY HI-FI



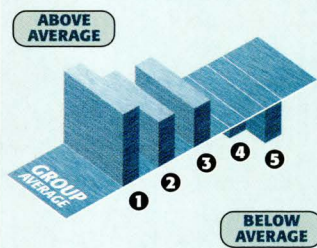
Our Recommended and Best Buy swing-tags are a great way to begin your hi-fi shopping list. However, at *Hi-Fi Choice* we believe firmly that only individual listening can decide which hi-fi gear to buy. There is only one golden rule of buying hi-fi: hear it for yourself. And for this you need the services of a good local hi-fi dealer. (See page 102 for the *HFC* dealer guide, to find your nearest hi-fi specialist.) If you are upgrading an existing system, you must hear any

proposed new component with gear you use already. Either take your kit to the dealer, or arrange a home trial which most decent retailers will organise. Listen for as long as possible (a weekend is ideal) because initial impressions can be misleading. Hi-fi you find exciting and zingy 'on the shelf', may well sound unbearably bright in time. If you find dealers you can trust, rely on their recommendations, even if they're not totally in line with ours. Hi-fi is part science, part art!

UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPH MEASUREMENTS

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

THE BAR-GRAPHS



1 DYNAMIC POWER OUTPUT: A measure of power up to one per cent distortion under realistic, music-like conditions, using a brief (20msec) transient signal and an eight-Ohm speaker load.

2 SPEAKER LOAD TOLERANCE: This indicates how ably the amplifier maintains a given level of performance into progressively lower-impedance and more difficult speaker loads.

3 AUDIBLE DISTORTION: Rather than quote a single figure for distortion at one frequency and level, this bar value represents a measure of distortion and its consistency across the whole audio band and the amplifier's dynamic range.

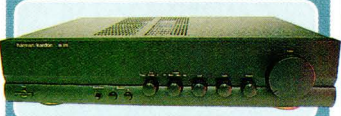
4 NOISE: This is a direct representation of the amplifier's A-weighted Signal-to-Noise (S/N) ratio at one Watt output into a model eight Ohm load.

5 OVERALL COMPATIBILITY: This new category measures the amplifier's ability to drive different loudspeakers, its susceptibility to radio-frequency interference (RFI) and its ability to handle today's high-output CD players.

RIVAL BUYS

1 ARCAM Alpha 7 £260
Now enhanced from the version tested by *Hi-Fi Choice*, the Alpha 7 is a mildly up-spec version of the Alpha One, with remote control and a phono input.

2 DENON PMA-350SE £200
This is a simply equipped, medium power amplifier with typically strong Denon build quality and fine, expressive sound quality.



3 HARMAN/KARDON HK610 £180
Medium power but high current design includes remote control and an optional add-in phono stage. Sound quality is well controlled and powerful.

4 SONY TA-F448BE £250
A classic minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit to broadly satisfactory effect – but keep the volume in check.

5 MUSICAL FIDELITY E1 £199
Built for orchestral music, the E1 has life-size dynamics. A richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special.

6 YAMAHA AX-492 £220
This amplifier is probably as well equipped as any at the price, and also offers an unusually powerful output stage, without sacrificing sound quality. There can be a problem with 'CD Direct', but otherwise a great value proposition.



Top: HK610
Above: Yamaha AX-492

A M P L I F I E R C O M P A R I S O N T A B L E

MAKE MODEL	NAD C320	PIONEER A-407R	ROTEL RA971	TECHNICS SU-A600MK3	TOKEN AUDIO K50
PRICE	£199.95	£225.00	£199.95	£199.95	£299 all black
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
GUARANTEE	2 years	1 year	2 years	1 year	3 years
SIZE (WXHxD) IN MM	435x100x290	420x128x335	440x92x347	430x125x318	430x260x700
WEIGHT	6.5kg	6.9kg	6.5kg	6.1kg	5.7kg
RATED CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 8 OHMS	40W	45W	70W	45W	50W
ACTUAL CONTINUOUS POWER OUTPUT, 8 OHMS	90W	60W	90W	55W	70W
RATED DISTORTION 20HZ-20KHZ, 1W/8 OHMS	0.03%	0.06%	0.03%	0.01%	0.1%
ACTUAL DISTORTION 20HZ-20KHZ, 1W/8 OHMS	0.014%	0.05%	0.005%	0.03%	0.18%
RATED INPUT SENSITIVITY (CD/AUX)	165mV	200mV	150mV	150mV	200mV
ACTUAL INPUT SENSITIVITY (CD/AUX)	376mV	224mV	192mV	185mV	322mV

SALE STARTS
SAT 19TH DEC

39 Outlets Nationwide



At Sevenoaks Hi Fi you will find a wide range of products on show with the emphasis on quality combined with unbeatable value for money.

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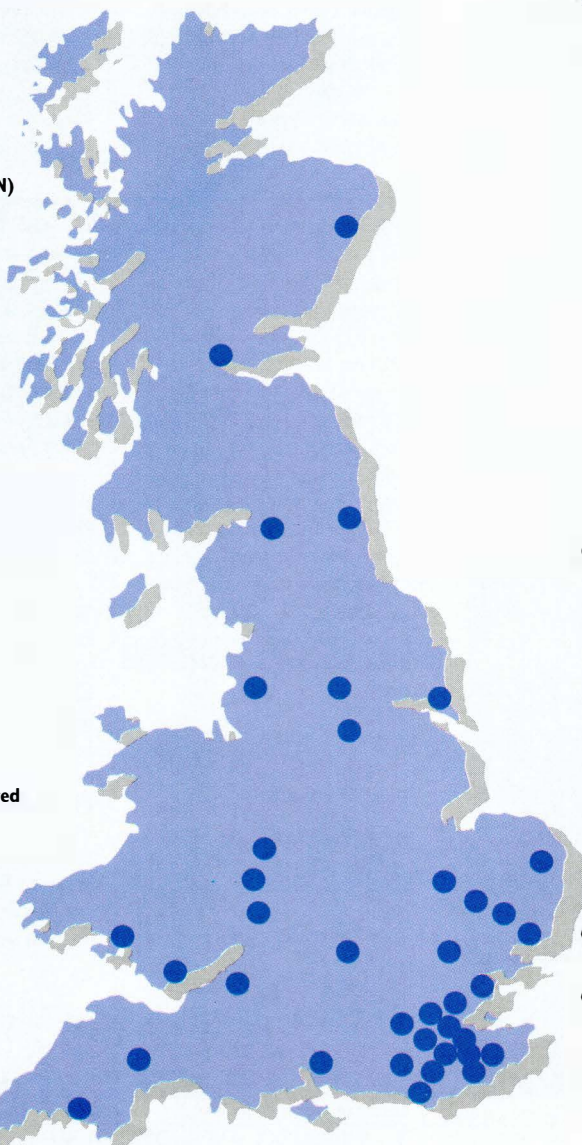
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0121 233 2977
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Livery Street
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57 Western Road, Hove
- BRISTOL
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92b White Ladies Road,
Clifton
- BROMLEY
0181 290 1988
39a East Street
- **soon** CAMBRIDGE (Dec?*)
01223 354237
1 & 2 Peas Hill
- CARDIFF
01222 472899
104-106 Albany Road
- CARLISLE
01228 590775
3 Earls Lane
(Next to Bus Depot)
- CHELSEA
0171 352 9466
403 Kings Road, SW10
- **moved** CHELTENHAM
01242 241171
14 Pitville Street
- CRAWLEY
Apologies - Opening Delayed
- CROYDON
0181 665 1203
373 London Road
- **soon** EDINBURGH (Dec?*)
0131 228 2777
25-27 Brunfield Place
- ESSEX
01376 501733
1 The Grove Centre,
Witham
- **new** EXETER
01392 218895
28 Cowick Street
- GUILDFORD
01483 536666
73b North Street
- **new** HOLBORN
0171 837 7540
144-148 Grays Inn Rd
- HULL
01482 587171
1 Savile Row, Savile Street



- **new** IPSWICH
01473 286977
12-14 Dogs Head Street
- KINGSTON
(LATE NIGHT THURSDAY)
0181 547 0717
43 Fife Road
- LEEDS
(OPEN SUNDAYS)
0113 245 2775
112 Vicar Lane
- MAIDSTONE
01622 686366
96 Week Street
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0191 221 2320
19 Newgate Street
- NORWICH
01603 767605
29/29a St Giles Street
- OXFORD
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01865 241773
41 St Clements
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01733 897697
36 Park Road
- **new** PLYMOUTH
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107 Cornwall Street
- PRESTON
01772 825777
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0118 959 7768
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0114 255 5861
635 Queens Rd, Heeley
- SOUTHAMPTON
01703 337770
33 London Road
- SOUTHGATE
0181 886 2777
79-81 Chase Side, N14
- **soon** SWANSEA (Dec?*)
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24 Mansel Street
- **soon** SWISS COTTAGE (Dec?*)
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21 North Ways Parade
- TUNBRIDGE WELLS
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478 St Albans Road
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SENSATIONAL SALE STARTS SATURDAY 19TH DECEMBER

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20/12	Sunday	Open 11-pm 5pm
21/12	Monday	Open as usual
22/12	Tuesday	Open as usual
23/12	Wednesday	Open as usual

24/12	Thursday	Open till 4pm
25/12	Friday	Closed all day
26/12	Saturday	Closed all day
27/12	Sunday	Open 11-pm 5pm
28/12	Monday	Open as usual

29/12	Tuesday	Open as usual
30/12	Wednesday	Open as usual
31/12	Thursday	Open till 4pm
01/01	Friday	Closed all day
02/01	Saturday	Open as usual
03/01	Sunday	Open 11-pm 5pm

SALE STARTS
SAT 19TH DEC

Sensational Sale at



PLEASE NOTE NOT ALL PRODUCTS ARE STOCKED AT ALL OUTLETS. PLEASE TELEPHONE TO VERIFY PRICE AND AVAILABILITY BEFORE TRAVELLING.

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Arcam Alpha 7 CD	£ 329.95
Arcam Alpha 8 CD	£ 449.95
Arcam Alpha 8SE CD	£ 599.95
Arcam Alpha 9 CD	£ 799.95
Cyrus DAD1	£ 399.95
Cyrus DAD3	£ 599.95
Cyrus DAD3Q	£ 899.95
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Denon DCD635	£ 179.95
Denon DCD835	£ 279.95
Denon DCD1550 AR	£ 349.95
Exposure CD	£ 1049.95
Marantz CD48	£ 149.00
Marantz CD67II	£ 229.00
Marantz CD67IOSE	£ 299.95
Marantz CD63IKI Signature	£ 359.00
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Meridian 508 24 Bit	£ 2149.95
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Myryad MCD500	£ 1299.95
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Rotel RCD951	£ 299.95
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Sony CDPXE310	£ 99.00
Sony CDPXE520	£ 129.00
Sony CDPXB920	£ 249.00
TAG McLaren CD20R	£ 1249.95
Yamaha CDX493	£ 179.95
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Arcam Alpha MCD	£ 449.95
Yamaha CDC565	£ 169.95
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Meridian 500	£ 1324.95
TAG McLaren CDT20R	£ 1499.95
DACS	
Meridian 566 24 Bit	£ 1379.95
TAG McLaren DAC20	£ 1249.95
MINI DISC/CD RECORDERS	
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Kenwood DM3090	£ 139.00
Marantz DR700	CD Recorder £ 599.95
Philips CDR760	CD Recorder £ 279.00
Philips CDR765	CD Recorder £ 369.00
Pioneer MJ0707	£ 229.00
Pioneer PDR555RW	CD Recorder £ 429.00
Sony MDSJE520	£ 159.00
Sony MDSJB920	£ 249.00
Yamaha MDX793	£ 249.00
CASSETTE DECKS	
Denon DRM550	£ 159.95
Denon DRV580 Twin	£ 179.00
Pioneer CT5550 Precision	£ 299.00
Yamaha KX393	£ 119.00
Yamaha KX580SE	£ 179.00
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Michell Gyrodec	inc RB300 £ 1019.95
Project 0.5	£ 169.95
Project 1	£ 209.95
Technics SL1210	£ 359.00
Thorens TD280/IV	inc AT95E £ 209.95
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Arcam Alpha T7	£ 229.95
Arcam Alpha T8	£ 279.95
Creech T43	£ 399.95
Cyrus FM7	£ 399.95
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Denon TU215RDS	£ 129.00
Denon TU1500RD	£ 249.95
Marantz ST48	£ 119.95
Marantz ST17	£ 599.95
Meridian 504	£ 739.95
Myryad T30	£ 399.95
Myryad MT100	£ 529.95
Pioneer F504 Precision	£ 299.95
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Arcam Alpha One	£ 229.95
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Rotel RA931	£ 149.95
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Sony TAFB920R	£ 249.00
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Arcam Alpha 9C	£ 399.95
Cyrus AEQ7	£ 499.95
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Cyrus APA7 Mono (each)	£ 949.95
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Meridian 557	£ 1524.95
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Acoustic Energy Aegis One	£ 149.95
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B&W DM601	£ 199.95
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Yamaha DSPA1	£ 1599.95
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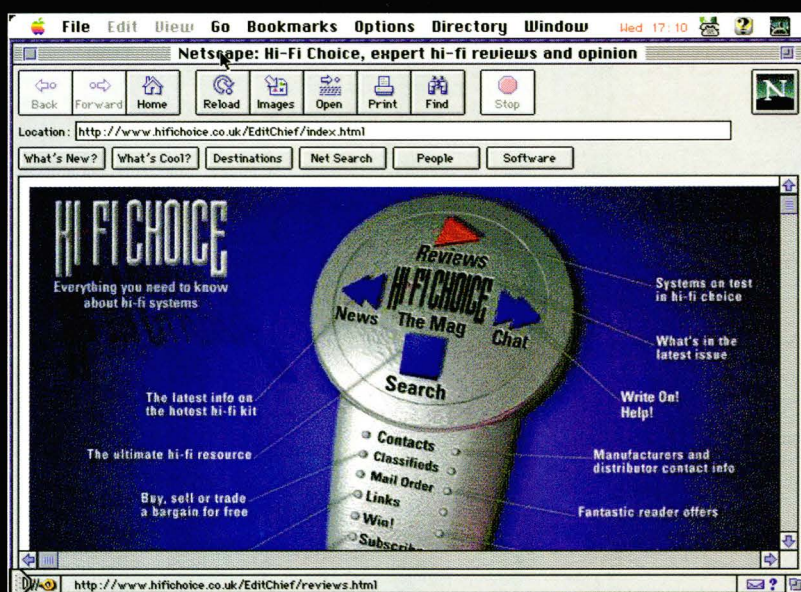
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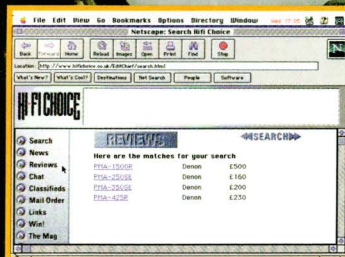
- 1 How to swap tips and gossip with hi-fi nuts around the world?
- 2 How to search for hi-fi equipment by price and specification?
- 3 Where you'll find links to your favourite hi-fi brands' Web sites?
- 4 What is the best CD player for £350 or under?

For the answers, look no further than the *Hi-Fi Choice* Website, the fact-packed cyberspace version of the *Finest Hi-Fi Magazine In The World*.

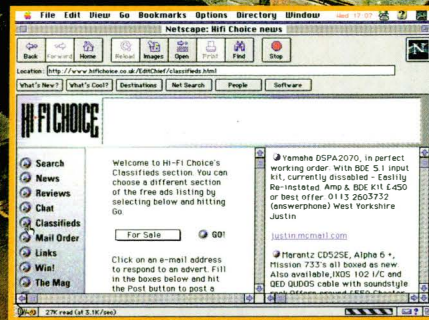
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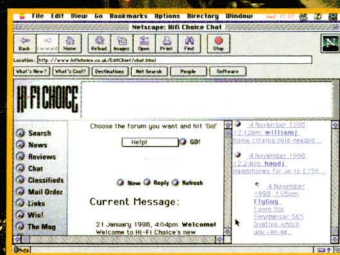
With numerous unique features, our enthusiasts' Website is the perfect complement to *Hi-Fi Choice's* printed monthly edition. Just look at the features we're offering!



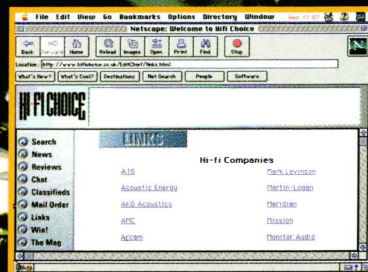
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► **Hi-Fi Links** Go straight to hi-fi makers for more info!

www.hifichoice.co.uk

Dealer Guide

BIRMINGHAM

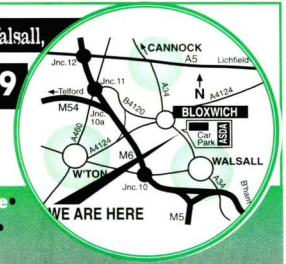
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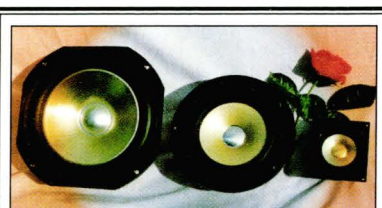
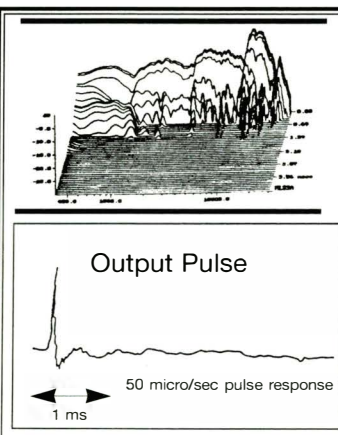
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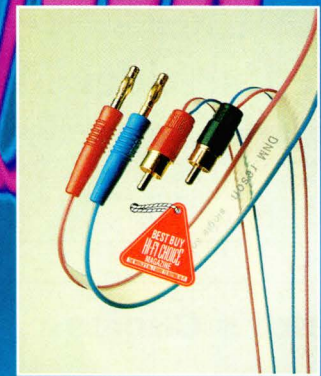
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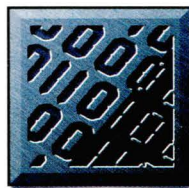
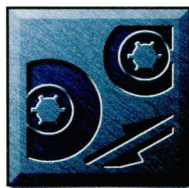
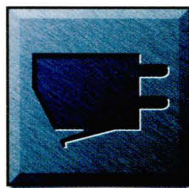
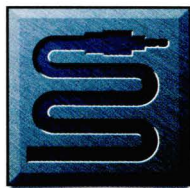
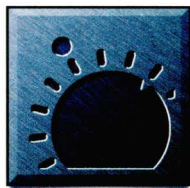
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*This service is FREE to subscribers, provided their subscriber number is enclosed.

● Marantz PM-17 Sig amp, brand new, £995. Sony XA 50ES CD player, brand new £675. (0181) 905 6331.

● Mark Levinson power amp, model no. 29 Dual Monaural, ex cond, 1 yr warranty £1,595. Cornwall (01208) 850979.

● Michell Argo preamp (£690) & Hera PSU (£140), Manticore Audio modified (£100) £450. Yamaha DSP-E1000 Pro-Logic processor (£700) inc Videotec 6-channel DVD input mod (£300) £450. Meridian 203 DAC (£500) £250. KEF 70S speakers (£300) £175. Cable Talk 4.1 spkr wire, 2 x 10m, gold bananas (€90) £50. Audioquest Ruby i/c, 1m, 3 sets, £25 pair. All exc cond, boxed etc. Colin, Reading (0118) 961 0485.

● Micromega Data/Dialog CD & DAC, stunning sound/looks. 30 hrs use, perf cond. £2,500 (£4,250). (01244) 831348 after 6pm.

● Musical Fidelity A220 50W class A amp, mint condition, boxed, manual, hardly used £350. Martin (0171) 354 4228.

● Musical Fidelity X-A200 monoblocks, boxed. Sony XA50ES CD player, boxed. ProAc Tablette 50 speakers, new. REL Stadium II subwoofer, new. Surrey (0956) 997543.

● Naim NAC52 preamp (£3,450) £2,700 ono. NAP135 mono power amps (£3,140) £2,540 ono. Both 1 yr

old, mint and boxed. Naim NACDS CD player (£3,940) £2,200 ono. (0118) 946 1421 eves.

● Naim NACDS CD player (£3,940) £2,940 ono (one yr old, boxed). Naim Nac52/PS Pre/power supply (£5,575) £2,999 ono. Naim Nap135 monos (£3,410) £2,000 ono. Dynaudio Contour 2.8 cherry loudspeakers (£3,250) £2,800, sealed, boxed. (0118) 946 1132 eves/(0118) 958 5463 days.

● Naim Nait 3 remote, inc interconnect and Naim speaker cable, boxed, 9 months old. £550 ono. (0171) 226 7481.

● Nakamichi 680, mint, manual £450 inclusive, on approval against cheque. (01392) 860182.

● Pair hi-fi speakers, Sony SS86E, British design, manufacture. Rated 5-star quality, as new, RRP £100. Best offer around £50. (01684) 572452.

● ProAc Response Three Signatures. Unique – only pair ever made in Yew real-wood veneer finish. Mint, £1,950 ovno. (01460) 55970 office/(01460) 57071 eves/weekends.

● QLN Qubic 122 floorstanding speakers, cost £280, accept £130. Mint, boxed. Bill (01382) 646767.

● Quad 405-2 stereo power amp, VGC £225. Wokingham (0118) 978 2110.

● Royd Doublet and Pentachord A speakers, list price £485 and £469.

£210 for each pair. Somerset (01934) 512096.

● Speakers, American Omnis, brand new, unwanted gift, 5 yr warranty, worth £1,000+. Floorstanding, quick sale needed. James, Colchester, (01206) 873903.

● Technics SL555 CD player, well looked after, excellent sound, boxed £80. Hants (01705) 470123.

● Technics SV-DA10 DAT deck in good cond £250. Akai GX-4000DB reel-to-reel tape deck with Dolby B £200. (01925) 822897.

● Thorens turntable TD160 super, plus SME arm 3009. Also, cartridge Linn K9, mint cond. £300. (01442) 822707.

WANTED

● Ergo AMT headphones (0115) 913 8607.

● Naim NAC A5 2 x 5m terminated. Bill (01382) 646767.

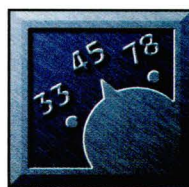
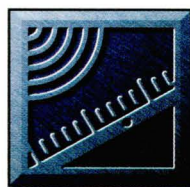
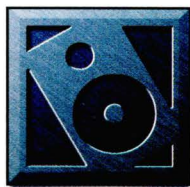
● Naim NAP 110, NAP 140 or NAP 160. Old style only. Should be in VGC. (0043) 664 4922 582 or email stony@aon.at.

● Tannoy 625 ALF. (01908) 602194 anytime.



BUYING TIPS

Buying secondhand can be a great way to pick up a bargain. A formerly-expensive secondhand component might well prove a better long-term bet than a brand-new product engineered down to a price. Do some research on which brands and products have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a secondhand hi-fi dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty. So it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy. Products such as speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amplifiers, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be troublesome – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!



Electra Etc

sounds to believe in!

END OF YEAR CLEARANCE SALE - NOW ON

		WAS	NOW			WAS	NOW			WAS	NOW
CD PLAYERS											
AMC CDB	XD	£150	£99	Pioneer CTS250	XD	£150	£109				
AMC CD9	XD	£120	£89	Sony TCKE4005	XD	£180	£118				
Arcam Alpha Plus	PX		£169	Sony TCKE5005	XD	£230	£149				
Arcam Alpha 5	PX	£500	£199	Sony TCKE6005	XD	£300	£169				
Arcam Alpha 7	PX	£330	£189	Sony TC6615	XD	£299	£179				
Arcam Alpha 9	XD	£800	£639	Teac V8030S	XD	£650	£399				
Arcam Delta 70.2	PX		£149	Technics RSTR474	XD	£220	£129				
Denon DCD425	XD	£150	£99	Yamaha KXW392	XD	£180	£129				
Denon DCD825	XD	£239	£179	MINI DISC & CD RECORDERS							
Kenwood DP2080	XD	£129	£69	Philips CDR870	XD	£500	£299				
Kenwood DPR3090	XD	£140	£79	Sony MDSJE10	XD	£299	£119				
Kenwood DPR7090	XD	£300	£199	TUNABLES							
Marantz CD36	XD	£149	£69	NAD 533	XD	£218	£159				
Marantz CD46	XD	£179	£79	TUNERS							
Marantz CD675E	XD	£300	£189	Denon TU215RD	XD	£150	£109				
Marantz CD63Ki Signature	XD	£400	£299	Denon TU425RD	XD	£200	£139				
Marantz CD17Ki Signature	XD	£1100	£849	Kenwood KT2080	XD	£130	£69				
Micromega Minium	XD	£349	£169	Kenwood KT3080	XD	£180	£89				
Micromega Stage 5	XD	£750	£449	Micromega Minium	XD	£300	£169				
Micromega Stage 6	XD	£950	£599	Pioneer F104	XD	£100	£69				
Musical Fidelity E61	XD	£300	£199	Pioneer F204RDS	XD	£140	£79				
NAD 510	XD	£200	£139	Rotel RT935	XD	£159	£99				
NAD 512	XD	£250	£169	Sansui TUX210	XD	£80	£59				
Philips CD710	XD	£100	£55	Sony STSE200	XD	£100	£69				
Philips CD602	XD	£119	£59	Sony STS43ES	XD	£249	£169				
Pink Triangle Numeral	XD	£1000	£749	AMPLIFIERS							
Pink Triangle Cardinal	PX	£800	£399	AMC 3025A	XD	£130	£89				
Quad 77 Bus	New	£700	£469	AMC 3050A	XD	£170	£119				
Rotel RCD930AX	XD	£180	£129	Arcam Alpha 6	PX		£159				
Rotel RCD950	XD	£250	£179	Arcam Alpha 7	XD	£260	£189				
Sansui CDX310	NEW	£140	£69	Arcam Alpha 8	XD	£360	£198				
Sansui CDX510	NEW	£160	£89	Aura VA100/II	PX	£350	£179				
Sony CDP361	XD	£149	£59	Exposure 15 Super	PX	£900	£650				
Sony CDPX900E	XD	£300	£169	Exposure 20 Super	PX	£800	£550				
Teac CDP3450SE	XD	£200	£119	Marantz PM66Ki Signature	XD	£400	£299				
Teac VRD510SE	XD	£849	£499	Micromega Minium	XD	£350	£199				
Teac VRD59	XD	£699	£399	NAD 312	XD	£200	£139				
Yamaha CDX390	XD	£130	£79	Pioneer A105	XD	£100	£69				
CD TRANSPORTS											
Micromega Drive 1	XD	£750	£499	Project 7	PX	£260	£100				
Micromega Drive 2	XD	£1000	£599	Quad 77	XD	£850	£499				
Teac VRD5T1	XD	£550	£359	Rotel RA920AX	XD	£100	£69				
DACS											
Meridian 203	PX		£219	Sansui AUX310	XD	£120	£69				
Meridian 263	PX		£279	Sonneteer Campion	XD	£600	£450				
Pink Triangle Da Capo	XD	£1499	£699	Sony TAFE210	XD	£119	£69				
Teac DT1	XD	£500	£299	Sony TAF448	XD	£250	£149				
CASSETTE DECKS											
Denon DRW580	XD	£200	£129	Talk Electronics Storm 1	XD	£500	£349				
Denon DRM605	XD	£230	£149	Talk Electronics Storm 2	XD	£650	£450				
Denon DRM740	XD	£269	£169	Teac ABX7	XD	£700	£449				
Kenwood KX3080	XD	£159	£99	Teac ABX10	XD	£1000	£599				
Nakamichi CR2E	PX		£249	PRE AMPLIFIERS							
LOUDSPEAKERS											
AVI Posifron	XD	£899	£699	Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	XD	£900	£629				
Castle Iris	PX	£250	£129	POWER AMPLIFIERS							
Celestion Little 1	XD	£100	£69	Quad 77	XD	£600	£399				
Celestion HTB Package	XD	£750	£449	Roksan Caspian	PX	£600	£419				
GLL IC110	XD	£300	£159	Talk Electronics Tornado 2	XD	£600	£419				
Heybrook Optima	XD	£260	£189								
Jamo Concert 8	XD	£1365	£899								
Jamo Concert 11	XD	£2250	£1549								
JBL TLX111	XD	£120	£69								
JBL TLX121	XD	£150	£99								
JBL Control 1C	XD	£200	£69								
Micromega Minium	XD	£300	£149								
Mission 731 Pro	XD	£139	£79								
Mission 733i	XD	£330	£189								
Mission 751F	XD	£348	£209								
Mission 752F	XD	£578	£349								
Mission 753F	XD	£797	£449								
Mission 754F	XD	£1300	£799								
Monitor Audio MA303	XD	£500	£299								
Mordaunt Short MS25i Pearl	XD	£329	£149								
Pink Triangle Ventral	XD	£1000	£599								
Polk RT3	XD	£200	£119								
Polk RT8	XD	£400	£219								
Revolver Purvey	XD	£200	£99								
Rogers LS3/5A	XD	£700	£349								
Rogers LS7T	PX		£249								
Ruark Icon	PX	£400	£250								
TDL RTL2	XD	£280	£149								
SYSTEMS											
Aiwa NSXAV70	XD	£400	£249								
Aiwa XRM10	XD	£300	£169								
Aiwa LCX330	XD	£200	£129								
Aiwa NSXV100	XD	£200	£129								
Aiwa NSXV800	XD	£350	£199								
Aiwa NSXV50	XD	£350	£199								
Denon DC1	XD	£380	£269								
Denon DM03	XD	£500	£349								
Denon D77 ex spks	XD	£650	£449								
Denon D907 ex spks	XD	£650	£469								
JVC D301T	XD	£250	£159								
JVC D401T	XD	£300	£179								
JVC UXT100	XD	£200	£149								
JVC UX1000	XD	£250	£179								
JVC EXT05	XD	£400	£289								
JVC MXD4T	XD	£330	£229								
Kenwood UD303	XD	£399	£199								
Kenwood UD403P	XD	£499	£229								
Kenwood XD500	XD	£330	£239								
Kenwood XD700	XD	£380	£269								
Kenwood HM901	XD	£600	£449								
Philips FW672P	XD	£599	£299								
Pioneer NS60M	XD	£449	£299								
Sony MNC550	XD	£330	£249								
Sony MHC801											
Teac Reference 500 ex spks	XD	£349	£189								
Yamaha CL10 ex spks	XD	£800	£599								
Yamaha CLAV10 ex spks	XD	£850	£599								
DVD & LASER DISC PLAYERS											
Pioneer CLDD925	XD	£800	£339								
Pioneer CLDD515-1	XD	£550	£269								
SURROUND AMPLIFIERS & RECEIVERS											
Arcam Xeta One	XD	£1000	£349								
Denon AVR3200	XD	£1000	£699								
Harman Kardon AVR30	PX	£1000	£499								
JVC AXV6BK	XD	£280	£119								
JVC RXV616R8K	XD	£400	£189								
Kenwood KRV5090	XD	£250	£89								
Kenwood KRV6090	XD	£279	£129								
Kenwood KRV8090	XD	£399	£159								
Kenwood KRV9090	XD	£499	£199								
Kenwood KRV888D (ex demod)	XD	£1000	£279								
Pioneer VSX505RDS	XD	£300	£189								
Sansui AV5100	NEW	£200	£99								
Sansui AV7100	NEW	£300	£149								
Sansui RZ5110	NEW	£200	£119								
Yamaha DSPA1 (Black)	XD	£1600	£1199								
Yamaha DSPA492	NEW	£250	£128								
Yamaha DSPA3090	PX	£1500	£699								
Yamaha RXV392	XD	£250	£159								
SURROUND PROCESSORS											
Kenwood S3300	XD	£129	£59								
Sony SDPE9ES	XD	£599	£329								
Yamaha DSPES80	XD	£450	£189								
CENTRE SPEAKERS											
JBL TLX103	XD	£100	£59								
Mission 73C	XD	£150	£89								
Mission 73Ci	XD	£149	£79								
Mission 75C	XD	£250	£169								
Polk CS250	XD	£250	£139								
Yamaha NSC80	XD	£100	£49								
Yamaha NSC105	XD	£80	£49								
SURROUND SPEAKERS											
JBL CM42	XD	£130	£89								
Mission 73S	XD	£100	£59								
Polk RTF/X	XD	£350	£189								
Polk M1	XD	£130	£79								
Polk M2	XD	£180	£99								
Pioneer SCR505	XD	£200	£139								
Pioneer SF505	XD	£140	£99								
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Rel 050	XD	£375	£299								
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Rel Storm	XD	£695	£499								
Yamaha YSTSW150	XD	£280	£179								

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New = Brand New and Factory Sealed. XD = Ex-Display or Ex-Demonstration complete with packing and instructions. PX = Part Exchange. Not all products are available at all stores, please check before travelling.

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HOW TO USE THE BUYERS' GUIDE

Best Buys, Recommendations & Editor's Choices

B BEST BUYS: Awarded to group-tested products which display an unbeatable blend of performance and value for money.

R RECOMMENDED: Top performers in group tests: perhaps not the cheapest but possibly more sophisticated than Best Buys.

E EDITOR'S CHOICE: More expensive components which exhibit outstanding engineering, industrial design and sound quality.

Our Three Step Guide to Buying Hi-Fi

The *Hi-Fi Choice Price Guide and Directory* are extremely simple to use, but contain all the information you need to select and buy the perfect hi-fi system. Here's how it works.

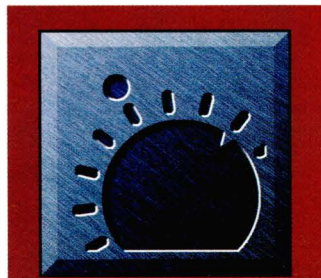
STEP 1 DISCOVER which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide, which starts on this page. The product listing is updated using manufacturers' data every other month, and aims to include every hi-fi component currently available in the UK. (But please fax us on 0171-917 5512 with any omissions!) It is an alphabetical listing divided into different types of hi-fi component, and also into price bands.

STEP 2 PRODUCTS whose names are printed in **RED** are those we have reviewed, which you can read about in the Directory (starts after the Price Guide). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy, Recommended or Editor's Choice awards, denoting products of exceptional quality and value. The Directory is sorted by product type and listed alphabetically, and the beginning of each section provides essential information about each kind of hi-fi component.

STEP 3 FIND your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (at the end of the Directory) to book a demonstration of the hi-fi equipment you want to hear. Remember to take your own LPs or CDs!

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AMPLIFIERS INTEGRATED

KEY

⊖ - Number of line-level inputs.

'20W' - Rated RMS output power per channel into nominal load of 8 Ohms.

UP TO £250

Akai AM1100	⊖	50W	230
AMC 3020	⊖	20W	100
AMC 3025A	⊖	30W	140
AMC 3050A	⊖	45W	170
Ariston AX910	⊖	30W	80
Cambridge A1 Mk III	⊖	30W	100
Cambridge A1 Mk3 SE	⊖	30W	120
Cambridge A3i	⊖	60W	200
Cambridge A500RC	⊖	50W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	⊖	30W	140
Denon PMA-350SE	⊖	50W	180
Denon PMA-535R	⊖	50W	230
Denon PMA-100M	⊖	80W	240
Goodmans Delta 900A	⊖	100W	130
H/K HK610	⊖	30W	180
H/K HK620	⊖	40W	250
JVC AX-V4BK	⊖	30W	200
JVC AX-A372BK	⊖	40W	200
JVC AX-R5BK	⊖	45W	200
Kenwood KA-1080	⊖	60W	140
Kenwood KA-3080R	⊖	70W	170
Kenwood KA-3020SE	⊖	50W	200
Marantz PM-47	⊖	40W	150
Marantz PM-57	⊖	50W	200
Marantz SR-47	⊖	40W	200
Marantz PM-66SE	⊖	50W	230
Musical Fidelity E1	⊖	30W	199
NAD 310	⊖	20W	100
NAD 312	⊖	25W	200
Pioneer A-105	⊖	30W	130
Pioneer A-204R	⊖	25W	160
Pioneer A-300R	⊖	50W	200
Pioneer A-305R	⊖	50W	200
Pioneer A-405R	⊖	45W	250
Rega Brio	⊖	30W	229
Rotel RA921	⊖	20W	100
Rotel RA931	⊖	35W	150
Rotel RA971	⊖	70W	200
Sansui AUX-410R	⊖	50W	150
Sansui AUX-510R	⊖	70W	230
Sherwood AX 4050R	⊖	50W	150
Sherwood AX-7030R	⊖	95W	230
Sony TA-FE210	⊖	40W	130
Sony TA-FE320R	⊖	60W	150
Sony TA-F248E	⊖	50W	200
TEAC AR-600	⊖	90W	200
Technics SU-V300	⊖	25W	150
Technics SU-V500	⊖	30W	180
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	⊖	37W	200
Technics SU-V620	⊖	70W	230
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	⊖	45W	250
Yamaha AX-392	⊖	60W	170
Yamaha AX-9	⊖	50W	200
Yamaha AX-492	⊖	85W	220

£251 TO £500

Alchemist Maxim	⊖	30W	350
AMC CVT 3030A	⊖	30W	400
Arcam Alpha 7	⊖	40W	260
Arcam Alpha 8	⊖	50W	360
Arcam Alpha 9	⊖	70W	500
Audio Analogue Puccini	⊖	40W	450
Audiogram MB1	⊖	40W	493
Audiolab 8000LX	⊖	60W	470
Audiolab 8000A	⊖	60W	500
Aura VA-100 II	⊖	70W	350
CR Dev CR324	⊖	100W	499
Creek 4330	⊖	35W	279
Creek 4340	⊖	35W	279
Creek 4330R	⊖	35W	355
Creek 5250	⊖	50W	450
Cymbol CA1	⊖	40W	499
Denon PMA-735R	⊖	65W	300
Denon PMA-1500R	⊖	70W	500
EMF Audio Sequel	⊖	50W	450
H/K HK640	⊖	55W	400
Kenwood KA-5090R	⊖	65W	300
Kenwood KA-7090R	⊖	85W	400
Magnum IA120	⊖	65W	265

Magnum IA170	⊖	96W	330
Magnum IA170SE	⊖	90W	430
Marantz PM-68	⊖	90W	300
Marantz PM-66 KI Sig.	⊖	50W	400
Micromega Minium Series 2	⊖	40W	400
Mission Cyrus SL	⊖	50W	398
Monnio Asty	⊖	55W	400
Musical Fidelity E11	⊖	60W	300
Musical Fidelity X-A1	⊖	50W	480
Musical Fidelity A2	⊖	25W	500
Myryad T-40	⊖	50W	400
NAD 314	⊖	35W	260
NAD 317	⊖	80W	470
Onkyo A9210	⊖	40W	260
Onkyo A921	⊖	50W	350
Onkyo A922	⊖	70W	400
Orelle SA-100	⊖	50W	499
Pioneer A-400X	⊖	50W	300
Pioneer A-605R	⊖	80W	400
Pioneer A-300R Precision	⊖	35W	400
Rega Luna	⊖	40W	375
Rega Mira	⊖	60W	450
Shearman 2.5	⊖	35W	499
Sony TA-FB920R	⊖	65W	300
Sony TA-FA30ES	⊖	80W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	⊖	40W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	⊖	50W	500
TEAC AH-500	⊖	50W	280
Technics SU-A800D Mk2	⊖	55W	300
Technics SU-A900D Mk2	⊖	70W	400
Thule Audio Spirit IA60	⊖	60W	449
Yamaha AX-592	⊖	100W	280

£501 TO £700

Alchemist Kraken APD6A	⊖	55W	600
Alchemist Nemesis	⊖	80W	700
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	⊖	40W	595
Audio Note Kanji Line SE	⊖	9W	699
Audio Note First integrated	⊖	40W	699
Audiogram MB2	⊖	60W	599
Audiolab 8000S	⊖	60W	700
CR Dev Orpheus	⊖	150W	569
CR Dev Kalypso	⊖	15W	599
CR Dev CR525	⊖	175W	699
Creek 5250SR	⊖	50W	575
Creek 5250SER	⊖	60W	665
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	⊖	60W	650
Exposure XX Super	⊖	55W	700
Gamma Gemini	⊖	12W	699
H/K HK660	⊖	65W	700
Hi Q Sound MCI	⊖	30W	565
Jolida 202	⊖	40W	695
LFD Integrated 0	⊖	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	⊖	33W	650
Lynwood Opal	⊖	80W	685
Magnum IA200	⊖	100W	599
Magnum Class A	⊖	85W	690
Micromega Tempo 1	⊖	50W	700
Mission Cyrus III	⊖	50W	598
Musical Fidelity A220	⊖	50W	700
Myryad MI 120	⊖	60W	600
Naim Nait 3	⊖	30W	590
Orelle SA-100RX	⊖	75W	649
Quad 77 Integrated	⊖	85W	700
Roksan Caspian	⊖	70W	695
Rose Scion	⊖	65W	615
Shearman Phase 2	⊖	50W	689
Stemfoort SF60	⊖	60W	549
Talk Electronics Storm 2	⊖	50W	650
TEAC AB-X7R	⊖	50W	700
Thule Audio Spirit IA100	⊖	100W	599

£701 TO £1000

Alchemist Forseti Integrated	⊖	100W	1,000
Arcam Alpha 10	⊖	100W	800
Audio Note Oto Line PP	⊖	12W	950
AWI S2000MI	⊖	100W	999
Copland CSA8	⊖	60W	945
Creo IMP702	⊖	70W	850
Creo IMP703	⊖	70W	1,000
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	⊖	50W	995
Exposure XV Super	⊖	55W	800
Golden Tube Audio SI-50	⊖	50W	1,000
H/K HK680	⊖	85W	1,000
Holli Audis Signature	⊖	65W	750
LFD 0 LE Integrated	⊖	60W	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	⊖	33W	800
Magnum Class A SE	⊖	80W	795
Marantz PM-17	⊖	60W	900
Meridian 551	⊖	55W	795
Micromega Tempo 2	⊖	70W	900
Naim Nait 3 R	⊖	30W	780
Opera Aida	⊖	60W	795
Pioneer A-07	⊖	80W	999
Primare A20 Mk II	⊖	70W	799
Rega Elicit	⊖	40W	730
Shearman Phase 2 Reference	⊖	50W	799
Sonnesteer Alabaster	⊖	50W	900
Stemfoort SF100	⊖	100W	849
Thule Audio IA150B	⊖	150W	999

£1001 TO £2000

Art Audio Integra	⊖	30W	1,499
ATC SIA2-150	⊖	150W	1,984

Audio Note Soro Line PP		20W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Line SE	ⓐ	12W	1,200
Audio Note Soro Line SE	ⓐ	12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE	ⓐ	18W	1,699
BB Audio BB 30-60	ⓐ	30W	1,495
Beam-Echo SA-50	ⓐ	50W	1,950
Bow Technologies Wazoo	ⓐ	50W	1,795
Bryston B-60	ⓐ	60W	1,249
Copland CSA14	ⓐ	70W	1,199
Copland CSA24	ⓐ		1,299
Copland CTA401	ⓐ	25W	1,699
CR Dev Romulus V3	ⓐ	35W	1,198
CR Dev Remus V3	ⓐ	60W	1,989
Credo LIM 702	ⓐ		1,191
Credo LIM 703	ⓐ		1,249
EAR 859	ⓐ	13W	1,999
EAR 834	ⓐ	40W	1,999
Graaf Venticinque	ⓐ	20W	1,695
LFD Integrated 1	ⓐ	65W	1,099
Meracur Intrate	ⓐ	60W	1,095
Primare A301	ⓐ	80W	1,699
Rogers E-20a	ⓐ	20W	1,229
Rogers E-40a	ⓐ	40W	1,900
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	ⓐ	25W	1,299
T+A R1200R	ⓐ	90W	1,750
Thule Audio IA250B	ⓐ	250W	1,799
Unison Simply Two	ⓐ	12W	1,100
Unison Simply Four P	ⓐ	24W	1,600
Unison Pentode 35	ⓐ	35W	1,650
Unison Simply Four T	ⓐ	11W	1,650
Woodside ISA230 Line	ⓐ	30W	1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	ⓐ	30W	1,249
YBA Integre DT	ⓐ		1,650

OVER £2000

Adyton Opera	ⓐ	50W	2,595
Audio Note Meishu Line		9W	2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	ⓐ	26W	56,000
Audio Research CA50	ⓐ		3,990
Cary CAD-300SEI	ⓐ	11W	3,995
Conrad-Johnson CAV-50	ⓐ	50W	2,495
EAR V20	ⓐ	24W	2,495
Electrocompaniet EC-1	ⓐ	100W	2,195
Gamma Rhythm	ⓐ	18W	2,499
Gamma Rhythm Ref	ⓐ	20W	3,499
Gamma Moment	ⓐ	40W	19,999
Jadis DA30	ⓐ	30W	3,490
Jadis DA60	ⓐ	60W	5,750
Krell KAV500i	ⓐ	150W	2,550
McIntosh MA6400E	ⓐ	100W	3,999
McIntosh MA6800E	ⓐ	150W	5,999
Meracur Onesta	ⓐ	75W	2,595
Musical Fidelity A1001	ⓐ	200W	2,500
Pioneer A-09	ⓐ	45W	4,000
Rowland Concentra	ⓐ	100W	5,500
T+A R1500R	ⓐ	135W	2,015
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Int	ⓐ	30W	2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	ⓐ	150W	6,900
Unison Simply 845	ⓐ	24W	3,195
Unison Performance One	ⓐ	25W	4,500
Unison 845 Absolute	ⓐ	40W	11,995

PREAMPS

KEY
 ⓐ (etc) – Number of line-level inputs.
 Ph – Phono input fitted as standard
 (may be an option on some other models).

UP TO £500

Art Audio Minuet	ⓐ	Ph	499
Audio Analogue Bellini		Ph	475
Audio Note The M		Ph	350
Beam-Echo PP-21	ⓐ	Ph	499
Bryston BP1	ⓐ	Ph	438
Carver CT-24	ⓐ	Ph	499
CR Dev Themis	ⓐ	Ph	349
Creek P43	ⓐ		399
Creek P52	ⓐ		499
Crimson CS610C	ⓐ	Ph	450
DPA Ent'ment phono		Ph	275
EAR 834P	ⓐ	Ph	349
EAR 834L	ⓐ	Ph	449
EAR 834P/MC	ⓐ	Ph	499
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	ⓐ	Ph	495
Henley HMC50	ⓐ		200
Henley HMC100	ⓐ		450
Hi Q Sound LCP2	ⓐ		149
LFD Mistral Linestage	ⓐ		449
LFD LSO Linestage	ⓐ		499
Lumley PP70	ⓐ		345
Lumley PP1	ⓐ		345
Magnum MP120	ⓐ		330
Magnum MP660	ⓐ		500
Magnum MP630	ⓐ		500
Monnie ADN-N	ⓐ	Ph	295
Monnie Asty L	ⓐ		500
Moth 30 Passive	ⓐ		149
Moth 30 RIAA	ⓐ	Ph	249
Moth 30 Active	ⓐ	Ph	349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	ⓐ		120
Musical Fidelity X-LP	ⓐ	Ph	130
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	ⓐ	Ph	200
Musical Fidelity E20	ⓐ	Ph	400
NAD 114	ⓐ	Ph	270

NAD 116	ⓐ	Ph	430
Naim Prefix			360
Naim NAC92	ⓐ		485
Parasound P/HP-100	ⓐ	Ph	130
Parasound P/HP-850	ⓐ	Ph	400
Rega EOS	ⓐ	Ph	398
Rega Cursa	ⓐ	Ph	450
Roksan Artaxerxes 10	ⓐ	Ph	395
Rose RV-23	ⓐ	Ph	450
Rotel RQ970BX	ⓐ	Ph	130
Rotel RC971	ⓐ		150
Rotel RC972	ⓐ		225
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	ⓐ		500
Technics SU-C1000 MK2	ⓐ	Ph	300
Thule Audio Spirit PR100	ⓐ		399
Trilogy 905	ⓐ		375
Trilogy 904	ⓐ	Ph	375
Trilogy 900	ⓐ	Ph	499
Unison Simply Phono	ⓐ	Ph	500

£501 TO £2000

Adyton Chorus	ⓐ		1,995
Alchemist Kraken Pre	ⓐ		550
Alchemist Forseti Pre	ⓐ		950
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 Note M1 Line	ⓐ		550
Audio Note M1 RIAA	ⓐ	Ph	550
Audio Note M2 Line	ⓐ		999
Audio Note M2 Line	ⓐ		999
Audio Note Discovery	ⓐ	Ph	1,099
Audio Note M2RIAA	ⓐ	Ph	1,099
Audio Prism Mantissa	ⓐ		1,995
Audio Research LS7	ⓐ		1,750
Audio Research LS3	ⓐ		1,997
Audio Synthesis Pro Passion	ⓐ		595
Audio Synthesis Passion	ⓐ		695
Audio Synthesis Passion 85	ⓐ		1,295
Audio Synthesis Passion 8M	ⓐ		1,695
Audiolab 8000C	ⓐ	Ph	580
Audiolab 8000PPA	ⓐ	Ph	1,000
Audiolab 8000Q	ⓐ	Ph	1,250
Aura CA-200	ⓐ	Ph	700
AVI S2000MP	ⓐ		949
AVI S2000MP+P	ⓐ	Ph	1,199
Beam-Echo SP-21	ⓐ	Ph	1,116
Bryston 4	ⓐ	Ph	642
Bryston BP5	ⓐ	Ph	889
Bryston BP20	ⓐ		1,126
Bryston BP-25	ⓐ		1,326
Canary Audio CA-606	ⓐ		1,295
Canary Audio CA-601	ⓐ		1,595
Cary SLP-50	ⓐ		995
Cary SLP-74	ⓐ		1,795
Cary PH-501	ⓐ	Ph	1,795
Chord Phono	ⓐ	Ph	1,898
Chord CPA 1800	ⓐ		1,905
Concordant Exhilarant	ⓐ		900
Concordant Exquisite	ⓐ		1,900
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL	ⓐ		995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	ⓐ	Ph	1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL	ⓐ		1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	ⓐ		1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	ⓐ	Ph	1,990
Copland CSA303	ⓐ	Ph	1,199
Copland CTA301 MkII	ⓐ	Ph	1,399
CR Dev Carmenta	ⓐ		659
CR Dev Argento	ⓐ	Ph	699
Credo CMP004	ⓐ		1,246
Credo CMP005	ⓐ		1,876
Densen DM-20	ⓐ	Ph	1,200
DNM 3 Start	ⓐ	Ph	1,000
DNM 3A Start	ⓐ	Ph	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre	ⓐ		795
Dynavector L200	ⓐ		1,195
Dynavector P100	ⓐ	Ph	1,495
Dynavector L100	ⓐ		1,995
Earmax Pre	ⓐ		1,895
ECA Vista S	ⓐ		760
ECA Vista HD	ⓐ		880
ECA Prisma	ⓐ	Ph	880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5	ⓐ		1,195
Electrocompaniet EC-4.6	ⓐ		1,750
Exposure XIX	ⓐ		800
Exposure XVII	ⓐ	Ph	850
Golden Tube Audio SEP-1	ⓐ		990
Graaf WFB Two	ⓐ	Ph	1,195
Graaf WFB One	ⓐ	Ph	1,725
Henley HMC200	ⓐ		750
Heybrook Signature II Pre	ⓐ		555
Hi Q Sound MCB2	ⓐ	Ph	545
Hi Q Sound MCL2	ⓐ		645
Jadis DP12	ⓐ		1,790
LFD MC1 Phonostage	ⓐ	Ph	949
LFD LS1 Linestage	ⓐ		999
LFD MC2 Phonostage	ⓐ	Ph	1,499
LFD LS2 Linestage	ⓐ		1,599
LFD LSB Linestage	ⓐ		1,999
Linn Wakonda	ⓐ		750
Linn Linto	ⓐ		850
Linn Kairn	ⓐ		1,400
Lumley LV1.5	ⓐ		895
Lumley LV1	ⓐ		1,150

Lumley PV1.5	ⓐ	Ph	430
Lumley PV1	ⓐ		360
Matisse Atom	ⓐ		1,000
McIntosh C712	ⓐ	Ph	1,999
Meracur Ingredi	ⓐ		925
Mendian 501	ⓐ		695
Meridian 562	ⓐ		765
Mendian 562V	ⓐ		995
Mendian 502	ⓐ		1,295
Michell Orca	ⓐ	Ph	1,650
Michi RHG-10	ⓐ		795
Michi RHQ-10	ⓐ	Ph	1,150
Michi RHA-10	ⓐ		1,150
Micromega Tempo P	ⓐ		1,150
Mission Cyrus Pre	ⓐ	Ph	648
Monrio Pluri-L II	ⓐ		900
Muse Model 3	ⓐ		1,990
Musical Fidelity F25	ⓐ	Ph	1,500
Myriad MP100	ⓐ		600
NAD 118	ⓐ		1,000
Naim NAC92R	ⓐ		650
Naim NAC72	ⓐ		745
Naim NAC102	ⓐ		1,080
Quad 77 Pre	ⓐ	Ph	850
Rega Hal	ⓐ	Ph	998
Roksan ROK-L2.5	ⓐ		1,250
Rose RV-235	ⓐ	Ph	525
Rotel RC995	ⓐ		525
Shearpe Phase 6 Pre	ⓐ		999
Shearpe Phase 1 Pre Ref	ⓐ		1,499
Siemel MC20	ⓐ	Ph	650
Siemel MM20	ⓐ	Ph	650
Siemel TU10	ⓐ		1,599
Siemel TR20	ⓐ		1,599
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre 1P	ⓐ	Ph	899
Sonic Frontiers Phono 1	ⓐ	Ph	1,999
Sonographe SC26	ⓐ		995
Sumo Athena II/LS	ⓐ		767
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS	ⓐ		987
Sumo Athena III	ⓐ		987
Sumo Artemis uP	ⓐ		1,595
T+A P1200R	ⓐ		965
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2	ⓐ		650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3	ⓐ		900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4	ⓐ		1,550
Talk Electronics Hurricane 5	ⓐ		1,900
Technics SU-C2000	ⓐ	Ph	700
Thorens TTP-200F	ⓐ	Ph	699
Thule Audio Spirit PR150I	ⓐ		699
Trilogy 901	ⓐ		750
Trilogy 906	ⓐ	Ph	995
Trilogy 902	ⓐ		1,595
Tron Retro	ⓐ		1,000
Tron Nucleus Phono	ⓐ	Ph	2,000
Tron Nucleus	ⓐ		2,000
Tube Tech Seer Line	ⓐ		935
Tube Tech Mac Phono	ⓐ	Ph	1,150
Tube Tech Prophet	ⓐ		1,970
Unison Feather One	ⓐ		795
Unison Mystery Two	ⓐ		1,750
Unison Mystery One	ⓐ		1,750
Unison VPP One	ⓐ	Ph	1,995
Van Den Hul Pre-amp	ⓐ		1,700
Wilson Benesch Stage One	ⓐ	Ph	995
Woodside SC27 Line	ⓐ		949
Woodside SC26 Line	ⓐ		1,557
XTC PRE-1	ⓐ		1,250
Yamaha CX-2	ⓐ	Ph	650
YBA 3	ⓐ		1,199
YBA Integre	ⓐ		1,199
YBA 2	ⓐ		1,999

OVER £2000

Adyton Temper	ⓐ		2,495
Adyton Modus	ⓐ		2,695
Alchemist The Alchemist pre	ⓐ		4,995
ATC SCA2	ⓐ		2,599
Audio Note M3Line	ⓐ		2,650
Audio Prism Avanti	ⓐ		7,995
Audio Research LS15	ⓐ		3,399
Audio Research LS22	ⓐ		4,391
Audio Research L55 MkIII	ⓐ		6,435
Audio Research REF 1	ⓐ		9,900
Boulder L3AE	ⓐ		2,100
Boulder L5AE	ⓐ		3,400
Boulder L5M	ⓐ		3,800
Boulder 2010	ⓐ		22,000
Canary Audio CA-801	ⓐ		3,750
Cary SLP-98L	ⓐ		2,595
Chord CPA 2200	ⓐ		2,530
Chord CPA 3200	ⓐ		3,785
Chord CPA 4000	ⓐ		6,675
Conrad-Johnson PF-R	ⓐ		2,490
Conrad-Johnson PV-12A	ⓐ	Ph	2,590
Conrad-Johnson Premier 15	ⓐ	Ph	3,995
Conrad-Johnson Premier 14	ⓐ	Ph	4,495
Conrad-Johnson Art	ⓐ		14,995
CAT SL1 Sig. Mk3	ⓐ	Ph	6,500
CR Dev Kastor	ⓐ		2,995
Credo LPR 001	ⓐ		2,815
DNM 3C Primus	ⓐ	Ph	2,550
DNM 3C Twin	ⓐ	Ph	3,800
DNM 3C Six	ⓐ	Ph	5,050
EAR 802MC	ⓐ	Ph	2,599
EAR G88	ⓐ	Ph	9,999
EAR P52	ⓐ	Ph	15,999

Gamma Era Ref	ⓐ	Ph	7,999
Graaf GM13.5B	ⓐ		3,750
Jadis DP60L	ⓐ		2,800

POWER AMPS (CONTINUED)

Bryston THX3B	150W	1,262
Bryston 7B-ST PRO	500W	1,545
Bryston 4B-ST PRO	300W	1,756
Bryston 7B-ST	500W	1,815
Bryston THX4B	300W	1,850
Bryston THX7B	500W	1,886
Canary Audio CA-706	40W	1,695
Canary Audio CA-708	40W	1,950
Carver A-500X	250W	949
Carver A-760X	380W	1,299
Chord SPM 400	100W	1,425
Chord SPM 600	130W	1,850
Conrad-Johnson MV-55	50W	1,995
Copland CTA501	30W	1,750
CR Dev Amphion	12W	1,949
Credo PMP 804		1,876
Creek A525E	80W	599
Crimson CS630C	100W	800
Densen B-300	100W	800
Densen DM-30	100W	1,200
DNM PA Start	45W	1,000
DNM PA1 Start	45W	1,650
DPA Enlightenment pwr	100W	995
Earmax Power	25W	1,895
ECA Lectern S	50W	880
ECA Lectern HD	50W	1,480
Electrocompaniet AW60FTT	60W	1,095
Exposure XVIII Super	70W	850
Golden Tube Audio SE-40	40W	1,100
Golden Tube Audio SE-300B MkII	8W	1,490
Golden Tube Audio SE-100	100W	1,995
Graaf Venticinque P	25W	1,395
Heybrook Signature II Pwr	120W	1,045
Hi Q Sound MCM	70W	715
Jadis DAs	40W	1,997
Lexicon 212	120W	1,850
LFD PA1 Powerstage	60W	999
LFD PA2 Powerstage	75W	1,599
LFD PA2M Powerstage	90W	1,999
Linn LK100	50W	650
Linn LK240	120W	750
Linn AV5105	100W	1,200
Lynwood Ruby	120W	985
Magnum MF330	150W	685
Magnum MF660	125W	825
Magnum A500SE	200W	1,485
Magnum A505E	200W	1,595
McIntosh MC7100	100W	1,999
Meracur Ciere	60W	1,095
Meridian 555	60W	750
Meridian 556	100W	895
Meridian 557	200W	1,400
Meridian 505	160W	1,590
Michell Alecto Stereo	50W	1,150
Michell Alecto Mono	100W	1,989
Michi RHB-05	100W	1,100
Michi RHB-10	200W	2,000
Micromega Amp	100W	1,150
Monno Asty P	100W	950
Monno Cento	135W	1,495
Monno HP-1	135W	1,750
Moth 60 Stereo	60W	599
Moth 30 Mono/100	100W	879
Muse Model 100	100W	1,490
Musical Fidelity X-A200	200W	1,000
NAD 218THX	200W	850
Naim NAP140	45W	770
Naim NAP180	60W	1,090
Naim NAP135	75W	1,705
Naim NAP250	70W	1,705
Papworth TVA50	50W	1,425
Parasound HCA-1000A	125W	600
Parasound HCA-1500A	205W	1,000
Quad 77 Power	85W	600
Quad 707	140W	800
Rega EXS	70W	598
Rega Exon	125W	1,196
Roksan Caspian Power	70W	595
Roksan ROK-S1.5	100W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)	75W	550
Shearpe Phase 3	50W	639
Shearpe Phase 3 Reference	50W	749
Shearpe Phase 5 Mono	100W	1,598
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Amp 1	40W	1,299
Sonographe SA250	125W	1,195
Sonographe SA400	220W	1,695
Sumo Polaris III	164W	950
Sumo Model Five	60W	1,975
Sumo Andromeda III	240W	1,975
T+A A1210	90W	875
T+A PA1200R	90W	1,445
T+A A1500	140W	1,535
T+A PA1500R	135W	1,665
Talk Electronics Tornado 2	65W	600
Talk Electronics Tornado 3	100W	750
Talk Electronics Tornado 4	110W	1,100
Technics SE-A2000	100W	1,100
Thorens TTA-2000	30W	599
Thule Audio Spirit PA100	100W	599
Thule Audio Spirit PA150B	150W	699
Trilogy 948	50W	1,895
Trilogy 948T	22W	1,895
Tube Tech Syrius	45W	1,150
Tube Tech Unisis Sig. Pwr	30W	1,900
Unison Power 35	35W	1,500

Woodside SA240	40W	1,199
Woodside MA100	100W	1,733
Woodside STA50	50W	1,880
XTC POW-2	150W	1,450
Yamaha MX-2	150W	750
YBA 3 stereo		1,299

OVER £2000

Adyton Cordis 1.6	120W	3,495
Adyton Cordis 3B	280W	12,995
Alchemist The Alchemist pwr	220W	3,995
Alchemist The Alchemist mono	55W	8,995
Art Audio Tempo	30W	2,499
Art Audio Quintet SE	-W	2,500
Art Audio Maestro	100W	3,524
ATC SPA2-200PRO	200W	2,056
ATC SPA2-150	200W	2,699
Audio Note P3	9W	2,150
Audio Note Quest	9W	2,750
Audio Note Yubi	18W	3,850
Audio Note Conquest	18W	4,450
Audio Note Tomei	30W	8,500
Audio Note Neiro	7W	11,360
Audio Note Ankoru	60W	14,500
Audio Prism Debut Mk II	35W	2,495
Audio Prism Mana	100W	12,995
Audio Research D130	130W	2,299
Audio Research VT60	35W	2,395
Audio Research D300	300W	4,678
Audio Research VT100	100W	4,995
Audio Research D400 MkII	400W	6,850
Audio Research VT130 SE	130W	8,500
Audio Research VT150 SE	150W	17,000
Audio Synthesis Desire Decade	200W	2,495
Beam-Echo DL7-35	30W	3,525
Border Patrol 300B SE	10W	3,495
Boulder 102AE	100W	2,800
Boulder 102M	100W	3,100
Boulder 500AE	150W	4,995
Boulder 500M	150W	5,500
Boulder 2060	600W	25,000
Boulder 2050	999W	43,500
Bryston THX8B	150W	2,385
Canary Audio CA-304	40W	2,695
Canary Audio CA-301	22W	2,995
Canary Audio CA-303	24W	5,495
Cary CAD-572SE	20W	2,495
Cary CAD-300SE	12W	3,995
Cary 300SE Sig	12W	4,795
Cary CAD-805	50W	8,995
Chord SPM 1000B	200W	2,920
Chord SPM 1200B	250W	3,790
Chord SPM 1200C	350W	4,210
Chord SPM 1400B mono	350W	8,420
Chord SPM 5000	415W	14,570
Conrad-Johnson MF-2300A	250W	2,990
Conrad-Johnson Premier 11A	70W	3,500
Conrad-Johnson Premier 12	140W	6,900
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8XS	150W	17,000
Conrad-Johnson Premier 8A	275W	17,000
CAT JL1	100W	18,000
Copland CTA505	67W	2,099
CR Dev Artemis		4,995
Credo LPO 804		2,456
Credo PMP 155		2,676
Credo LPO 455		4,975
Credo LPO 155		6,983
DNM PA3	50W	2,500
DNM PA3S	23W	3,750
Dynavector HX75	75W	2,195
Dynavector HX1.2	130W	3,995
EAR 861	32W	3,599
EAR 509 Mk II	100W	3,999
EAR 519	100W	4,699
EAR 549	200W	6,499
Electrocompaniet AW120DMB	120W	2,695
Electrocompaniet AW250R	250W	3,995
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	180W	4,595
Exposure IV	80W	2,199
Exposure XVI	125W	4,000
Gamma Aeon	20W	4,999
Gamma Space Ref	18W	7,999
Gamma Aeon Ref	70W	49,999
Graaf 5050	50W	2,100
Graaf GM20	60W	2,750
Graaf GM100	100W	4,250
Graaf GM200	200W	7,500
Jadis DA8	80W	3,333
Jadis DA7	100W	5,290
Jadis JA30	30W	5,980
Jadis JA300B	10W	9,000
Jadis JA80	60W	9,912
Jadis JA200	160W	15,518
Jadis JA500	400W	21,500
Krell KAV500/2	100W	3,485
Krell FPB200	200W	6,490
Krell FPB300	300W	9,500
Krell FPB600	600W	12,900
Krell KAS2	200W	20,000
Lexicon 225	250W	2,500
Lexicon 501	500W	5,000
Linn Klout	80W	2,400
Lumley M125	120W	3,750
Lumley M250	250W	7,500
Magnum Class A mono	180W	2,450
Magnum A200SE	275W	3,750

Mark Levinson 331	100W	4,495
Mark Levinson 332	200W	6,495
Mark Levinson 333	300W	8,495
Mark Levinson 33H	150W	19,395
Matisse Ref Monoblocks	180W	8,000
McIntosh MC150	150W	3,499
McIntosh MC300	300W	3,999
McIntosh MC500	500W	8,999
McIntosh MC1000	999W	14,999
Meracur Tentare	75W	2,245
Meracur Cantare	-W	8,995
Muse Model 160 Ser. II	160W	2,290
Muse Model 150	125W	2,690
Muse Model 175 Ser. II	175W	3,490
Muse Model 300 Ser. II	300W	3,990
Musical Fidelity F16	200W	2,500
Musical Fidelity F19	300W	4,000
Papworth M100	100W	2,645
Papworth M200	200W	3,825
Roksan ROK-M1.5	160W	2,250
Rowland Model 2	75W	4,999
Rowland Model 6	150W	10,999
Rowland Model 8T	250W	12,499
Rowland Model 9T	350W	27,999
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,399
Siemel TA20	50W	2,350
Sonic Frontiers Power 1	55W	2,499
Sonic Frontiers Power 2	110W	4,999
Sonic Frontiers Power 3	220W	8,599
Sumo Model Ten/M	240W	4,200
Sunfire Sunfire	300W	2,170
T+A A3000	190W	2,850
Talk Electronics Tornado 5	200W	2,100
Trilogy 958T	45W	3,395
Trilogy 958	100W	3,395
Tube Tech Genesis Sig.	100W	4,700
Tube Tech Synergy DMA	150W	6,400
Unison Smart 845	24W	3,500
Unison Smart 300B	24W	4,250
Unison Palladio	32W	11,995
Van Den Hul Power amp	65W	2,500
XTC POW-1	200W	2,250
YBA 2 stereo		2,200
YBA 1 HC stereo		4,999

Cardas Audio Cardas Cross	⊗	360.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five C	⊗	530.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink Golden-5 C	⊗	600.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross	⊗	700.00
ChordCo Chrysalis	⊗	40.00
ChordCo Cobra 2	⊗	55.00
ChordCo Siren	⊗	69.00
ChordCo Chameleon	⊗	90.00
ChordCo Solid	⊗	120.00
ChordCo Chorus	⊗	199.00
Connections UK Ultra	⊗	28.00
Connections UK Midas	⊗	39.00
Connections UK HD	⊗	46.00
DBF Acoustics Black Velvet	⊗	30.00
DBF Acoustics Black Velvet SE	⊗	40.00
DBF Acoustics Azure SE	⊗	75.00
DNM-Reson TCC75	⊗	35.00
DPA Slink	⊗	41.00
DPA White Slink	⊗	75.00
DPA Black Slink	⊗	220.00
Ecosse Ref CA1	⊗	65.00
Ecosse Ref CS1	⊗	75.00
Ecosse Ref MA2	⊗	155.00
Ecosse Ref MS2	⊗	165.00
Ecosse Ref US1	⊗	550.00
Expressive Tech IC-1	⊗	700.00
Gamma Wow Balance	⊗	799.00
Goetz M1 Interconnect	⊗	145.00
GT Audio Intercon	⊗	130.00
Henley HSP10	⊗	20.00
Henley HSP50	⊗	35.00
Henley HSP100	⊗	65.00
Henley HSP200	⊗	95.00
Heybrook Black Focus	⊗	39.00
Insert Audio IAS 1.2	⊗	21.50
Insert Audio IC100 Mk II	⊗	46.95
Insert Audio Image 5.1	⊗	84.95
Insert Audio Status 3.4	⊗	160.00
Ixos 104	⊗	20.00
Ixos 1003	⊗	30.00
Ixos Gamma 1002	⊗	39.95
Ixos 103	⊗	45.00
Ixos 102	⊗	60.00
Ixos 101	⊗	100.00
Ixos 100.XO3	⊗	150.00
Kimber PBJ	⊗	68.00
Kimber KC1	⊗	96.00
Kimber Hero	⊗	110.00
Kimber Silver Streak	⊗	180.00
Kimber KCAG	⊗	390.00
Kimber KCTG	⊗	720.00
Kronos Konnekt 3	⊗	49.00
Kronos Konnekt 2	⊗	99.00
Kronos Konnekt 1	⊗	199.00
LAT International IC-50	⊗	370.00
LAT International IC-80 MkII	⊗	58.00
LAT International IC-200 Mk II	⊗	151.00
Lieder Chanson	⊗	340.00
Lieder Lek	⊗	420.00
Lieder Het Lied	⊗	420.00
Lieder Song	⊗	580.00
Lieder Maas	⊗	620.00
Lieder Rijn	⊗	1,000.00
Lieder Waal	⊗	1,400.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	⊗	115.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	⊗	175.00
Moth Leyline Black	⊗	100.00
Moth Leyline Grey	⊗	200.00
Nordost Magic	⊗	35.00
Nordost Black Knight	⊗	60.00
Nordost Blue Angel	⊗	98.00
Nordost Blue Heaven I/C	⊗	144.95
Nordost Red Dawn	⊗	285.00
Nordost 7PN	⊗	825.00
Ortolfon 7N interconnect	⊗	250.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 35	⊗	40.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 50	⊗	50.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 52	⊗	70.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 53	⊗	90.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 100	⊗	100.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 102	⊗	130.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 103	⊗	160.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 104	⊗	190.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 200	⊗	220.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 202	⊗	290.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 203	⊗	360.00
Precious Metals Silver Signal 204	⊗	430.00
Prowire Silver	⊗	60.00
PAD Elementa	⊗	145.00
QED Qnect 2	⊗	30.00
QED Qnect 4	⊗	60.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	⊗	75.00
Shinpy Red Star 2	⊗	80.00
Shinpy Black Star 2	⊗	120.00
Shinpy Pulsar 2	⊗	240.00
Shinpy Quasar 2	⊗	

SME 5900A	102.57
Sonic Link Red	25.00
Sonic Link Silver pink	35.00
Sonic Link Black	49.00
Sonic Link White	65.00
Sonic Link Brown	70.00
Sonic Link Violet	85.00
Sonic Link Maroon	125.00
Sonic Link Blue Nickel	150.00
Sonic Link Vermillion	195.00
Sonic Link Red earth	300.00
Sonic Link Black earth	450.00
Sonic Link Blue earth	695.00
Sonic Link Black Rhodium	995.00
Straightwire Chorus	40.00
Supra DAC-X	60.00
Supra EFF-ISL	80.00
Supra EFF-XLR	90.00
Tara Prism 3	1795
Tara Prism 5	21.95
Tara Prism 8	25.95
Tara Prism 11	37.50
Tara Prism 22	63.50
Tara Prism CD	76.25
Tara Prism 33-i	88.25
Tara Prism 55	115.00
Tara RSC-CD	138.00
Tara RSC-Prime	170.00
Tara RSC-Ref Gen. 2	229.00
Tara RSC-Master Gen. 2	464.00
Tara RSC-Decade	935.00
Tara The 2	1,170.00
Tara The One	2,230
Transparent Cable Musichord Int	48.00
Transparent Cable The Link	92.00
Transparent Cable Music Link	119.00
Trichord Pulsewire 75	169.00
Vampire Wire CC	24.00
Vampire Wire CCC/II	58.00
Vampire Wire SC/II	98.00
Vampire Wire SC/IV	144.00
Vampire Wire A/2	259.00
Vampire Wire SL	412.00
Van Den Hul Storm	25.00
Van Den Hul Source HB	50.00
Van Den Hul D102 III	69.99
Van Den Hul Thunderline HB	130.00
Van Den Hul First	210.00
Van Den Hul Second	240.00
Van Den Hul MC Gold	400.00
Van Den Hul MC Silver IT	1,240.00
Van Den Hul MC Silver IT Bal	1,560.00
Wireworld Orbit	30.00
Wireworld Solstice II	40.00
XLO Type 150	50.00
XLO Type 0.1	180.00

Ixos 106	30.00
Kimber Opti-link	50.00
Kimber Illuminati DV-30	70.00
Kimber Illuminati D-60	325.00
Kimber Illuminati DX-50	350.00
Kimber Illuminati Orchid	750.00
LAT International DI-20-D	79.00
Moth Leyline Datalink	140.00
Nordost Moonglo	155.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 35	20.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 100	50.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 200	110.00
Precious Metals Silver Dig 202	145.00
QED Digiflex	20.00
QED Optiflex	25.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	45.00
Shinpy Digital	265.00
Siltech HF-6	145.00
Sonic Link Green	60.00
Supra EFF-ID	45.00
Supra DAC-XLR	45.00
Transparent Cable PDL	199.00
Trichord Pulsewire 75D	75.00
Vampire Wire DJ/1	150.00
Van Den Hul Source HB	30.00
Van Den Hul Videolink	60.00
Van Den Hul AES-EBU 110	65.00
Van Den Hul First	125.00
Van Den Hul Second	130.00



Speaker Cables

KEY
 ⊗ - Stranded construction.
 ⊙ - Solid-core construction.
 Price per mono metre, unterminated.

Acoustic Energy AESC-C3	11.95
ALR/Jordan QMM	5.00
Apertura Silver	82.50
Art Yam Church M2000	470.00
Art Yam Church 5000	795.00
Audio Note AN-D	4.50
Audio Note AN-B	16.50
Audio Note AN-L	29.50
Audio Note AN-SP	150.00
Audio Note AN-SPx	450.00
Audioquest Type 2	3.50
Audioquest F-18	3.60
Audioquest Type 6+	9.00
Audioquest Indigo +	15.00
Audioquest Crystal +	25.00
Audioquest Forest	75.00
Audioquest Argent +	125.00
Audioquest Clear 3	200.00
Cable Talk Theatre 2	1.50
Cable Talk The Flat One	2.00
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25
Cable Talk Talk 4.1	4.25
Cable Talk Talk 3.1 Biwire	4.50
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	7.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1 Biwire	8.50
Cable Talk Symphony 3	12.50
Cable Talk Concert 2.1 Biwire	14.00
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin SC	35.00
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five SC	59.00
Cardas Audio Cross SC	99.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five SC	109.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink Golden5 SC	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	789.00
ChordCo Myth	6.00
ChordCo Legend	15.00
ChordCo Odyssey	17.00
DNM-Reson LSC	6.95
DNM-Reson LSCB	13.95
Ecosse Ref FS2.16	1.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.2	2.50
Ecosse Ref CS2.3	3.75
Ecosse Ref CS2.15	5.75
Ecosse Ref MS2.2	15.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.3	20.00
Ecosse Ref MS2.15	30.00
Ecosse Ref US2	450.00
Gale XL105	1.00
Gale XL189	1.00
Gale XL315	2.00
Gale XL160-2	2.50
Gale XL315-2	3.99
Gamma Wonder Line	99.00
Goertz M1	16.00
Goertz M2	32.00

CABLES Digital Interconnects

KEY
 ⊗ - Stranded construction.
 ⊙ - Solid-core construction.
 Prices of interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B	139.00
Apertura Model A	255.00
Art Yam Church 5000	275.00
Audioquest Digital/video 1	30.00
Audioquest Digital/video 2	60.00
Audioquest Optilink X	90.00
Audioquest Digital PRO	100.00
Audioquest Optilink Pro	149.00
Audioquest Optilink Z	179.00
Cable Talk Digital 2	78.00
Cardas Audio Lightning	190.00
ChordCo Codac	38.00
ChordCo Optichord	40.00
ChordCo Prodac	50.00
DNM-Reson DIG100	26.00
DPA Opti-link	20.00
DPA Digi-link	27.50
Ecosse Ref MD2	71.50
Insert Audio Dataline 500	24.95
Insert Audio Optic 2.1	29.95
Insert Audio Dataline 700	39.95
Insert Audio Image 5.1	44.95
Ixos 105	25.00

Goertz Big Boy	64.00
GT Audio Speaker	50.00
Ixos 607	2.00
Ixos 6004	3.00
Ixos 6003	3.00
Ixos 605	3.00
Kimber 4PR	3.90
Kimber 4VS	9.00
Kimber 4TC	19.60
Kimber 8TC	32.70
Kimber 4AG	394.00
Kimber 8AG	656.00
LAT International SS 800	16.00
LAT International BIWIRE	23.00
LAT International SS 1000	36.00
Lieder Pad	133.00
Lieder Bel Canto	188.00
Lieder Spoor	253.00
Lieder Straat	463.00
Lieder Weg	663.00
Linn K20	4.00
Linn K400	10.00
Linn K600	15.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	35.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	40.00
Mission Duet	1.90
Mission Quartet bi-wire	3.90
Naim NAC A5	5.70
Nordost Octava	3.00
Nordost 4-Flat	12.00
Nordost Blue Heaven Spkr	55.00
Nordost Red Dawn	110.00
Nordost SPM	325.00
Ortofon SPK100	3.00
Ortofon SPK200	5.00
Ortofon SPK300	8.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 32	7.50
Precious Metals Silver L'r 102	10.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 34	15.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 104	20.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 106	30.00
Precious Metals Silver L'r 108	40.00
Puresonic OFC 7892	1.20
Puresonic OFC 7844	1.65
Puresonic OFC 7845	1.95
Puresonic OFC 7891	2.85
Puresonic OFC 7816	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7832	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7812	3.75
Puresonic OFC 7825	6.95
Puresonic PSOCC 7801	9.50
Puresonic PSOCC 7802	18.00
Puresonic PSOCC 7803	27.00
QED Qudos Micro	1.25
QED Qudos micro 4 core	2.00
QED Qudos 4 core	4.00
QED Qudos Bi-Wire	4.50
QED Qudos Silver	4.95
QED Profile 4x4	9.00
QED Profile Silver 12	15.00
Rega REGA	2.00
Roksan ROK-Speaker	6.00
Shinpy Red Devil	30.00
Shinpy Red Star 2	39.00
Shinpy Black Star 2	62.00
Shinpy Pulsar 2	104.00
Shinpy Quasar 2	208.00
Siltech LS2-45	109.00
Siltech FT-12 MKI	240.00
Siltech LS4-120	549.00
Silver Sounds 12 Gauge	15.00
Silver Sounds 10 Gauge	35.00
Silver Sounds 8 Gauge	75.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic	10.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic HC	15.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice	55.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice Ultra	85.00
Sonic Link AST50	1.95
Sonic Link AST60	2.50
Sonic Link AST75	2.95
Sonic Link AST200	5.95
Sonic Link AST200x2	10.00
Sonic Link S300	18.00
Sonic Link S130x2	20.00
Sonic Link S300x2	40.00
Sonic Link S900	60.00
Sonic Link S600x2	80.00
Sonic Link Black Rhodium 4	1,000.00
Straightwire Quartet	8.00
Supra Classic 2.5	2.49
Supra Linc 2.5 Flex	3.49
Supra Classic 4.0	3.95
Supra Ply 2.0	4.95
Supra Linc 4.0 Flex	4.95
Supra Ply 3.4	6.95
Supra Quattro 4x4	8.95
Supra Classic 10	9.95
Tara Prism Extra	1.95
Tara Klara	2.95
Tara Prism Omni	3.95
Tara Prism 2+2	8.20
Tech + Link SPC 79	1.20
Transparent Cable Musichord Spkr	11.00
Transparent Cable The Wave	23.00
Transparent Cable Music Wave Spkr	25.00
Vampire Wire SC-384	11.00
Vampire Wire SC-554	15.00

Vampire Wire ST-I	30.00
Vampire Wire SC-1108	30.00
Vampire Wire ST-II	48.00
Vampire Wire ST-III	73.00
Van Den Hul Skyline HB	3.50
Van Den Hul Snowline	5.00
Van Den Hul Skytrack HB	5.50
Van Den Hul Gold Water	7.00
Van Den Hul Clearwater	7.00
Van Den Hul Snowtrack	10.00
Van Den Hul CS122 HB	12.00
Van Den Hul Cleartrack	13.00
Van Den Hul D352 HB	20.00
Van Den Hul Teatrack HB	22.00
Van Den Hul SCS12	34.00
Van Den Hul Magnum HB	38.00
Van Den Hul The Wind HB	40.00
Van Den Hul Revolution HB	76.00
Van Den Hul Revelation HB	120.00
Van Den Hul The Third	900.00
XLO Pro 625	4.00
XLO Pro 600	16.60

CARTRIDGES

KEY
 MM - Moving-magnet type.
 MC - Moving-coil type.
 UP TO £100

Audio Note IO1	MM	99
Audio Technica AT-91	MM	15
Audio Technica AT-95E	MM	20
Audio Technica AT-110E	MM	28
Audio Technica AT450E	MM	70
Audio Technica AT440ML	MM	90
Benz-Micro MC20EII	MC	70
Denon DL110	MC	70
Denon DL160	MC	90
Denon DL103	MC	100
Goldring Elan	MM	19
Goldring Elektra	MM	29
Goldring 1006	MM	59
Goldring 1012GX	MM	79
Goldring 1022GX	MM	99
Grado ZTE+1	MM	27
Grado ZCE+1	MM	37
Grado ZF3E+1	MM	48
Grado Prestige Black	MM	49
Grado Prestige Green	MM	59
Grado Prestige Blue	MM	69
Grado ZFI+	MM	83
Grado Prestige Red	MM	98
N'ham Tracer I	MM	99
Ortofon VMS2	MM	15
Ortofon OM 5E	MM	20
Ortofon OM 10	MM	30
Ortofon 510	MM	40
Ortofon OM DJ	MM	50
Ortofon OM 20	MM	70
Ortofon 520	MM	70
Ortofon MC1 Turbo	MC	75
Ortofon Concorde DJ	MM	80
Ortofon OM 30	MM	90
Ortofon 530	MM	100
Pickering TE-15	MM	20
Pickering VE-15	MM	25
Pickering T-E	MM	25
Pickering V15-DJ	MM	28
Pickering TL-2	MM	35
Pickering TL-2E	MM	45
Pickering XV15-625E	MM	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	MM	50
Pickering TL-2-S	MM	55
Pickering XV15-7575	MM	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	MM	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	MM	70
Pickering TL3S	MM	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	MM	95
Pickering XIZ-3500	MM	100
Pickering TL-4-S	MM	100
Rega Bias	MM	39
Rega RB78	MM	39
Rega Super Bias	MM	59
Rega Elys	MM	85
Shure M708X	MM	21
Shure M92E	MM	22
Shure SC35C	MM	29
Shure M447X	MM	35

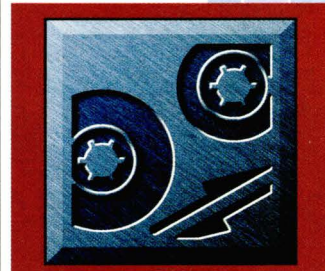
CARTRIDGES (CONTINUED)

Shure M44CX	MM	35
Stanton 500AL II	MM	35
Stanton 500EL	MM	44
Stanton 680AL/X	MM	59
Stanton 680EL/X	MM	74
Sumiko Oyster	MM	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	MM	50
Sumiko Pearl	MM	70
Sumiko Blue Point	MC	100

OVER £100

Audio Note IO2	MM	139
Audio Note Soara	MC	795
Audio Note IO1V	MC	1,095
Audio Note IO Ltd	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9	MC	330
Benz-Micro The Glider	MC	650
Benz-Micro M090	MC	700
Benz-Micro L040	MC	700
Benz-Micro H200	MC	700
Benz-Micro Reference	MC	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	MC	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	MC	1,600
Clearaudio Aurum-Alpha	MM	135
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta	MM	195
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta/S	MM	265
Clearaudio Gamma-S	MC	745
Clearaudio Signature	MC	1,495
Clearaudio Accurate	MC	2,500
Clearaudio Insider	MC	4,900
Denon DL304	MC	200
Dynavector 10X4II	MC	189
Dynavector 23RS	MC	375
Dynavector 17D2	MC	450
Dynavector XX-1L	MC	998
Dynavector XX-1	MC	998
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	MC	1,698
Goldring Eroica LX	MC	110
Goldring Eroica	MC	110
Goldring 1042	MM	120
Goldring Elite	MC	220
Goldring Excel VX	MC	525
Grado Prestige Silver	MM	119
Grado Prestige Gold	MM	149
Grado Signature Junior	MM	150
Grado Signature BMZ	MM	250
Grado Signature MCZ	MM	375
Grado Signature TLZ	MM	650
Grado Signature XTZ	MM	975
Grado Reference	MM	995
Koetsu Red T	MC	1,550
Koetsu Red K Sig	MC	1,998
Koetsu Urushi	MC	2,297
Koetsu Signature	MC	3,218
Koetsu Gold PR	MC	5,498
Linn K9	MM	125
Linn Klyde	MC	500
Linn Arkiv	MC	1,000
London Decca Maroon	MM	299
London Decca Gold	MM	319
London Decca Maroon Dp	MM	379
London Decca Gold Dp	MM	399
London Decca S Gold	MM	439
London Decca S Gold Dp	MM	519
London Decca Jubilee	MM	999
Lyra Lydian	MC	649
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	MC	995
Lyra Parnassus DCT	MC	1,895
N'ham Tracer II	MM	310
N'ham Tracer III	MM	410
N'ham Tracer IV	MM	660
Ortofon MC15 Super II	MC	140
Ortofon 540	MM	140
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	MC	150
Ortofon MC2SE	MC	200
Ortofon MC25FL	MC	250
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	MC	300
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	MC	450
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	MC	550
Ortofon MC2000II	MC	800
Ortofon MC Rohmann	MC	1,000
Ortofon MC3000 II	MC	1,200
Ortofon MC7500	MC	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	MM	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	MM	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Reson Mica	MM	185
Reson Reca	MM	250
Reson Aciore	MM	299
Reson Etile	MC	455
Reson Lexa	MC	1,300
Roksan Corus Black	MM	150
Roksan Shiraz	MC	970
Shure V15XMR	MM	295
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	120
Sumiko BPS	MC	250
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	1,000
Transfiguration Temper	MC	1,950
Van Den Hul MM-1	MM	250
Van Den Hul MM-2	MM	300
Van Den Hul DDT-II	MC	600
Van Den Hul MC-10	MC	750

Van Den Hul MC-One	MC	900
Van Den Hul MC-ONE Super	MC	1,050
Van Den Hul MC-Two	MC	1,200
Van Den Hul The Frog Low o/p	MC	1,500
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IISLA	MC	2,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLN	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLA	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIICMN	MC	2,800
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIICLN	MC	2,900
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	MC	3,000
Wilson Benesch Matrix	MC	786
Wilson Benesch Carbon	MC	1,348
Wilson Benesch Analog	MC	1,572



CASSETTE DECKS

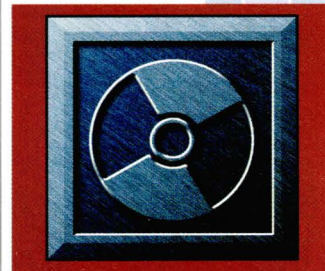
KEY
 ⇐ - Autoreverse - no need to remove and turn around the tape.
 3-H - 3 heads, i.e. separate record and replay heads.
UP TO £200

Akai DXW1100	⇐	200
Akai DX1200	⇐	200
Ariston WX-510	⇐	60
Denon DRM-550	⇐	160
Denon DRW-585	⇐	200
Goodmans Delta 801	⇐	170
JVC TD-X372BK	⇐	150
JVC TD-R472BK	⇐	200
Kenwood KX-W4080	⇐	160
Kenwood KX-3080	⇐	160
Kenwood KX-W6080	⇐	200
Kenwood KX-5080S	⇐	200
Marantz SD-455	⇐	169
Marantz SD-57	⇐	199
Onkyo K 185	⇐	200
Pioneer CT-S250	⇐	150
Pioneer CT-W205R	⇐	160
Pioneer CT-W505R	⇐	180
Pioneer CT-S450S	⇐	200
Pioneer CT-W606DR	⇐	200
Sony TC-KE200	⇐	120
Sony TC-WE525	⇐	160
Sony TC-KB820S	⇐	180
Sony TC-WE725	⇐	180
TEAC W-416	⇐	100
TEAC V-615	⇐	130
TEAC RH-300	⇐	160
TEAC W-790R	⇐	170
TEAC V-1050	3-H	200
TEAC RH-500	3-H	200
Technics RS-BX501	⇐	170
Technics RS-TR373	⇐	180
Technics RS-TR474	⇐	200
Technics RS-A26	3-H	130
Yamaha KX-393	⇐	200
Yamaha KX-W521	⇐	170
Yamaha KX-493	⇐	180

OVER £200

Carver TDR-1550	⇐	629
Denon DRM-650S	⇐	250
Denon DRM-740	3-H	270
Denon DRS-810	3-H	310
H/K TD420	⇐	250
H/K TD450	3-H	350
JVC TD-V662BK	3-H	270
JVC TD-W718BK	⇐	300
NAD 613	⇐	230
NAD 614	⇐	270
NAD 616	⇐	300
Onkyo TA 6210	⇐	230
Onkyo TARW 211	⇐	270
Onkyo TARW 311	⇐	320
Onkyo TA 6310	⇐	330
Onkyo KR 609	⇐	350
Onkyo KW 606	⇐	370
Onkyo TARW 411	⇐	470
Onkyo K 611	3-H	460
Pioneer CT-S550S	3-H	300
Pioneer CT-W806DR	3-H	250
Pioneer CT-S550S Precision	3-H	340
Pioneer CT-S830S	3-H	500
Pioneer CT-95	3-H	1,000
Rotel RC960BX	⇐	250
Sony TC-WE825S	⇐	250
Sony TC-KA6ES	3-H	550
T+A CC1200R	3-H	1,180

TEAC W-860R	⇐	230
TEAC W-6000R	⇐	450
TEAC V-6030S	⇐	550
TEAC V-8030S	⇐	650
Technics RS-AZ7	3-H	270
Technics RS-TR575	⇐	280
Yamaha KX-580SE	⇐	250
Yamaha KX-W592	⇐	280



CD PLAYERS

KEY
 ⇐ - Multiplayer: can be loaded with more than one disc.
 ⇐10 - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.
UP TO £250

Akai CD1100	⇐10	200
Akai CDM1200	⇐	230
AMC CD9	⇐	130
AMC CD8A	⇐	150
AMC CD9/DAC8	⇐10	200
Ariston CDX700	⇐	70
Ariston CDC610	⇐	90
Ariston CDX710	⇐	100
Cambridge CD4	⇐10	150
Cambridge CD4SE	⇐10	200
Cambridge CD6	⇐10	250
Denon DCD-435	⇐	130
Denon DCD-635	⇐	180
Denon DCD-735	⇐	230
H/K HD710	⇐10	200
JVC XL-V120BK	⇐	110
JVC XL-V130BK	⇐	120
JVC XL-V230BK	⇐	140
JVC XL-F116BK	⇐	180
JVC XL-F216BK	⇐	200
JVC XL-S274BK	⇐	250
Kenwood DP-1080	⇐	110
Kenwood DP-2080	⇐	130
Kenwood DP-R3090	⇐	140
Kenwood DP-R4090	⇐	160
Kenwood DP-3080	⇐	170
Kenwood DP-R6090	⇐	200
Kenwood DP-4090	⇐10	250
Marantz CD-38	⇐	130
Marantz CC-38	⇐	200
Marantz CD-48	⇐10	200
Marantz CD-57	⇐10	230
Marantz CD-67II	⇐10	250
NAD 522	⇐	170
NAD 510	⇐	200
NAD 523	⇐	250
NAD 512	⇐10	250
Philips CD711	⇐	120
Philips CD721	⇐	130
Philips CD751	⇐10	150
Philips CDC751	⇐	180
Pioneer PD-106	⇐	130
Pioneer PD-206	⇐	150
Pioneer PD-F606	⇐	200
Pioneer PD-M603	⇐	200
Pioneer PD-S505	⇐10	250
Pioneer PD-F706	⇐	250
Rotel RCD-930AX	⇐	180
Sansui CD220	⇐	120
Sherwood CD-4030R	⇐	180
Sherwood CDC680	⇐	180
Sherwood CDC6050R	⇐10	200
Sony CDP-M205	⇐	110
Sony CDP-XE210	⇐	120
Sony CDP-M305	⇐	130
Sony CDP-XE310	⇐	140
Sony CDP-CE105	⇐	150
Sony CDP-XE510	⇐	180
Sony CDP-CE315	⇐	200
Sony CDP-C325M	⇐	200
Synergy CDJ1210	⇐	120
TEAC CDP-1120	⇐	100
TEAC CD-P1820	⇐	130
TEAC CD-P3450SE	⇐	200
TEAC PD-D2400	⇐	200
TEAC PD-H500	⇐	240
Technics SL-PG390A	⇐10	90
Technics SL-PG490A	⇐	100
Technics SL-PG590A	⇐	120
Technics SL-PD688	⇐	140

Technics SL-PD888	⇐	160
Technics SL-PS670D	⇐	200
Technics SL-MC410	⇐	250
Technics SL-PS770D	⇐10	250
Yamaha CDX-393	⇐	150
Yamaha CDC-565	⇐	170
Yamaha CDX-493	⇐	180
Yamaha CDX-9	⇐	200
Yamaha CDC-665	⇐	220
Yamaha CDX-593	⇐10	230

£251 TO £500

Arcam Alpha 7	⇐10	330
Arcam Alpha MCD	⇐	450
Aura CD100	⇐10	400
Carver MV-5	⇐	469
Denon DCD-835	⇐	280
Denon DCM-260	⇐	300
Denon DCD-1550AR	⇐10	350
H/K HD730	⇐10	300
H/K FL8300	⇐	300
JVC XL-Z674BK	⇐10	300
Kenwood DP-R7080	⇐	300
Kenwood DP-9090	⇐10	300
Kenwood DP-5090	⇐10	300
Kenwood DP-7090	⇐10	400
Marantz CD-67SE	⇐10	350
Marantz CC-870	⇐	400
Marantz CD-631K1	⇐10	400
Musical Fidelity E60	⇐10	300
Musical Fidelity A2 CD	⇐10	500
Myriad T-10	⇐10	400
NAD 513	⇐	290
NAD 515	⇐	350
NAD 514	⇐10	370
NAD 517	⇐	400
Onkyo DX 7210	⇐10	260
Onkyo C721	⇐10	290
Onkyo DXC 320	⇐	380
Onkyo DX 7510	⇐	400
Onkyo CM 716	⇐	450
Parasound C/DP-1000	⇐10	500
Pioneer PD-F805	⇐	300
Pioneer PD-570S	⇐10	300
Pioneer PD-F906	⇐	350
Pioneer PD-S904	⇐10	400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	⇐10	460
Rotel RCD951	⇐10	300
Rotel RCD971	⇐10	350
Sony CDP-CX55	⇐	280
Sony CDP-XE900E	⇐	300
Sony CDP-CX200	⇐	380
Sony CDP-XA20ES	⇐	450
Sony CDP-X3000ES	⇐10	500
Synergy CDJ2010	⇐	300
Yamaha CDX-993	⇐10	400

£501 TO £1000

Acurus ACD11	⇐10	899
Alchemist Nexus	⇐10	600
Arcam Alpha 8	⇐10	520
Arcam Alpha 8SE	⇐10	600
Arcam Alpha 9	⇐10	800
Audio Analogue Paganini	⇐10	695
Audiolab 8000CD	⇐10	1,000
Audiomeca Obsession	⇐10	999
AVI S2000MC2	⇐	899
AVI S2000MC 24 Ref	⇐10	999
Creek CD42	⇐	599
DPA Renaissance int CD	⇐10	950
Helios Model 3	⇐10	650
Helios Model 2	⇐10	950
Heybrook Signature II	⇐10	989
Linn Mimik	⇐	875
Magnum CD2020	⇐10	595
Marantz CD-17	⇐10	800
Micromega Premium 10	⇐10	650
Micromega Premium 20	⇐10	850
Mission dAD3	⇐10	598
Mission dAD3Q	⇐	898
Monnio Asty PL	⇐10	675
Monnio Privilege	⇐10	995
Musical Fidelity X-RAY	⇐	799
Myriad T-20	⇐10	600
Myriad MC100	⇐10	700
Orelle CD100eA	⇐10	649
Orelle CD-100eSA	⇐	999
Pioneer PDS-06	⇐10	550
Primare D20	⇐10	799
Quad 77 Bus	⇐	700
Quad 77 Mains	⇐	900
Roksan Caspian	⇐10	895
Rotel RCD991	⇐	750
Sony CDP-XA50ES	⇐10	1,000
Talk Electronics Thunder 3	⇐	1,000
TEAC VR		

OVER £1000

Acoustic Precision Eikos	£1,850
Alchemist Forseti	£1,995
Audio Research C01	£3,290
Audio Research C02	£4,100
Audiomeca Keeps	£1,500
Audiomeca Talisman	£2,150
Audiomeca Talisman SE	£2,500
Cary CD-301	£2,495
Classe CDP-3	£1,395
Conrad-Johnson DF-2	£1,695
Conrad-Johnson DV-2b	£2,495
Copland CDA-266	£1,199
Copland CD277	£1,800
Copland CDA288	£2,199
Cymbal CDP12	£1,299
Helios Model 1	£1,250
Helios Stargate	£2,250
Krell KPS30i	£5,490
Krell KPS-20i	£9,990
Marantz CD-17KIS	£1,100
Mark Levinson 59	£4,995
McIntosh MCD7009	£3,699
Meracus Tanto	£1,595
Meracus Imago Player	£4,495
Meridian 506	£1,100
Meridian 508	£1,995
Micromega Solo	£2,500
Myryad MCD500	£1,300
Naim CD3-5	£1,050
Naim CDX	£2,200
Oracle CD Player	£9,525
Pink Triangle Numeral	£1,049
Pink Triangle Litaural	£2,200
Primare D302	£1,799
Proceed CDP	£3,395
Resolution CD50	£2,995
Roksan Attesa-DP3P	£1,495
Shearpe Phase 7	£1,499
Sherwood CD1	£1,100
Sonic Frontiers Anthem CD1	£1,699
Sonic Frontiers SFCD-1	£3,799
T+A CD1210R	£1,185
T+A CD1220R	£1,540
Theta Digital Miles	£2,495
XTC CDP-1	£1,250
YBA Integre	£1,250
YBA CD3	£2,250
YBA CD2	£3,350
YBA CD1	£4,500

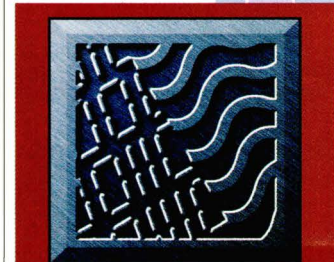


CD TRANSPORTS

KEY
 - Electrical (coaxial) digital output.
 Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Alchemist Forseti Drive	£1,100
Altis CDT III	£4,995
Arcam Delta 250	£800
Audio Research CDT1	£3,290
Audio Synthesis Transcend Decade	£3,295
Audiolab 8000CDM	£1,400
Audiomeca Damnation	£999
Audiomeca Damnation SE	£1,100
Audiomeca Talisman	£1,850
Audiomeca Talisman SE	£1,999
Audiomeca Talisman DOB	£2,250
Audiomeca Mephisto	£2,550
Audiomeca Mephisto SE	£2,500
Audiomeca Mephisto	£2,750
Conrad-Johnson DR-1	£1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv	£775
Jadis J03	£4,850
Jadis J02	£4,990
Jadis J01	£12,500
Krell KPS-20t	£8,490
Linn Karik	£1,850
Mark Levinson 37	£3,995
Mark Levinson 31.5	£9,295
Meracus Imago	£3,995
Meridian 500	£1,245
Micromega Drive 3	£1,000
Micromega Data	£2,000
Monrio Bitmatch	£950
Muse Model 5	£1,800
Oracle CD Drive	£7,415
Pink Triangle Cardinal II	£909

PS Audio Lambda TR	£2,250
PS Audio Lambda AT&T	£2,778
Rogers SC-8t	£2,699
Roksan Attesa-DP3	£1,295
Sonic Frontiers Transport 3	£5,999
T+A CM1200R	£875
TEAC VRDS-T1	£550
TEAC P-30	£2,500
Theta Digital Data Basic II	£2,397
Theta Digital Data III NTSC/PAL	£5,455
Thorens TCD-2000	£999
Trichord Digital Turntable	£719
Tube Tech Fulcrum	£1,000
Wadia 8	£3,195
Wadia 20	£4,370

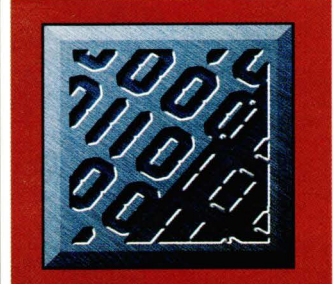


DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)

KEY
 - Number of digital inputs

Alchemist Forseti DAC	£1,100
Altis Reference	£4,995
AMC DAC8	£130
Arcam Black Box 50	£350
Arcam Black Box 500	£500
Audio Note DAC1	£675
Audio Note DAC2	£1,099
Audio Note DAC3	£1,750
Audio Research DAC5	£2,148
Audio Research DAC5	£2,335
Audio Research DAC3	£4,195
Audio Research DAC3	£4,555
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade	£2,795
Audiolab 8000DAX	£1,000
Audiomeca Elux	£799
Audiomeca Ambrosia	£1,850
Boulder 2020	£21,000
Chord D5C900	£1,850
Chord D5C1100	£2,575
Chord D5C1500	£3,850
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	£1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	£1,990
dCS Elgar	£8,500
DPA Little Bit 3	£325
DPA Renaissance DAC	£595
DPA Enlightenment DAC	£850
DPA SX128	£2,000
DPA SX256	£4,000
DPA SX512	£8,000
Jadis J53	£2,129
Jadis J51	£8,068
LFD DAC2	£1,950
LFD DAC3	£3,000
Linn Numerik	£1,500
Mark Levinson 36	£3,995
Mark Levinson 30.5	£15,950
Meracus Auriga	£1,295
Meracus Flagrare	£2,495
Meridian 566	£1,095
Micromega DAC 2	£750
Micromega Dialog	£1,750
Monrio 18B2	£795
Muse Model 2	£2,190
Muse Model 2 Plus	£2,500
Musical Fidelity X-ACT	£200
Musical Fidelity X-DAC	£300
Onkyo DX 7310	£330
PS Audio DL3	£777
PS Audio SL3	£1,449
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	£2,950
PS Audio Ref Link	£4,550
Rogers SC-8m	£1,899
Roksan Attesa-DA2	£595
Sonic Frontiers Processor 3	£5,999
Sumo Theorem II	£945
Sumo Theorem IIB	£1,155
TEAC D-TI	£500
Theta Digital Chroma Std	£849
Theta Digital Pro Geny	£1,145
Theta Digital Pro Prime II	£1,800
Theta Digital Pro Basic III	£2,990
Theta Digital Gen V SE	£4,300
Theta Digital Casablanca LS	£5,910
Thorens TDA-2000	£700
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	£1,395
Tube Tech Fulcrum	£1,400
Wadia 12	£1,530
Wadia 15	£3,790
Wadia 64.4	£4,750

Wadia 16	£7,395
Wadia 7	£9,995
Wadia 9	£12,790
Woodside DVAC-18	£1,499



DIGITAL RECORDERS

KEY
 MD - MiniDisc
 DAT - Digital Audio Tape
 - portable

Denon DMD-1000	MD	£300
Kenwood DM-7090	MD	£500
Kenwood DM-9090	MD	£550
Marantz DR700	MD	£600
Onkyo MD-121	MD	£450
Onkyo MD 122	MD	£700
Philips CDR870	MD	£499
Pioneer PDR-555RW	MD	£500
Pioneer PDR-04	MD	£700
Pioneer D-05	DAT	£900
Pioneer PDR-05	DAT	£1,000
Pioneer D-C88	DAT	£2,000
Sharp MD-R2	DAT	£300
Sharp MD-R1E	DAT	£300
Sharp MD-MS200H	DAT	£350
Sharp MDXV300H	DAT	£1,000
Sony MZ-E20	DAT	£180
Sony MDS-JE510	DAT	£250
Sony MZ-E30	DAT	£280
Sony MDS-S38	DAT	£300
Sony MZ-R30	DAT	£300
Sony MDS-JA30ES	DAT	£699
Sony MDS-JA50ES	DAT	£1,300
TEAC MDH300	DAT	£300
TEAC MD-H500i	DAT	£350
TEAC MD-5	DAT	£600
TEAC MD-10	DAT	£900
Yamaha MDX-9	DAT	£300



HEADPHONES

KEY
 'D' - Dynamic type, compatible with virtually all normal headphone outputs.
 'E' - Electrostatic type; generally includes a separate power supply.
 - Open-back construction.
 - Closed-back construction.
 UP TO £40

AKG Rox	D	£30
Aural Envelope DX200	D	£20
Aural Envelope DX220	D	£30
Beyer DT111	D	£15
Beyer DT211	D	£31
Beyer DT211TV	D	£35
JVC HA-CD88	D	£18
JVC HA-D525	D	£20
JVC HA-F65	D	£20
JVC HA-D626	D	£25
Kenwood KPM-310	D	£18
Kenwood KPM-410	D	£25
KLH KHP201TW	D	£21
KLH KHP-300V	D	£25
KLH KHP-420V	D	£33
Maxell HP-2000	D	£20
Pioneer SE-A40	D	£20
Pioneer SE-A20V	D	£23
Pioneer SE-M250	D	£25
Pioneer SE-M350	D	£30

Sennheiser HD56	D	£18
Sennheiser HD433	D	£20
Sennheiser HD400	D	£25
Sennheiser HD470	D	£35
Sennheiser HD60TV	D	£40
Sony MDR-W20G	D	£18
Sony MDR-E837	D	£18
Sony MDR-P70	D	£18
Sony MDR-ED238	D	£20
Sony MDR-009TV	D	£20
Sony MDR-A34L	D	£20
Sony MDR-E848	D	£20
Sony MDR-P1TV	D	£25
Sony MDR-CD270	D	£30
Sony MDR-E868	D	£35
Sony MDR-V400	D	£40
Sony MDR-D11	D	£40
Stanton ST Pro	D	£25
Technics RP-F200	D	£30
Technics RP-HT300	D	£40
Vivanco SR150	D	£20
Vivanco SR200	D	£25
Vivanco SR250	D	£25
Vivanco SR300	D	£30
Vivanco IR5700	D	£40

OVER £41

AKG K301	D	£80
AKG K222iR	D	£100
AKG K401	D	£120
AKG K501	D	£150
AKG K333iR	D	£150
AKG K444iR	D	£180
AKG K290S	D	£250
AKG K1000	D	£700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	D	£80
Audio Technica ATH40FS	D	£120
Audio Technica ATHM40FS	D	£120
Audio Technica ATH911	D	£120
Beyer DT311	D	£50
Beyer DT411	D	£63
Beyer DT511	D	£106
Beyer DT801	D	£125
Beyer DT811	D	£145
Beyer DT100	D	£160
Beyer DT901	D	£160
Beyer DT911	D	£170
Denon AH-D210	D	£45
Denon AH-D350	D	£65
Denon AH-D550	D	£80
Denon AH-D650	D	£95
Denon AH-D750	D	£130
Denon AH-D950	D	£150
Grado SR40	D	£45
Grado SR60	D	£79
Grado SR80	D	£100
Grado SR125	D	£150
Grado SR225	D	£200
Grado SR325	D	£300
Grado RS2	D	£495
Grado RS1	D	£695
Jecklin Float Model 1	D	£79
Jecklin Float Model 2	D	£99
Jecklin Float ELS	E	£399
JVC HA-D727	D	£43
JVC HA-W60	D	£49
JVC HA-D910	D	£65
JVC HA-D1000	D	£250
JVC HA-F25	D	£699
Philips SBC 3396	D	£70
Philips SBC HP9000	D	£90
Pioneer SE-M550	D	£50
Pioneer SE-M750	D	£60
Precide Ergo Model 1	D	£120
Precide Ergo Model 2	D	£140
Sennheiser HD495	D	£50
Sennheiser IS 380	D	£55
Sennheiser HD495	D	£60
Sennheiser HD500	D	£70
Sennheiser RS400	D	£80
Sennheiser HD570	D	£80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	D	£90
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	D	£100
Sennheiser IS450	D	£110
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	D	£125
Sennheiser HDC 451-1	D	£130
Sennheiser HD250II	D	£150
Sennheiser HD565 Oval'n	D	£150
Sennheiser HD25-13	D	£160
Sennheiser Lucas	D	£160
Sennheiser HD25	D	£160
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	D	£200
Sennheiser HD600	D	£250
Sennheiser Lucas/HD580	D	£260
Sennheiser IS850	D	£859
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	E	£998
Sennheiser Orpheus	E	£9,652
Sony MDR-IF120K	D	£50
Sony MDR-E888	D	£55
Sony MDR-IF125RK	D	£60
Sony MDR-V600	D	£70
Sony MDR-F1	D	£100
Sony MDR-NC5	D	£100
Sony MDR-IF420RK	D	£100
Sony MDR-CD770	D	£100
Sony MDR-D77	D	£130
Sony MDR-IF520RK	D	£150

HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Sony MDR-CD1700	D	🔒	200
Stanton DJ Pro 101/HB	D	🔒	65
Stanton DJ Pro 1000	D	🔒	95
Stanton DJ Pro 1001	D	🔒	150
Stax SR-001	E	🔒	280
Stax SR-Lambda Nova C	E	🔒	370
Stax Lambda Nova Basic	E	🔒	449
Stax SR-Lambda Nova S	E	🔒	450
Technics RP-F800	D	🔒	50
Technics RP-HT600	D	🔒	60
Technics RP-DJ1200	D	🔒	130
Vivanco IR5800	D	🔒	50
Vivanco SR850	D	🔒	50
Vivanco SR650	D	🔒	50
Vivanco FMH 3000	D	🔒	60
Vivanco SR 750	D	🔒	60
Vivanco IR6000	D	🔒	70
Vivanco SR909	D	🔒	70
Vivanco IR 7600	D	🔒	100
Vivanco SR1000IFL	D	🔒	100
Vivanco SR2000IFL	D	🔒	120



EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS
Hi-Fi Tables

KEY
4 - Number of shelves

Alphason SM17	1	49
Alphason VSM17	1	85
Alphason GSM17	1	85

Alphason GMV1P	1	110
Alphason R17/17	3	120
Alphason GMH1P	1	150
Alphason VR17/17	3	190
Alphason GR17/17-AS	4	275
Audiophile Base 01	1	79
Audiophile S4T120	4	280
Audiophile S4T120P	4	560
BCD Model 1006/8	1	795
BCD Model 1000	3	1,250
Custom Design Aspect 650	4	240
Custom Design e'lite E4	4	250
Custom Design Aspect 500AV	3	270
Custom Design Aspect 850	5	270
Custom Design e'lite AV	6	350
Deadrock 701	1	60
Deadrock 802	2	90
Deadrock 705	3	130
Deadrock 705	5	230
Deadrock 704	4	250
Elemental Isotube x1	1	169
Elemental Isotube BS	1	199
Elemental Isotube TS	1	209
Elemental Isotube IS	1	209
Elemental Reference B1	1	329
Elemental Reference BS	1	499
Elemental Reference x1	1	499
Elemental Reference TS	1	549
Elemental Reference IS	1	549
Elemental Isotube x4	4	599
Elemental Isotube x4/Ref	4	1,199
Elemental Reference x4	4	1,599
Fi-Rax R4	6	399
Frameworks H175	1	139
Frameworks FS1	1	150
Frameworks H500	3	265
Frameworks FT2	2	285
Frameworks FT3	3	350
Frameworks H700	3	355
Frameworks H900	3	389
Heybrook Stand-Signature	4	249
Impulse Iso-plate	1	190
JPW 3 Tier	3	80
JPW 5 Tier	5	100
Kudos Audio Corinthian	5	600
Linn K3000	8	85
Mana Sound Frame	1	125
Mana Mini Table	1	150
Mana Power supply table	1	150
Mana Reference flat top	1	150
Mana Sound Shelf	1	175
Mana Sound Base	1	175

Mana Sound Stage	2	200
Mana Sound Table	2	235
Mana Ref Shelf	3	325
Mana Reference Table	3	350
Mana 2 Tier Amp stand	3	375
Mana 3 Tier Amp Stand	4	450
Mana 4 Tier Amp Stand	5	500
Mana 5 Tier Amp Stand	6	600
Mana 6 Tier Amp Stand	7	700
Mission Hark	2	298
Optimum G2	2	69
Optimum G2/Pedestal	2	99
Optimum G4/Pedestal	3	130
Optimum OPT 3406	5	149
Optimum G5/Pedestal	6	150
Optimum OPT 4906	6	199
Optimum OPT 6606	4	249
Optimum OPT 340	3	249
Optimum OPT 490	4	299
Optimum OPT 440	4	299
Optimum OPT 10206	6	299
Optimum AV 300	3	329
Optimum OPT 700	3	349
Optimum OPT 610	5	349
Optimum OPT 660	4	349
Optimum OPT 1020	6	399
Optimum OPT 1190	7	450
Projekt A3	3	145
Projekt A4	4	190
Projekt A5	5	235
Projekt B3	6	255
Projekt A6	6	280
Projekt B3i	6	300
Projekt B4	8	340
Projekt B Multi	8	345
Projekt B3ii	7	345
Projekt C3	9	375
Projekt D3	12	420
Projekt C3i	8	420
Projekt B5	10	425
Projekt C3ii	11	465
Projekt C3i	11	465
Projekt D4	12	500
Projekt C3iv	12	500
Projekt D3ii	10	510
Projekt C Multi	14	545
Projekt D4	9	555
Quadraspire Q4S mini shelf	16	560
Quadraspire Q4S shelf	1	65
Quadraspire QKS Cabinet shelf	1	65
Quadraspire QAV shelf	1	80
Quadraspire Q4M mini table	1	130
Quadraspire Q4 table	4	250
Quadraspire Q4SP Table	4	320
Quadraspire QAV table	3	350
Quadraspire QAVSP Table	3	400
Quadraspire QK Cabinet	4	450
Reson DOMOPS	1	195
Reson DOMOWS	1	195
Sound Org Z022	1	65
Sound Org Z021	2	78
Sound Org Z030	3	100
Sound Org Z060	4	120
Sound Org Z038	4	135
Sound Org Z540	5	140
Sound Org Z545	4	150
Sound Org Z560	5	160
Sound Org Z530	3	170
Soundstyle X300	3	180
Soundstyle X305	3	210
Soundstyle X053	3	210
Soundstyle X050	4	210
Soundstyle X6300	4	210
Soundstyle X100	3	215
Soundstyle X6110	4	230
Soundstyle X058	5	240
Soundstyle X310	5	250
Soundstyle X105	3	250
Soundstyle X6053	4	255
Soundstyle X6100	4	265
Soundstyle X6310	3	275
Soundstyle X6058	5	290
Soundstyle X6105	5	300
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	5	320
Stands Unique Isolation Platform	1	52
Stands Unique Sound Support	4	249
Stands Unique Sound Tower	5	289
Stands Unique Compact Sound Supp	4	315
Stands Unique Sound Support 10	4	315
Stands Unique Sound Twr Cabinet	5	369
Stands Unique Ref Wall Support	1	550
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	10	689
Stands Unique Ref Floor Support	6	799
Target B5	5	175
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-CD	1	110
Townshend Seismic Sink 1-3D	1	400
Townshend S/Sink Stand 1-4	4	999
Townshend Seismic Sink Stand	4	1,245
Vibraplane Passive	1	1,895
Vibraplane Active	1	3,600
Wilson Benesch Standard Shelf	1	130
Wilson Benesch Mono Block	1	265
Wilson Benesch Kevlar Shelf	1	270
Wilson Benesch Asside Basic	4	590
Wilson Benesch Asside	4	720
Wilson Benesch Triptych	1	990

HI-FI CHOICE WEBSITE

Why not use our exclusive interactive hi-fi buying guide? Find us on the Web at: <http://www.hifichoice.co.uk>. See You There!



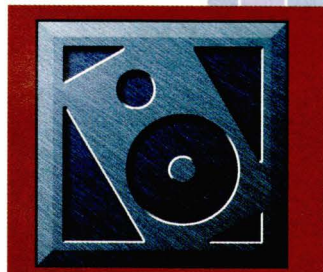
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS Speaker Stands

KEY
60 - Height of stand in cm

Alphason NCI	60	47
Alphason Akros I	60	49
Alphason RS1	120	49
Alphason NCII	60	84
Alphason HDS-40/M	60	85
Alphason Titan S	60	125
Apollo A26	66	80
Arcici Q-1	30	299
Arcici Q-2	30	299
Atacama BD21	56	55
Atacama BD17	55	55
Atacama BD25	60	60
Atacama SE16	65	65
Atacama SE12	65	65
Atacama SX500	67	67
Atacama F2	70	70
Atacama F1	70	70
Atacama SX600	70	70
Atacama SL200	70	70
Atacama SE24	61	70
Atacama SE20	70	70
Atacama SX700	73	73
Atacama SL300	73	73
Atacama TP600	75	75
Atacama TP500	75	75
Atacama SE615	75	75
Atacama SE515	75	75
Atacama SE415	75	75
Atacama SL400	76	76
Atacama SE1000S	80	80
AVF Tower P6144BP	60	35
BCD Model 1010	60	595
Credo STD 001	60	284
Custom Design Tri 100	50	50
Custom Design R/S300	50	70
Custom Design M3	60	55
Custom Design M2	55	75
Custom Design M1	55	75
Custom Design Tri 300	55	85
Custom Design SCS 24	60	85
Custom Design X24	61	109
Deadrock 903	60	60
Deadrock 902	47	60
Deadrock 901	39	60
Dynaudio Trophy	60	120
Dynaudio Master	60	200
Dynaudio Ultima	60	290
Elemental Isotube S2	49	499
Elemental Isotube SCZ	49	699
Elemental Reference S2	52	999
Elemental Reference SCZ	52	1,499
Elemental Reference SZ	52	21
Harbeth HL-Stands	21	249
Heybrook Stand-ULT	3	55
Heybrook Stand-S6	63	69
Heybrook Stand-S4	48	69
Heybrook Stand-S1	47	119
JPW MS2	45	45
JPW MS3	61	55
JPW MS1	46	80
JPW HS1	58	120
JPW HS2	45	120
Kudos Audio Arrow	60	50
Kudos Audio S-50	60	100

o Don't discount the value of a good quality support, like this Optimum International OPT 490G, if you want to get the best from your sources and amps.

Kudos Audio S-100	63	270
Mission Micrometer	58	70
Mission Entasis	58	98
Opera S1	60	345
Pioneer CP-7		50
Pioneer CP-8		80
Projekt Signature		80
Revolver RS1	55	80
Royd Royd	55	70
Royd Royd	55	99
SD Acoustics SD Alexandra	50	369
Silverado Silverado 1 Stand	50	350
Sonus Faber Ironwood	60	475
Sonus Faber Stonewood		497
Sound Org Z037		55
Sound Org Z027		55
Sound Org Z026		55
Sound Org Z518	45	65
Soundstyle X6118	42	100
Stands Unique Speaker support	59	159
Stands Unique Tuned Spkr Support	59	220
Stands Unique Tuned Carbon Fibre	59	299
Stands Unique Vivas CF Spkr Supp	60	349
Target TR60	60	68
Target R1	53	280



LOUDSPEAKERS

- KEY**
- ↕ – Floorstander; larger models requiring no separate stand.
 - ⌘ – Stand mount; smaller models designed to be raised above the floor.
 - ⇨ – Wall mount; designed to be sited on or near the wall.
 - ⊠ – Box type, including infinite baffle, reflex and transmission line types.
 - ⦿ – Horn type; mostly large and very efficient.
 - – Panel type, including electrostatic and planar magnetic types.

UP TO £130

Allison Micro Monitors		95
Allison Mini References		120
Ariston MSX 03		30
Ariston MSX 05		50
Celestion 12i		119
Denon SC-M2		80
Denon SC-E313SE		130
Gale Mini Monitors		70
Gale Gold Monitors		90
Gale 2i		130
Genexxa GX300		80
Genexxa GX350		80
GLL Arena		90
GLL Imagio IC208		100
Goodmans Active 75		65
Heybrook Prima 2		129
Interaudio XL1000		130
Jamo Studio-80		70
Jamo SAT-90		90
Jamo Cornet 25		100
Jamo D-110		100
Jamo SAT-170		110
Jamo Studio-110		110
Jamo Cornet 145		110
Jamo Cornet 35		120
Jamo Artina		120
Jamo D-115		120
Jamo 28		125
JBL TLX111		120
JPW Mini Monitor		60
JPW ML110		70
JPW Gold Monitor		80
JPW ML210		80
JPW ML310		90
JPW ML410		100
JPW ML510		130
JVC SX-SC1VBK		60
JVC SP-V50		80
JVC SP-X220TBK		100
JVC SP-X550BK		130
KEF Coda 7		129
Kenwood LS-90UK		130
Mission 700		130
Mission 731i		130

Mordaunt-Short VS-100		100
Mordaunt-Short MS05i		100
NAD 801		100
Paradigm Micro v2		100
Paradigm Atom v2		120
Pioneer CS-3030		120
Polk AB410		100
Realistic Minimus 26		56
Realistic Minimus Pro-77		100
Revolver Beretta		100
R Allen Minette 2		100
Solid HCM2		130
Sony SS-86E		100
Tangent Monitor 3		60
Tangent Monitor 5		80
Tannoy Mercury M1		120
TDL Nucleus 1		75
TDL Nucleus 2		130
TEAC LS-X8 Mk II		80
Technics SB-CS55		80
Technics SB-CS65		100
Technics SB-CS75		100
Wdale Valdus 100		100
Wdale Diamond 7.1		100
Wdale Valdus 200		110
Wdale Modus Micro		110

£131 TO £200

Acoustic Energy AE100		200
Allison Model 4A		170
B&W DM302		150
B&W CWM5		170
B&W DM601		199
Bose 201 IV		200
Boston CR6		149
Boston 325		149
Boston Micro 80 Sat		169
Boston Runabout		169
Boston 335		179
Boston 351		189
Boston CR7		199
Boston Runabout II		200
Celestion 15i		199
Cerwin-Vega CT-165		200
Genexxa GX650		140
Genexxa Pro		160
GLL Imagio IC218		140
GLL Imagio IC318		200
Heybrook Heylette		199
Heybrook HB1		199
Infinity SM65		150
Infinity Reference 1i		150
Infinity Reference 11i		200
Interaudio XL2000		200
Jamo Cornet 165		150
Jamo 38		150
Jamo 525		150
Jamo 560		150
Jamo 660		170
Jamo Cornet 65		170
Jamo Studio 180		180
Jamo D165		200
Jamo 68		200
JBL TLX121		150
JBL LX20		200
JPW ML610		170
JPW SS551		200
KEF Coda 8		189
KEF Q15		199
KEF Model 60S		199
Kenwood LS-200G		200
KLH Model 21		155
KLH Model 11		155
KLH Model 31		185
Magnat Vector 22		179
Mission 731i Pro		140
Mission 732i		200
M-A Monitor 1		200
Mordaunt-Short MS10i Pearl		150
Mordaunt-Short VS-200		150
Mordaunt-Short MS812		200
Mordaunt-Short MS20i Pearl		200
Mordaunt-Short VS-300		200
Paradigm Mini Monitor		200
Pioneer CS-5030		170
Polk M2		180
Polk RT3		200
Polk AB610		200
Rega Kytte		198
Revolver Colt		139
Revolver The 230		169
Revolver Purdey MkII		199
R Allen Minette 3		159
R Allen Dim'n 5/1 Compact		179
R Allen RA6		199
Rogers CS1		179
Royd A7X		155
Sequence 200		199
Solid Monitor		200
Sony SS-126EB		150
Sony SS-176E		200
Tangent Monitor 9		150
Tangent Monitor 11		180
Tannoy Mercury M2		140
TDL Nucleus 3		200
Technics SB-CS95		150

Technics SB-M20		200
Wdale Diamond 7.2		140
Wdale Valdus 300		150
Wdale Modus Music Two		200
Wdale Valdus 400		200
Wdale Diamond 7.3		200

£201 TO £300

Acoustic Energy AE200		250
Arcadyis Baby 1		299
Audio Gem Opal		230
B&W QWM6i		280
B&W DM602		300
Bose 151		220
Bose 301 IV		300
Boston 361		219
Boston CR8		239
Boston 381		259
Boston CR9		279
Boston Voyager		299
Castle Isis		250
Celestion C1		299
Celestion 23i		299
Cerwin-Vega VS-8		250
Cerwin-Vega CT-330		300
Chario Syntar 100		249
Chario Ref 100		299
Chario Hipor 1000		299
Dali 102B		260
Dali 150		300
Eltax Linear Response		249
GLL Imagio IC238TL		250
Heybrook Optima		259
Heybrook Heylios		269
Infinity SM85		250
Interaudio XL3000		230
Interaudio XL4000		260
Jamo 892		220
Jamo Cornet 175		230
Jamo Classic 4		250
Jamo Art		270
Jamo D265		300
Jamo 307A		300
JBL LX2		250
JBL TLX151		300
JM Lab Tantal 507		295
JPW ML710		230
JPW ML810		260
JVC SX-SW10		300
KEF Coda 9		299
KEF Model 70S		299
KLH 83A		205
KLH 183A		265
KLH Soundbites System		276
KLH Model 81		280
KLH Model 41		290
Linn Kan		295
Mission 750LE		250
M-A Monitor 2		250
M-A Silver 3		300
Mordaunt-Short MS30i		275
Mordaunt-Short MS10i Classic		280
Mordaunt-Short MS814		300
Mus Tec Kestrel SE		300

NAD 802		280
NHT SuperZero		218
Paradigm Monitor 5		250
Paradigm Monitor 7		300
Pioneer CS-7050		230
Pioneer CS-9030		280
Pioneer S-LC1		300
Polk AB505		220
Polk M3 II		220
Polk RT5		250
Polk RT7		300
Polk M5		300
Promenade SP1		299
Rega EL8		298
Revolver The 250		250
R Allen Dimension Five 1		239
R Allen RA8		249
R Allen RA8M		249
R Allen Dimension Five 2		269
Rogers db101		250
Rogers G53		279
Royd The Envoy		249
Ruark Epilogue		239
Sequence 300		249
Solid HCM1		250
Sony SS-176EB		250
Tannoy Mercury M3		230
Tannoy Precision P10		300
Wdale Modus Music Four		230
Wdale MFM1		250
Wdale Valdus 500		300
Yamaha NS10M		300
ZYP A1		219
ZYP A25		295

£301 TO £500

Acoustic Energy AE109		350
Acoustic Energy AE209		450
Acoustic Energy AE120		500
Allison Model 2A		420
Arcadyis Baby 2		399
Audiovector C1		399
AVI Neutron		499
B&O Beovox CX50		325
B&O Beovox CX100		425
B&W CWM8i		350
B&W DM305		350
B&W CDM2SE		400
B&W DM603		500
B&W Signature 7		500
Bandor Pictures		352
Blue Room Mini Pod		400
Boston Micro 90 Sat		369
Boston Micro 80 Sys		369
Boston VR20		380
Castle Tay		350
Castle Kendal		400
Castle Eden		470
Celestion 25i		399
Celestion 30i		449
Celestion 35i		499
Cerwin-Vega VS-10		350
Chario Syntar 100T		399

JBL 4312 Mk II: listen to your old rock albums as they sounded in the recording studio.



SPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Chario Ref 1000	£	499
Clements 300si	£	395
Dali 104B	£	370
Dali 606	£	400
Dali Royal	£	500
Def Tech Celsius	£	395
Dynaudio Audience 5	£	400
Epos ES12	£	499
GLL Imagio IC248TL	£	350
GLL Imagio IC258TL	£	450
GLL Imagio IC348TL	£	500
Heybrook Heylo	£	359
Heybrook Ultima	£	399
Infinity SM105	£	350
Infinity SM115	£	400
Infinity SM125	£	500
Jamo Classic 6	£	330
Jamo Cornet 75	£	330
Jamo Cornet 195	£	350
Jamo BX-100A	£	350
Jamo 98	£	350
Jamo 407A	£	350
Jamo D365	£	400
Jamo Cornet 95	£	400
Jamo Classic 8	£	400
Jamo Graphic	£	400
Jamo 128	£	450
Jamo BX-150A	£	450
Jamo Atmosphere	£	480
Jamo 477A	£	500
JBL LX60	£	350
JBL LX6	£	350
JBL TLX161	£	400
JBL PS8	£	500
JBL TLX171	£	500
JM Lab Micron	£	395
JM Lab Tantal 515	£	495
JM Lab Megane	£	495
Jordan Watts JHFLG	£	380
Jordan Watts JH200	£	420
JPW ML910	£	330
JPW S5553	£	400
JPW ML1010	£	400
JPW Ruby 1	£	400
JPW Ruby 2	£	500
KEF Q35	£	349
KEF Q55	£	499
KEF RDM One	£	499
Keswick Aria II	£	379
KLH 283A	£	310
KLH 383A	£	335
KLH Model 51	£	375
KLH Model 71	£	420
KLH Model 62T	£	486
Linn Sekrit	£	395
Magnat Vector 55	£	349
Magnat Vector 77	£	449
Mission 733i	£	330
Mission 751f	£	348

Mission 734i	£	499
Mission 774	£	500
M-A Monitor 3	£	350
M-A Silver 5	£	400
M-A Studio 2SE	£	500
M-A Monitor 4	£	500
M-A 700 PMC	£	500
Mordaunt-Short MS25i Pearl	£	330
Mordaunt-Short MS815	£	450
Mordaunt-Short MS40i	£	450
Mus Tec Harner	£	400
Mus Tec PM15	£	475
NAD 804	£	400
Neat Critique	£	445
NHT SuperOne	£	338
NHT Model 1.5	£	450
Opera Duoetto	£	395
Origen Live OL-1AS	£	399
Origen Live Monarch	£	399
Paradigm Studio/20	£	350
Paradigm Monitor 9	£	400
Pentachord A	£	469
Pioneer S-LC2	£	450
Polk AB705	£	330
Polk RT8	£	400
Polk RT10	£	500
Polk AB805	£	500
Prof Monitor Co TB1SM	£	403
Prof Monitor Co TB1	£	410
Prof Monitor Co TB1S	£	450
Prof Monitor Co TB1M	£	447
Prof Monitor Co XB1	£	499
Promenade SP2	£	399
Promenade SP3	£	499
Rega Jura	£	450
Rega ELA MkII	£	498
Revolver The 260	£	350
R Allen Dimension Five 3	£	349
R Allen Dimension Five 4	£	429
Rogers G55	£	379
Rogers G56	£	429
Rogers G58	£	479
Rogers C6/20	£	499
Royd The Squire	£	350
Royd Minstrel SE	£	399
Royd Doublet	£	485
Ruark Icon	£	359
Sequence 400	£	329
Solid Verticale	£	400
S Coast Odette	£	325
Spendor S2	£	399
Spendor 2020	£	399
Spendor S1	£	499
System 1130	£	500
Tannoy Precision P20	£	400
TDL RTL2 SE	£	330
TDL RTL 3SE	£	450
TDL Chiltern CF100	£	450
Technics SB-M300	£	350
Technics SB-M500	£	450
Totem Mite	£	495

Triangle Titus TZe	£	379
Triangle Lunn	£	500
Wdale Modus Music Six	£	330
Wdale MFM3	£	350
Wdale Modus Music Eight	£	430
Wdale MFM5	£	450
Wdale Modus Music 1/6	£	500

£501 TO £800

Acoustic Energy AE1-II	£	795
Acoustic Precision Eikos FR1	£	800
Allison Model 3A	£	525
Arcaydis AK1	£	599
Arcaydis AS2	£	699
Arcaydis AK3	£	799
Audio Gem Emerald	£	540
Audio Note AN-K/D	£	620
Audio Note AN-J/B	£	799
Audiovector M1	£	759
Audiovector C2	£	799
AVI Biggatron	£	599
B&O Beolab 2500	£	750
B&W CDM1 SE	£	600
B&W P4	£	675
Bose 501	£	600
Bose A'mass AM3	£	650
Boston VR50	£	600
Castle Severn 2	£	580
Castle Avon	£	750
Celestion 45i	£	599
Celestion C2	£	699
Cerwin-Vega VS-12	£	550
Cerwin-Vega VS-15	£	700
Chario Ref 100T	£	599
Chario Hiper 1000T	£	699
Clements 600si	£	595
Cura CA-10	£	699
Dali 107	£	600
Dali 350	£	600
Dali 450	£	700
Dali 109	£	800
Def Tech BP6B	£	750
Diapason Micra II	£	750
Dynaudio Audience 50	£	577
Epos ES14	£	675
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	£	699
Harbeth HL-P3ES	£	799
Heybrook Duet	£	799
Infinity SM155	£	550
Infinity Kappa 60	£	595
Infinity Delta 60	£	700
Infinity Kappa 70	£	795
Jamo BX-200A	£	530
Jamo Classic 10	£	600
Jamo 507A	£	700
Jamo 707i	£	800
JBL LX70	£	550
JBL LX7	£	550
JBL TLX181	£	600
JBL SVA1500	£	600

JBL L20	£	700
JBL PS12	£	750
JM Lab Cobalt 807	£	595
JM Lab Cobalt 810	£	775
Jordan Watts JH400	£	515
JPW Ruby 3	£	800
KEF LS3/5a	£	649
KEF RDM Two	£	699
KEF Q65	£	799
Kelly KT2	£	700
Keswick Volante	£	729
KLH Model 82Ta	£	690
Linn Tukan Passive	£	550
Linn Kellidh Passive	£	750
Magnat Vintage 710	£	799
Manticores Minaret	£	690
Mendian A500	£	750
M&K S-85	£	700
Mission 752f	£	578
Mission 755i	£	650
Mission 753f	£	798
M-A Silver 7	£	600
M-A 702PMC	£	600
M-A 703PMC	£	800
Mordaunt-Short MS50i	£	550
Mordaunt-Short MS816	£	600
Mordaunt-Short MS30i Classic	£	600
Mus Tec Falcon	£	575
Nam Intro	£	680
Neat Mystique 2	£	575
Neat Petite II	£	745
Opera Seconda	£	595
Opera Operetta II	£	770
Opera Platea	£	795
Origin Live Resolution	£	732
Paradigm Studio/60	£	650
Paradigm Studio/80	£	750
Pentachord B	£	519
Pentachord Pentode	£	729
Polk RT12	£	600
Polk RT16	£	799
Polk LS50	£	800
ProAc Tablette 50	£	599
ProAc Studio 100	£	699
Promenade SP4	£	650
Quad 10L	£	600
Rogers G59	£	579
Rogers LS3/5A	£	699
Rogers C6/25	£	799
Roksan ROKone 1	£	595
Roksan Ojan 3	£	795
Royd The Sorcerer	£	595
Royd Abbot	£	695
Ruark Templar II	£	599
Ruark Sceptre	£	599
Ruark Talisman II	£	749
Ruark Prologue One	£	799
SD Acoustics SD3R	£	649
Shinpy Polarys	£	595
Silverado Raider	£	695
Sonus Faber Concertino	£	599
S Coast Hades	£	695
Spendor 2030	£	599
Spendor LS3/5A	£	630
Spendor SP3/1P	£	795
T+A TB 100	£	700
Tannoy Precision P30	£	600
Tannoy Definition D100	£	689
Tannoy Precision P40	£	800
TDL Cotswold CF200	£	650
TDL RTL 4	£	650
TDL T-Line 3	£	700
Titan Mini T/2	£	599
Totem Rokk	£	695
Triangle Comete TZe	£	525
Triangle Zephyr	£	799
Wdale MFM7	£	650

£801 TO £1500

Acoustic Energy AES05	£	850
Acoustic Energy AES09	£	1,000
Acoustic Energy AE2-II	£	1,095
Acoustic Energy AES20	£	1,200
Acoustic Solutions Eight	£	1,200
Apertura Prima	£	1,095
Apertura Nova	£	1,395
Arcaydis AC1	£	1,099
ATC SCM10	£	1,000
Audio Note AN-J/D	£	930
Audio Note AN-K/SPx	£	1,060
Audio Note AN-E/B	£	1,299
Audio Note AN-J/SPx	£	1,415
Audio Physic Step	£	1,299
Audiovector M1 Super	£	999
Audiovector M2	£	1,399
Audiovector M1 Sig	£	1,449
AVI Positron	£	899
B&O Beolab 4000	£	1,100
B&W P5	£	875
B&W CDM7	£	1,000
B&W DM604	£	1,000
B&W P6	£	1,095
B&W Matrix 805 V	£	1,095
Bandor Trident	£	846
Bandor Mora	£	1,260
Bandor Bandora	£	1,340
BKS Audio Hybrid 107	£	1,500

With the new Nautilus 800 series, B&W has shown the way ahead for 21st Century speaker design.



Factsback
 For access to past reviews see page 145.

SUBWOOFERS (CONTINUED)

H/K Citation 7.4		875
Infinity SSW-10		500
Jamo SW303E		220
Jamo SW400E		350
Jamo SW505E		400
Jamo Sub One		400
Jamo SW600e		530
JBL Contol Sub 6		200
JBL PSW800		275
JBL Sub 10		300
JBL PSW1000		325
JBL PSW1200		375
JM Lab Tantal SW20		349
JM Lab Cobalt SW27A		595
JM Lab Electra SW33A		895
JM Lab Sub Utopia		2,200
JPW Subwoofer		130
JPW SW40		199
JPW SW60		350
JPW SW-120		500
KEF Model 20B		349
KEF Model 30B		499
KEF Model AV1		2,499
Kenwood SW500		250
Kenwood SW501		349
Keswick Alto		1,299
KLH ASW10-100		350
KLH ASW12-120		380
Linn AV5150		2,850
L Voice RW24		11,500
Magnat Vector Sub 30P		149
Magnat Vector Sub 30A		299
Meridian M2500		1,595
M&K VX-7MKII		450
M&K V-75 MKII		650
M&K V-125		800
M&K V-125 (THX)		800
M&K MX-70		900
M&K MX-150 (THX)		1,500
M&K MX-700		1,595
M&K MX-200		1,800
M&K MX-350THX		1,995
M&K MX-5000 (THX)		2,900
Mission 73AS		450
Mission 75AS		548
M-A ASW110		500
M-A ASW210		700
Mordaunt-Short MS826S		500
Mordaunt-Short T2000		500
Mus Tec Sub		650
Muse Model 22		1,890
Muse Model 18		3,790
Neat Gravitas		1,095
NHT SW2Pi		699
Paradigm PDR10		250
Paradigm Servo 15A		800
Poik PSW50		350
Poik PSW150		500
Poik PSW300		750
REL Q50		375
REL Q-100E		495
REL Strata II		575
REL Storm		695
REL Stadium II		995
REL Stentor II		1,800
REL Studio II		4,000
Revel Sub-15		2,195
Revolver The Recoil		100
R Allen Gold Sub		149
R Allen Dim'n Active		499
R Allen Magnum Active		699
Rogers AB1		549
Rogers Sub-bass		679
Roksan Ojan 3S		795
Sequence FW120		249
Solid PB100		350
Sony SA-W305		130
Sunfire True Sub		1,450
TDL Nucleus SBR		200
Triangle Sat III		650
Tsunami TS200		300
Tsunami TS210		399
Velodyne VA-68XII		399
Velodyne VA-810XII		599
Velodyne VA-1012XII		699
Velodyne VA-1215XII		999
Velodyne FSR-12		1,099
Velodyne FSR-15		1,299
Velodyne F-1800II		1,999
Wdale Modus Sub Bass		180
Wdale Modus Powered Sub		350
Wilson Audio Puppy 5.1		8,450
Wilson Audio Whow III		12,500
Yamaha YST-SW40		140

Yamaha YST-SW80		180
Yamaha YST-SW150		280
Yamaha YST-SW300		350

TONEARMS
KEY
 Ⓞ - Pivoted.
 # - Parallel tracking.

Air Tangent IC	#	4,600
Air Tangent 10B	#	8,600
Air Tangent Reference	#	14,000
Audio Note AN-ARM 1	Ⓞ	169
Audio Note AN-0s	Ⓞ	795
Audio Note AN-1s	Ⓞ	995
Audiomeca SL5	#	2,500
Clearaudio TQ-1 Improved	#	1,950
Dynavector 507	Ⓞ	1,995
Graham 1.5 Basic	Ⓞ	1,695
Graham Mk 2.0	Ⓞ	2,650
Helius Orion 4 Copper	Ⓞ	549
Helius Cyalene 2	Ⓞ	1,495
Kuzma Stogi	Ⓞ	750
Kuzma Stogi Ref	Ⓞ	1,250
Linn Akito	Ⓞ	500
Linn Ekos	Ⓞ	1,500
Manticore Musician II	Ⓞ	595
Manticore Magician II	Ⓞ	895
Manticore Magician 12	Ⓞ	995
Moth Mk I	Ⓞ	109
Moth MKIII Stainless	Ⓞ	146
Moth Mk III Tungsten	Ⓞ	174
Moth Moth 900	Ⓞ	598
Naim ARO	Ⓞ	1,070
N'ham Space	Ⓞ	450
N'ham Paragon 3	#	550
N'ham Paragon 2	#	800
N'ham Mentor	Ⓞ	800
N'ham Foot	Ⓞ	1,100
N'ham Paragon 1	#	1,600
Rega RB250	Ⓞ	109
Rega RB300	Ⓞ	174
Rega RB900	Ⓞ	598
Rockport Series 7000	#	6,000
Roksan Tabnz	Ⓞ	320
Roksan Tabriz Zi	Ⓞ	420
Roksan Artemiz	Ⓞ	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	Ⓞ	309
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	Ⓞ	338
SME Series II 3009-R	Ⓞ	514
SME Series II 3010-R	Ⓞ	526
SME Series II 3012-R	Ⓞ	565
SME 309	Ⓞ	689
SME 310	Ⓞ	705
SME 312	Ⓞ	802
SME Series IV	Ⓞ	983
SME Series V	Ⓞ	1,461
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 4i	Ⓞ	3,000
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 5i	Ⓞ	3,250
Wilson Benesch Act 0.5	Ⓞ	795
Wilson Benesch ACT2	Ⓞ	1,350
Zeta AS	Ⓞ	469
Zeta VDH	Ⓞ	549

TUNERS
KEY
 'P20' (etc.) - Number of presets.
RDS - Radio Data System; receives text information on station, programme type etc.

Akai AT1200	P30	170
AMC T7	P30	130
Arcam Alpha 7	P24	230

Arcam Alpha 8		280
Arcam Delta 280		300
Ariston TX-510		60
Audiolab 8000T	P39	800
Aura TU80	P30	350
AVI S2000MT2	P99	899
Carver TX-8R	P20	469
Creek T43	P68	399
Day Sequerra FM Ref		5,937
Day Sequerra S B'dcast Mon		16,640
Denon TU-260L	P20	120
Denon TU-215RD	P40	150
Denon TU-425RD	P40	200
Fanfare FT1	P08	1,395
H/K TU930	P30	150
H/K TU950	P30	200
Kenwood KT-2080	P20	130
Kenwood KT-3080	P50	180
Linn Kudos	P50	775
Linn Kremlin	P80	2,600
Magnum Dynalab FT11		550
Magnum Dynalab FT-101A		825
Magnum Dynalab Etude		1,250
Magnum Dynalab 108		4,500
Marantz ST-48	P30	119
Marantz ST-17	P60	600
McIntosh MR7084	P50	2,499
McIntosh MX118	P50	4,999
McIntosh MX130	P50	6,999
Meridian 504	P16	695
Michi RHT-10	P16	895
Micromega Minium FM Mk2	P39	330
Micromega Tuner	P39	700
Mission Cyrus FM7	P29	400
Musical Fidelity E50	P20	300
Myryad T-30	P39	400
Myryad MT100	P39	530
NAD 412	P24	190
NAD 414RDS	P30	250
NAD 710	P24	270
NAD 712	P24	330
Naim NAT03		615
Naim NAT02		1,130
Naim NAT01		1,780
Onkyo T 421ORDS	P30	180
Onkyo T 409	P30	230
Onkyo T 411 RDS	P30	260
Pioneer F-204RDS	P30	140
Pioneer F-504RDS	P40	250
Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	P40	300
Quad 77FM	P25	700
Rega Radio	P24	298
Roksan Caspian	P50	595
Rotel RT-935AX	P20	160
Rotel RT940AX	P20	200
Sony ST-SE200	P50	100
Sony ST-SE300	P30	120
Sony ST-SE500	P30	140
Sony ST-5B920	P30	180
Sony ST-SA3ES	P30	250
T+A T1200R	P60	790
TEAC T-R400	P40	100
TEAC TR-460	P40	120
TEAC T-H500	P30	170
Technics ST-GT350L	P50	130
Technics ST-GT550L	P39	180
Technics ST-GT650L	P39	230
Thorens TRT-2000	P59	499
Thule Audio Spirit TU100	P40	499
Yamaha TX-480L	P40	100
Yamaha TX-10 II	P40	130
Yamaha TX-492RDS	P40	130
Yamaha TX-59 2RDS	P40	180
Yamaha RX-396RDS	P40	250

TURNABLES
KEY
 Ⓞ - Arm included.
 # - Cartridge included.
UP TO £500

Audio Note AN-TT 1		349
Dual CS435-1	Ⓞ	150
Dual CS455	Ⓞ	190
Dual 505-4 UK	Ⓞ	250
Eclipse TT430	Ⓞ	70
Genexa Lab-710	Ⓞ	60
Genexa Lab-810	Ⓞ	70
Kenwood KD-492F	Ⓞ	100

Michell Mycro		455
Moth Alamo		199
Moth Kanoor MK1 Arm		279
Moth Kanoor MK3 Arm	Ⓞ	329
NAD 533	Ⓞ	220
N'ham Interspace		500
Pioneer PL-J2500-C	Ⓞ	80
Pioneer PL-990	Ⓞ	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	Ⓞ	170
Pro-Ject 1/510	Ⓞ	210
Pro-Ject 2/520	Ⓞ	325
Pro-Ject 6/MC15	Ⓞ	500
Rega Planar 78	Ⓞ	214
Rega Planar 2	Ⓞ	214
Rega Planar 3	Ⓞ	274
Roksan Radius	Ⓞ	470
Sherwood PM8550	Ⓞ	160
Sony PS-LX150H	Ⓞ	90
Sony PS-LX500H	Ⓞ	150
Technics SL-J110D	Ⓞ	120
Technics SL-BD20	Ⓞ	160
Technics SL-BD22	Ⓞ	180
Technics SL-1210MKII	Ⓞ	400
Technics SL-1200MKII	Ⓞ	400
Thorens TD-180 AT91	Ⓞ	190
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	Ⓞ	210
Thorens TD-166 V/UK/RB	Ⓞ	400
Thorens TD-318 III TP50	Ⓞ	500

OVER £500

Audio Note AN-TT 2		995
Audio Note AN-TT 3		1,995
Audiomeca Romance	Ⓞ	1,895
Audiomeca J1		3,500
Basis 2000		1,995
Basis 2001		2,995
Basis Ovation II		5,400
Basis 2500		5,495
Basis 2800	Ⓞ	7,495
Basis Debut Gold Std III		8,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum		10,300
Chantry QT Level 2	Ⓞ	705
Clearaudio Evolution	Ⓞ	1,790
Clearaudio Reference	Ⓞ	3,990
DNM-Reson Rota 1		3,900
DNM-Reson Rota 2	Ⓞ	5,600
Impulse Moskito	Ⓞ	695
Kuzma Stabi		1,950
Kuzma Stabi Reference		3,750
Linn LP12 Baski		1,100
Linn LP12 Lingo		1,750
Manticore Mantra 97		595
Manticore Mantra		895
Manticore Magister		4,400
Michell Gyrodec		875
Michell Orbe		1,995
N'ham Spacedeck		750
N'ham Graphic		1,200
N'ham HyperSpacedeck		1,500
N'ham Mentor		2,600
N'ham Anna Log		5,500
Oracle Paris		1,100
Oracle Delphi		3,370
Oracle Delphi 15th Anniv		3,800
Pink Triangle Tarantella		680
Rega Planar 9	Ⓞ	1,598
Reson RS1M	Ⓞ	695
Reson Rota 1	Ⓞ	3,900
Rockport Capella II		7,000
Rockport Sirius III		50,000
Roksan Xerxes 10		1,295
Roksan TMS		2,750
SME Model 20/2		3,403
SME Model 20/2A	Ⓞ	4,863
SME Model 30/2		10,675
SME Model 30/2A	Ⓞ	12,135
Stratosphere ST1		6,500
Technics SL-1200LTD	Ⓞ	700
Thorens TD-146 VI TP50	Ⓞ	550
Thorens TD-2001 TP90	Ⓞ	700
Thorens TD-520 SME		1,050
Well Tempered Record Player	Ⓞ	1,850
Well Tempered Classic	Ⓞ	2,980
Well Tempered Super	Ⓞ	3,900
Well Tempered Reference	Ⓞ	5,300
Wilson Benesch Circle		795
Wilson Benesch WB Turntable		1,775
Wilson Benesch Full Circle	Ⓞ	1,995

PRODUCTS TESTED & RATED
 Turn over for a full round-up of all reviewed products!

Do you want to choose your hifi in a comfortable and relaxing environment . . . ?

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Nobody else in these areas stocks all the following major brands: Acoustic Energy, Arcam, Audiolab, Aura, B&W, Cyrus, Epos, DPA, Harman Kardon, Heybrook, Infinity, JPW, KEF (Reference), Linn Products (including records), Marantz, Meridian, Mission, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Nakamichi, Onix, Pioneer, PROAC, QED (Systemline), Quad, Rega, Revox, Rogers, Rotel, Sony, Sound Org, Target, T.D.L., Yamaha (including Home Cinema Systems) & Top Tape.

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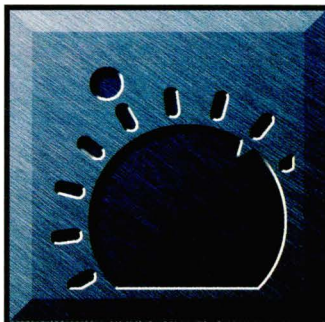
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Amplifiers

The amplifier is at the heart of any hi-fi system, accepting the outputs from various music sources, increasing the amplitude of their signal and then driving the loudspeakers to produce sound. One-box 'integrated' amps rule the roost at low-to-middle price points, but if you pay more, the low-level and high-level signal processes are separated into preamp and power amp boxes, and even separate 'outboard' power supplies come into play. Another luxury is a separate amp for each stereo channel: such devices are known as monoblocks. Finally, output power and sound quality are not necessarily related. Some of the finest amplifiers outputs only 12 Watts, but will yield loudness aplenty when partnered with high-efficiency loudspeakers.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

LINE INPUTS: Number of input sockets for line-level (non-vinyl) sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.
MM PHONO INPUT: An input specially designed for moving magnet (high output) phono pickup cartridges.
MC PHONO INPUT: An input for moving coil (low output) phono pickup cartridges.
REMOTE CONTROL: An infra-red handset to adjust volume etc.
HEADPHONE SOCKET: An integral output for headphones.
POWER OUTPUT (Watts): Our measurement of an amp's RMS power output into 8 Ohms.
RECEIVER: An amplifier with built-in radio receiver (tuner).
FACTSBACK REFERENCE: The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our favored review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.
H: High End Review

B BEST BUY **R RECOMMENDED** **E EDITOR'S CHOICE**

Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

MM PHONO INPUTS
 MC PHONO INPUTS
 HEADPHONE SOCKET
 REMOTE CONTROL
 POWER OUTPUT (W)
 RECEIVER
 FACTSBACK NO.
 ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	HEADPHONE SOCKET	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Maxim	319	Vivid and colourful-sounding amp, but just too bold and brassy	5	●				30		1737	154
Alchemist Kraken APD6A	579	Compact, with Darth Vader styling, yet sound quality is meek and mild, despite strong midband dynamics	5	●				55		2150	175
Alchemist Nemesis	700	Good if ultimately undistinguished amplifier whose strengths include warmth, authority and distinctive aesthetics	6					80		2006	168
AMC 3025a	140	Surprisingly potent and easy on the ear, if not especially analytical – classic bargain-basement material, in fact	4	●	●	●	●	30		2045	171
AMC 3050a	170	Tremendous value for money, and a full, big, if rather uninformative sound	4	●	●	●	●	45		1970	167
AMC 3100a	200	A head banger's delight, but sound quality can be muggy and brash on occasions	6				●	100			186
AMC CVT3030a	400	Beer-budget valve amp, with valve-like virtues (euphony with dynamics) and vices (system dependency, noise)	6	●				30		2001	168
Arcam Alpha One	230	Rather like an Alpha 7 but without the remote control and an what appears to be better sound quality still	6					35			186
Arcam Alpha 7	260	Decent, if slightly system-fussy amplifier that generally pulls all the right strings	5	●				40		1971	167
Arcam Alpha 8	360	Enjoyably soft-centred amp, won't frighten the animals. Upgradeable via preamp output, and optional remote	5	●				50		1853	162
Arcam Alpha 9	500	Not quite a match for the Alpha 9/9P combo, the solo integrated is nevertheless colourful and explicitly detailed	7			●		70		2007	168
Arcam Alpha 10	800	Although not the best sounding in its class, the Alpha 10's modular nature demands it be taken seriously	5			●		100			181
Audio Analogue Puccini	450	Superbly finished, the entry-level Audio Analogue performs way out of its class	5	●	●			40		2147	175
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	595	Upgraded, more powerful Puccini is disappointingly sluggish and curiously lacking in musical vitality	5	●	●			40			181
Audiogram MB1	493	The only flaws are the amateurish build, a number of technical problems and inconsistent sound quality	4	●		●	●	40		2235	178
Audio Note Oto SE	1,200	Transparent, dynamic, clear and subtle, but offers limited power output	4					24			126
Audiolab 8000LX	470	Well built, entry-level model lacks bottle and pizzazz. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	6					60		2148	175
Audiolab 8000S	700	Informative in every sense, only a slight lack of bite detracts. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	6			●	●	60		1740	154
AVI S2000MI	999	Fine, detailed amplifier with excellent timing and strong control of a wide range of loudspeaker loads	5			●		100		2155	175
Bryston B60R	1,249	Great build, but the lazy bass and opaque treble bracket an articulate midband. Comes with 20 year guarantee	5			●	●	60		2156	175
Cambridge Audio A500RC	200	Load tolerance may be a problem for some, but this is an otherwise impressive, if tonally muted amp	6			●		50			186
Copland CSA8	945	Sophisticated yet transparent, this is one of those amplifiers that sounds good even when the gloss has worn off	5					60		2010	168
Copland CSA14	1,199	Great sound and looks, but avoid high capacitance speaker cables	4	●				60		1416	148
CR Developments CR324	569	Solid and capable on paper, this is a bit of a blunt instrument when let loose on the music	5					150			181
Credo IMP702	850	Old-fashioned looking, but bags of clarity and precision, though it can sound brash in the wrong system	5					70		2157	175
Cymbal CA1	499	Lacklustre amplifier tends to underperform with complex material. Best with straightforward compact loudspeakers	6					40		2236	178
Creek 4330	279	Compact, even pretty, but sounds dark and uninviting, with coarse treble and 'woomy' bass	5					40		2052	171
Denon PMA-250SE	160	This amp can sound rough when extended, but within its limits it is open, detailed and likeable	5					30		2046	171
Denon PMA-350SE	200	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, this SE model is a control freak, but can sound wonderful	5					50		1856	162
Denon PMA-425R	230	Well-equipped and generally enjoyable but slightly ragged performer	3	●		●	●	45		1973	167
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation, but musically unexciting	5	●	●	●	●	97		1802	157
Denon PMA-1500R	500	Recommended for its outrageous power, especially with problem speakers.	5	●	●	●	●	70			181
Densen Beat B-100 MkII	650	High 'air guitar' factor, and can punch above its weight, but check it will complement your system	5					60		1855	175
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	450	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
Electrocompaniet EC1-2	995	A 50 watt amplifier which sounds more powerful, and makes 'real sounding' music.	4					50		2158	175
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but with low power, mundane sound and poor build	3					12		1416	148
Goodmans Delta 900A	130	Coloured and raw sound tarnish high power yield and remarkable pricing, and noisy fan cooling is a real joy-killer	5	●		●	●	100		2228	178
Harman/Kardon HK610	180	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●				30		1465	149
Harman/Kardon HK620	250	Capable and musical amplifier which is one of the nicest at this price. Optional add-in MM/MC board available	6					40		1858	162
Hofli Audis Signature	750	A 'no-feedback' circuit giving outstanding resolution, but significant load dependency	4	●				65			181
JoLida 202	695	Well-built and technically accomplished, affordable valve integrated with subtle refined, if not quite gripping sound	4					40		2011	168
JVC AX-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-5090R	300	Large, well equipped and high tech integrated, but TRAITS output still gives a harsh, unsmooth performance	5	●	●	●	●	65		2053	171
Kenwood KAF-3010R	180	Plenty of twiddly bits yet weak on inputs, and basically good, but somewhat uneven sound quality	4	●		●	●	70			186
Lavardin Model IT	£3,200	Banishment of 'memory distortion' delivers an amp with the best of valve and transistor sound characteristics	4					40			184
LFD Integrated Zero	549	Lively and brisk, but at the same time cold and unsympathetic	6					50		1584	140
Linn Majik (phono)	800	The cornerstone of Linn's modular hi-fi system is innovative, but sounds vague and confused	5	●	●			33		1013	129
Magnum IA120	265	Mirror finish amplifier with bold, colourful delivery, but needs careful system matching to avoid loss of clarity	6					65		2054	171
Magnum IA170	330	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic; preserves colour and dynamics	6					96		1260	142
Magnum IA200	599	Sweet, valve-flavoured solid state amplifier which flatters where it doesn't cast light	7					160		1860	162
Magnum Class A	690	Lashings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A circuits trade lushness for accuracy	4	●	●			60			116
Magnum Class A SE	795	A MOSFET amplifier drawing inspiration from the world of valves, this is an erratically refined, detailed amplifier	5	●				80		2159	175
Marantz PM-48	150	Fine entry level amplifier has excellent midband resolution and top, with a slightly coarse textured bass	5	●		●	●	50			186
Marantz PM-57	200	Well equipped but ultimately anodyne amplifier which lacks for nothing but star quality	5	●		●	●	50		2049	171

CONTINUED

Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK NO.
RECEIVER
POWER OUTPUT (W)
HEADPHONE SOCKET
REMOTE CONTROL
MC PHONO INPUTS
MM PHONO INPUTS
LINE INPUTS

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	5	4	3	2	1	0	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
▶ Marantz PM-66SE	230	A bit lush, and power output is limited, but it gives airy, large-scale music. An excellent budget buy	5	●					50		1969	167
▶ Marantz PM66 KI-Signature	400	<i>It knows how to rock and roll with holographic detail and stereo, but prefers small/medium scale acoustic material</i>	5	●					50		2003	168
▶ Marantz PM-17	900	Probably worth it for the WBT terminals and other build features alone, but this model doesn't sing as it should	6	●					60			181
▶ Micromega Tempo 2	900	Idiosyncratic but flexible amplifier with an attractively forward and expressive sound quality	7						70			181
▶ Mission Cyrus IIIi	598	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance was not liked. Upgradeable using PSX PSU unit							50		1854	162
▶ Mission Cyrus SL	398	Articulate amplifier with build quality to die for, superb, outgoing midband and lean, though well-extended bass	6						50			168
▶ Monrio ASTY	400	Engaging, but ill-disciplined, even OTT amplifier with unpredictable system compatibility	5						55		2237	178
▶ Musical Fidelity E1	199	Richly flavoured tone and realistically-scaled imagery distinguish this entry-level Richer Sounds special	6						30		2050	171
▶ Musical Fidelity E11	299	Well built minimalist amp with a 5 year guarantee, but can sound congested when extended	6						60		2232	178
▶ Musical Fidelity X-A1	479	<i>Idiosyncratic visuals just another plus for an amp that is powerful, well built, and serves the music superbly</i>	6						50			181
▶ Musical Fidelity A2	500	Lucid, transparent midband and a full upper bass are provided by this highly proficient A1 replacement	5	●					25		1862	162
▶ Musical Fidelity A220	700	Powerful, authoritative and well turned-out amplifier that is easy to match with comparably priced speakers	5	●					50		2012	168
▶ Myryad MI120	600	Well styled, well built: a good, even tempered amplifier, though it can sound rather brittle	6						60		2153	175
▶ NAD 310	100	<i>Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness</i>	5						20		1468	149
▶ NAD C320	200	<i>Excellent budget amp from the makers of the seminal 3020 offers better clarity and neutrality and good build</i>	6						40			186
▶ NAD 314	260	Lively if coloured presentation that is musically engaging and easy on the ear	6	●					53		1807	157
▶ Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5						30		1748	154
▶ Orelle SA-100	499	<i>A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble</i>	5						50		1749	154
▶ Orelle SA-100RX	649	<i>In its latest guise, this is a fluid, articulate and transparent design – and excellent value</i>	7					Opt	75			181
▶ Pioneer A-204R	160	The A-204R makes no special claims beyond being well equipped and cheap, but displayed unexpected quality	5	●					25		2047	171
▶ Pioneer A-300R	200	Its bright and breezy sound is a natural tonic to those of us worn down by the ongoing stress of life	5	●					50		1469	149
▶ Pioneer A-405R	250	Fully featured, open and dynamic sounding; makes up in enthusiasm what it occasionally lacks in refinement	5	●					45		2230	178
▶ Pioneer A-407R	230	Clean, consistent, finely detailed sound, good finish and (mainly) good build	5	●					45			186
▶ Pioneer A-400X	300	On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling than on its first outing	6	●					50		1545	138
▶ Pioneer A-300R Precision	400	<i>Sophisticated variant of the A-300R. Not an obvious winner, but will slowly ply you with its subtle charms</i>	5	●					35		1863	162
▶ Pioneer A-605R	400	Intriguing technology, but execution is certainly impeded by excessive gadget count	5	●					80		2005	168
▶ Pioneer A-07	999	Curious blend of high-end attributes and inconsistent, though undeniably detailed sound	5	●					80		2160	175
▶ Primare A-20 Mk II	799	Everything except packaging has changed in mkII version: but ballsier model has lost none of its refinement	5						70			181
▶ Pro-ject Model 7	300	A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC phono	5	●					40		1264	142
▶ Quad 77 Integrated	700	<i>Compact and sophisticated amp. Has limited inputs when used with 'foreign' components. (Optional system remote)</i>	3						84		2013	168
▶ Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier, derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, though at least it is well behaved	4	●					50		1865	162
▶ Roksan Caspian	695	<i>Well-built, open and articulate amplifier, which is also consistent from system to system, and well built</i>	6						70		2014	168
▶ Rose Scion	615	Unique two-box integrated gives real subtlety and low level resolution, but the sound lacks scale and weight	5	●					65		2009	168
▶ Rotel RA-931	150	Rather dry and unforgiving sound from this internally well specified and attractively priced amplifier	4	●					35		2048	171
▶ Rotel RA-971	200	<i>Budget buy par excellence, especially for large rooms and insensitive speakers</i>	6						70			186
▶ Sony TA-F48BE	250	Minimalist interface is matched to carefully considered circuit with satisfactory effect – but keep the volume in check	5	●					55		2055	171
▶ Sony TA-F3000ES	500	<i>Champagne 'shoebbox amp' may lack power reserves, but is quick and articulate. In every sense a knockout</i>	5	●					35		2239	178
▶ TAG McLaren 60iRv	999	Looks, feels and sounds better than the Audiolab it supersedes. Smooth, open, refined but lacks body and drive	6						60			184
▶ Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model	6						50		1868	162
▶ Talk Electronics Storm 2	650	Crisp, clean, well defined sound, arguably lacking warmth, but a good midrange purchase overall	6						50		2154	175
▶ TEAC A-BX7R	700	Characterful balance mars a meticulously designed amplifier. Includes a balanced input, optional MM/MC stage	5	●					50		1869	162
▶ Technics SU-A660MK3	200	Plenty of wellie for the price, but the sound can be a tad coarse and lacking in fine detail	5	●					37			186
▶ Technics SU-A700 Mk 3	250	Fully equipped, high-tech amplifier ultimately fails the authenticity test, and can sound messy and inarticulate	5	●					45		1870	162
▶ Technics SU-A800D Mk 2	300	Two-box amplifier looks great, has plenty of gadgets, and makes good, if slightly over-exuberant music	5	●					55		2234	178
▶ Technics SU-A900D Mk 2	400	Looks like a pre/power amplifier, but in effect it's an integrated, with a rather soft-centred sound to match	5	●					70		2149	175
▶ Token Audio K50	350	<i>Stainless steel finish, others available. Sound is warm and attractive, though a little undynamic</i>	5						50			186
▶ Woodside ISA230 Disc	1,249	Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for ultimate success	3	●					30			116
▶ Yamaha AX-492	220	Powerful, well equipped amplifier at an attractive price, offers powerful and engaging music-making	5	●					85		2231	178
▶ Yamaha AX-592	280	Fine, middle ranking amplifier, with a detailed midband but performance declines at frequency extremes	5	●					100		2056	171
PREAMPLIFIERS												
▶ Audiolab 8000C	580	Distinctive, stark neutrality will not appeal to all. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	5	●								97
▶ Audiolab 8000Q	1,250	Tested with 8000M monoblock power amps. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	6								1301	145
▶ Copland CTA-301MkII	1,399	Sweet sounding, but never gets bogged down in audio treading	4	●							1630	151
▶ Crimson 610C	875	Not entirely satisfactory preamp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	4	●								181
▶ EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with 509 Mk 2 power amp. (See Power Amplifier section.)	4	●								63
▶ ECA Vista	760	<i>Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system. (Tested with Lectern power amp)</i>	5								1302	145
▶ Exposure XVII	850	Superbly rhythmic; maybe a bit overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super	5	●								142
▶ Jadis JP-30MC	5,978	French tubes, beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (Tested with JA 30 power amp)	5	●								60
▶ LFD Mistral Linstage	449	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6								1930	165
▶ Meridian 501	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. (Tested with 555 power amp)	5	●							1303	145
▶ Meridian 562V	995	Transparent and capable preamp, also features six digital inputs	9	●								140
▶ Meridian 502	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation	7									162
▶ Moth 30 Passive	149	<i>Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy</i>	4									109
▶ Moth 30 Active Line Stage	349	Excellent-sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp	4								1931	165
▶ Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp	5									166
▶ Musical Fidelity X-PRE	200	Cleverly configured preamp with many upgrade options, and open, lively and engaging sound	4								2152	175
▶ Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista	1295	Fully remote, nuvistor tube equipped, with fine coherence and musicality	5	●								182
▶ NAD 114	270	<i>Beer-budget preamp, sounds focused, detailed and consistent</i>	6	●							1932	165
▶ Naim NAC92R	630	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry. (Tested with NAP90 power amp)	5								1936	165
▶ Quad 77 Pre	850	<i>Sophisticated design with 2-way remote control console; open colourful sound and very flexible</i>	4	●							1941	165

CONTINUED

Amplifiers

SPECIFICATIONS									
MM PHONO LINE INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER		

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MM PHONO LINE INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	RECEIVER	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Rega Hal	998	Passive line stages dedicated to Exon power amps	6	●	●	●			1942	165
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 RC-971	150	Low price is offset by rather coarse sound quality with certain types of music. (Tested with RB-971 power amp)	5				●			178
Sumo Athena IIB	767	Big, natural and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	6						1305	145
TAG McLaren PA20R	1500	Refinement of Audiolab original with clean, detailed sound but limited thrill power. (1/2w 125M monoblocks.)	6				●	●		184
Talk Hurricane 2L	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6						1937	165
Thorens TTP2000F	699	Glamorous, shoebox-format, minimalist pre with fine detail and some granularity	3	●	●	●			1938	165
Woodside SC26 Phono	2,233	Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency. (Tested with STA35)	5	●	●					100

POWER AMPLIFIERS

Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	529	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless	1						60		124
Arcam Alpha 9P	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1						60	1929	165
Arcam Alpha 10P	£600	Good all-rounder with huge headroom and a taut, controlled sound. Not the last word in transparency	1						100		183
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around	1						15		109
Audiolab 8000M	1,600	Strong, controlled sound; confident bass, but colourless. Superseded by new TAG McLaren Audio products	1						125	1301	145
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1						67	1630	151
Crimson 620C	875	Not entirely satisfactory power amp which has dynamic strengths, but underachieves when the volume is raised	1						50		181
Cyrus Power	£498	Detail and midband clarity and stand-out qualities. Smooth and refined with most types of music but bass-soft	1						50		183
Densen B-300	£800	Expensive but highly musical. Colourful and warm sound with strong timing and listener involvement	1						100		183
EAR 509 Mk II	3,699	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention. (Tested with 802 Preamp)	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
LFD Mistral Power	449	Infectious upper band vitality, but LF dynamics lacking – likewise 'grip' and transparency	1						60	1930	165
Meridian 555	750	By providing an open window on the music, this amp is wide open to RF and low level IM distortions	1						60	1303	145
Michell Alecto stereo	1,150	Open, well-focused imagery with natural, refined textures	1						50	1940	165
Moth 60 Watt Stereo	599	Miniature power amp lacks control and finesse – not comfortable with difficult speaker loads	1						60	1931	165
Moth 30 Series Monoblocks	879	Tested with Active Preamp. Demonstrated solid balance and proved adept at delivering vital musical qualities	1						100		155
Musical Fidelity FX2	800	Quality build and imposing presentation is married to strong power yield, tonal colour and finesse	1						100	1934	165
Musical Fidelity X-A50	500	Cleverly configured and attractively packaged, open, lively and engaging sound. Reviewed with X-PRE	1						50		175
Myryad MA120	450	Based in MI120 integrated – see latter for comments, but sounds significantly better when bi-amped with MI120	1						60	1935	165
NAD 214	370	A little lightweight, but detailed, consistent sound quality, and excellent value for money	1						80	1932	165
Naim NAP90	450	Power amp from a Nait integrated with some improvements	1						30	1936	165
Quad 77 Power	600	Open, bold and colourful, with mild compression	1						85	1941	165
Rega Exon	1,196	Monoblock, priced each, dedicated for Hal preamp. Bold, outgoing, in-command kind of sound	1						125	1942	165
Roksan Capsian Power	£595	Excels musically and in conventional hi-fi terms. A power amp for people with long-term satisfaction in mind	1						70W		183
Rotel RB-971	200	Somewhat better than the accompanying preamp – clean, mean and bridgeable. (Tested with RC-971)	1						70		178
Rotel RB-980BX	450	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid-back and occasionally smeared sound	1						120		155
Sirius D200	2995	Single MOSFET pair per side gives tremendous resolution and timing (balanced only)	1						200		183
Sumo Polaris III	950	Tested with Athena IIB. Big and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	1						164	1305	145
TAG McLaren 125M	2400	Refined Audiolab replacement monoblocks with clean sound but limited thrill power. (1/2w PA20R preamp)	1						145		184
Talk Tomado 2	600	Good, but slightly retiring sound which lacks the authority to stand out in a crowd	1						65	1937	165
Thorens TTA2000	599	Low power shoe-box format, but gutsy and surprisingly subtle and articulate	1						30	1938	165



Cables

Cables are an integral part of a hi-fi system, required to connect source components to amplifiers, and the latter to speakers.

- Analogue Interconnects connect source components and amplifiers, and run between pre and power amps. They are priced for one-metre terminated pairs.
- Digital interconnects connect CD transports to DACs or digital recorders. They come in optical and electrical varieties, the former being made of plastic or glass. The prices shown are for a terminated linear metre.
- Speaker cables are used between the amplifier and speaker. Our prices are per unterminated metre. Termination (plugs and soldering) costs vary.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SYMMETRICAL:** A twisted pair of conductors.
- **COAXIAL:** A central 'hot' conductor and a shield that carries the negative signal.
- **STRANDED:** Multiple strands with no intervening insulation.
- **SOLID CORE:** Single or multiple, individually insulated strands.
- **COPPER:** Material used for conductor.
- **SILVER:** Material used for conductor.
- **DIG CABLE TYPE:** O - optical digital; E - electrical digital for CD Players, DACs and digital recorders.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
- ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.
- H:** High End Review

B BEST BUY
R RECOMMENDED
E EDITOR'S CHOICE

STATUS

Cables

SPECIFICATIONS										
SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER		

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS											
Audio Note AN-A	18	Not especially impressive: warm but well-rounded balance that restricts 'air' but is quite clear			●		●	●			108
Audio Note AN-C	35	Neutral but lacking in subtle texture and unable to distinguish fine detail					●	●			1687 131
Audio Note AN-S	99	Up-beat and enthusiastic sound with satisfyingly deep and grumbly bass	●				●	●			1687 131
Audio Note AN-V	179	15 individually insulated silver strands make up this very clean and dynamically unchallenged cable	●				●	●			1687 131
Audioquest Turquoise	40	A 'fit and forget' cable that sounds distinctly lazy	●				●	●			160
Audioquest Topaz 2	60	Sounds flattened out, with poor imaging and grainy treble					●	●			2166 176
CableTalk Advanced 2	35	Slight roughness in loud music barely detracts from a well-balanced performance with good imaging					●	●			2166 176
Cable Talk Studio 2	65	A first-class performer from tonal, dynamic and rhythmic standpoints	●				●	●			160

CONTINUED

Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTS/BACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(€)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTS/BACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Cambridge Pacific	30	Lacks subtlety and bass impact but is otherwise quite serviceable for the price				●		●		2167	176
Cambridge Audio Studio Ref	40	Dynamic cable with strong soundstaging and only a slight lack of detail				●		●			160
Chord Company Cobra 2	50	Good, strong sound with full-bodied music, less happy with smaller forces						●		2167	176
Connections Midas HD	39	Canary yellow cable with excellent plugs and an open sound. Slight treble glare			●			●			160
DNM TCC75	34	Price for 0.75m. High resolution cable, but best in short runs due to higher than average series impedance						●	●	1690	131
DPA Slink	41	Slightly bright and zingy with flat soundstaging and hollow bass, though vocals and strings sound convincing	●			●				1690	131
DPA White Slink	75	Bass recedes as the music gets complex; midrange and treble better with quite good detail and imaging						●	●	2168	176
DPA Black Slink	245	Initially dark and meaty but after running in, it's lucid and transparent. Quad geometry, Gore-Tex dielectric	●					●	●	1691	131
Goertz M1 Interconnect	145	Soft sound lacking in bite, with excessive and plummy bass (NB sample used in review was only 0.5m)	●					●	●	2168	176
Insert Audio IC100 MkII	47	Mostly good sound is let down by pervasive dryness						●	●	2169	176
Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble					●	●	●	1692	131
Ixos Gamma 1002	39	Lumpy bass, grainy treble, and poor integration. Nice colour, though	●					●	●	2169	176
Ixos 103	45	Even-handed and generous sound, bass has a well-rounded, bouncy quality					●	●	●	1692	131
Ixos 102	60	A bit bright and undynamic, this cable is nevertheless a good all-rounder, whose faults are largely subtractive					●	●	●		160
Ixos 101	100	A cable with personality: its veiled and shut in quality bring an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike					●	●	●	1693	131
Kimber Hero	110	Slight roughness detracts from some music; seems well suited to rock and jazz. Lively and detailed	●				●	●	●	2170	176
Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy	●				●	●	●		108
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed, but there's a sense of distance between music and listener: vocals are coarse rather than liquid	●				●	●	●		108
Nordost Black Knight	60	Flat black cable that is distinctive but slightly coloured – but not in a wholly negative manner	●					●	●		160
Nordost Blue Heaven	145	Very good bass and only slightly grainy treble add up to a well integrated, natural-sounding cable	●					●	●		176
Prowire Silver	60	A good cable in every way, with just the occasional hint of coloration and coarseness					●		●	2171	176
PAD Elementa	145	A fat, heavy and frankly rather lazy-sounding cable; best with music for small forces	●					●	●	2171	176
QED Qnect 2	30	Very well balanced, refined and detailed, this is everything a good cable should be, and excellent value						●	●	2172	176
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight				●		●	●		160
SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. We're unsure about the flesh-coloured finish though...	●					●	●		160
Sonic Link Black	49	Nickel-plated copper with a slight dryness in the bass and a hint of treble roll-off don't compromise integration	●					●	●	2172	176
Straight Wire Chorus	40	A very confident cable with good bass, though perhaps a shade of treble loss					●	●	●	2173	176
van den Hul The Storm	25	Price for 0.8m. Rich and warm but bass is rolled off: however there's plenty of drive and top end is clean				●		●	●	1701	131
van den Hul Source HB	50	Price for 0.8m. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness					●	●	●		160
van den Hul D102 MkIII	70	A cable with everything; good bass, treble, imaging and naturalness						●	●	2173	176
van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of informatio					●	●		1702	131
van den Hul The Second	240	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											
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear-cut transparency				●	●			E	108
Chord Codac	36	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration				●	●			E	108
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	Sound is lacklustre								O	108
DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impressive 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				●		●	●	E	1707 131
Kimber Kable Opti-link	50	Appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet sounds a little brighter and livelier than most								O	108
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive				●	●	●	●	E	108
QED DigiFlex	20	A top performance, low-loss 75 Ohm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality					●	●	●	E	108
Siltech HF-6	145	Sounds detailed, very clean and extended, but bass is less well resolved – a treat for high-end systems	●				●	●		E	1709 131
SonicLink Green	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a bit over-crisp at times – very compelling, however				●		●	●	E	1709 131
van den Hul The First	125	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly cautious compared to some. Plenty of subtle information and integration					●	●		E	1710 131
LOUDSPEAKER CABLES											
ALR Jordan QMM	5	Generally neutral, if sometimes bass-shy, but not very communicative				●		●			183
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that are twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward						●	●		109
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	150	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●					●	●		109
Audioquest F-14	2.2	Ideal for laying under carpets. F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound						●	●		109



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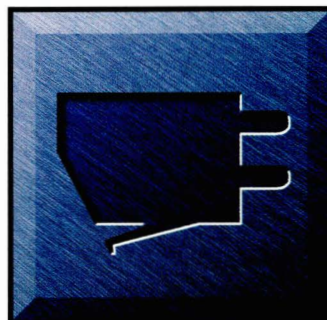
Cables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

SYMMETRICAL COAXIAL STRANDED SOLID CORE COPPER SILVER DIG CABLE TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIG CABLE TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Audioquest Type 4	5	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains 'bite'	●				●	●			109
Audioquest Type 6	9	A very inflexible cable in which the sonic ends don't quite justify the means	●				●	●			183
Audioquest Crystal	25	Neutral balance is spoiled by some graininess and smearing	●				●	●			168
Bandridge LC7409	4	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings					●	●		1800	157
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25	Quite well-balanced but tends to lose bass lines in complex music			●		●	●			168
Cable Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained					●	●		1800	157
DNM LSC350	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension	●				●	●			168
DNM LSC8500	12	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire					●	●		1716	133
DPA Black Sixteen	100	Unflappable resolution of musical details. No dampening of dynamics, simply oodles of taut information	●				●	●	●	1717	133
Gale XL189	1	Slightly bright and not too subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system			●		●	●			168
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. Can be slightly manipulative					●	●		1800	157
Goertz M2	32	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility			●		●	●			168
Heybrook Heywire	3.5	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven					●	●			109
Hitachi LC-OFc	7	Very crisp, very clear and very confident. In the right system would be very expensive to better	●				●	●			109
Kimber 4TC	19.6	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas	●				●	●			168
Kimber 4VS	9	A good mix of virtues including particularly fine bass	●				●	●			183
Linn K20	4	Seems to work best with lively, unobtrusive music - can be dry and edgy	●				●	●			183
Naim NACA 5	5.5	A 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems, where it works a treat					●	●			109
Nordost Octava	3	Fair bass but confused treble and some coloration	●				●	●			168
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey-sounding - strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance. A bit bass-shy, too					●	●			133
Ortofon SPK200	4.99	Good strong bass and fair detail, only slightly marred by a little dryness	●				●	●			183
Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric, with robust, full-blooded bass - if slightly bright at times					●	●			133
Precious Metals SL102	10	Unusual construction gives rather strained sound, only really cheering up with simple musical textures	●				●	●			183
Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound - but too messy and bloated for its own good	●				●	●			183
Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design; shame about the sound quality	●				●	●		1800	157
QED Qudos	2.25	Despite high-tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, its music-making failed to gel					●	●		1800	157
QED Profile 4x4	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding					●	●			168
QED Qudos Silver	5	Basic figure-8 cable adds value with silver plating, to generally smooth and detailed effect	●				●	●			183
Silver Sounds 12 gauge	15	Basic 'homemade' construction gives fairly neutral sound. Price not outstandingly competitive	●				●	●			168
Sonic Link S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●				●	●			168
SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced					●	●		1800	157
SonicLink AST150	3.95	Slightly plummy bass and a useful way of holding musical strands together					●	●		1800	157
StraightWire Quartet	8	A good all-rounder with full tone, clear detail and natural ambience			●		●	●			183
Supra Ply 3.4	6.95	Clean sound which stays together well at high levels, with full bass - perhaps a touch of treble restriction	●				●	●			183
Tara Labs Klara	2.95	A good budget cable with an even spread of virtues - and very minor vices - across the board	●				●	●			183
van den Gold Water	7	Bass becomes shy when there's a lot happening, and detail could be clearer	●				●	●			183
van den Hul The Clearwater	7	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky-sounding cable					●	●			109
van den Hul The Magnum	38	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twin-lead cable, Magnum sounds soft and old-fashioned					●	●			109
van den Hul The Wind	40	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!					●	●			109
van den Hul Revolution	76	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 - a hint of congestion at frequency extremes					●	●		1726	133
XLO Pro 600	16.60	Basically neutral tonality but can become aggressive and two-dimensional	●				●	●			168



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs and generally more expensive low- and very-low-output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono-input-equipped valve amps need a transformer to cope with MC cartridges. ■ Even basic high-output MM cartridge designs will benefit from a customised amplifier input load. Consult your dealer for further details on this topic.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MM:** Moving-magnet cartridge with a normal output, suitable for all amplifier phono inputs
 - **MC:** Moving-coil cartridge with a low output, only suitable for high-sensitivity MC amplifier phono inputs
 - **REPLACEABLE STYLUS:** Most MM cartridges have a stylus (needle) that can be removed and replaced when worn out
 - **OUTPUT (mV):** Cartridge output in millivolts
 - **MASS (g):** The mass of your chosen cartridge
- affects the choice of partnering tonarm. Consult dealers or manufacturers to establish which arms and pickups work well together.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback ad on the penultimate page of the mag.
 - **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.
- Hi:** High End Review

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Cartridges

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

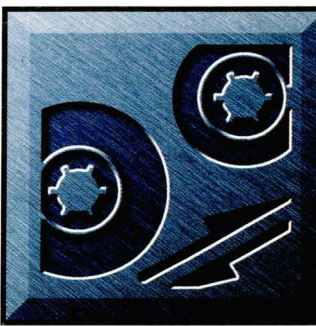
REPLACEABLE STYLUS MM MC OUTPUT (mV) MASS (g) FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	MM	MC	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Audio Technica AT-95E	20	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced	●			2.8			48
Clearaudio Signature	1,495	A great all-round performer with fine dynamic vitality and a seductive midband intimacy			●	0.55	11.5	2142	175
Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well			●	1.0	6		48
Denon DL160	90	Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'			●	0.1	6		43
Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life'. Is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail			●	0.1	6		103
Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether, and a bargain at the price			●				103
Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	450	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent			●	0.15	5.3		158

CONTINUED

Cartridges

STATUS	PRODUCT	PRICE (£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				REPLACEABLE STYLUS	MM	MC	OUTPUT (mV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
A	Dynavector Te-Kaitora	1,698	A real smoothie, but pricey. Worth checking out for its delicate laid-back transparency and low needle-talk	●			0.25	8.5	2142	175
A	Dynavector XX-1L	998	Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm	●			0.25	12		84
A	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
A	Goldring Elan	19	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●			5.0	7		67
A	Goldring 1012GX	79	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency colouration apparent	●			6.5	7		85
A	Goldring 1022GX	99	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●			6.5	7		85
A	Goldring Eroica LX	110	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative	●			0.5	8		84
A	Goldring 1042	120	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively, though	●			6.5	6		91
A	Goldring Elite	220	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound is not the cleanest	●			0.5	8		103
A	Goldring Excel VX	525	Good bass drive but dull and imprecise higher up. An old-fashioned sound that falls short of the true high end	●			0.45	8	2143	175
A	Grado Prestige Gold	149	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●			4	6		158
A	Grado Reference	995	Loads of tracking headroom but treble is limited. A prospect for mid-oriented valve amp users	●			1.7	6.5	2143	175
A	Linn K9	125	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus	●			4.5	5		Col
A	London Decca Maroon	259	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconic as ever	●			5.0	6		67
A	London Decca S Gold	399	Immediate and detailed, but coloured and nonlinear, with a questionable effect on records	●			5.0	6		84
A	Lyra Lydian	649	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed	●			0.3	7		158
A	Lyra Clavis Da Capo	995	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard	●			0.1	7		143
A	Lyra Parnassus D.C.t	1,895	A real little jewel of a cartridge, with many good qualities, but handicapped by a rather too obvious treble peak	●			0.22	10.5	2144	175
A	Ortofon 510/P	38	For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality	●			3.0	5		85
A	Ortofon 520/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, but the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound	●			3.0	5		67
A	Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but subtle – take it as it comes!	●			3.3	4		103
A	Ortofon MC15 Super II	130	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and close up	●			0.35	7		103
A	Ortofon MC25E	180	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable	●			0.5	11		139
A	Ortofon MC25FL	250	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP	●			0.5	11		139
A	Ortofon MC30 Supreme	525	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings	●			0.5	10.7		158
A	Ortofon Rohmann	1,000	A class act in nearly every respect, with fine groove security and a very smooth and even-handed sound	●			0.25	8.5	2144	175
A	Ortofon MC3000II	1,100	A real ear-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere – one of the very best	●			0.12	10		84
A	Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo	●			0.12	10		91
A	Rega Bias	39	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow body, but the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound	●			5	4		67
A	Rega Elys	85	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is more detailed, accurate and convincing	●			5.0	5		67
A	Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but smoother and more civilised	●			6.5	5		91
A	van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●			5.5	6		103
A	van den Hul DDT-II	600	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing, but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy	●			0.35	7.6		158
A	van den Hul MC-10	750	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●			0.4	6		60
A	van den Hul MC-One	900	This extends all the positive qualities of the 10, but adds greater authority and scale – worth all the extra money	●			0.4	6		60
A	van den Hul MC-Two	1,200	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal	●			0.4	6		72
A	van den Hul Frog	1,500	Seems to control/suppress surface noise better than its rivals. This delicate and subtle performer has great charm	●			0.65	7	2145	175
A	van den Hul G' hopper III GLA	2,800	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available. It has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse	●			0.4	6		122
A	Wilson benesch Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive	●			0.58	6		158
A	Wilson benesch Carbon	1,573	Carbon fibre body contributes to a delightfully clean and open midrange, and a quick, lively and coherent sound	●			0.45	7	2145	175



Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Cassette decks hook up to the 'tape loop' inputs and outputs offered by most modern amplifiers. It's worth taking care to choose the best tapes for a specific machine. For example, expensive metal tapes will be a wasted investment for a cheap deck. Many better-specified decks have manual or automatic bias adjustment to get the best from specific samples of tape. Twin decks offer the possibility of copying from tape to tape, playing two cassettes sequentially or recording onto two tapes at once. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but uni-directional mechanisms promise better sound. Dolby S is the ultimate noise reduction system, and three-head decks permit record monitoring off-tape.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **DOLBY B/C:** The first and second Dolby hiss-killers.
- **DOLBY S:** A desirable derivative of Dolby SR professional noise-reduction.
- **DOLBY HX-PRO:** Extends headroom for cassette recording.
- **3-HEAD:** Permits monitoring off-tape while you're recording.
- **TWIN DECK:** Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play.
- **AUTOREVERSE:** Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.
- **AUTO CALIBRATION:** The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.
- **ADJUSTABLE BIAS:** Permits manual optimisation of tape.

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ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

H: High End Review

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Cassette Decks

STATUS	PRODUCT	PRICE (£)	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS								
				DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY HX-PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
A	Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed deck. Astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●			●				1513	136
A	Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin for those who want bells, whistles – and music	●			●		●		1377	146
A	Denon DRM-550	160	There are some technical limitations, but this remains a fine-sounding deck, and excellent value	●			●					158
A	Denon DRW-580	200	Twin deck: OK for casual use, but will quickly pall with more quality critical applications	●			●		●			171
A	Denon DRS-640	200	Draw-loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well-adjusted sound	●			●		●		1591	140
A	Denon DRM-650S	230	An improvement on predecessors, it offers a wide-ranging, sound. Dolby S is not the best feature	●		●				●	1920	164
A	Denon DRM-740	270	Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment, offers good, if somewhat detached sonics	●			●		●		1514	136
A	Denon DRS-810	310	Draw-loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition	●			●		●			127
A	Harman/Kardon TD420	250	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well-conceived, minimum features design	●			●		●		1592	140
A	Harman/Kardon TD450	350	Draw loader with poor tape navigation features; good midband but shallow bass	●			●		●		1920	164

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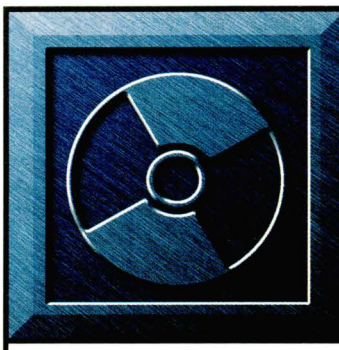
Cassette Decks

STATUS

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

DOLBY C DOLBY S DOLBY BX PRO 3-HEAD TWIN DECK AUTO REVERSE AUTO CALIBRATION ADJUSTABLE BIAS FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	DOLBY C	DOLBY S	DOLBY BX PRO	3-HEAD	TWIN DECK	AUTO REVERSE	AUTO CALIBRATION	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	
JVC TD-V62BK	270	Assured, clean and agile-sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1380	146
JVC TD-W718	300	Twin deck. Good for creative live recording, but no timer standby. Respectable performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2039	171
Kenwood KX-W6080	200	Modestly decent-sounding twin deck, with some transport instability and ragged bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2040	171
Marantz SD455	170	Works well as a single deck, especially on replay, but dubbing at high/low speed compromises sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		184
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
NAD 616	300	Twin deck with basic features. No Dolby setting memory, transport is too unstable for audiophile use	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2041	171
Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer-loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146
Pioneer CT-S550S	250	Great features, good with cheap low bias tapes, but slightly synthetic sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
Pioneer CT-W806DR	300	Had it not been for the iffy transport quality, this sophisticated twin would have been Recommended	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2042	171
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 sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
Teac V01050	180	One of the cheapest 3-head machines around, but it shows in very 'thick' sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		184
Technics RS-AZ6	200	For those who can't afford the RS-AZ7, clarity over the widest bandwidth thanks to AZ thin-film head	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1920	164
Technics RS-AZ7	270	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in state-of-the-art	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
Yamaha KX-490	200	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		158
Yamaha KX-580SE	250	Subtle, engaging and transparent deck, with a lightweight tonality, but stability and strong detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2043	171



CD/DVD Players

All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see below). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical type. The former is preferable for the ultimate sound. A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which converts the disc's digital bitstream into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue convertor, or DAC. Although most players are contained within a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs. The first new DVD players have not excelled with CD software.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.
- AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT:** Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT:** For optical connection to an outboard DAC.
- ST OPT DIG OUTPUT:** High-speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.
- BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT:** Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.
- HEADPHONE SOCKET:** For 'can' users.
- VARIABLE OUTPUT:** Remotely adjustable output level (usually non-audiophile).
- MULTI-DISC:** Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.
- DAC TYPE:** BS - Philips Bitstream; MB - multibit; Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies; 1bit - single bit types eg MASH, bitstream, PWM, etc; CC - constant calibration.
- FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full information, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the magazine.
- ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared. Factsback information page.

High End Review

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CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT OPTICAL DIG OUTPUT ST OPT DIG OUTPUT BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT HEADPHONE SOCKET VARIABLE OUTPUT MULTI-DISC DAC TYPE FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPTICAL DIG OUTPUT	ST OPT DIG OUTPUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Acurus ACD11	899	First-rate if costly player, which combines a delightful transparency with an uncontrived naturalness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1962	166
Acoustic Precision Eikos	1,850	Seriously customised Pioneer with extraordinary resolution and world beating imaging and bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit		165
Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb		169
AMC CD8A	150	Has balanced output, but is otherwise rather grey and unremarkable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	2071	172
AMC CD9/DAC8	200	Beer-budget two-box system (player + DAC) is smooth, attractive and easy on the ear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	CC	2261	179
Anthem CD1	1,595	Unusual combination of high-end player, complete with HDCD, and changer. Good, but noisy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2219	178
Arcam Alpha 7	330	Mildly rehashed favourite comes up smelling of roses	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1872	179
Arcam Alpha MCD	450	Excellent bass and natural midband, but just a touch of treble dryness, from this very listenable changer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2220	178
Arcam Alpha 8	520	Refined, intricately detailed but a little cautious. Should be broadly compatible with a variety of amps	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1873	163
Arcam 8SE	600	Excellent (and very reasonably priced) HDCD-compatible player is a strong all-rounder	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1-bit		176
Arcam Alpha 9	800	Looks like other Arcam CD players, but sounds compressed and lacking in detail	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Ring DAC		184
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1875	163
AVI S2000MC2	899	A chip off the old block. This model's in-er-face balance obstructs an otherwise finely detailed sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2179	176
AVI S2000MC Reference	1,399	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us. A fine performer in a sympathetic system	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB		169
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and 'em sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1268	147
Cambridge Audio CD4SE	200	Among the best encountered at the price, considerably more refined and convincing than the CD4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1877	163
Cambridge Audio CD6	250	A sharp, articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS		159
Copland CDA-266	1,199	Simple yet elegant design is unexpectedly sophisticated under the skin, and effective in execution	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2183	176
Copland CDA-288	2,199	A gentle giant of a player that errs in favour of pastel shades rather than bold daubs of colour	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1880	163
Cymbol CDP12	1,299	Clean, detailed and airy HDCD-equipped player with minimalist trappings	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hybrid	2184	176
Denon DCD-635	180	Modest presentation gives little clue to the thoroughbred electronics ticking away inside	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2075	172
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1269	147
Denon DCD-835	280	Refined version of Denon's multibit technology is a bit of a star	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB		184
Denon DCD-1550AR	350	Disappointing bland and ploddy sound from an immaculately constructed, high tech player	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2266	179
Denon DCD-1015	350	Excellent, mid-range player - fast, fluid and lean	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1599	141
Denon DCD-3000	1,000	Sings with the temperament of a huge orchestra under the baton of a timid conductor	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1881	163
harman/kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is amplifier fussy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit		159
harman/kardon HD730	300	Competitive at the price, with a coloured but dynamic and outgoing sound, good features	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1957	166
harman/kardon FL8300	300	Generally capable changer with relaxed sound and firm bass. Just a hint of roughness on occasion	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	2220	178

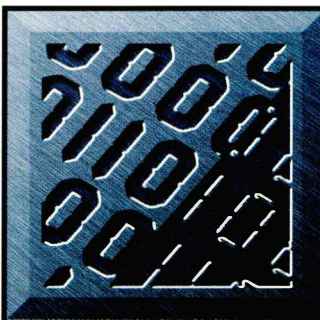
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CD/DVD Players

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	ST OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE DIG OUT	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Technics SL-PG480A	130	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unobtrusive, slightly harsh top end								1bit	159
Technics SL-PS670D	200	Fine, middle ranking player which sounds solid, sometimes even a little stolid								1 bit	2264 179
Technics SL-PS770D	250	High tech and well built technology battleship which smoothes the rough edges off the music								BS	2080 172
Technics SL-MC410	250	If you fancy a CD player that holds 111 discs, this one's cheap, pretty capable, and easy to use								Hyb	2224 178
Trichord Genesis	549	Breathed-on Pioneer is warm and mellifluous, but ultimately lacks drive and authority								Hyb	169
Trichord Revelation	799	Well-ordered and clean sound that may be a little too refined for some, images well								1bit	1966 166
XTC CDP-1	1,250	Bright and sometimes abrasive, but detailed player								MB	2186 176
Wadia W830	3000	Envelope busting dynamics, power and imaging in a rather unexciting box (digital volume control)								MB	183
Yamaha CDC-665	220	This player offers many features and highly listenable sound, with tidy and tuneful bass and good imaging								1bit	2225 178
Yamaha CD-X993	400	A bit of a lush, though the sound is singularly free of grain, and equipment levels are strong								BS	184
TRANSPORTS											
Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing								-	1323 144
PS Audio Lambda	2,250	With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail								-	1106 133
Roksan Attessa ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of sounding exciting with the right material								1bit	1867 162
Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound (tested with D-T1)								-	1325 144
Theta Data Basic II	2,397	Uses a Philips CDM9 Pro mechanism and works a treat with more lively DACs								-	1494 130
Thorens TCD2000	999	Lively presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble. (Tested with TDA 2000 DAC)								-	1867 162
Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer								-	1867 162
Wadia 8	3,195	Budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; too expensive for the performance on offer								-	1495 130
DACS											
Audio Note DAC1	675	Oddball DAC with manual de-emphasis switch. Needs a high preamp input impedance or bass will suffer								MB	127
Linn Numerik	1,500	A new 20-bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a bit dry and humourless								MB	1323 144
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590	The sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail. (Tested with Lambda transport)								MB	1106 133
PS Audio Reference Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics								MB	1069 132
Roksan Attessa ATT-DA2/DS5	1,145	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material								1bit	1867 162
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
Thorens TDA2000	700	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble								BS	1867 162
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer. Switchable phase, dither etc								Hyb	1867 162
DVD PLAYERS											
Denon DVD-3000	700	Enjoyable rather than analytical, includes 24/96 and AC-3/MPEG-2 Audio								BS	180
Micromega Premium DVD	1,500	Unique lack of regional coding constrictions but both DVD and CD replay are compromised								BS	183
Panasonic DVD-A350	700	24/96 converter and AC-3 & MPEG-2 Audio included, well balanced, if slightly blurred and shut in								BS	180
Pioneer DV-505	450	Plenty of analysis, with a slightly ragged edge. Rescued by the price & S/PDIF capabilities								BS	180
Pioneer DVL-909	900	DVD and LD player: self-recommending to AV nuts; musically detailed but occasionally seems disjointed								BS	180
Sony DVP-S715	600	24/96 converter for DAD compatibility, sharp, forward, but slightly unobtrusive sound								BS	180
Toshiba SD3107B	550	Dynamic sound and good stereo which lacks lowest stratum of detail								BS	180



Digital Recorders

Domestic digital recording has been possible since the launch of digital audio tape (DAT) in the '80s. Since then DAT has remained expensive and largely esoteric, favoured only by well-heeled or professional users. Digital Compact Cassette and MiniDisc (MD) were launched in the early '90s but only MD has stayed the course. A little later came domestic CD-Recorders using CD-R discs, while the latest twist is the arrival of rerecordable CDs known as CD-RW discs. The recording quality hierarchy is as follows: DAT, CD-R/CD-RW, MD. MD is probably the most convenient to use, and offers sophisticated editing facilities, while CD-R is ideal for making digital 'dones' of prerecorded CDs. DAT is the medium of choice for high-quality location recording.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **FORMAT:** Type of recorder – see left for descriptions.
- **DAC TYPE:** Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream; MB - multibit; Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream; 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc.
- **ADC TYPE:** The analogue to digital converter (ADC) converts sound into digits during live recording. Types of ADC are as per DACs (qv).
- **PORTABLE:** Battery operable, but not necessarily personal-stereo-sized.
- **OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for optical cable.
- **ELEC IN/OUTPUTS:** Digital socketry for electrical cable.
- **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our faxed review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of the mag.
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- H:** High End Review

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Digital Recorders

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
MINIDISCS										
Denon DMD-1000	300	A good machine, but it still doesn't manage to shake off the MiniDisc plague of losing the listener's interest	MB	BS	N					184
Denon DMD-1300	500	Sound sometimes lacks integration but tonal balance is good and it handles loud music with panache	MD	BS	BS				2193	177
Kenwood DM-9090	550	Slight sibilance and image vagueness do not detract from excellent balance and solid bass	MD	BS	BS				2194	177
Onkyo MD-121	450	Mid-sized deck that sounds slightly coloured at times, though immediate and lively	MD	BS	BS				2195	177
Sharp MDR3H	300	Nifty machine combining a 3-disc CD changer with a MD recorder. Sound on both is rather below par, though	BS	BS	N					184
Sharp MD-R2	300	Budget recorder that loses little or nothing in comparisons with much more expensive models – highly capable	MD	BS	BS				2196	177
Sony MDS-JB920	300	One of the better MD decks, its sound is neutral and dynamic. European Audio Recorder of the Year '98-'99	BS	BS	N					184
CD RECORDERS										
Philips CDR-880	499	Capable of making perfect copies of CD digital, and very acceptable copies of anything analogue too	BS	BS	N					184
Pioneer PDR-555RW	480	Competitor to Philips' CDR880; it can't make perfect copies but has the edge in replay and analogue record sound	BS	BS	N					184
Pioneer PDR-04	700	Scaled down version of the PDR-05 with auto level setting but all the socketry and features you need to make CDs	CD-R	BS	BS					171
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000	The first domestic CD-R deck – excellent sound quality	CD-R	BS	BS				1652	152



Headphones

There are several different ways of making a headphone. The most expensive models employ electrostatically-driven diaphragms within an open-backed earcup. Most mid-price designs feature dynamic, moving-coil-driven diaphragms in open, semi-open or closed-back designs. An open-backed headphone can sound remarkably transparent, but also permits the ingress of external noise. Closed-back designs keep out unwanted sound, but may be less comfortable to wear and more coloured. The latest development is the cordless headphone using either infrared light or, more recently, radio waves. Quality is improving, but has yet to match the best corded designs.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **TYPE:** Operating principle: D - dynamic; E - electrostatic
- **SUPRA-AURAL:** Where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.
- **CIRCUM-AURAL:** Where the earcup encloses the ear.
- **OPEN BACK:** Offers an open sound but lets in noise.
- **CLOSED BACK:** Keeps out external noise.
- **MASS (g):** Mass in grams
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Load offered to the headphone amplifier. Many headphones offer a significantly higher value than loudspeakers, for example, but this does not mean they will be incompatible with the majority of amplifiers.
- **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR:** Compatible with mini-jacked components, eg personal stereos.
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Headphones

SPECIFICATIONS

STATUS: **SUPRA-AURAL TYPE**, **CIRCUM-AURAL**, **OPEN BACK**, **CLOSED BACK**, **IMPEDANCE (Ω)**, **MASS (g)**, **3.5mm JACK ADAPTER**, **FACTSBACK NO.**, **ISSUE NUMBER**

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS										
AKG K1000	700	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs	D	●	●	●	270	120				99
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	80	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found	D	●			280	40				55
Beyer DT100	160	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	D		●	●	350	600				157
Beyer DT311	50	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone	D	●		●	124	40	●	1098		133
Beyer DT411	63	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price	D	●		●	120	250				111
Beyer DT511	106	Superb midband clarity and speed slightly at odds with soft bass. High tingle factor, even so	D		●	●	200	250			2063	172
Beyer DT531	135	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D		●	●	245	250				144
Beyer DT911	170	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps: these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans	D		●	●	275	250				111
Denon AH-D550	80	A competent 'phone with integrity, but little panache or charisma. Hard headband causes brain strain	D		●	●	200	35	●	1801		157
Denon AH-D750	130	Loud and gutsy, meaty bass, good with rock and dance. Can sound thick and clumsy	D		●	●	250	30	●	2063		172
Grado SR-40	45	Cheap and nasty appearance largely redeemed by cheerful, up-beat sound. Very comfortable	D	●		●	120	32	●	2064		172
Grado SR-80	100	Open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes	D	●		●	60	8	●	1801		157
Grado SR-225	200	Warm, darkly-coloured tonally and ultimately lacking in clarity, but true to the spirit of the music	D	●		●	200	32		1883		163
Jecklin Float Model 1	79	While very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness	D		●	●	400	200				55
Jecklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in the long term, despite lack of adjustment	D		●	●	400	200				63
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations	D	●		●	220	32	●			121
JVC HA-W60	49	Remarkable lack of interference and hiss ameliorates adequate sound of this cordless design	D	●		●	165	1/R	●			172
Precide Ergo Model 2	140	Still has much of the spaciousness of the Float from which it is derived, but coarse mid/top	D			●	380	100		1892		163
Philips SBC 3396	70	Remarkably airy for closed-back designs. Fine tonal balance, punchy delivery. Amazing for money	D		●	●	255	32	●	2064		172
Philips SBC HP900	90	Sharper, snappier midrange than 3396: initially impressive but blows it on balance and listenability	D		●	●	200	32	●	2065		172
Sennheiser IS 380	55	As close as you'll get to real hi-fi with infra-red phones at this price. Inevitable hiss spoils the illusion	D	●		●	192	1/R	●			172
Sennheiser HD 455	55	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound; modular, but can become dislodged from head	D	●		●	185	60	●	1801		157
Sennheiser HD 475	80	Elegant, uncluttered sound and very comfortable but lean bass saps satisfaction	D	●		●	120	60	●	2065		172
Sennheiser HD 545	125	Fine all-rounder that takes all styles of music in its stride. Ear-clamping headband	D		●	●	255	150	●	2066		172
Sennheiser HD 565 Ovation	150	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable	D		●	●	255	150	●	1801		157
Sennheiser HE 60/HEV70/UK	998	Very nearly a superb electrostatic, with a pure midband, but top end is sibilant and edgy	E		●	●	260	n/a				1898
Sony MDR-CD770	100	Neutrality and comfort make the Sony easy to live with. Correct-sounding too, yet musically unrewarding	D		●	●	-	-	●	1801		157
Sony MDR-CD1700	200	Astonishingly detailed, uncoloured and free of the usual artefacts from a sealed back headphone	D		●	●	325	32	●	1901		163
Sony MDR-F1	100	Natural, easy-going sound teamed with great looks and comfort. Shame about the lightweight bass	D		●	●	300	12	●	2066		172
Technics RP-DJ1200	130	Functional design with head-pulping bass and muggy tonal balance. Good job they're sweat-proof	D	●		●	230	32	●	2067		172
Stax Lambda Nova Basic	449	Refined, articulate, yet with real presence - and a notable bargain by electrostatic standards	E		●	●	347	n/a		1902		163
Vivanco IR5800	50	Consistently musical infra-red design. Doesn't reach for sonic heights so hiss can be forgiven	D	●		1/2	226	1/R	●			172
Vivanco SR650	50	Unusually comfortable 'phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive	D	●		●	175	-	●	1801		157
Vivanco SR750	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics	D	●		●	188	-	●	1801		157
Vivanco Cyberwave FMH3000	80	The only cordless 'phone to offer genuine walkabout freedom, but sounds like a cheap FM tuner	D	●		●	210	FM	●			172



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Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

As the last link in the hi-fi chain, loudspeakers are at the mercy of incoming signals. Nevertheless, distortions introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be the most obvious. The average loudspeaker comprises an enclosure containing two drive units. Inside the box, a simple electrical circuit (the crossover or dividing network) splits the incoming, full-frequency-range signal into the right portions for specific drive units to handle: highs to the 'tweeter', lows to the 'woofer'. For any given box size, designers must balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against bass extension (how low it goes). Subwoofers augment bass and are either passive (unamplified) or, preferably, active (self-amplified).

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **SIZE WxHxD (cm):** Width by height by depth in centimetres.
- **FLOORSTANDER:** Requires no stand support.
- **SENSITIVITY (dB/W):** How much sound results for a given electrical input — the higher the figure, the louder the speaker.
- **IMPEDANCE (Ω):** Impedance, measured in Ohms, indicates how much resistance the speaker presents to an amplifier. As impedance decreases, demands on an amplifier increase.
- **BASS FROM (Hz):** The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce effectively.
- **FREE SPACE:** Speakers which should not sit close to walls.
- **CLOSE TO WALL:** Speakers which should sit between 3 and 12cm from the rear wall.

● **FACTSBACK REFERENCE:** The Factsback Reference number permits direct access to our full review reprint service. For full info, see the Factsback advert on the penultimate page of this issue.

● **ISSUE NUMBER:** The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which an original review appeared.

Hi: High End Review

B BEST BUY **R RECOMMENDED** **E EDITOR'S CHOICE**

Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

- SIZE WxHxD (CM)
- FLOORSTANDER
- SENSITIVITY (dB/W)
- IMPEDANCE (Ω)
- BASS FROM (Hz)
- FREE SPACE
- CLOSE TO WALL
- FACTSBACK NO.
- ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(E)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Acoustic Energy AE200	250	Metal-cone miniature has a tendency to shout but is still lots of fun, and well built too	18,5,30,25		87	6	40			2199	177
Acoustic Energy AE109	350	Lots of mass-loaded twin-driver speaker for the money, especially for loud, driving bass	18,90,25		88	4	25			1904	164
Acoustic Energy AE120	500	Attractive presentation and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance	18,98,28		89	4	25			1904	170
ATC SCM20	1,599	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable	24,44,31		83	8	28				86
Audio Gem Emerald	540	Pretty compact floorstander with lively if lightweight sound	18,94,21		87	6	40			1905	164
Audio Note AN-J/B	799	Light damping and local unevenness add some coloration, but don't spoil the speaker	38,58,25		93	8	25				110
Audio Note AN-E/B	1,299	Coherent, dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity — but ugly!	36,84,28		94	8	20				106
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually-styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47		88	8	28			1344	143
Audiovector M2	1,399	High-class, smooth and slightly laid-back performer has driving bass. It's upgradeable, too!	20,102,30		89	4	22				180
AVI Positron	899	This 'mini-floorstander' is capable of great precision and delicacy, but in a rather small scale way	175,74,24.5		85	6	40			2130	174
B&W CDM2SE	400	Beautifully styled and finished, respectable midband. Lacks definition towards frequency extremes	22,32,25		87	6	40				183
B&W DMS02	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22		88	4	45			1778	156
B&W DM601	199	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	152
B&W DM305	350	Ridged paper cone gives lively sound, clever box, but a little uneven	22,87,31		89	4	40			1908	164
B&W DM603	500	Squat floorstander with decent dynamics and well-judged, restrained balance; bass could go deeper	23,5,88,29		89	7	45			2050	170
B&W CDM1SE	600	A great looking stand-mount with one of the best midbands around, and a subtle blend of other qualities	22,37,29		88	5	40			2209	177
B&W CDM7	1,000	A combination of serious welly and physical elegance; but a basic lack of midband smoothness	22,97,29		90	4	22			2151	174
B&W Matrix 805 V	1,095	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low coloration	33,33,21		87	8	30				98
B&W Matrix 804	1,695	A great all-rounder which combines exceptional bass extension with fine sensitivity	26,96,26		88	4	20			1985	167
B&W Nautilus 802	6000	Outstanding example of the high tech speaker builder's art	39,111,55		91	8	34				183
Cabasse Farella 400	950	Exciting but very upfront-and-in-her-face sound. High sensitivity, fine build and good dynamic drive	26,92,32		92	5	28				180
Castle Isis	250	A great miniature at a competitive price. Sound is lightweight but very coherent, with a fine overall balance	17,35,5,21		87	8	45			2019	170
Castle Kendal	500	A beautifully finished compact floorstander with a decidedly forward but communicative sound.	17,76,20		86	6	45			2204	177
Castle Severn 2	539	Carbon fibre cone gives lovely, subtle midband but treble is a bit dull and bass a bit thumpy	21,84,25		87	8	30			2120	174
Castle Avon	730	Lovely box and lovely voices from carbon-fibre composite cone	22,91,28		85	8	22			1909	164
Castle Harlech	880	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33		88	8	28			1820	160
Castle Howard S2	1,200	Ably fills the gap between Chester and Winchester; has a rich, laid-back balance	26,104,41		90	8	40			1078	132
Celestion 12i	119	Not without virtue, but the relentless enthusiasm and mid-band colourations can become wearing	19,31,21		88	6	45			2254	179
Celestion 23i	300	Cosmetically flawed, but the bottom end has fine get-up-and-go, and works well with dance tracks	24,86,27		89	6	30			2200	177
Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35		88	6	25			1910	164
Celestion A2	1500	Full scale, big sound from ultra-elegant floorstander. Smooth and slightly laid back presentation	24,93,39		89	6	22				180
Cerwin-Vega VS10	350	Not very refined but extremely ballsy; these rock boxes have no shortage of gung-ho	33,70,29		95	6	37			1758	155
Chario Syntar 100	249	Pretty with a pleasantly easygoing balance, but not the most communicative or exciting sound around	18,32,27		87	6	45			2020	170
Chario Academie	1650	Pricey Italian stand-mount, has high class sound and appearance. Solid walnut enclosures	25,40,31		84	8	40				180
Dali 606	400	A big bruiser at a tempting price. Sounds refined and polite, but also packs some punch	22,97,32		91	4	25			2121	174
Dynaudio Audience 5	400	Follows the Dynaudio tradition for fine midband transparency, but the overall timbre is a bit thin	20,31,26		85	4	40			2205	177
Dynaudio Audience 50	577	This stand-mount doesn't look big, but sound quality can match many models at twice the price	20,33,25		86	4	30			2122	174
Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,842	Wonderful voice-band delicacy and loads of deep bass from a very elegant and compact box	21,95,29		85	4	20			1986	167
Eltax Linear Response	249	A curiously dumpy shape, but smooth, laid-back performer is easy on the ears, with fine tonal accuracy	25,35,32		85	4	40			2201	177
Epos ES12	499	High quality luxury stand-mount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25		85	8	45			1823	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 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 2i	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27		88	7	40			2021	170
Genexa Pro	160	Terrific treble and upper-mid but coloured and cuppy lower-mid and bass. A mixture of genius and gro.	14,27,14		86	8	90			2255	179
GLL Imagio IC130	500	Lots of speaker for the money, but sound is decidedly dull and shut in	22,112,29		88	4	20			1824	160
Heybrook Prima 2	159	Great openness, speed and timing. Sounds fresh and vital, though sometimes lacks scale and weight	20,29,18		87	6	50			2256	179
Heybrook Heylette	269	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature has fine bass-to-mid integrity, but dull and shut-in top end	19,5,30,20		89	6	45			2026	170
Heybrook Heylios	389	Great all-round performance in a pretty package at a sharp price	24,36,27		87	6	25			1912	164
Heybrook Heylo	439	Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought	23,73,19		88	8	30			1658	152
Heybrook Quartet	649	Solid, large bookshelf model with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound	24,41,22		90	8	48				122
Heybrook Ultima	649	Has the bass wallop to justify its dual hi-fi/home cinema roles, but doesn't excite	22,97,29		89	6	45			2126	174
Heybrook Sextet	1,299	Coherent and highly analytical, partly due to distinct upper-mid forwardness	27,90,20		88	8	25				102
Heybrook Octet	1800	Good-looking but pricey floorstander with novel drivers and a fine ceramic-enclosure midband	24,97,31		90	6	25				180
Infinity Delta 60	700	Striking and massive floorstander, lots of speaker for the price, but seems a victim of its own complexity	16-29,115,41		90	4	25				183
Infinity Reference ii	150	Although not to our tastes, this is a competent speaker, and decent material value	20,34,20		89	6	50			1403	148

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Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE WxHxD (CM) SENSITIVITY (dB/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (Hz) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTS/RACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	FACTS/RACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
Jamo BX100A	350	Offering a cracking output for their size, these rock boxes can be a bit bright but have decent bass	31,5,4,28	91	8	40	●	●	1758	155
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom'n'tizz character sounded crude	22,90,29	●	90	4	28	●	1659	152
Jamo Cornet 195	350	Loads of bass, should have plenty of yooof-appeal – it looks the business, and is priced attractively	20,5,91,31	●	90	3	26	●		183
Jamo 477A	500	Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price	19,77,28	●	88	4	40	●	1549	138
Jamo 507A	700	Imaginative styling keeps the front view super slim yet still it packs a punch. Glass top is a nice touch	22,94,37	●	88	3	40	●	2126	174
JBL LX2	250	<i>Invigorating, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with considerable enthusiasm</i>	22,40,27	87	8	40	●	●	2022	170
JBL L20	700	Pricey, heavy and a bit laid back, but this is a fine rock'n'roller which is dynamic and communicative	26,42,28	86	8	30	●	●	1550	138
JBL SVA1500	700	A distinctive Pro-style bi-radial horn tweeter, with a fun sound, enlivened by a juicy bass thump	175,51,31	86	8	40	●	●	2127	174
JBL L40	1,000	Classic, large, stand-mount three-way is full of vim and vigour, with a superb sense of balance	30,65,31	88	4	23	●	●	1976	167
JBL SVA 2100	1250	Monstrously large and brutish styling, goes very loud as well as deep. Fine focus but some boxiness	37,114,52	●	91	8	<20	●		180
JBL L90	1,500	<i>A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a bit crude</i>	24,94,35	●	91	6	23	●	1348	143
JBL LX70	550	Bassmeister supreme, shame the rest doesn't match up. Fine sensitivity but an itchy scratchy treble	26,5,94,30	●	91	4	33	●		183
JM Lab Spectral 909.1	1,375	Multi-driver array in a large and very substantial enclosure. Good scale but lacks delicacy and sweetness	27,107,35	●	90	4	20	●		180
JM Lab Tantal 515	495	<i>Lively and open if bright. Sound is entertaining and informative, but presentation is nondescript</i>	20,94,26	●	92	5	32	●		183
Jordan Watts JH400	565	Piano-finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid	28,38,21	86	8	50	●	●		106
JPW Mini Monitor	60	<i>Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way</i>	18,27,17,5	86	8	50	●	●	1781	156
JPW Gold Monitor	80	<i>More informative than Mini Monitor – but fiercer too</i>	18,27,17,5	86	8	50	●	●	1782	156
JPW ML510	130	<i>Lots of good-quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components</i>	20,34,22	88	5	50	●	●		169
JPW ML710	230	Good material value but disappointingly uneven bass – check out the 510s instead	20,88,30	●	88	5	40	●	2202	177
JPW ML910	330	Loads of speaker for the money, plenty of headroom and loudness capability, but sounds dull	23,104,30	●	91	4	43	●		183
JPW ML1010	400	A seriously substantial speaker for the price, and an obvious choice for those who like their music loud	22,5,115,40	●	91	6	25	●	2031	170
JPW Ruby 1	400	Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good, if slightly edgy balance	19,32,21	87	6	55	●	●	1572	139
JPW Ruby 4	1,000	Twin metal-cone main drivers improve the dynamic performance and bass extension, with little sacrifice	22,94,26	●	88	8	25	●	2132	174
KEF Coda 7	129	<i>Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be tauter; build tougher</i>	18,30,23	88	6	50	●	●	1783	156
KEF Coda 8	189	<i>Outstandingly well-balanced, bass is deep but a little vague</i>	20,32,5,29	86	6	28	●	●	1784	156
KEF Coda 9	299	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●		1785
KEF RDM One	499	Cute and tiny, nice midband but lack of bass warmth and weight	23,30,24	88	6	70	●	●	1913	164
KEF Reference Model 2	1,599	Classy, large floorstander that has massive headroom and clean mid-to-treble, but limited deep bass	23,103,34	●	89	4	30	●	1987	167
Kelly KT2	700	<i>Chunky floorstander has tacky finish but whopping sensitivity and a very involving, (if characterful) sound</i>	23,89,34	●	94	4	33	●		183
Kelly KT3	1,200	<i>Super-high-sensitivity, hefty floorstander sacrifices smoothness for dynamic realism</i>	25,95,36	●	95	4	28	●	2133	174
Keswick Audio Aria II	379	<i>Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in</i>	21,42,24	89	8	20	●	●	1405	148
Keswick Audio Torino	999	Good value, lively contender with distinctive styling. Goes loud and deep but could be smoother	18-26, 93,28	●	90	4	20	●	1977	167
Linn Keilidh Passive	750	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive	20,83,28	●	87	4	22	●	1552	138
Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving	20,90,28	●	87	4	25	●		118
Living Voice Auditorium	1,500	<i>Pretty, compact floorstander has wonderful coherence, high sensitivity and fine dynamic integrity</i>	21,5,98,29	●	91	4	25	●		180
Magnat Vector 77	450	Tall, dark and a lot of speaker for the money. Beautiful balance, but lacking in subtlety and transparency	22,115,29	●	89	5	30	●		183
Magnat Vintage 720	1200	Slightly crude in some respects but lots of heart, fine scale, decent dynamic coherence and integrity	29,113,32	●	88	4	20	●		180
Mission 700	130	A lot of speaker for the money. Good bass weight and extension and goes loud with ease	18,34,26	87	8	40	●	●	2257	179
Mission 731 PRO	140	<i>Cautious balance makes a fine match with budget equipment. A classy baby for smaller rooms</i>	17,5,31,5,20	89	8	55	●	●		169
Mission 750LE	250	Fabulous cosmetics and a great midband carry the day, though size will out and bass is inevitably limited	17,28,27	86	7	45	●	●	2203	177
Mission 733i	330	New tweeter gives a more open sound; a good all-rounder that doesn't sound as big as it looks	20,5,88,30	●	88	8	45	●	2027	170
Mission 774	500	Gorgeous floorstander is an entertaining communicator, despite some balance oddities (bright treble)	18,95,31	●	90	4	40	●		183
Mission 752 Freedom	578	<i>A beautifully judged compromise in the art of combining presentation with a decent sound</i>	20,90,25	●	89	8	45	●	2123	174
Mission 753 Freedom	798	<i>Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics</i>	21,90,31	●	89	4	40	●	1914	164
Mission 754 Freedom 5	1,298	Tall but exceptionally elegant floorstander gives fine midband projection; goes loud but limited deep bass	22,111,31	●	88	4	40	●	1981	167
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	400	An exceptionally discreet floorstander; sonically uneven, but capable of fine results	16,91,21	●	88	5	30	●	2032	170
Monitor Audio Monitor 4	500	An oddball balance but an entertaining diaphram, and a good looking real-wood-box at a realistic price	20,87,24	●	84	6	23	●	2210	177
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	600	Good-looking luxury compact with all-metal diaphragms: lovely midrange, but occasionally edgy	22,35,26	87	8	45	●	●	1661	152
Monitor Audio 702PMC	700	A good all-round stand-mount with intimate midband focus	20,40,25	87	8	30	●	●	2128	174
Monitor Audio MA703 PMC	800	Lovely but pricey floorstander has up-front, coherent, 'shiny' sound	20,89,27	●	88	8	50	●	1826	160
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
Monitor Audio 705PMC	1400	Beautifully finished compact floorstander with fine midband coherence, but limited bass and top end	20,94,28	●	89	4	25	●		180
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	<i>Up front, bouncy and a whole lot of fun</i>	18,5,30,5,20	86	8	50	●	●	1789	156
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Slightly shut-in and coloured quality is offset by fine bass and impressive communication	25,43,28	90	8	28	●	●	1662	152
Musical Technology Kestrel SE	300	Brighter and drier-sounding than the standard Kestrel (and not the better for it)	20,84,19	●	84	5	50	●	1915	164
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
Musical Technology PMI15	450	<i>A subtle, understated but very involving example of the 'classic' luxury-finish compact standmount.</i>	20,41,27	88	5	38	●	●		183
Musical Technology Condor	1,000	Lots of clever ideas in a floorstander, which places transparency and smoothness ahead of dynamic drama	25,91,23	●	85	4	28	●	2134	174
Naim Intro	660	<i>Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth</i>	24,89,27	●	89	6	30	●	1916	164
Naim Credo	1,060	Involving sound, but rather forward and cold. Good clarity, but some coloration and a lack of richness	24,89,30	●	88	8	28	●		180
Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy – smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	●	88	6	25	●	1352	143
Neat Critique 2	445	Contemporary standmount has a clean, crisp sound with lovely natural midband voicing	22,32,24	86	6	50	●	●		183
Neat Mystique Mk2	575	<i>This elegant package delivers a fine overall sound quality; some might find the top end too insistent</i>	20,86,18	●	85	6	23	●	2211	177
Neat Petite II/Gravitas	2,000	Beautifully presented miniature/subwoofer combo with ribbon tweeter gives smooth, laid-back sound	23,105,40	●	85	6	25	●	1988	167
Origin Live Conqueror	1,650	Chunky floorstanding three-way has lovely cabinetwork and lively sound, but limited deep bass	24,94,27	●	88	8	30	●	1989	167
PMC TB15	430	<i>Pro-audio version of TB1</i>	20,41,30	87	6	40	●	●	2207	177
PMC TB1	482	<i>A classy, laid-back performer that likes going loud and loves the bass guitar</i>	20,40,31	87	8	45	●	●	1830	160
PMC LB1	935	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited	18,53,25	89	4	33	●	●		110
PMC AB1	1,496	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room	26,79,43	89	6	22	●	●		114
Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	●	89	8	25	●	1155	138
Polk RT16	799	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39	●	91	4	22	●	1831	160

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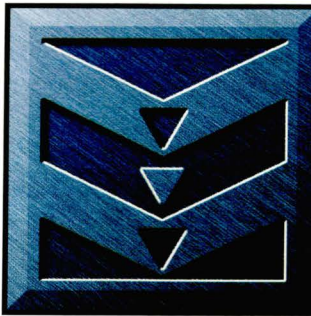
Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

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SIZE WxHxD (CM) FLOORSTANDER SENSITIVITY (db/W) IMPEDANCE (Ω) BASS FROM (HZ) FREE SPACE CLOSE TO WALL FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS														
Polk LS70	1,200	High sensitivity, but balance has too much midbass boom; mid-top is laid back													1084	132
Proac Response 2.5	2,700	For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good boxes, this speaker should be first port of call													1457	149
QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal stand-mount with heavy, laid-back balance but remarkably unboxy sound														167
Quad ESL-63	3,450	Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without														60
Rega Kyte	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative														114
Rega EL8	298	Kyte drivers in compact floorstander give more bass but less coherence														122
Rega ELA MK II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills													1578	139
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing													1083	132
Rehdeko RK 115a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic coherence														1982
Revolver Colt	139	A good all-rounder, if a little bland, and excellent value for money														1407
Revolver 250	250	A nice price for a floorstander, but over-bright sound balance has potentially fatiguing consequences														2023
RMS Revelation Series 1	1,299	Innovative metal-box compact with integral port/stand – clean with good timing but very laid-back balance														1983
Rogers GS1	179	Classy looking small box with equally classy, if slightly over cautious sound														2258
Rogers dB101	250	This shapely sub-miniature is fast and agile but lightweight and forward: great voices; lacks bass														2024
Rogers LS3/5A	699	Clever AB1 stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot														1354
Rogers C6/28	1,399	Large floorstander with carbon-fibre tweeter. Sounds better than it looks, especially through the midband														167
Roksan ROKone	595	Large stand-mount is musically very communicative if a little coloured														1834
Roksan QJan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance														1082
Roksan QJ3X Black	995	Innovative low-line, 2-way floorstander with decoupled tweeter; great bass and fine dynamic range														1979
Royd Minstrel	275	Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing; a bit bright														1167
Royd Doublet	485	Great value compact floorstander: lively and very informative, if a little uneven														1835
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Extremely musical and communicative speaker that's fun to listen to. Aesthetics could be better, though														139
Royd Abbot	695	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance														118
Ruark Epilogue	269	Beautifully finished miniature with a lively balance and plenty of charm; best suited to smaller rooms														183
Ruark Sceptre	599	'Traditional' cabinetwork with classy veneer and shiny gilt fixings, hampered by rather wayward sound balance														2129
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence														118
Ruark Crusader	1,599	Elegant luxury three-way with wonderfully even-handed, if rather laid-back balance														1990
Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to vanish behind the music														1227
SD Acoustics SD3R	649	SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature, good bass and low sensitivity														106
SD Acoustics SD5	1,549	Bass suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth. Has ribbon tweeter														1081
Sequence 400	329	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great														1917
Shahinian Arc	1,875	Occasionally wonderful, small, floorstanding omnidirectional design: bright but coherent and revealing														110
Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact: neutral if bright, tough work for amps														1918
Spendor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound														1836
System Audio 1130	499	Super-slim, super smooth, involving experience, but not ideal if you like your bass deep and loud														183
Tangent Monitor 5	80	An uneven performer best suited to small rooms and generous volume levels														169
Tangent Monitor 9	150	Budget floorstander that motors when the music demands, with a solid bass but occasionally raw treble														1926
Tannoy Mercury M1	120	Sounds much bigger and expensive than it is. Solid, tuneful bass, wide open soundstage, excellent imaging														2259
Tannoy Mercury M2	140	A fine all-rounder with big box and deep bass for the price; could be sweeter and tighter														169
Tannoy Mercury M3	230	Good-looking floorstander; very neutral and evenhanded, with fine midband but weak dynamics and drive														2025
Tannoy Precision P20	400	A creative and attractive design with time-aligned drivers, but the sound lacks sufficient excitement														2208
Tannoy D300	999	Gorgeous-looking compact floorstander. And a fine all-round performer, too!														167
Tannoy D500	1,999	Plenty of muscle and stereo, but short of poise and delicacy. Hard work for amps														1355
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600	These awesome horn-loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive														C93
TDL RTL3SE	450	A touch of boom'n'tizz might be to taste, but this is a lot of box for the money, with floor-shaking bass														2124
TDL CF100 Chiltern	450	Tiny but classy monitor has a laid-back balance, a fine midband and a surprising bass; but needs space														183
TDL CF200 Cotswold	650	Fine midband tonality and dynamic range, but less happy towards the bandwidth extremes														2212
TDL T-Line 3	700	Plenty of bass and treble, but broad midband is rather repressed														1921
Technics SB-M20	200	Well-balanced with natural perspectives and fine midband coherence, but bass is a bit boxy and uneven														1413
Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass, heavy balance and low sensitivity														1666
Totem Model One	1,195	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size														122
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness														86
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140	A good-hearted, lively and up-front performer that's a little lacking in subtlety and smoothness														169
Wharfedale Valdsus 400	200	Very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass														1414
Wharfedale Valdsus 500	300	These rock boxes can move plenty of air, albeit not as subtly as alternatives														1758
Wharfedale MFM-3	350	Smooth broad midband gives fine voice rendition; bass could be better														1922
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal-cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun														110
SUBWOOFERS																
Acoustic Energy AE108S	299	Lots of loud subwoofer for your money, though ultimately more film than music oriented														2247
B&W ASW1000	499	(Active) Very competently engineered all round, and goes (unnecessarily) very loud														2248
B&W AS6	500	(Active) Good material value with a fair amount of low bass from 100W design														1736
Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass for high sensitivity speakers														128
Jamo SW600	530	(Active) Has some neat styling touches and remote control, but deep bass is limited														1736
JPW SW60	349	A real heavyweight, sounds clean and transparent, if perhaps a little understated. Usefully flexible														2249
KEF Model 30B	499	(Active) Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension														1736
KEF AV1	2,499	(Active) Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky														128
M&K VX-7B	450	(Active) Baby of a big range; this active design delivers deep, plenteous bass but lacks transparency														1736
M&K MX70	900	(Active) Justifies cost and belies its diminutive size, with an agility that makes sense of the toughest material														2250
REL Q50	375	(Active) Genuinely deep, clean bass from an attractively compact and cost effective package														2251
Rogers AB1	549	Subwoofer-cum-stand designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures														1354



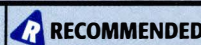
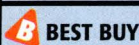
Stands & Supports

Hi-fi supports are more important than you might imagine – they can have very subtle effects on the sound of your system! There are two kinds of support: those for equipment and those (stands) for loudspeakers. Equipment supports keep vibrations and resonances from affecting electronic components, while speaker stands hold enclosures stock-still and ensure they are at the correct height for your ears. Equipment supports may be rigid affairs fabricated from steel or more exotic materials; or they may have a form of suspension. Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models, and vary between open-frame and solid-pillar types. Always check with speaker and electronics manufacturers to see which supports they recommend.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **HEIGHT (cm):** How tall is your support?
- **TOP PLATE SIZE (cm):** Dimensions of top surface on stand or equipment support.
- **FILLABLE:** Some speaker stands can be mass-loaded with sand or lead-shot to improve sound.
- **WELDED:** The better stands and supports are welded together rather than just bolted.
- **NUMBER OF SHELVES:** The number of tiers on an equipment rack or support.
- **SHELF TYPE:** The material from which shelves are made. Wood generally means Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF).
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H: High End Review



Stands & Supports

SPECIFICATIONS

TOP PLATE SIZE (cm)
HEIGHT
FILLABLE
WELDED
NUMBER OF SHELVES
SHELF TYPE
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT (E) COMMENTS

EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

Alphason GR 17/17-AS	275	Great looks but sound can be bettered at this price	36	60,39		4	Glass	181
Elemental Isotube x 4/Ref	1199	Blockbusting size and build. Super sound quality	92	45,49	●	4	Marb	181
Fi-Rax R4	399	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass				5	Glass	1633 151
Frameworks H500/H175	404	Two-shelf stand and isolation platform combo in tubular steel – made a spectacular impression on audition	70	52,34	●	3	Glass	1952 166
Ixos Deadrock 704	250	Looks unassuming but sound is full and inviting		46,39		4	Resin	181
Kudos Corinthian	599	True heavyweight that doesn't quite manage knockout sound	91	46,38		4	Wood	181
Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	King of its type: angle iron, chipboard and glass combine to make a significant difference to sound quality	56	49,39	●	1	Glass	147
Mana 5 Tier Sound Table	600	Infinitely upgradeable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle-iron design that adds speed and bandwidth	91	49,39	●	5	Glass	1633 151
Optimum Int 2000 OPT490	299	25kg stand with shelves between variable-height tubular uprights. Sounds smooth and relaxed with sturdy bass	50	60,40		4	Glass	1953 166
Optimum Int 2000 OPT660	349	Glitzy style isn't reflected in sound, which is wholesome	82	60,52		5	Glass	181
Quadraspire Q4	250	Easy to live with, tonally neutral	54	40,49		4	MDF	1633 151
Sound Organisation Z038	135	Too lively and lacking order – but inexpensive	50	84,40	●	5	Wood	1633 151
Sound Organisation Z560	160	Welded and bolted members give structural integrity. While performance is not up with the best, it's great value	90	46,36	●	5	Wood	1954 166
Soundstyle X100	230	Looks lovely, sounds lively but slightly bright	64	49,28	●	4	Glass	181
Soundstyle Select 6105	290	Respectable sonics: structurally solid and smart	78	43,36		5	Glass	1633 151
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320	Veneered shelves clamped between tubular uprights. Delivers with classical material	82	48,27		4	Wood	1955 166
Sound Organisation Z545	150	Budget gem from the stalwarts of sound supports	70	46,36	●	4	Glass	181
Stands Unique Sound Tower	289	Wooden uprights combine with glass shelves to provide a fresh, forward sound, but bass could be quicker	81	72,42		5	Glass	1633 151
Target B5	175	Free of colorations, fine grip and good value	81	49,36	●	5	Wood	1633 151
Townshend Seismic Stand	1245	It's big, it wobbles and it's pricey. But this is the ultimate equipment support	72	58,45		3	Wood	181
Wilson benches Assist	590	Sounds even better than it looks. And it looks wonderful	72	37,50		4	Wood	181

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	84	Tall, slim and elegant, though sound and value are unexceptional	40-60	17,17	●			159
Alphason Titan	125	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 is 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	Stands out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of its performance	61	19,57	●	●		1373 146
AVF Tower 400	35	Ridiculously cheap and much better than no stand at all	54	17,20	●			159
Kudos S50	100	Better sound than the budget stands, particularly in low-frequencies	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	5			●		1373 146
Revolver RS1	70	A good blend of performance and appearance for the price	53	18,18	●			159
RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	349	Pricy carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A				159
Stands Unique HP	220	Real wood disguises high-performance tuned technology	59	22,23				159
Target R1	280	Truly high-mass four-pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack	53	15,21	●	●		1373 146
Target TR60	68	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less-than-audiophile-oriented, twin-column design	60	15,15	●			1373 146

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4TC Kimber Speaker Cable



Kimber Cable PowerKord



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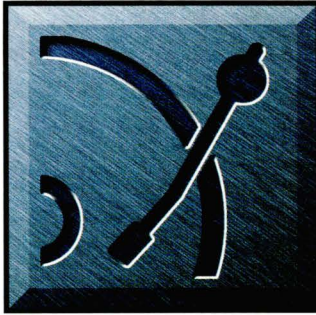
Kimber Cable PBJ interconnect

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Russ Andrews



Tonearms

Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). However, hard-core vinyl fans should invest in a more expensive separate motor unit with specialist tone-arm – the only way to make the most of vinyl LPs. It is essential to achieve operational synergy between such components, so this is one area of hi-fi where the skills of a knowledgeable dealer are invaluable. The quality of a tonearm's construction and design affect sound quality significantly. There are three basic arm designs listed in the key, and each has strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, being usually the most practical and affordable.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **EFFECTIVE MASS:** This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.
- **PARALLEL TRACKING:** An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
- **PIVOTED:** Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.
- **UNI-PIVOT:** Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
- **EFFECTIVE LENGTH (CM):** Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.
- **ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT:** Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
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B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

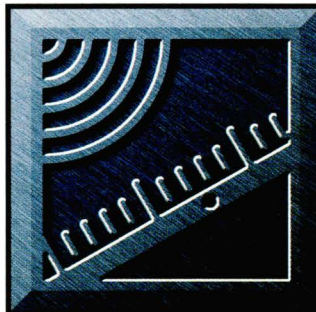
Tonearms

SPECIFICATIONS

PARALLEL TRACKING
EFFECTIVE MASS
PIVOTED
UNI-PIVOT
EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)
ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	PARALLEL TRACKING	PIVOTED	UNI-PIVOT	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
A Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,250	Large, solid and well-made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High	●	●	●	●	229	79
A Linn Ekos	1,500	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Medium	●	●	●	●	229	67
A Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low	●	●	●	●	237	60
A Rega RB300	174	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low	●	●	●	●	237	60
A Roksan Tabriz Basic	275	Targeted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases – a touch bright though	Low	●	●	●	●	240	91
A SME Series IV	983	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low	●	●	●	●	233	60
A SME Series V	1,461	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price	Low	●	●	●	●	233	60



Tuners

TV has stolen radio's status as the foremost broadcast entertainment medium, but with its Radio Four plays and Radio Three music, the BBC still makes a potent case for audiophile reception equipment. For how much longer, under the cost-conscious Birt regime, remains to be seen. Another new imponderable is the arrival of digital radio broadcasting, though reception apparatus is currently non-existent outside of the in-car market. These days tuners play second fiddle to hi-fi sources like CD, but in many ways they are a greater engineering challenge than digital equipment, and thus higher price-tags clearly equate to superior performance. High-quality, roof-mounted antennae are essential for audiophile listening, so factor them into your budget.

KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **WAVEBANDS:** FM – (VHF), M – MW, L – LW.
- **PRESETS:** Number of station frequencies that can be stored.
- **RDS:** (Radio Data System) was originally designed for in-car applications. RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, traffic news and other information about broadcasts.
- **REMOTE CONTROL:** Infra-red control handset supplied.
- **SIGNAL STRENGTH METER:** Indicates strength of signal from aerial – useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation.
- **ROTARY TUNING KNOB:** Experience has shown that this analogue throwback is ergonomically far superior to the button-based approach.
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B BEST BUY **R** RECOMMENDED **E** EDITOR'S CHOICE

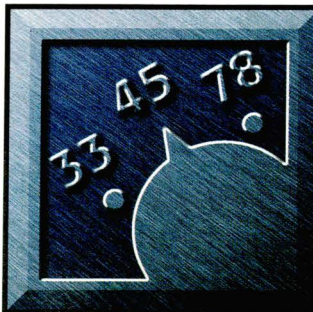
Tuners

SPECIFICATIONS

WAVEBANDS
PRESETS
RDS
REMOTE CONTROL
SIG. STRENGTH METER
ROT. TUNING KNOB
FACTSBACK NO.
ISSUE NUMBER

STATUS

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NUMBER
A AMC T7	130	Performance adequate but price is sharp, especially with remote control. Some hum	FM, M	30	●	●	●	●	1945	166
A Arcam Alpha 7	230	Indifferent RF performance but a touch of audiophile sound quality with clean, strong signals	FM, M, L	24	●	●	●	●	1946	166
A Arcam Delta 280	300	Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. Remote £60 extra	FM	20	●	●	●	●	120	120
A Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound	FM, M, L	20	●	●	●	●	93	93
A Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	1947	166
A Denon TU-1500RD	250	A well-balanced and clean sound with good bass and treble extension	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	184	184
A Magnum Dynalab FT11	499	All-analogue tuner: receives weak or tightly packed stations but loses out on noise and sonic neutrality	FM	3	●	●	●	●	184	184
A Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Bulky but effective, delivering fine RF performance and good sound for the price	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	1948	166
A Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price	FM	80	●	●	●	●	1254	142
A Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation	FM	39	●	●	●	●	72	72
A Marantz ST-48	120	A classic budget model which manages a performance only just behind much more expensive models.	FM, M	60	●	●	●	●	184	184
A Micromega Tuner	750	Has digital output but even without the Micromega DAC, this provides exceptional sound quality. Looks good too	FM	29	●	●	●	●	1810	157
A 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
A Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and with a subjectively larger-than-life presentation	FM	20	●	●	●	●	1810	157
A Myryad T-10	530	A very smart unit which works well and offers good rhythmic drive and vitality, albeit at a price	FM	20	●	●	●	●	184	184
A Naim NAT01	1,730	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM	40	●	●	●	●	1254	142
A Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance; slightly disappointing sound	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	1949	166
A Pioneer F-504RDS Precision	300	Lots of features, plus a sound that's low on noise and high on communication, adds up to a good value package	FM, M	40	●	●	●	●	184	184
A Roksan Caspian	595	Neat facia with great ergonomics, but sound is not really any better than models at half the price	FM	50	●	●	●	●	184	184
A Rotel RT-935AX	160	Good ergonomics and sound quality at a realistic price, but limited features and RF selectivity	FM, M	20	●	●	●	●	1950	166
A Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to perform at its best	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	1810	157
A Sony STS-B920S	180	A little hiss and image compression don't detract from the clean performance of this feature-packed tuner	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	184	184
A Technics ST-GT350L	130	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM, M, L	30	●	●	●	●	1254	142
A Thorens TRT2000	499	Not exactly neutral sounding, but nonetheless makes listening fun	FM, M	59	●	●	●	●	1810	157



Turntables

Specialist turntables are at the heart of high-fidelity sound. CD players may offer ultra-low noise and a flat frequency response, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative rhythmical timing taken for granted by serious turntable users. Less expensive turntables are usually supplied with a matching tonearm (and often a 'starter' cartridge, too). Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Because turntables are mechanical devices, designed to retrieve micron-small modulations engraved into vinyl, engineering quality is of paramount importance. This is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do, and require the finest equipment support systems.

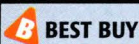
KEY TO SPECIFICATIONS

- **MANUAL:** You do all the work.
- **AUTO:** The record player does all the work.
- **SEMI-AUTO:** You put the needle on, the turntable lifts it off at the end of the record.
- **SPEEDS:** In RPM to correspond with long-playing records or seven-inch singles.
- **SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS:** Sprung suspension to minimise structural interference.
- **EXTERNAL PSU:** Outboard power supply; generally indicative of higher-quality performance.
- **SUPPLIED WITH ARM:** Many turntables do

not come with a tonearm fitted, but if this category is checked, the deck is already thus equipped.

- **SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE:** If a turntable comes complete with arm and cartridge.
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H: High End Review



Turrtables

STATUS

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUAL AUTO SEMI-AUTO SPEEDS SUSP. SUBCHASSIS EXTERNAL PSU SUPPLIED WITH ARM SUPPLIED WITH ARM FACTSBACK NO. ISSUE NO.

PRODUCT	(£)	COMMENTS	MANUAL	AUTO	SEMI-AUTO	SPEEDS	SUSP. SUBCHASSIS	EXTERNAL PSU	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	FACTSBACK NO.	ISSUE NO.
Clearaudio Reference	3,990	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail, but can sound bold	●			33/45					1328	144
DNM Rota 2	5,600	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on its own table	●			33/45					1328	144
Dual 505-4 UK	250	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph				33/45	●					103
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,950	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●			33/45						91
Linn LP12 Basik	1,100	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●			33						103
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains	●			33/45						91
Michell Gyrodec	875	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●			33/45						55
Moth Kanoot	329	Rather coarse-sounding deck that requires decent isolation and comes with a Rega RB300 arm	●			33/45					1907	164
Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm	750	No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever				33/45						159
Pink Triangle Anniversary	2,500	Possibly the most detailed, clear, neutral-sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny	●			33/45						91
Pro-ject 2	300	Remarkably effective at the price, with decent timing and a generally well defined sound				33/45					1907	164
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	850	Don't think of this as a deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Oracle Delphi – it's that good	●			33/45						138
Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident				33/45						48
Rega Planar 3	274	Sounds musical in a balanced manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●			33/45					1907	164
Reson RS1	600	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail				33/45						159
Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant-looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight	●			33/45						159
SME Model 20A	4,863	Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval	●			33/45/78						118
Thorens TD166 V/UK/RB	400	Refined, solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM/MC budget cartridges				33/45						103
Thorens TD2001	700	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled				33/45						159
Well Tempered Record Player	1,850	Intriguing and challenging. Musically not ideal, but its limp quality and lack of artificiality set standards	●			33/45					1180	136



OPERA DUETTO

“So luxurious that it sets new standards for speakers in the sub-£500 bracket” – Hi Fi News

Opera Duetto is an unusual loudspeaker. We use one inch thick solid hardwood for the cabinet, to give high mass, great rigidity and complete freedom from resonance. As well as being acoustically inert, real wood is a beautiful, natural material, and Duetto is a tribute to our cabinet makers' art, refined and supremely elegant.

Beneath the elegant exterior, advanced acoustic research and top quality components combine to give a sound rich in detail, space and warmth. *What do the reviewers say?* Hi Fi World gave top-star rating with the words: “A genuinely transparent and musical sound”. Hi Fi News called the Duetto: “So luxurious that it set new standards for speakers in the sub-£500 bracket”. And What Hi-Fi? called it simply: “A class act”. *If you are looking* for quality and refinement from affordable loudspeakers, Duetto will enthral you. And at just £395 for the pair, so will the price.

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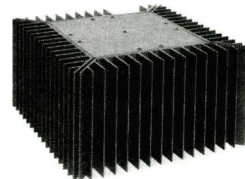
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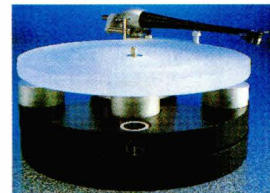
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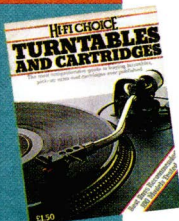
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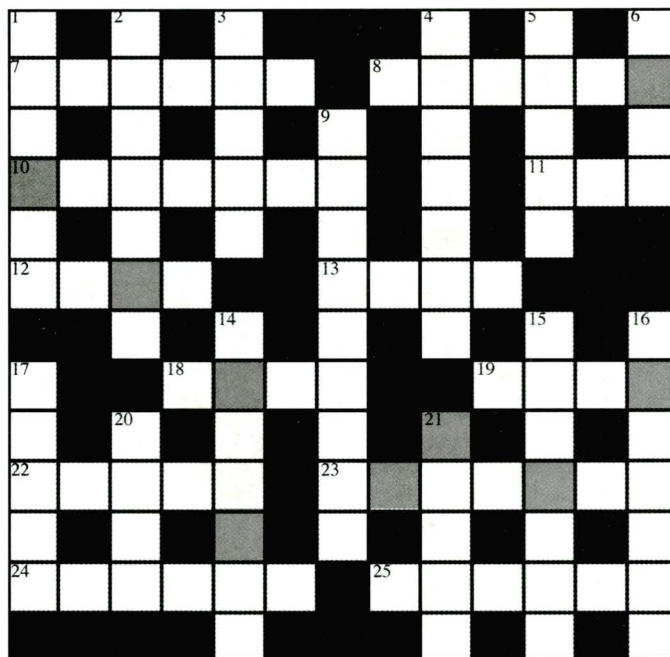
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- 9) By entering the competition, you agree to be bound by the rules.
- 10) All entries must be on this official entry coupon. If you do not wish to cut your magazine, you may send a photocopy of the page instead. Please note: only one entry form per household.

CHFC 901B

THE HI-FI CHOICE CROSSWORD

Test your hi-fi knowledge and win a pair of Black Box speaker stands!



THE CLUES

CLUES ACROSS:

- 7) Product lines from mountain systems (6)
- 8) The maker of the Academy 2 tails off from a chariot (6)
- 10) Somebody who talks about 20 down's speciality (7)
- 11) Oddly, David gets Digital Versatile Disc (3, init)
- 12) Part of a record player with an arm (4)
- 13) Make a duplicate (4)
- 18) A chief with the digital Dr. Sample (4)
- 19) Tiny disc for a classic little car (4)
- 22) Bitter Japanese electronics firm (5)
- 23) Danish company who go with a Bang (7)
- 24) A whisky-related name in audio accessories (6)
- 25) The couch potato's control is far away (6)

CLUES DOWN:

- 1) Memorable radio station button (6)
- 2) An aerial (7)
- 3) Record or tape units on levels of the ship (5)
- 4) Dutch maker of the first re-writable CDR (7)
- 5) A system of beliefs leads to Naim's speaker (5)
- 6) A noisy connection to 10 across (4)
- 9) The accuracy of Pioneer's range of separates (9)
- 14) & 17) Down. CDs for short (7,5)
- 15) The task assigned to a British name in hi-fi (7)
- 16) Innovator of 9 down (7)
- 17) See 14 down
- 20) Europe's largest loudspeaker manufacturer (4)
- 21) The radio receiver sounds fish-y (5)

After solving the puzzle, unscramble the letters from the circled squares to spell out the stand related prize word.

WIN WIN WIN

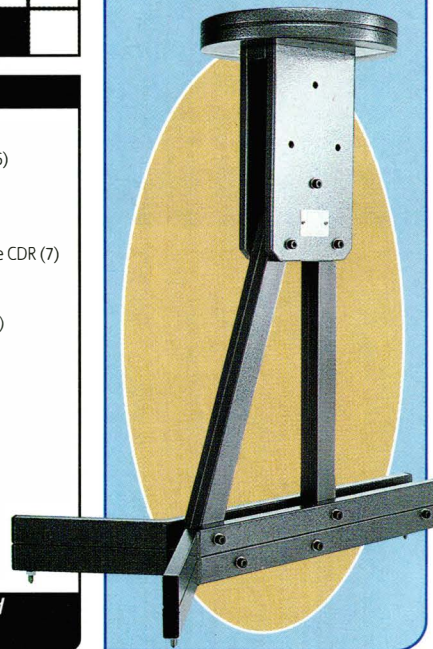
Standing at a height of 670mm, these £796 Black Box stands are based on a studio design and place maximum rigidity and damping at the top of their priority list.

The triangulation of the base unit and three spiked feet provide the stands with massive stability. This large footprint allows the stand's centre column to be reversible in direction so that the support plate can be adjusted to provide two alternative heights, the higher being 670mm.

The rectangular legs and uprights are double section steel, welded at crucial points, allowing frictional contact between the two sections. This, along with the MDF plate, damps any significant potential resonances in the frame, thereby ensuring none of its own characteristics are imposed on the output of the loudspeaker.

Similarly the top plate is constructed from an MDF/damping layer sandwich, with pads of belt rubber to maximise friction between the stand and speaker cabinet.

So, if you can find the mystery word, you could be the proud owner of a pair of these innovative stands.



HIGHLIGHTS OF NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE ...

AFFORDABLY SPEAKING

For the February '99 issue we're taking a close look at the competitive world of the budget loudspeaker. Paul and Paul have been measuring and listening to a dozen of the finest contenders for the budget Best Buy crown. Among them is Linn's new Kan, the latest Monitor Audio Silver Series design and models from Acoustic Energy, Wharfedale, TDL, Mission, KEF, Tannoy and many more.



HIGH-END WIZARDS

Our selection from the wild world of the high-end next month will include TAG/McLaren's PPA phono stage and Michell's new Orca preamp and revamped Alecto monoblock power amps.

PRE/POWER STARTERS

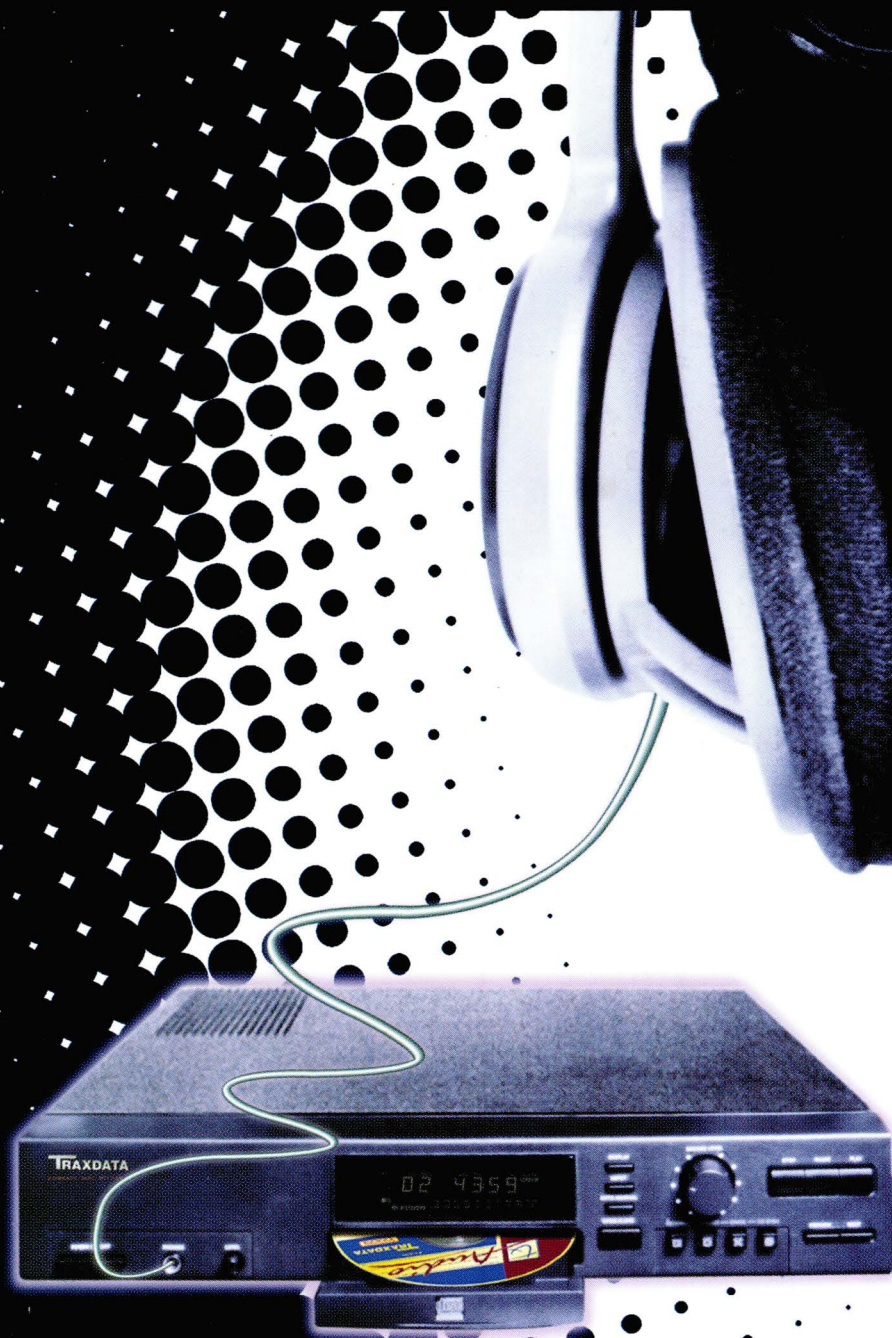
Richard Black has been finding out what kind of quality is on offer from pre/power amp combinations at around the £1,000

price point. The line-up includes s: NVA, Crimson, Thule, Alchemist, Creek and Arcam.

■ **The February issue will be on sale on Thursday, January 21st 1999.**



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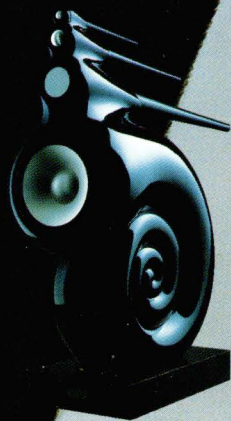
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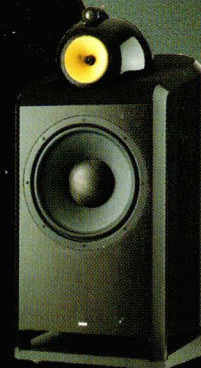
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B&W's Nautilus™801 fuses the innovative Nautilus™ tube technology with a series of industry firsts: Fixed Suspension Transducer™, Kevlar® drive units, Matrix® cabinet bracing and Flowport™ technology. The result is an unprecedented purity of sound. The reason EMI's Abbey Road studios, along with best in the recording industry, are now upgrading to the Nautilus™801. Listen and you'll see – at your nearest authorised Nautilus™ 800 Series dealer. For more info contact B&W: 01903 750 750 or visit our website <http://www.bwspeakers.com>



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